

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

**Press Release**  
**5<sup>th</sup> May 2009**  
**PR41a/09**

**BRISTOL LEARNER WINS LEARNING AWARD**

Pauline Gibbon, aged 55, from Yate, has started a learning journey to gain qualifications, after spending 27 years working in healthcare. Her dedication and commitment to learning is being recognised with a Regional Individual Award as part of Adult Learners' Week 9 – 15 May 2009.

Having battled severe depression and agoraphobia during the last seven years, Pauline has overcome her fears to emerge more confident and gain qualifications that reflect her life's achievements.

She experienced severe bullying as a child and left school with no formal qualifications or even a desire to learn again. With dreams of becoming a nurse, she eventually got a job as a nursing assistant and has been learning her skills on the wards ever since.

"It dawned on me then that I had a great deal of missed opportunities to better myself," Pauline said. "I didn't want to end my working life with regrets as I still have at least 10 years of nursing to offer. I started my NVQ Level 2 Health and Social Care in April 2008. I've been on numerous study days and learnt lots."

Pauline plans to continue with her NVQ qualifications and then do a Spirometry course, which studies the testing of lung conditions. She has just recently delivered a presentation on her learning, with great confidence, at a staff conference.

"Doing my NVQ has seen me bloom as a person," she said. "I now have a social life and have set challenges beyond my expectations – something I never thought would be possible."

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 Pauline Gibbon** please phone Casey Palmer on 01179 753 711.

**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. Pauline Gibbon will be presented with a Regional Learning Works Award – sponsored by the Learning and Skills Council - 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 the event. 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; 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.