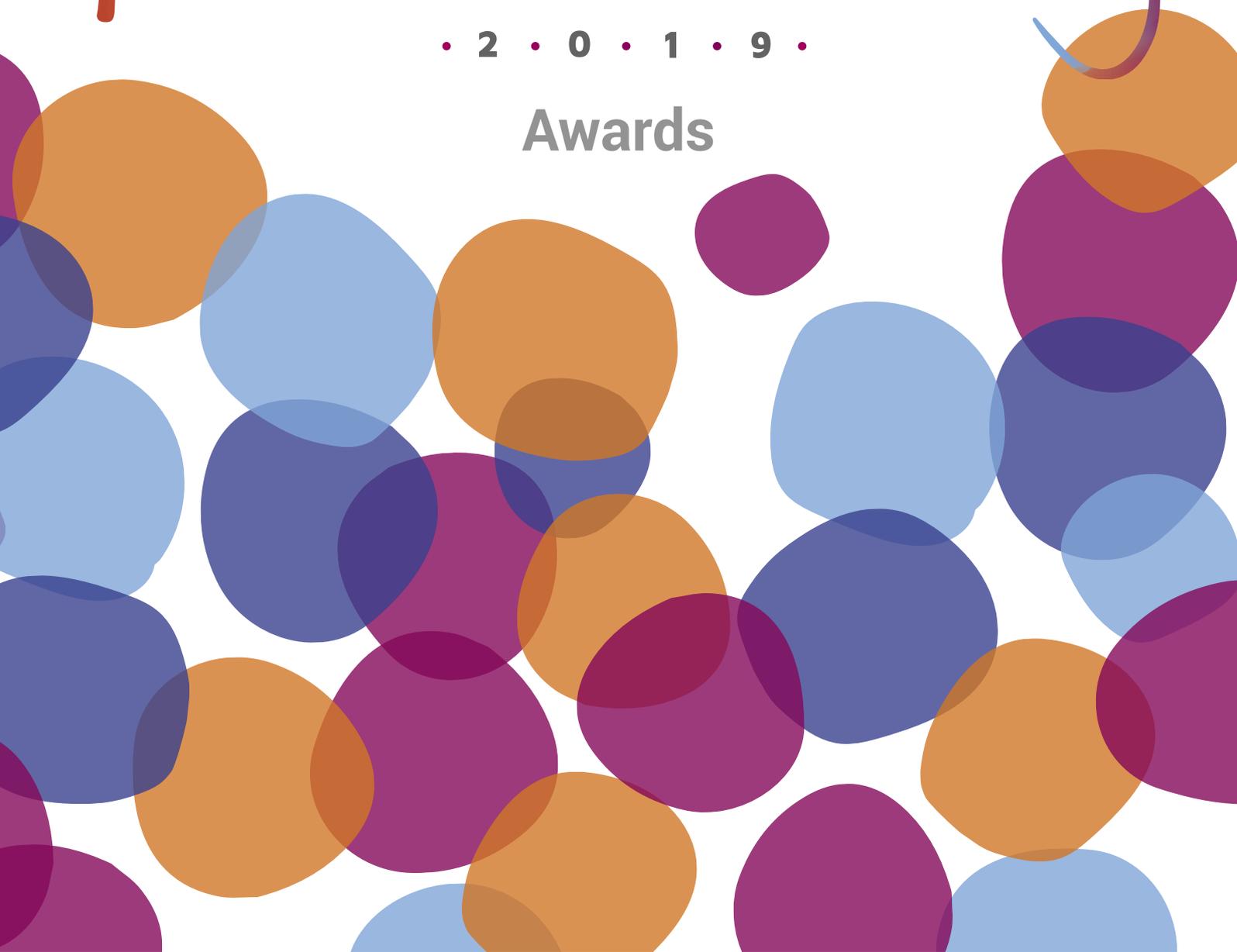


# Festival of Learning

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## Awards



Led by:

**L&W** LEARNING AND  
WORK INSTITUTE

Supported by:



Department  
for Education

Awards sponsored by:



CITYLIT





## ABOUT US



### ABOUT FESTIVAL OF LEARNING

Festival of Learning is the biggest celebration of lifelong learning in England.

For more than 25 years we have been recognising the remarkable achievements of people, including tutors, projects and employers, that have used learning to positively transform their lives and the lives of others.

Through the stories of our award winners, Festival of Learning aims to celebrate and showcase the breadth of benefits learning can bring to individuals, businesses, communities and society, and inspire more people to learn.

[www.festivaloflearning.org.uk](http://www.festivaloflearning.org.uk)

@ festival\_learn

### ABOUT LEARNING AND WORK INSTITUTE

Learning and Work Institute is an independent policy, research and development organisation dedicated to lifelong learning, full employment and inclusion.

We believe a better skilled workforce, in better paid jobs, is good for business, good for the economy, and good for society.

We want everyone to have an opportunity to realise their ambitions and potential in learning, work and throughout life.

We are proud to have led Festival of Learning since its beginnings in 1992.

[www.learningandwork.org.uk](http://www.learningandwork.org.uk)

@ LearnWorkUK





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A MESSAGE FROM...

## OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Adult learning has perhaps never been more important. Learning can help people into work, climb the career ladder, make new friends, be active in their community, and improve their health and wellbeing. It makes a difference to people's lives, to communities, and to many of the big issues our country faces.

Festival of Learning helps to celebrate the best in adult learning and inspire more adults to learn. The stories of the award winners show the range of reasons people have for learning and the range of impacts it can have. They showcase inspirational learners, tutors, employers and projects.

It is right to celebrate the achievements of our wonderful winners. The number of adults in learning has fallen over the last

decade and our research shows stark and persistent inequalities, with some groups far less likely to participate in learning.

Our award winners show how powerful learning can be and the difference that great tutors and learning providers can make. I hope their stories help to demonstrate to other adults how learning can make a difference, inspire more people into learning, and help to persuade policymakers of the need for a renewed commitment to lifelong learning.

Congratulations to all of our award winners and nominees, and good luck in continuing your learning and inspiring others.

**Stephen Evans**  
Chief Executive



**L&W** LEARNING AND  
WORK INSTITUTE





A MESSAGE FROM...

## THE DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION

The Department for Education is proud to be a longstanding supporter of Festival of Learning. I am pleased to join you in marking and celebrating the achievements of all those who have provided education, the tutors, the employers and in particular those who have often taken the brave step to go back into education.

Education does not stop after school. Festival of Learning award winners show that it is never too late to learn something new or develop their knowledge. They prove that even though taking that leap into the unknown can be daunting and requires perseverance and dedication, the rewards can be invaluable.

The diverse and inspiring stories in this booklet present to us extraordinary examples of the vital role learning can play in people's lives and the benefits it brings to families, communities and the economy.

We should also not forget the important role employers play in contributing to lifelong learning through supporting staff development, making sure their workforce has up to date skills, and providing opportunities for training and progression. This is an opportunity to celebrate their contributions to learning as well.

We want to encourage more people to learn throughout their lives and remind them that whoever you are, however old you are and wherever you live, learning can be an incredible way to change your life.

It is my great pleasure to offer this year's Festival of Learning award winners and finalists my sincere congratulations.

