

Adult Learners' Week

Events Guide

15 - 21 May 2010

Adult Learners' Week is the UK's largest festival of learning, engaging on average 50,000 people each year, it celebrates learning in all its diversity.

Every year, Adult Learners' Week inspires people to see what learning could do for them, offering them the chance to catch up on skills they've missed out on in the past, develop themselves for the future, or simply learn for pleasure.

Now in its 19th year, Adult Learners' Week will take place from 15 – 21 May 2010, and whether you're an employer, a learning provider or a partner organisation there are many benefits to getting involved.

Holding an event as part of Adult Learners' Week is a great way to showcase the opportunities that you provide, encouraging new audiences to take the first steps into learning, and others to learn more.

We have a variety of themes to give you ideas for your activities, and national and local events throughout the week include Cultural Diversity Weekend (15 – 16 May), Learning at Work Day (20 May) and Silver Surfers' Day (21 May).

Adult Learners' Week is a chance to have fun and be creative, whilst spreading the message that learning is good for health, self – esteem and employability. So whatever you plan to do, make sure it fits your goals and appeals to your audience.

co-ordinated by:



Supported by:



A few tips for planning your event:

Here are a few things to think about to help you start planning your events....

Step 1

- What do you want to get out of the event or what do you want attendees to gain from the event?
- What sort of event will attract the type of audience you are trying to reach? (Fun and informal activities can be a great way to engage new people, so be creative.)
- Where will be the most appropriate location for the audience and for you?
- How can you reach your audience in the most cost-effective way?
- Is there a theme that you could base it on? See p. 7 for themes

Step 2

- What resources do you have? For example, staff, volunteers, time, budget etc.
- How can you work with other partners in order to make the event as successful as possible? See p. 4 for more information about partnerships.

Step 3

- Order **Adult Learners' Week resources** to help tie your campaign to the national publicity.

Materials that are available include:

- Discover magazine (for providers/ campaign supporters) (free)
- New Horizons magazine – a motivational magazine for potential learners. (free)
- Packs of Posters (including A3, A4 and customisable empty belly posters) (free)
- Bookmarks (free)
- Event in a Box – all you need for your event, including;
 - a set of Quick Reads books,
 - a banner
 - balloons
 - pens
 - customizable posters
 - bookmarks
 - scratchcards,
 - a Planning Toolkit CD
 - and learning materials to support your activities.

Step 4

- Put your event on the **Adult Learners' Week Event Diary**, this is a free on – line advertising opportunity for you to publicise your activities. The event diary is used by the careers advice helpline, 0800 100 900, advisors will inform callers of their local events.

Visit www.alw.org.uk to add your event to the diary.

Step 5

- Make the most of the local media – to ensure they are aware of your event and can promote it.
- We have some suggestions to support you, including a press release template. See p.5 for more information.

Step 6

- Use **Adult Learners' Week evaluation forms**, to measure the success of your event. These will be available online and will be incentivised to help you get as much feedback as possible. See page 6 for further guidance.

Partnerships

Adult Learners' Week is what it is today because of organisations working together for mutual benefit, it can be an excellent opportunity to build and develop partnerships within your region or sector, and even strengthen your case for sponsorship/ funding.

Think about what you need from a partner to help you run your event?

- is it money or resource?
- is it volunteers with particular skills?
- or is it contacts?

What can partners bring?

Could they help to:

- promote the event;
- share costs
- increase activity and widen reach;
- provide some prizes as an incentive; or
- provide a venue for the event?

Be open minded and think creatively about which organisations/partners could be useful to your activity.

Partnership event ideas

Sometimes 'piggybacking' on other organisations' activities will provide opportunities to meet and network with their supporters. Local events may be the opportunity to collaborate on some activities under a joint theme.

For example in 2009 a 'Learning for Life' event took place in Carlisle City centre, celebrating volunteering and community action. Participating organisations included the University of Cumbria, Carlisle College, local training providers, Adult education and Family Learning, the Library service, Cumbria CVS, the Armed Forces, the Community Law centre and several departments of Carlisle City Council. The event provided local people with information about the wide range of formal and informal learning opportunities available.

Sponsorship

- Use the knowledge you have about your audience in order to shape suitable activities;
- tell potential sponsors what is in it for them, be realistic about what you are asking for and have a well thought-out time plan and stick to it;
- follow up in writing so all parties know what is being supplied and what you'll provide in return;
- always use the sponsor's logo and acknowledge their support in publicity so that they can be associated with activities that give them the exposure they want and are more likely to get involved again.

Using the media

People often think that only national media coverage counts, but this is not true. Local and regional media have large, regular and loyal audiences, from local newspapers to radio stations and websites. There are also regional TV stations covering larger areas too. This is a vast local audience who want to hear about what's going on in their area and the issues that affect them.

Before you contact anyone make sure you have notes about what is interesting or newsworthy about your event:

- Usually this will be the remarkable stories of your learners;
- the creativity/type of event you are holding;
- and what it brings to the area.

