

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

**Press Release**  
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**For immediate release**

**FULL-TIME CARER GOES BACK TO UNIVERSITY AND WINS LEARNING AWARD**

Angela Mills, aged 31, from Leek, looks after her disabled husband and two children, yet learning has helped her onto a University access course. Angela's remarkable achievement will be awarded with a Regional Individual Learner Award from the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), as part of Adult Learners' Week 17<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2008.

As a child Angela was told that she wouldn't amount to anything. For a long time she believed this, until taking a course in child protection through the youth club she volunteered for. It led to her applying for a place at university.

The level 1 taster course interested her because of her own experiences as a child. "After completing it I was eager for more knowledge and progressed to a level 3 course," she says. "I found this to be a very difficult challenge and at times wished to give up. But a voice in my head told me to persevere."

Her self-belief wasn't her only obstacle to learning. With a disabled husband and two children to care for, she has had to work hard to fit her studying in. "I carried on for years believing that I was not good enough and lacked all confidence in myself," she says. "After having my two children and then having to cope with the fact that my husband became disabled, I thought my life was over. However, gradually, I pulled myself up and began to study seriously for the first time."

Now she is taking every opportunity available to her to fulfil her potential. Through an access course she has applied to study social work at Staffordshire University, which she hopes to take up this year.

David Lammy, Minister for Skills, said, "I never fail to be inspired by the stories I hear about learner's achievements. Angela's hard work confirms my belief that improving your skills can be a life changing experience."

He continued, "The benefits better skills bring to learners and those around them are wide-ranging. On the personal level people become more confident and have higher self-esteem, and individuals can develop better job prospects. More widely this can lead to parents being better able to help their children with homework and learner's employers becoming more competitive. Any adults wanting to improve their skills can call 0800 100 900 and find out about the courses in their local area."

Rachel Thomson, Senior Campaigns Officer at NIACE, said, "In spite of the fact this is the 17th annual Adult Learners' Week we continue to be amazed by the quality of the nominations we have received. Angela's story is an indication of how learning can transform lives completely. All of this year's winners have shown a huge commitment, passion and creativity throughout their learning journeys. Their achievements are all the more inspiring due to the challenges they have overcome and they fully deserve to be recognised as outstanding and inspirational adult learners."

James Plaskitt, Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Department for Work and Pensions, and Minister responsible for ESF, said, "I am pleased that the ESF is again sponsoring Adult Learners' Week which provides a wonderful opportunity to celebrate learning and communicate how it can help people improve their job prospects. I hope that many more people will be inspired to take up learning opportunities after hearing the inspirational stories of the winners of this award."

Ends

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

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## Notes to Editors

1. Angela Mills will be presented with a Regional Individual Learner Award at the West Midlands Adult Learners' Week Regional Award Ceremony at Kings Hall, Stoke on Trent on Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2008 from 10:30am – 12:30pm. Journalists and photographers are invited to attend. 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, 17<sup>th</sup>–23<sup>rd</sup> May 2008, 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, learndirect, the National Learning and Skills Council, Ofcom - the Office of Communications, the Quality Improvement Agency, 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 2008 will include the following national events:
  - Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> May: **Cultural Diversity Weekend**
  - Monday 19<sup>th</sup> May: **Adult Learners' Week National Award Ceremony** - QEII Conference Centre, London
  - Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> May: **National Policy Conference** *Adult Learning and Culture* to be held at the London Chamber of Commerce
  - Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> May: Quick Reads Learners' Favourite Award and Voice on a Page to be held at The Globe Theatre
  - Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> May: **Learning at Work Day** – *What makes learning at work, work* at the Victory Services Club, Marble Arch
  - Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> May: **Silver Surfers Day**
4. A national helpline - **learndirect** - 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 2008 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 **learndirect** free on 0800 100 900 to find Adult Learners' Week events local to you.
6. The themes for Adult Learners' Week 2008 are:
  1. Globalisation and the changing world of work
  2. Environmental Sustainability
  3. Technological Change
  4. Citizenship and belonging in a diverse society
  5. Demographic change
  6. Poverty reduction
  7. Changing expectations and perceptions of the Third Sector
  8. Well-being and happiness

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.