**Rt Hon Anne Milton MP**  
Minister of State for Skills and  
Apprenticeships



Department  
for Education





A MESSAGE FROM...

## OUR PATRON

I am pleased to congratulate everyone that was nominated for this year's Festival of Learning awards. As patron of Learning and Work Institute, it is important that we help to celebrate the incredible journeys the award winners and finalists have undertaken to achieve their goals.

At the heart of our awards are the personal experiences and stories that illustrate the diverse ways in which lifelong learning contributes to individuals, communities and society. These inspiring stories show the breadth of motivations for people to learn: to support children's development, for health and wellbeing, to contribute to the community and to get that first job or a promotion.

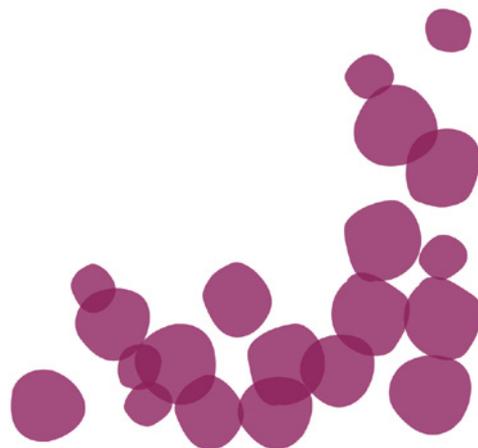
This year's Patron's Award recipient is Michael Shakil. Michael is a remarkable young man who having grown up in care has used learning to change the course of his life.

Now in his final year at university, he is working towards establishing his furniture making business and can look ahead to a future that is bright. His story of determination and passion reflects the ethos of Festival of Learning.

In addition to the awards celebrations, Festival of Learning aims to encourage adults and families to try out learning for themselves, and perhaps catch the lifelong learning bug. Have a Go Month, which is in September this year, brings together a host of organisations to showcase the many and varied opportunities there are to learn.

Lifelong learning is exactly that – lifelong. And I am convinced that it is never too late, and of course never too early, to start. Congratulations to you all.

**HRH, The Princess Royal**  
Patron, Learning and Work Institute



# Patron's Award

## MICHAEL SHAKIL

Michael grew up in care and was struggling to find his place in the world. Following a reconciliation with his birth family he discovered that his father, brother and sister were all studying at university and he was motivated to work hard to achieve the same for himself.

"I'd had a really hard time at school. I was in a children's home and was excluded from primary school twice due to bad behaviour. I was bullied in secondary school so I had to move around a lot. I fell in with a bad crowd, even though I'd always just wanted to be a furniture maker and have my own business.

Growing up, I never thought I could make it to university but I am now studying computer graphics design at Kingston University. It hasn't always been easy. I had to study my foundation year at Kingston College, and it was quite uncomfortable going back into a college setting aged 26. But I was so determined not to mess up the opportunity to progress onto my degree that I stuck at it.

Coming to university has unlocked confidence that I never knew was there. It's brought the creative out in me and made me work harder than I've ever worked before. I recently won the university's Bright Ideas competition with one of my furniture designs. I know now where I want to be and I know how to get there and that's what keeps me going. My aim is to develop my small furniture making hobby into a full business and study the MA in product and furniture design."

Chrissie Farley, lead access and support officer at Kingston University said, "Michael is a gutsy, motivated and enterprising student and he has used his determination to push through and overcome all barriers."



**"Coming to university has unlocked confidence that I never knew was there."**

Nominating organisation: Kingston University | [www.kingston.ac.uk](http://www.kingston.ac.uk) | @KingstonUni



A MESSAGE FROM...

## OUR PRESIDENT

I am delighted to congratulate all our award winners and finalists for Festival of Learning 2019. It is a pleasure to read the inspiring shortlist of nominations and to take part in the discussions with our partners to select our winners.

The President's Award was introduced to recognise extra special achievements by an employer or learning provider. This year's President's Award goes to City Lit.

City Lit is a giant of adult learning. It opened in Fetter Lane in the City of London with 180 students in 1919 and now, 100 years on, it welcomes more than 30,000 people each year to purpose built premises on Keeley

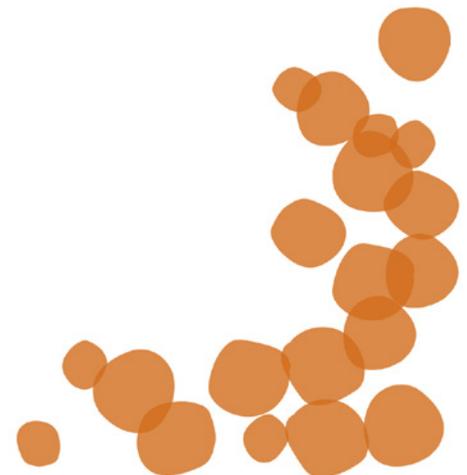
Street. I am delighted to recognise City Lit's enduring work, in its centenary year, with this award. It is at the heart of adult learning in London bringing together people of all ages, backgrounds and reasons for learning to give them new confidence, direction and hope.

I commend City Lit and all its staff for offering transformative learning opportunities and tailored support that enables people to support their families, achieve their career goals, participate in society and contribute to their community. It is a truly inspiring and remarkable institution.

**Nick Stuart CB**  
President, Learning and Work Institute



**L&W** LEARNING AND  
WORK INSTITUTE



# President’s Award

## CITY LIT

City Lit first opened its doors for enrolments in September 1919 and in its first century has supported well over a million adults in London to learn.

“One of the first courses we offered in 1919 was lipreading for soldiers whose hearing had been damaged badly by shell fire in the First World War. One hundred years later we now have more than a thousand tutors teaching five thousand courses every year from languages to visual arts, humanities to business, and music to wellbeing.

It’s important to us to make sure that the diversity of London and the diversity of Londoner’s interests are reflected in the courses we have on offer so we’re constantly changing the curriculum to make sure that it stays relevant and interesting. As well as bringing more than 30,000 learners into City Lit each year, we also reach out and work with communities around London.

Many of our learners come here to be a part of something. Their learning is cumulative and collective, and our tutors are not only experts in their fields, but they understand how adults learn. They create environments in their classes where people will learn from each other as well as the tutor. The democratisation of knowledge, sharing, learning from peers is something that is quite special and is at the core of why we remain relevant and why people keep on coming back to City Lit to learn again and again.”