Contacting the media – some tips

- Give yourself plenty of time – about two weeks – May is always a busy month in a journalist's calendar.
- Use **Adult Learners' Week** as your 'hook': journalists keep notes on what happens at particular times of the year and they will have heard of it.
- have some good case-studies of learners at hand. A journalist always looks for the 'people' element of any story and if you can help them with this they are more likely to take notice.
- Having interview opportunities prepared is also a great incentive.

The news release

The main point of contact for a journalist is the news release and if you choose to contact a journalist with a news release remember to keep it short and interesting. Let your passion for the subject come through, but try to avoid writing emotively. Use quotes of learners to provide the emotional punch for you.

- Write 'News Release' and the date at the top, and make sure that the title of your news release sums up the story (it should not be a headline).
- Your first paragraph must include the six key questions: Who? What? Why? Where? When? How?
- Your second and third paragraph can include more detail – remember that a learner talking about how their life has been transformed is a very powerful tool.
- Keep your news release to one side of A4 if you can and don't forget to add your full contact details.
- Any supplementary information can be added to the end as an Editor's Note such as venue and time of event with relevant photo opportunities.

Download a press release template at www.alw.org.uk

Evaluation

After all that planning it is always useful to know how well participants received your event. Did it actually make a difference? Did it help you achieve your objectives? Did it fulfil your funders' objectives? This information is valuable in assessing your organisation's involvement in Adult Learners' Week as well as raising the value of learning generally.

Each year **Adult Learners' Week** events are evaluated by NIACE to measure the impact and reach of the campaign. This helps to gain much needed further funding, to continue to inspire learners and policy – makers alike.

- Use **Adult Learners' Week Evaluation forms**, to gain feedback from your participants. These will be available online, to download, and on paper, and will include an incentive to help you get as much feedback as possible.
- As an event holder, it would really help us to develop the campaign, if you could also fill out an evaluation form about your experiences of the event, what you thought about the materials and resources that were available and how many people took part in your activities.

In a survey of event attendees, the impact of Adult Learners' Week events in 2009 were:



Learn new things	63%
Find out about a course	49%
Encourage friends and family to learn new things	48%
Sign up for a course	37%
Learn about volunteering	30%
Seek out careers advice	25%
Seek out workplace training	23%
Change career/job	11%
Apply for a job	8%
Go to the job centre	8%
Start work	8%
Ring Careers Advice service	8%
Other	1%

Event ideas and themes

As well as the national theme days; Cultural Diversity Weekend, Learning at Work Day and Silver Surfers' Day, for 2010 the themes will be broadly around the following areas, and you may like to use these as a starting point for your activities:

- Health and well-being – including learning for active living, mental health issues, arts, culture and creativity, sport, and preparing for the 2012 Olympics.
- Older people's lives – including issues around learning in later life, older workers, ageing, demography, intergenerational learning and digital participation.
- Social mobility and a more equal society – including issues around community cohesion, equality and diversity, ESOL, women returners, offender learning, financial capability and migration.
- Family life – including issues around family and intergenerational learning.
- Active citizenship and empowered, cohesive communities – including issues around volunteering, social movements, community engagement, civic renewal and democratic participation.
- Skills for a resilient and productive economy, including literacy, language and numeracy, modern foreign languages, media literacy, digital inclusion and participation and in support of jobs for the future - science, technology, medicine and engineering.
- International development – including north/south issues, migration and fair-trade.
- Sustainability – including 'green' issues, globalisation and sustainable development.

Here are some events from last year's themes that may inspire you..

Cultural Diversity Weekend

Cultural Diversity Weekend kickstarts the beginning of each Adult Learners' Week in May and provides an excellent platform to raise awareness of the diversity of learning and learners. It enables providers to engage with learners through interests they are comfortable with such as dance, food, music and art.

- Dance Off! Events took place across the country including Bollywood classes in Surrey, West African dance in Manchester and West End musical dance in London.
- A Passport to Culture tour of the world's continents was held in Lincolnshire's The Collection, where local communities (including Polish, Portuguese, Nigerian, Spanish, Italian, Indian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Mexican, Bulgarian, English and Sudanese communities) volunteered to share a variety of craft, dance, music and food activities.

- Over 2,800 people signed up to courses, from samba and drumming to plastering with Walsall Learning Alliance's new learning campaign, a range of world dance sessions from Bhangra to salsa were held in Leicester's libraries
- A 'Learn yourself well' event was held at the World Museum in Liverpool, offering African dance, holistic therapies, a learning market and a chance to join the Liverpool Challenge to get fit and healthier.
- The 'Celebration of Culture' event in Woking hosted a free internationally themed concert in the town centre with colourful acts from lion dancers to Morris dancing!

Globalisation and the changing world of work

Issues that could be highlighted through this theme include employability, getting back to work, skills for life, upskilling and reskilling, participation, progression and qualifications.

- Workplaces and unions held events across the country, including branches of Tesco, DHL, Argos, Sainsbury's and McVities;
- Reading and writing workshops were organised by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust;
- Citizens Advice Bureau sessions were held in Warrington libraries; Skills for Life sessions were held at National Museums Liverpool;
- 'Improve your English' tasters were held by Chelsea Theatre;
- A Jobs and Training Fair was organised by Greenwich Council, giving participants an opportunity to interview as volunteers for the Olympics.

