



*The partnership to promote
excellence in learning*

Reasons to be cheerful –
Economy down - Learning up?

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Figures revealed today by Learning South West could show that the smart response to the gloom and chill of the current climate is to get learning.

The charity is the regional co-ordinator for the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education's (NIACE) annual Adult Learners' Week campaign. Figures recently released show a 40 per cent increase in the number of individuals from the South West nominated for the inspirational Adult Learners' Week Awards. The region was just knocked off the top spot nationally with 152 exceptional learners nominated to win an award.

The awards recognise the commitment and achievement of adult learners and are the highlight of the week-long celebration of adult learning, taking place May 9 to 15.

Last year's Adult Learners' Week survey, conducted by NIACE, – *Counting the Cost* – showed a two per cent fall in the number of adults participating in learning in the South West. The high rise in award nominations this year gives the first indication that learning has turned the corner and is on the up.

Tim Boyes-Watson, Chief Executive of Learning South West, the regional co-ordinator for Adult Learners' Week said: "The increase in nominations for this year's awards means potential learners will have plenty of encouragement to take up the growing number of opportunities to get involved in learning."

With the country in recession a key date for this year is Learning at Work Day, on May 14, which aims to promote the benefits of learning in the workplace. According to the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) employers who don't train staff are 2.5 times more likely to fail than those who do.

Tim added: "In these challenging economic times training is more important than ever to ensure the survival of local businesses. These new figures are encouraging and Adult Learners' Week is a great opportunity for everyone to find out more about the benefits of investing in skills."

ENDS

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Notes to Editors

- Adult Learners' Week is the UK's largest learning campaign to encourage adults to give learning a go, led by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE.) Find out more at <http://www.niace.org.uk/alw/2008/default.htm>
- Learning South West is an independent charity based at Bishops Hull near Taunton. Find out more at www.learning-southwest.org.uk.
- The West Midlands received the highest number of individual nominations (165) for the 2009 Adult Learners' Week awards. The South West figure for 2008 was 109 nominations.
- *The Counting the Cost* survey on adult participation in learning is published by NIACE. The 2009 survey will take place during February and March with the results published under embargo for Adult Learners' Week.
- Copies of the survey are available to journalists on approval. Please contact Ed Melia, NIACE Press Officer, on 0116 204 4248, 07795 358 870 or email: ed.melia@niace.org.uk. The 2008 survey, undertaken for NIACE by RSGB, interviewed a weighted sample of 4,932 adults, aged 17 and over, in the UK in the period 20 February – 20 March 2008. 411 adults were interviewed in the South West.
- LSC figure taken from the LSC, Train to Gain web pages: www.traintogain.gov.uk/Helping_Your_Business/extrasupport/