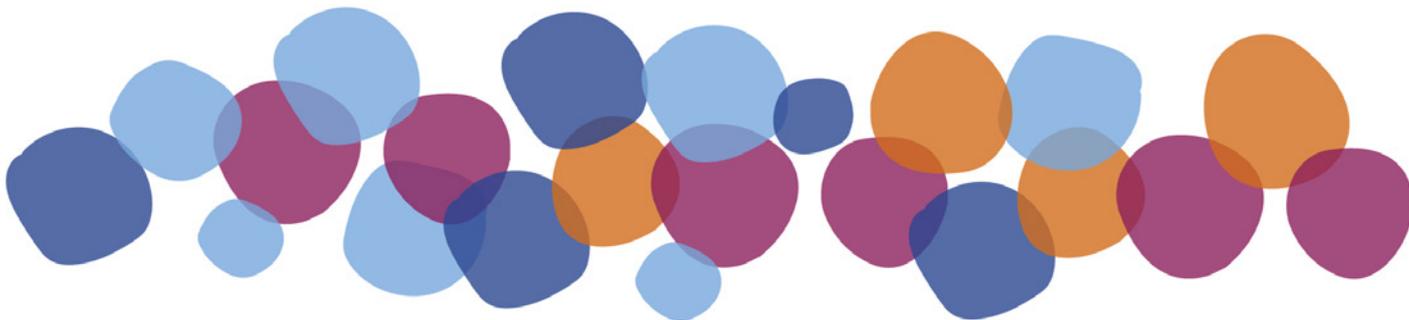
Learner, Ray Plassard, said, “I first came to City Lit in 1967. It is a unique institution. It has a friendly atmosphere, embraces every genre, the tutors are excellent and as a student here you just have a sense of feeling you are in the right place.”



**“The democratisation of knowledge, sharing, learning from peers is something that is quite special and is at the core of why we remain relevant...”**

Nominating organisation: City Lit | [www.citylit.ac.uk](http://www.citylit.ac.uk) | @citylit





A MESSAGE FROM...

## OUR PARTNER, NOCN

NOCN Group is proud to be working in partnership with Learning and Work Institute to support the 2019 Festival of Learning Awards.

The awards celebrate the achievements of people whose learning has positively impacted their work life, such as securing a promotion at work or starting their own business. The awards also recognise the employers that have given their staff the opportunities and support to learn and achieve their potential at or for work.

NOCN has been involved with Festival of Learning for a number of years as part of its ongoing commitment to L&W, and each year we are privileged to hear the remarkable stories of inspirational people and organisations. Learning not only changes careers and enhances prospects, but it is good for health and wellbeing – there is no doubt that it really can make us happier and healthier.

With the right help and the right attitude we can all achieve great things, overcoming the odds and realising our true capabilities and worth. Many of the learners shortlisted for these awards have benefitted from direct and effective support provided by compassionate organisations that firmly believe in the ability of their learners to achieve their goals. It is a partnership approach which delivers results.

There is no doubt that learning on the job or in preparation for a job, can be valuable not only to the employee but to the employer too, and the quality of nominees and winners for this year's awards prove that.

Congratulations to you all!

**Graham Hasting-Evans**  
Managing Director, NOCN



# Learning for Work Award

WINNER  
SPONSORED BY NOCN

## EMMA SEARLE

Emma wanted to pursue a career as a paramedic, but didn't have the required qualifications. Her learning journey began when she decided to retake her English, maths and science GCSEs at Petroc College in Devon.

"Two things led me to study for my chosen career. When I was 12 my father passed away unexpectedly. I felt helpless and often thought if I'd had medical training I might have been able to change the outcome. I wanted to train and to give back to the community what I could not give to my father. Now, I am a wife, a mother to two children and step-mother to three, and I've had times where we have had to call for medical assistance. Seeing the paramedics help my family has impelled me to help other families needing assistance.

I hadn't achieved the grades needed at school for a paramedicine degree, so I retook my GCSE English, maths, and science exams at Petroc, then completed an access to higher education course. I also volunteered as a community first responder. I'm now undertaking a degree in paramedic science at the West of England University Bristol which will give me the education and experience I need to be a paramedic.

The difference the learning has made in my life is massive. I get to do what I have always wanted to do which is save lives, and with every course I complete, my dream of being a paramedic is becoming a reality."

Simon Shipley, head of faculty at Petroc, said "Emma's learning has transformed her view of herself from someone who did not feel capable of academic success to someone who is capable of whatever she sets her mind on."

**"The difference the learning has made in my life is massive. I get to do what I have always wanted to do which is save lives..."**



Nominating organisation: Petroc College | [www.petroc.ac.uk](http://www.petroc.ac.uk) | @petrocofficial

# Employer Award

WINNER

SPONSORED BY NOCN

## KEOGHS

Keoghs law firm pride themselves on investing in learning to support the development of home-grown skills and talent.

“Keoghs is committed to providing staff-centred workplace learning. We provide comprehensive learning and development opportunities for staff at all levels. All our 1,700 staff have an individual training record, career discussion and development plan, regardless of role and contract. We offer more than 30 apprenticeships a year, and sponsor operational staff to take professional law qualifications.

Working with Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council Adult Education, Bolton College and Jobcentre Plus we have also supported over 100 local long-term unemployed people to access a sector-based work academy (SBWA) since 2016 with 76% of participants coming from disadvantaged areas. These are people who would never normally apply for a job in a law firm. Almost half of the learners gain a job with us, and others go on to find work elsewhere.

As a result of our investment in learning and development we have seen enhanced business performance, improved retention to 82%, reduced sickness, and raised morale.

The SBWA and other mentoring and engagement activities enable us to give back to our community. Every business is based in a community and proactively engaging with that community drives employer



**“All our staff have an individual training record, career discussion and development plan, regardless of role and contract.”**

brand, loyalty and sources great employees.”

Learner, Nathan, said “After 18 months out of work I attended an employability course with Keoghs, which turned out to be a life changing opportunity. The course boosted my confidence and improved my skills, and I was offered a job. The ongoing coaching and development support that I was provided with blew me

away. Within seven months I had secured a promotion.”

Jayne Tramontana, adult education manager at Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council said, “Keoghs have an outstanding ethos, commitment and proven track record in providing staff-centred workplace learning and extending this into the wider community.”

Nominating organisation: Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council | [www.bolton.gov.uk](http://www.bolton.gov.uk) | [@boltoncouncil](https://twitter.com/boltoncouncil)



A MESSAGE FROM...

## OUR PARTNER, SKILLS AND EDUCATION GROUP

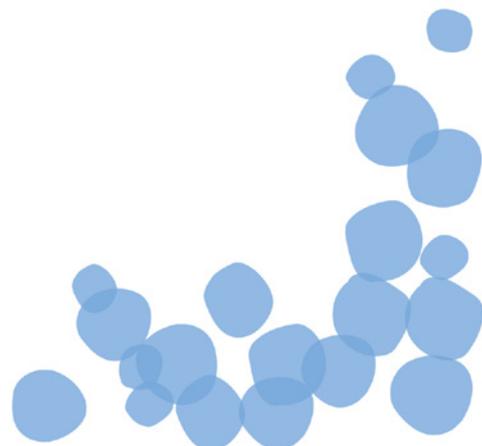
The Skills and Education Group is delighted to be sponsoring Festival of Learning 2019. We believe it's a fantastic initiative which shines a much-needed spotlight on lifelong learning.

As an organisation, we care passionately about advancing the lives of individuals through skills and education. It is therefore a pleasure to be supporting the New Directions Award at this year's Festival of Learning. Adult education transforms lives, tackles social mobility and helps communities and the economy to thrive.

The individuals shortlisted for the New Directions Award have embarked on learning journeys in order to reinvent themselves and their careers, and to accomplish things that they were previously unable to, for a whole range of reasons.

We look forward to presenting the winner with this new award and celebrating their achievements, and we congratulate all of this year's nominees.

