ONE IN THREE ADULTS GO BACK TO LEARNING

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A third of British adults are living a life of regret.

That’s according to new research by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Close to one in three adults (31 per cent) say they wish they had achieved better qualifications when they were younger and one in four (27 per cent) regret not making the most of the opportunities they were given at school or college.

Over a quarter, (28 per cent) admit that they didn’t work hard enough while they were at school – and now they’re living with the consequences. For example, just under half (45 per cent) of unemployed people who are actively looking for a job, regret not working hard enough in comparison to just over a quarter (29 per cent) of full time workers.

However, the good news is, over a third of adults (35 per cent) have already gone back to learning to gain more qualifications and a further six per cent are planning to do the same. And it’s not surprising, considering the benefits. Over one in four (30 per cent) of those who have completed retraining say it improved their employability and close to one in five (17 per cent) were rewarded with a pay rise.
Meanwhile, over a quarter (26 per cent) say their job – and life – is now more rewarding.

When it comes to the new skills Britons are gaining, the vocational route is a keen choice. A quarter (25 per cent) have trained or would like to train in a specific vocation whereas other options include professional jobs that require degree-level qualifications, like doctors or teachers, and roles such as managers or senior administrators.

One well-known face to have re-trained after leaving education is Michelle Dewberry, winner of The Apprentice 2006. She left school with two GCSEs but went back to learning to gain two NVQ qualifications.

Julia Dowd, Director of Young People’s Learning at the LSC, says, “Unfortunately, in today’s competitive world, it’s highly unusual for people to follow the likes of Alan Sugar and Richard Branson and achieve great success without any qualifications. Now, the best chance anyone can have is to achieve at least five good GCSEs, or a Level 2 diploma. Like Michelle Dewberry, it is never too late to return to learning and there are thousands of vocational and academic courses available across the country.

“So today, we are calling on all young people to ensure they achieve at least the minimum set of qualifications before leaving college or school, which will increase their employability.”

Phil Hope MP, Skills Minister said: “With 20 per cent of adults saying they did not realise how their choices at school and college would impact their career options, this research underlines the importance for young people still in learning to think hard about their future as the
decisions they make will effect the rest of their lives. They must not be tempted to drop out into low paid, dead end work.

“Our message is that whatever your background or talents there will be a learning option for you. It may be an apprenticeship or work based learning route at a College. The quality, status and relevance of vocational qualifications have never been higher and these days they can set young people on their way to Foundation Degrees, Higher Education and top careers. Colleges are becoming highly focussed on employer's needs so training has to be practical and high quality, combining the theory and practical skills people really need.”

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Notes to editors:
This press release applies to England only.

Research was conducted online between 15th and 18th December 2006 by YouGov Plc who interviewed a sample of 2,124 GB 18+ adults. Data have been weighted to be representative of the GB adult population. YouGov is a member of the British Polling Council.

LSC
The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. We are responsible for ensuring the availability of high-quality education and training for everyone. We have a single goal: to improve the skills of England’s young people and adults to world class standards. Our vision is that young people and adults in England have knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce. We work nationally, regionally and locally to deliver this ambition on behalf of learners and employers.
Apprenticeships

- There are currently 255,500 young people aged 16-24 undertaking an Apprenticeship. They can choose from over 180 career paths in 80 different sectors of industry and commerce
- Apprenticeships provide 16-24 year-olds with a mixture of on and off-the-job training while they are being paid. For employers, Apprenticeships offer the opportunity to improve their businesses bottom line through the tailored, relevant training of highly motivated young people
- There are two levels of Apprenticeships:
  - ‘Apprenticeships’, equivalent to GCSE level, incorporate a National Vocational Qualification to Level 2; key skills and in some cases a technical certificate
  - ‘Advanced Apprenticeships’, equivalent to Alevels, incorporate a National Vocational Qualification to Level 3, key skills and a technical certificate

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)

All 16-year-olds in England from a household with an annual income of up to £30,810 who stay on at college or school are eligible for the EMA. The scheme allows payments of £10, £20 or £30 a week in return for a commitment to study. Additional benefits of up to £500 over two years are also available for meeting certain targets.

For advice and information on how to apply for the EMA call 080 810 16219 or visit the web-site www.direct.gov.uk/ema for application packs. For people with speech and hearing difficulties who use textphone, please call 0800 056 5344.

Separate EMA and Apprenticeship schemes are operated by the administrations for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.