Environmental sustainability

In recent years 'green issues' and sustainable development have gained increasing publicity and public awareness, but what is understood is yet to be translated into widespread action.

- The BBC's 'Queen of Green' Penny Poyzer led three sustainable lives workshops in Derby;
- An Eco-chic fashion show was held in Shrewsbury; and Birmingham Conservatoire ran a week of events.
- Other events included recycling costume jewellery sessions in Southend;
- Bird walks and bird box making at Chasewater Innovation Centre; a 'Health and Wellbeing – People and Planet' event which included calculating your carbon footprint;
- Stonemasonry and heritage skills in Chester;
- Gardening workshops held in Somerset, complete with a grow your own salad plant!

Technological change

For some, the technological revolution has made the world a much smaller place, but there are many individuals who lack the skills to engage. This theme includes issues around ICT, e-learning, media literacy and digital inclusion.

- A Wii Play Event at The Collection in Lincolnshire, engaging families and groups in intergenerational play;
- Digital technology workshops by learndirect Centres in Sandbach, including eBay Auctions, Banking Online and Socialising Online;
- How to build a computer from scratch session in Stroud Green Library;
- A photography competition for East of England sponsored by East of England Skills and Competitiveness Partnership, attracting 300 entries, of which the shortlist was exhibited at the Imperial War Museum at Duxford.

Citizenship and belonging in a democratic society

- Activities from archaeology and India to religion and creative writing were held at the British Museum with Open University.
- There was international cookery and cake decorating by Bexley Adult Education; exploring census materials at Metropolitan Archives;
- The artefacts and works of Rabindranath Tagore by Alexandra Park Library;
- A celebration of the 200th Anniversary of Charles Darwin's birth by London South Bank University;
- ESOL, numeracy and literacy and citizenship taster events by City College Norwich at ASDA, the Norwich train station and Norwich Job Centre.

Demographic change

Issues concerning learning and employability are important for older workers, women returners, migration, learning in later life, family and intergenerational learning.

- Over 700 people visited the town centres of Cheshire and Warrington for advice and guidance as part of dedicated 'reading corners';
- Wormword Scrubs offered a variety of tasters on parenthood, being a good father and helping children stay off drugs;
- A Norwich Community Learning Circus event featured circus skills and kick boxing to engage adults across the region;
- Introductions to Japanese, Spanish and Arabic by Richmond Libraries.

Poverty reduction

In a rapidly changing economic climate it has become important to understand how to get more from life with less money. Issues may include financial education and engagement with the most isolated and excluded learners.

- Events included baby first aid courses by British Red Cross through Hackney Libraries;

- A money advice campaign in Derby;
- A Skills and Learning Fair in Rochdale; free taster sessions in growing your own vegetables,
- Internet auctions and beating the credit crunch run by Dacorum Borough Council; an e-learning and jobs fair in Greenwich; a Money Matters event to support the launch of BBC RaW money website in Whitehaven;
- A free recession buster service offered in Coventry;
- A mobile learning bus in Worcester;
- A family fun weekend in Bethnal Green;
- Father and child Tai Chi lessons in Derbyshire;
- A numeracy awareness day at Bury Fire Station and 'Weigh to Go' event at Bury Market tackling maths through fruit and veg!

Roles of public, private and voluntary sectors

This theme includes issues around volunteering, social movements, community engagement, civic renewal and democratic participation.

- Events included tasters in Community Leadership by Birkbeck College;
- Free workshops in radio and community communications in Middlesbrough;
- Retirement workshops by Peterborough Senior Citizens Forum;
- Test-driving the online citizenship training programme by East Ham Library;
- A community cohesion event in Burton on Trent;
- Street Skills advice in Ludlow town centre; volunteering tasters at Citizens Advice Bureaus across the country.

Well-being and happiness

This theme could include activities based around learning for active living, arts, culture and creativity as well as the ever important family and intergenerational living.

- From ballroom to belly dancing, salsa to Bollywood, dancing was a popular activity everywhere following the launch of Dance Off as part of Adult Learners' Week 2008;
- Life drawing sessions at various galleries including The Usher Gallery and the National Portrait Gallery;
- Leeds Kirkgate Market held a range of activities including Qi Gong, Kung Fu cookery and yoga;
- Chess for women and the over 50s in Hackney;
- Gospel singing in Lambeth;
- Wii health and fitness demos at Royal Mail by WEA;
- Pottery and sculpture at The Rosetta Arts Centre; a Fantastic People, Wonderful World event at RAF Museum Cosford featuring science, engineering and technology;
- A Books on the Beach event in Hartlepool;

- Hair and beauty treatments in Gainsborough shopping centre;
- A Weekend Warriors gig for over-35s in Corby!

To find out more about Adult Learners' Week, to order materials and to access our event diary visit www.alw.org.uk, or email alw@niace.org.uk.