**Paul Eeles**  
Chief Executive, Skills and Education Group



# New Directions Award

## VICKY SEAGARS

WINNER

SPONSORED BY SKILLS  
AND EDUCATION GROUP

Attending family learning courses run by Kent Adult Education with support from the family liaison officer at her children's school gave Vicky the boost she needed to pursue her dream of becoming a midwife.

"I wanted to get out of the house and start to learn again. We'd had some awful times as a family and my anxiety had become really bad. It was time to make a change and create something positive in our lives.

The courses at the school were ideal because they involved the children, fit around school times and were held somewhere I knew. A creche was also available which was vital as my youngest wasn't in school yet.

It was nice to do something educational with my children. I wanted to show them it's never too late to learn and every step counts. But also for me it was nice to build up confidence in my knowledge again after being out of education so long. I'd always wanted to be a midwife, but the anxiety stopped me. Attending the courses gave me the confidence I needed to step back into education and to apply for my degree in midwifery.

I'm now in my second year of midwifery training and my anxiety rarely affects my life anymore. The courses showed me that I can still handle the academic side of things, in fact, I can flourish. My children say how proud they are of me

for persevering and being brave enough to do something I've always wanted to do. They've become more enthusiastic about their own learning and my sister and my husband now attend courses through the school too."

Caroline Grover, curriculum leader at Kent Adult Education said, "Vicky has grabbed this opportunity and soared to new heights! Congratulations to a truly inspirational mum!"

Sue Babin, family liaison officer, Canterbury Road Primary School said, "Vicky is an educational athlete; I admire her resilience and perseverance in overcoming obstacles and challenges to continue her studies."



**"It was nice to do something educational with my children. I wanted to show them it's never too late to learn and every step counts."**

Nominating organisation: Kent Adult Education | [www.kentadulthoodeducation.co.uk](http://www.kentadulthoodeducation.co.uk) | @KentAdultEd



A MESSAGE FROM...

## OUR PARTNER, EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOUNDATION

As the national workforce development body for the further education and training sector, we are particularly pleased that Festival of Learning not only celebrates and champions those adult learners who have transformed their lives through education, it also recognises those tutors who have helped them every step of the way.

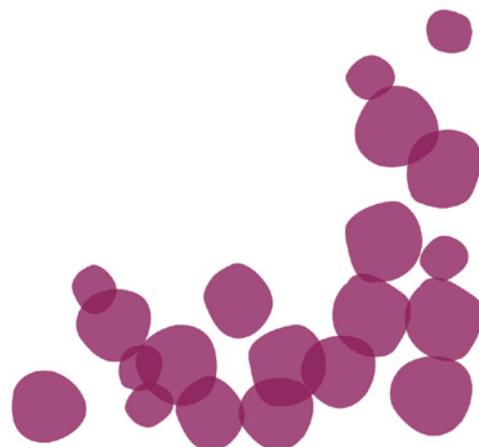
An education system is only as good as its teachers, trainers and tutors, and as a sector we need to showcase and promote the very best – to set a standard for others

to aspire to and be able to reach. Those who have been shortlisted for this award all deliver excellence in teaching adults and recognising their achievements is essential. We are looking forward to presenting the Tutor Award, marking the great achievements of every winner and nominee, and continuing our support for Festival of Learning which plays a crucial role in the world of skills.

**David Russell**  
CEO, Education and Training Foundation



**EDUCATION & TRAINING  
FOUNDATION**



## Tutor Award

# FIONA PICKETT

Fiona was a trained secondary teacher but losing her hearing meant she couldn't return to a standard classroom. When she started attending lipreading classes at City Lit it rekindled her interest and enthusiasm for teaching.

"When I tried lipreading classes at City Lit I learnt a huge amount, not just lipreading theory but also how to manage my hearing loss. I realised I was observing the tutor and the techniques for teaching the different lipreading exercises.

I now teach advanced lipreading classes at City Lit. All of my students have an acquired hearing loss, use speech to communicate and use hearing aids or cochlear implants.

My teaching is influenced by my own hearing loss and students know straight away that I get it. They're supportive of each other and me since, like most of them, my hearing has deteriorated over time. It's rewarding to see students blossom from their first nervous attendance to becoming confident and assertive, realising that they're deaf, not daft.

I also teach trainee lipreading tutors on a year-long course, and several times a year I teach deaf awareness to staff from all departments at Transport for London and the British Museum. As part of my continuing professional development I attend Association of Teachers of Lipreading to Adults events and manage a



**"It's rewarding to see students blossom from their first nervous attendance to becoming confident and assertive, realising that they're deaf, not daft."**

lesson share programme. I'm also learning British Sign Language. This has enabled me to expand the lipreading teacher training course to be more inclusive, enrolling students who were born deaf and revising material and ways of teaching to accommodate them."

Lorraine Braggins, assistant head of programme for lipreading and acquired hearing loss at City Lit said, "Fiona's teaching is outstanding and the impact on her learners is exceptional. Her classes provide a lifeline to many who would otherwise struggle to cope."

Nominating organisation: City Lit | [www.citylit.ac.uk](http://www.citylit.ac.uk) | @citylit



A MESSAGE FROM...

## OUR PARTNER, THE WEA

The WEA is proud to support Festival of Learning and sponsor the Social Impact Award. The awards are a fantastic example of how adult learning can transform lives.

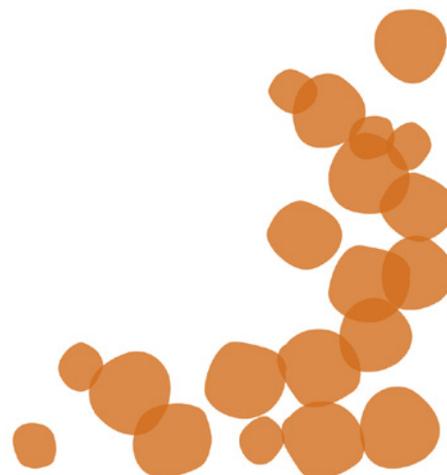
The need for adult learning is more important now than it ever has been since the WEA began its work in 1903. The challenges we face today provide opportunities to reflect on the needs and possibilities of adult education today and into the future. The opportunities it provides are frequently nothing

less than transformative, not only on the employability and skills development of students, but on their health, wellbeing and wider benefits to their families and their community.

We must not forget that adult education is a beacon of hope and should be a place where all can come to re-engage with learning.

**Ruth Spellman OBE**

CEO and General Secretary of The WEA



# Social Impact Award

WINNER

SPONSORED BY THE WEA

## PETER SHUKIE

Dr Peter Shukie teaches at the University Centre at Blackburn College with a focus on technology enhanced learning and educational practice in a digital age. His passion for accessible education led him to create Community Open Online Courses (COOCs), a non-profit, community focused organisation that works with individuals and groups to engage more adults in learning and deliver new and different learning opportunities for people from all walks of life.

"I teach on an education studies BA programme and work with courses in coaching and mentoring. My classes include the ways we use technology and research to develop our awareness of the world around us, and practise skills that help us make a difference to our worlds. My students are co-explorers and co-researchers. We work together to explore what education means, and by including our communities we make that purposeful and powerful.

