

**National Institute of Adult Continuing Education**  
[www.niace.org.uk](http://www.niace.org.uk)

**Press Release**  
**5<sup>th</sup> May 2009**  
**PR44c/09**

**NATIONAL AWARD FOR DORSET GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS**

Kushti Bok in Dorchester is a group formed by members of the Gypsy and Traveller communities to overcome negative stereotyping and to encourage learning. Their dedication and commitment to learning is being recognised with a National Group Award as part of Adult Learners' Week 9 – 15 May 2009.

Having experienced prejudice and exclusion throughout their lives, Kushti Bok they are using their culture and skills to help others understand them.

The 10-strong group – who are part of the largest single ethnic minority in the county - was formed after partnership working with the ESF-funded Matchmaker project at Kingston Maurward College. Inspired by the College's approach to ask what education and training they needed to improve their lives, participants were pleased that courses could be delivered flexibly at times and places which suited their lifestyles.

Through the Matchmaker project, over 100 Gypsies and Travellers have achieved qualifications at Levels 1 to 3, from large goods vehicle driving, hairdressing and beauty therapy, to chainsaw operation, childcare and teaching.

As the group has grown in numbers, so too has their confidence. With a philosophy of "Nothing about us without us", they have become members of various consultative and advisory groups including local authority and mental health agencies.

Kushti Bok has been invited to design and deliver awareness training to Dorset Police for both new recruits and serving officers. The group meets monthly at Kingston Maurward and has also organised and delivered two local conferences and one national event to raise awareness of the needs of Gypsies and Travellers across the UK.

Ruth McGill, one of the Kushti Bok learners said, "We are working to overcome discrimination towards us. Kushti Bok has encouraged people to believe in themselves and supported them to achieve their dreams and aspirations."

Further Education Minister Sion Simon said, "The Adult Learners' Week Awards are a great opportunity to recognise and celebrate the achievements of learners around the country. As the awards show, learning in all its many forms leads to a host of benefits not only for the individual learner, but also for their families and the wider community."

He continued, "I hope the award winners will inspire others to rediscover learning. Whether your goal is to be able to help your children with their homework, realise a career aspiration or simply learn for pleasure, brushing up on existing skills or learning new ones can transform your life."

Rachel Thomson, Senior Campaigns Officer at NIACE, said, "The outstanding adult learning we celebrate during Adult Learners' Week shows the range and breadth of adults' enthusiasms, skills and determination to succeed, often against the odds. Our winners are remarkable – for their energy, commitment and talent – and each and every one should be extremely proud of what they've achieved."

Ends

**To contact Kushti Bok** please phone Ken Onions on 01305 215065 or 07917 337 588.

**For further information on Adult Learners' Week please contact:**

Ed Melia, NIACE Press Officer, on 0116 204 4248 or 07795 358 870.

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### **Notes to Editors**

1. Kushti Bok will be presented with a Group Award at the Adult Learners' Week National Awards Ceremony at the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre in Westminster, London on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2009. They will also receive an award at the South West Adult Learners' Week Regional Award Ceremony at Westlands Leisure Complex on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2009. Journalists and photographers are invited to attend both events. More information is available

from Ed Melia, NIACE Press Officer, on 0116 204 4248 or 07795 358 870 or [ed.melia@niace.org.uk](mailto:ed.melia@niace.org.uk)

2. Adult Learners' Week, 9<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> May 2009, is the largest annual celebration of adult learning in the UK. It is supported by the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills, the European Social Fund, Careers Advice, the National Learning and Skills Council, Ofcom - the Office of Communications, the Learning and Skills Improvement Service, the Learning and Skills Council, Booktrust, Ufi/learndirect, Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, National Open College Network, BECTA, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and City and Guilds. More details at: [www.alw.org.uk](http://www.alw.org.uk)
3. Adult Learners' Week 2009 will include the following national events:
  - Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May: **Cultural Diversity Weekend.**
  - Monday 11<sup>th</sup> May: **Freedom to Teach, Freedom to Learn** Joint NIACE, NRDC, UCU Conference at the Institute of Education, London.
  - Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> May: **National Policy Conference *Beyond the Recession: Adult Learning in Changing Times*** at the Mermaid Theatre, Blackfriars, London, sponsored by the QCA; and
  - **Adult Learners' Week Parliamentary Reception**, at the House of Commons, sponsored by City and Guilds.
  - Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> May: **Quick Reads Learners' Favourite Award**, at the British Library.
  - Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> May: **Learning at Work Day.**
  - Friday 15<sup>th</sup> May: **Adult Learners' Week National Award Ceremony** - QEII Conference Centre, London, sponsored by BECTA; and
  - **Silver Surfers Day.**
4. A national helpline – **Careers Advice** - is available year-round for confidential advice and information about careers and courses. The call handlers will have access to the NIACE website and can give information about local activities during Adult Learners' Week. Calls are free on 0800 100 900.
5. Events for Adult Learners' Week 2009 are listed in the interactive online calendar at [www.alw.org.uk/calendar](http://www.alw.org.uk/calendar) where you can search by keyword, your preferred date and by the region you live in. Or call **Careers Advice** free on 0800 100 900 to find Adult Learners' Week events local to you.
6. The themes for Adult Learners' Week 2009 are:
  1. Prosperity, employment and work
  2. Sustainable development
  3. Technological Change
  4. Demography and social structure
  5. Poverty reduction
  6. The roles of the public, private and voluntary sectors
  7. Well-being and happiness
  8. Crime and social exclusion
7. The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) is the leading non-government organisation for lifelong learning in England, and exists to encourage more and different adults to engage in better-quality learning of all

kinds. It campaigns for, and celebrates the achievements of, all adult learners.