My creation of COOCs as a free platform has put us in contact with many people, networks and thinkers. There are multiple approaches to how people use COOCs, for example 'A Parent's Reading Guide' enables parents to access teaching materials and approaches from the school to aid their child's development. 'Smart Phone Thinking' was created by a student who wanted to make accessible training for older people buying smart phones.

I've worked with 50 community project creators this last twelve months. Each project involved community members, parents, teachers and families. We are all agents of change and my role is to allow each of us that realisation, we can all make a difference. Teaching is my way of being part of something that is larger than myself."

Former student, Sandie Delafield said, "Peter encourages learners to find a purpose through their studies which can make a positive difference to both the learner and the world around them, far beyond the borders of a classroom."

**"We are all agents of change and my role is to allow each of us that realisation, we can all make a difference."**



Nominating organisation: Blackburn College | [www.blackburn.ac.uk](http://www.blackburn.ac.uk) | @bbcollege



A MESSAGE FROM...

## OUR PARTNER, CITY LIT

In a time of increasing uncertainty, we believe there has never been a more important place in society for lifelong learning, retraining and upskilling. Adult education opens up opportunities for individuals and communities often under-served by education provision elsewhere.

That's why we are particularly pleased that Festival of Learning celebrates those individuals that have returned to learning as an adult, and through this learning have transformed their own lives. Those who have been shortlisted for this award all share the same common goal: a desire for self-improvement and self-actualisation. We are looking forward to presenting the award for Return to Learning, marking the great achievements of every winner and nominee.

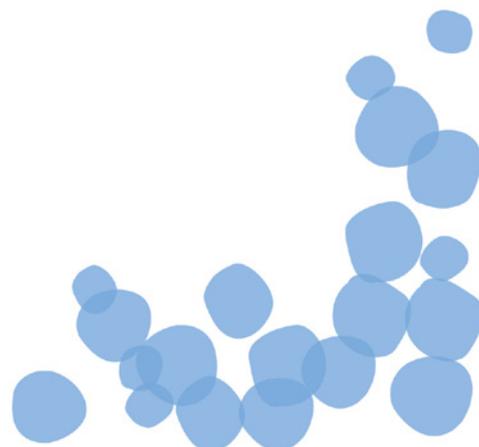
This year we enter our second century at City Lit. Since we opened in 1919, we have welcomed tens of thousands of Londoners every year, with probably well over a million people having benefitted from our unique offering over the last century.

We are also proud to continue supporting campaigns like Festival of Learning which play an invaluable role in ensuring that lifelong learning is recognised for the vital contribution it makes to developing people's skills, confidence and self-esteem, and help underscore the economic importance adult education initiatives have in helping transform people's lives on a professional and personal level.

**Mark Malcomson CBE**  
Principal and CEO, City Lit



# CITYLIT



# Return to Learning Award

WINNER

SPONSORED BY CITY LIT

## STUART FERRISS

At school Stuart was told to sit at the back of the classroom because he couldn't read or write. Aged 50, he began attending the dyslexia study skills class run by Oldham Lifelong Learning Service. Stuart's return to learning has opened up new and better job opportunities, and had a profound impact on his life.

"All my life, I hadn't been able to write. I became a skilled joiner (managing without writing skills) and then a school caretaker. I was doing the work of a site manager but needed literacy skills to apply for the site manager job.

I joined a dyslexia study skills class where I learnt in an interactive way. I looked forward to going every week. My tutor was exceptional and I met other learners in similar situations to me. I joined a functional skills English class and was motivated to gain entry level 2 qualifications.

During this time I was made redundant from the school caretaker job that I loved and felt very low. Attending English classes kept me going - I had something to look forward to. I'm still motivated to do even better at entry level 3 and beyond and I now have a new job as a caretaker in a community centre.

I'd hoped to achieve qualifications and take on more responsibility at work and in the voluntary sector. This I have done, but I have changed my attitude to life as well. I'm more positive and rather than let life happen to me, I make things happen. I'm no longer letting life pass me by."

Janet McDowell, programme leader for maths and English at Oldham Lifelong Learning Service said, "Stuart has worked extremely hard, never giving up but facing this head on, to gain literacy skills and pass on his positive experiences to other people."



"Attending English classes kept me going - I had something to look forward to. I'm still motivated to do even better at entry level 3 and beyond and I now have a new job as a caretaker in a community centre."

Nominating organisation: Oldham Lifelong Learning Service | [www.oldham.gov.uk](http://www.oldham.gov.uk) | @OldhamCouncil



# Project Award

## NURTURING RECOVERY

Nurturing Recovery is run in partnership by Bridgwater & Taunton College, North Somerset Council and a number of other local agencies to support adults with a range of addictions and mental health issues through tailored horticulture programmes.

“Many of our learners are unemployed, experiencing mental ill health or recovering from substance misuse. Our aim is to offer them ways to move towards more satisfying lifestyles that could include employment, volunteering or leisure activities. Each learner joins a level 1 practical horticulture course specially adapted to their learning needs. The course offers them job-related skills, life skills, work experience and the chance to progress onto other learning.

We have committed to providing a relaxed approach: start and end dates are flexible, and learners can dip in and out of the sessions to suit their needs. We deliver micro learning sessions and small team-based tasks which are complemented with yoga and other relaxation techniques. The focus is on the learning and the learners - there is no homework nor any exams.

We see our learners re-establish connections with other people and with the world around them; they become more active and fitter, and gain confidence and a new focus in life due to their achievements.

We've supported more than 100 people in the past five years and



**“We’ve supported more than 100 people in the past five years and now we’re exploring ways to roll it out to other colleges as well as adapting it to benefit young people in schools.”**

now we’re exploring ways to roll it out to other colleges as well as adapting it to benefit young people in schools.”

Learner Colin said, “Gardening became something to wake up for in the morning. It’s my addiction that brought me here but I’m now a year clean and head gardener

for a local church. I’ve married my recovery with life, and life to me today is about plants and doing things differently. I feel I’m a productive member of society. I’m a changed person - and I never thought I’d ever say that.”

Nominating organisation: Bridgwater & Taunton College | [www.bridgwater.ac.uk](http://www.bridgwater.ac.uk) | @BTC\_Coll

## MARIE SMITH

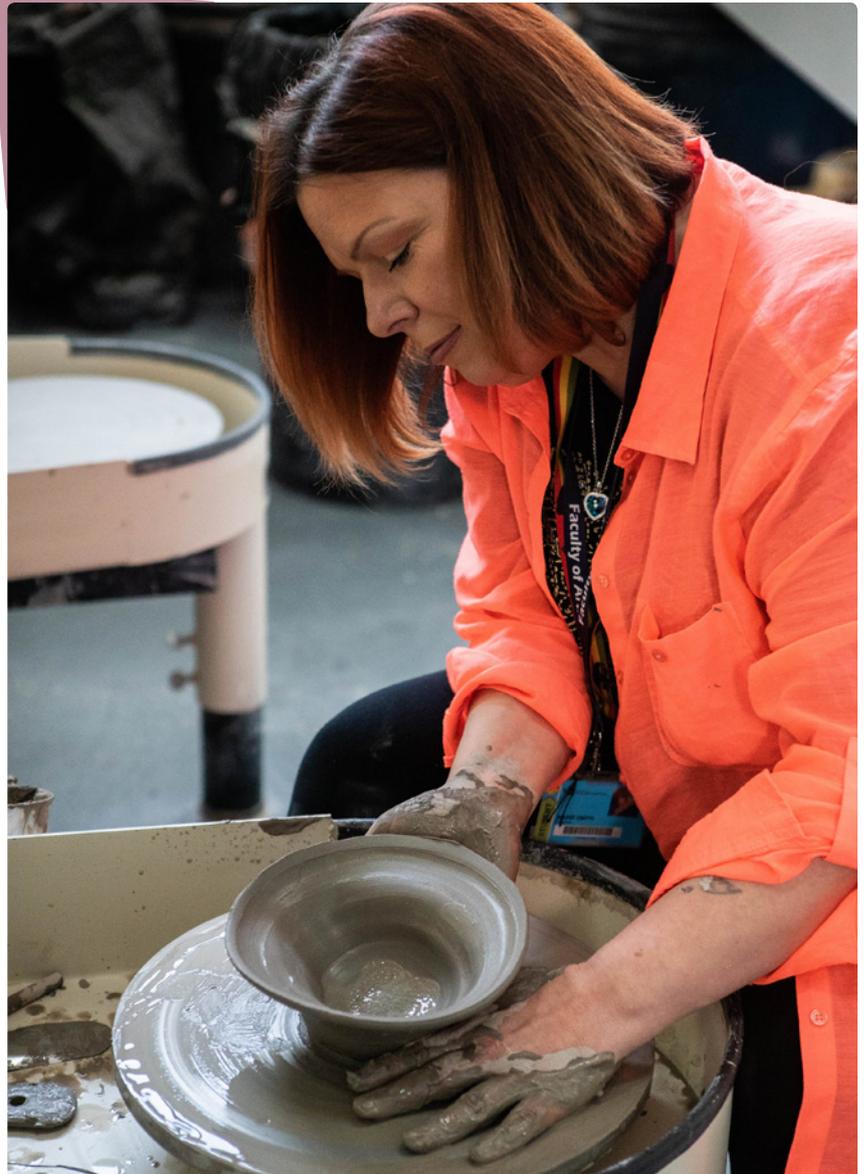
Marie's learning journey began when she was referred to Adult Education Wolverhampton's Like Minds pottery course by her psychologist to help her to overcome severe depression.

"As a child I was sexually abused which had an impact on my life at school. I played truant and left school without qualifications. I didn't want to be around people and I couldn't leave the house. There were times where my depression stopped me from doing many daily activities - I wouldn't wash, comb my hair or brush my teeth for weeks on end.

Once I started the Like Minds course I realised I didn't want to live in my bedroom. I wanted to feel better and overcome the burden of my past. Starting to learn something that I love gave me a reason to get up in the morning and a reason to live.

Learning has transformed every part of my life. I am now studying for a degree in glass and ceramics at Wolverhampton University. I no longer need to take anti-depressants and have learnt many coping strategies in their place. My self-esteem has grown, and learning with others has given me a chance to build close friendships. I am now able to work, I have come off benefits and I can pay my own way through life. My future is bright. I know what I want in life and I know where my journey is taking me. Adult education has given me so much strength and determination. I can actually say education has saved my life."

Sian Fletcher, curriculum manager at AEW, said "Marie's learning journey has been a magnificent one, learning has truly transformed her life. She is a fantastic role model for others."



**"My self-esteem has grown, and learning with others has given me a chance to build close friendships."**

Nominating organisation: Adult Education Wolverhampton | [www.aes.wolverhampton.gov.uk](http://www.aes.wolverhampton.gov.uk) | @AEWolverhampton

# English Language Learning Award

WINNER

## SEONG NGOH CHUA

Brought up in a traditional Chinese family in Malaysia and educated in a school which did not teach English, Seong never imagined that she would have a second chance to better her education. But she found the courage to enrol on a level 1 ESOL class at Adult Education Wolverhampton (AEW) and embark on a learning journey that has transformed her life and the lives of others.

"I felt misunderstood, isolated and lost. I knew that educating myself would better my life mentally, emotionally and physically so I decided to enrol at AEW. I felt empowered! Step by step I've been given the opportunity to challenge myself and see how far I can go. I'm currently working towards level 2 English, and having passed level 2 maths I'm now on a GCSE bridging course.

Learning has given me the chance to grow as an individual and have aspirations for a brighter future. These are the happiest days of my educational life. My self-esteem is restored and I am confident. I volunteer for AEW at open days and events and as part of their Talk English project and also as a Chinese teacher in Birmingham. I joined the school PTA and I also interpret for my friends at hospital appointments.

I wanted to prove that I am capable, strong and determined and that I can accomplish whatever I set myself to do. I wanted to be a good role model to my daughters and they say that they are very proud of me. This fills me with pride."

Cate Ball, teaching, learning and assessment manager for communication studies at AEW said "Seong is an admirable and remarkable person. Her resilience

and determination have stuck with her and have helped her to achieve and encourage others to do the same."



**"These are the happiest days of my educational life. My self-esteem is restored and I am confident."**

Nominating organisation: Adult Education Wolverhampton | [www.aes.wolverhampton.gov.uk](http://www.aes.wolverhampton.gov.uk) | @AEWolverhampton

# Outstanding Individual Learner Award

WINNER

## DIANA OMOKORE

Living in care, Diana experienced a difficult start in life, and has had to overcome significant barriers on her learning journey into higher education. However she is now studying a BSc (Hons) medical science at De Montfort University with the ambition to become a doctor.

“Education was my focus and I saw it as a way out of my difficult experiences living at home. When taken into care, moving 12 different times over a short space of time was challenging and I didn’t get the support that I needed. It really got me down but also motivated me to do more and be the best that I could possibly be.

I did well in my GCSEs, achieving 10 A\*-B grades and I also learnt how to play a number of instruments including the piano, flute, guitar, alto saxophone, drums, clarinet and the violin. Learning to play different instruments and being part of the Thurrock youth orchestra was great. It made me feel like I belonged somewhere and reduced my social anxiety.

I am an NSPCC ambassador and member of their youth advisory board as I believe young people’s voices in the community should be heard. I am also a Childline volunteer which is a role I’m really proud of given my childhood experiences. I want to be a good role model for people who have had similar experiences to mine.

I’m now working towards scoring high marks in my medical science degree so I can go on to become a paediatric surgeon.”

Melissa Page, HE guidance officer at De Montfort University, said “Even though Diana hasn’t had the support of a stable family home she has made the most of all opportunities available to her and her achievements to date are remarkable.”



**“Learning to play different instruments and being part of the Thurrock youth orchestra was great. It made me feel like I belonged somewhere and reduced my social anxiety.”**

Nominating organisation: De Montfort University | [www.dmu.ac.uk](http://www.dmu.ac.uk) | [@dmuleicester](https://twitter.com/dmuleicester)



ASHLEIGH  
EMMASON



DACE  
MIKISITE



JULIE  
REDPATH

OUR  
**FINALISTS**



KARL  
ANTHONY



SYLVIA  
ROWBOTTOM



VOICEBOX CAFES

# FINALIST

## ASHLEIGH EMMASON

Having successfully completed a level 2 business administration apprenticeship, Ashleigh continued working full-time and returned to Bolton College to embark on an access to higher education course. Ashleigh has now progressed onto a degree apprenticeship with Stateside Foods.

“I was working in an administrative role and felt as though I had more to give so I visited Bolton College to see what opportunities were available. I realised that an access to higher education course was right for me, to give me options and develop my career opportunities. The course was very challenging but enjoyable and I learnt so much about business.

After this I decided to embark on a degree apprenticeship. I loved the idea of learning on the job. I felt that learning theory in university and being able to take it back to the workplace and apply it as soon as I saw fit would be more beneficial than just learning in the classroom.

I was offered a business management degree apprenticeship at Stateside Foods, the country's largest producer of chilled pizzas. Stateside Foods pay for my degree with an additional level 5 CMI in chartered management. Academic knowledge at university combined with working full time within a dynamic business has provided so many lessons I wouldn't have experienced on an ordinary university course.

I am still studying and working but this is no longer a balancing act. The support from university and work combined make my time so much more enjoyable. I am now on a management pathway and see a long-term future for myself with this company.”

Jodie Cooke, curriculum leader at Bolton College said, “Ashleigh has continued to grow and excel at Stateside Foods. She has quickly become a valued and well-respected member of the workforce and I am confident that she will continue to be amazing throughout her degree apprenticeship and beyond.”

**“I loved the idea of learning on the job. I felt that learning theory in university and being able to take it back to the workplace and apply it as soon as I saw fit would be more beneficial than just learning in the classroom.”**



Nominating organisation: Bolton College | [www.boltoncollege.ac.uk](http://www.boltoncollege.ac.uk) | @BoltonCollege

## FINALIST

### DACE MIKISITE

Dace is from Latvia and is profoundly deaf. Her first language is Latvian Sign Language but she has since become competent in British Sign Language. She is studying at the Centre for Deaf Education at City Lit to improve her English, in particular her grammar, reading and writing skills.

“I live in the UK so there was a need for me to learn English to be able to actively participate in society. I don't want to live here and not be able to communicate in English; I want to be independent. I want to be able to develop the skills I need to help with employment opportunities, to be able to read my mail and understand forms.

I attend City Lit one day a week to learn English in a deaf-only group. We are all sign language users. I have really enjoyed the social aspect of learning with other deaf people, rather than being the only deaf person in a group, not understanding things and feeling isolated. There is a fun and sociable side to learning and this is just as important as the grammar and English.

Learning as part of a community of deaf learners helps reduce isolation and helps improve confidence and wellbeing. As I progress, my confidence grows and grows. It's really hard sometimes but I keep going, and feel like I have something to aspire to in my life.”

Russell Aldersson, English tutor for deaf people at City Lit said, “Learning English while not being able to acquire it in the same way that everyone else can is like climbing a linguistic mountain. Dace has persisted and persevered, taking each step at a time, and her commitment to learning is extraordinary.”



**“It's really hard sometimes but I keep going, and feel like I have something to aspire to in my life.”**

Nominating organisation: City Lit | [www.citylit.ac.uk](http://www.citylit.ac.uk) | @citylit

# FINALIST

## JULIE REDPATH

Julie's transformational learning journey began when she was signposted by another training provider to East Riding of Yorkshire Council's Building Better Opportunities (BBO) programme. The programme helped her to build her confidence and skills, and progress to further learning and employment. Julie went on to support others in her community to learn and get into work.

"I was feeling very alone with no confidence and I didn't like myself. I had recently lost my job as a retail manager through health problems, and my marriage had broken up. I had lost the strong, independent woman that I used to be and felt I was on the scrap heap.

I took part in numerous BBO training courses including self-esteem and confidence building, CV writing, customer service, wellbeing to work and social media. The courses gave me renewed confidence and I felt ready to focus on finding work. I progressed to the ReNu programme which helped with employability skills. I met some wonderful people and learning gave me self-belief and, most importantly, a future. I found me in the end and all the hard work paid off.

I got two temporary jobs. I was a learning ambassador promoting the benefits of adult learning to community groups, and a Wheels to Work project coordinator, helping people to get to work, training and college. I really enjoyed sharing my own story to help others and gained invaluable work experience that I hope will pay off with my future aspirations of getting back into an office based, customer service role."

Dawn Redfern, project manager for employability projects at East Riding of Yorkshire Council said, "Julie immersed herself in the opportunities that BBO gave her, always putting herself forward to try and take control of her life and learn new skills. Her hard work, perseverance and dedication paid off and her future is looking bright."

**"The courses gave me renewed confidence and I felt ready to focus on finding work. I progressed to the ReNu programme which helped with employability skills."**



Nominating organisation: East Riding of Yorkshire Council | [www.eastriding.gov.uk](http://www.eastriding.gov.uk) | @East\_Riding

## FINALIST

# KARL ANTHONY

A motorcycle accident left Karl potentially unable to walk unaided for the rest of his life. His dramatic rehabilitation to full mobility led him to become a qualified personal trainer and during his work with clients he realised his own experience could help others with their recovery. He is now studying for a sports therapy degree at the University of East London.

“Following my accident I was told I would never return to an active lifestyle. This motivated me to learn about rehabilitation and strength and conditioning so that I could go further than the limitations placed on me. My goal is to create a new

system of rehabilitation that blends the principles of strength and conditioning and sports therapy to ensure that nobody else is told they won't ever be able to do the things they enjoy again.

Before starting my degree I completed New Beginnings, a 10-week preparation course for mature learners. I was suffering with PTSD and social anxiety and found being in large groups very stressful. I am now coping very well, and this has also improved my interpersonal relationships outside of university. I also worried that I was not smart enough as I have been out of education for a long time and have

dyslexia which makes producing written work difficult. By developing coping strategies to work around the dyslexia I have received good grades. This has boosted my confidence to the point where I know I will succeed and make a meaningful change to the world of sports therapy.”

Caroline McGlynn, pre-entry programmes leader at University of East London, said “Karl has started on a long journey of academic study and professional practice. With the determination shown during his recovery and at the start of his studies, I have no doubt that he will make a huge contribution to the field.”



**“By developing coping strategies to work around the dyslexia I have received good grades. This has boosted my confidence to the point where I know I will succeed and make a meaningful change to the world of sports therapy.”**

Nominating organisation: University of East London | [www.uel.ac.uk](http://www.uel.ac.uk) | @UEL\_News

## FINALIST

# SYLVIA ROWBOTTOM

Sylvia began attending poetry classes at City Lit in 1999 at the age of 71. Despite challenges of age and mobility she continues to travel by public transport each week to attend classes, and her work has been published in numerous poetry journals.

"I had to leave school at 16. The war was on so I went to clerical school and got a job but I made a pledge to myself that whenever I got the chance, no matter how long it took, I would get more education. The years passed. I worked and saved, got married and brought up children and by then I was 65. The first thing I did when I retired was set up a direct debit to the Open University.

Learning kept my mind active and occupied, and still does. I graduated with a first class degree in humanities when I was 70, and then joined the poetry in the making course. Poetry was something I had always wanted to pursue and I knew it was a road I had to follow. Studying at City Lit I felt part of me was coming to life that never had before.

By the time you get to the age of 90, it is good to have something to occupy your mind. If your mind is focused on something you care about, you are, I think, less likely to become ill. It gives my family peace of mind to know that 'mum's got something to occupy her mind' and it has also given us opportunities to connect."

Caroline Natzler, poetry tutor at City Lit said "Sylvia's distinctive spirit, determination, generosity, insightful supportiveness to other poets and unique sense of humour are remarkable. She is a great inspiration to everyone in the class."



**"By the time you get to the age of 90,  
it is good to have something to  
occupy your mind."**

Nominating organisation: City Lit | [www.citylit.ac.uk](http://www.citylit.ac.uk) | @citylit

# FINALIST

## VOICEBOX CAFES

During 2018, Good Things Foundation was funded by the Government Equalities Office to deliver activities to celebrate the 100 year anniversary of the Representation of the People Act and Qualification of Women Act. They created Voicebox Cafes as an innovative, nationwide project to engage young women through a programme of activities covering education, participation and celebration of UK democracy.

“In delivering the Voicebox Cafes we aimed to provide safe, creative and well-facilitated spaces to engage with young women, enabling them to explore democracy and their own power to support, challenge and change.

We designed the programme based on evidence from our network and previous projects using a blended community and digital approach which was integrated right across the project from the learning resources to social media campaigns. It provided invaluable tools to help the participants’ voices reach more people, and offered opportunities for spread and scale. Groups learnt about the value of connecting with local MPs, influencers and online political materials such as e-petitions.

Voicebox Cafes supported women to build their own and each other’s confidence in speaking out on issues that matter to them and discover how to use their democratic voice to the full. Reaching deep into local communities, our project focused on women who have traditionally

not engaged in democracy and civil life to enable them to join forces and amplify their voice.

In 2018, 1,283 women were involved and the percentage who understand democratic processes increased from 27% to 92%, and the percentage who are likely to participate in democratic processes increased from 28% to 85%.”

Learner Rheima said, “My knowledge and participation was pretty non-existent before. I’ve learnt to pay more attention to my environment. I’ve become more conscious of my place in the world and how I contribute to society.”

**“It provided invaluable tools to help the participants’ voices reach more people, and offered opportunities for spread and scale.”**



Nominating organisation: Good Things Foundation | [www.goodthingsfoundation.org](http://www.goodthingsfoundation.org) | @goodthingsfdn



## NATIONAL SELECTION PANEL

We would like to thank our partners who have helped to choose this year's winners.

**Nick Stuart CB**

Learning and Work Institute President

**Maggie Galliers CBE**

Learning and Work Institute Chair

**Nicholas Blaney**

Department for Education

**Graham Hasting-Evans**

NOCN

**David Russell**

Education and Training Foundation

**Mark Malcomson CBE**

City Lit

**Paul Eeles**

Skills and Education Group

**Ruth Spellman OBE**

The WEA

**Kirsti Lord**

Association of Colleges

**Mark Dawe**

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**Ian Borkett**

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**Simon Beer**

HOLEX

**Amy King**

GlamSci

**Stephen Evans**

Learning and Work Institute

**Joyce Black**

Learning and Work Institute

**Rhian Short**

Learning and Work Institute

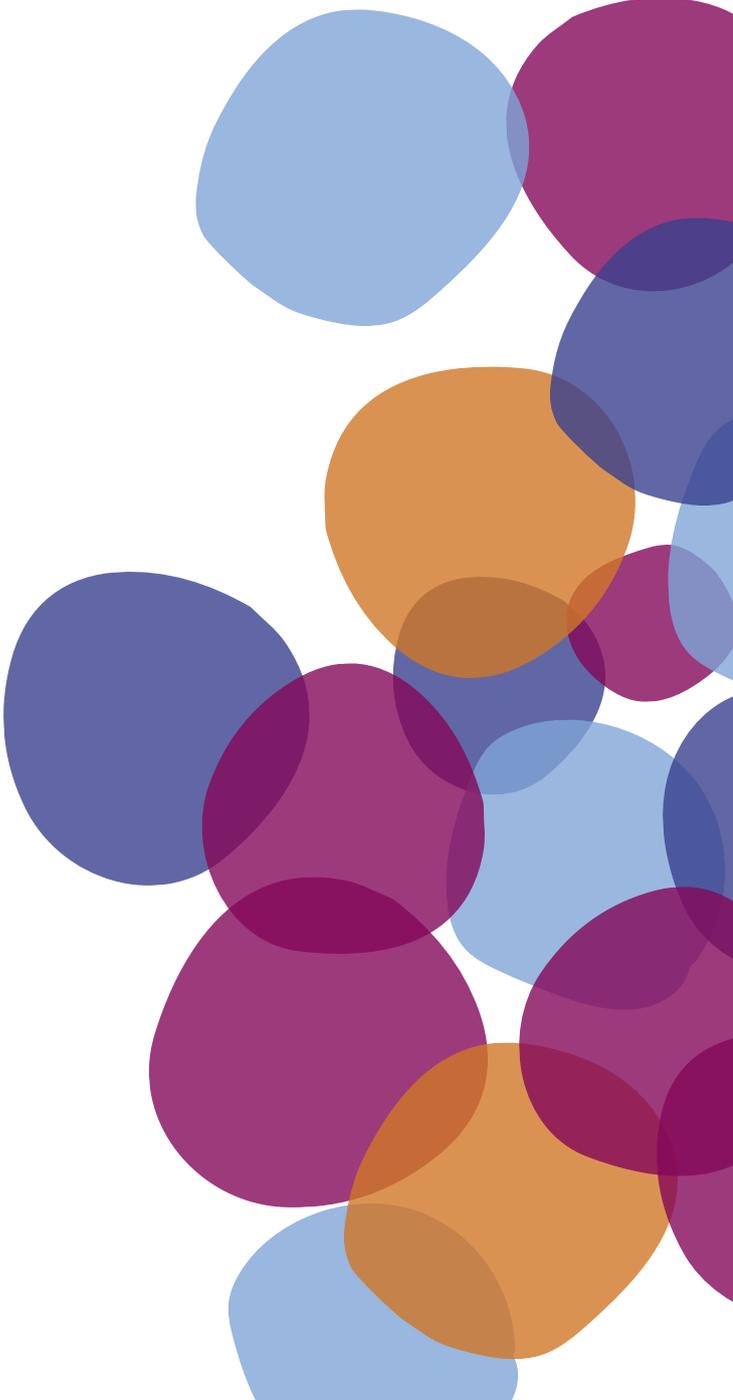
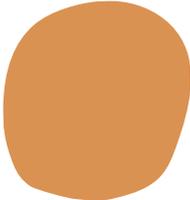


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WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK BROTHER BEAR AND NOMINATING ORGANISATIONS  
FOR SUPPLYING OUR AWARD WINNER AND FINALIST PHOTOGRAPHS.



# Festival of Learning

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