

Festival of Learning

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Festival of Learning is always a highlight of the year for everyone at Learning and Work Institute. The hundreds of outstanding nominations we receive show the power of learning to transform lives and communities.

Our winners this year again show the full spectrum of learning. People learn for so many different reasons, in lots of different ways, and with so many different benefits. That includes learning for work or to change career, to make new friends and connections, improve health and wellbeing, and simply for interest or fun.

The pandemic and its associated lockdowns reignited a passion for learning for many. Our research showed a spike in the number of adults taking part in learning, much of it self-directed and online.

Our challenge, as we hopefully emerge from the worst effects of the pandemic, is to harness this interest and build a culture of learning. Because adult learning is increasingly essential for life, work and community.

This year's Festival of Learning winners show this. We celebrate their achievements and I know that they will help inspire many more adults into learning.

Congratulations to all our winners and nominees!

Stephen Evans
Chief Executive, Learning and Work Institute

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Festival of Learning is a wonderful celebration of the difference that education can make to people's lives.

The stories of the winners and finalists from this year's awards are extremely motivating. Be it learning to support your children's education, learning to improve your health, or to help find a job or progress in work, the people recognised are real examples of just how lifelong learning can transform and enrich lives.

Lifelong learning has always been important, but it is more crucial today than ever before. We must all work together to ensure more adults are able to learn, and we must redouble our efforts to tear down the barriers that get in an individual's way as we seek to level up opportunity, life chances and prosperity across the country.

I want to congratulate every winner and finalist as well as all nominees for this year's Festival of Learning awards. Their achievements serve as an example to us all. I hope that their stories help inspire more adults to take the first steps in their learning journey.

Alex Burghart MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Skills

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I am delighted to congratulate all our winners and finalists for this year's Festival of Learning Awards, and to acknowledge everyone who was nominated. Reading the shortlisted nominations and taking part in the panel discussions to select the winners is always an immensely inspiring and enjoyable task, and this year was no exception.

The President's Award recognises learning provision that goes the extra mile. This year's President's Award goes to the Liverpool Philharmonic's Music and Mental Health programme – Life Rooms.

The Life Rooms are a community space, run by Liverpool Philharmonic and Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust, where people can take part in a variety of activities to increase their skills, confidence, sense of identity and mental well-being. The programme aims to support the wellbeing and recovery of Mersey Care service users and Life Rooms members by increasing access to high quality music-making and embedding alternative approaches to recovery within Mersey Care settings.

I commend all of the staff members and partners that have work tirelessly to make the project the success it is. They are transforming lives and giving hundreds of people hope and ambition for a brighter future.

Nick Stuart CB

President, Learning and Work Institute

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NOCN Group has been involved with Festival of Learning Awards for several years and we are delighted to be able to offer our support again in 2022. The awards are an opportunity to promote our shared commitment, in encouraging adults to learn and celebrate the positive impact of lifelong learning.

We are proud to be a leading education and skills charity, our focus is social and economic mobility, not profit in the UK and overseas. We offer a wide range of products and services, including regulated qualifications, EPA for apprenticeships, Job Cards and endorsed short courses.

NOCN Group are delighted to offer 'lifetime skills' solutions for work, arming learners with not just job-specific competences but also the ability to adapt to a working environment that is changing at pace. The post pandemic world is a very different place, and we now enter uncertain times with the cost of living crisis. Whilst costs continue to rise both at home and in business, we must continue to provide real solutions to learners. Learners that want to advance their knowledge and for employers supporting employees to upskill.

The Festival of Learning Awards shine a light on what can be achieved through learning, changing not only careers and enhancing prospects, but improving health and happiness too. Every year we are privileged to hear the stories of inspirational people and organisations, and with the right help and attitude, we can all achieve great things.

Graham Hasting-Evans
Chief Executive, NOCN

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The fourth industrial revolution that we are currently living in is arguably the most transformative and disruptive ever seen. The use of artificial intelligence, virtual and augmented reality, big data and robotics are impacting almost every sector, at unparalleled speed.

We are seeing the transformation of entire systems of production, management and governance. While this has the potential to bring gains for consumers and businesses, it does invariably have an impact on workers.

This is why now, more than ever before, adult learning is absolutely indispensable and fundamental to enabling people to develop their skills and advance their career.

At the Education and Training Foundation, we champion the importance of lifelong learning and the vital role tutors play in this agenda. As a result, we are delighted to continue our collaboration with Festival of Learning through our sponsorship of the Tutor Award.

Last year we had a remarkably deserving winner in José Aguiar, a teacher at Pentonville prison, who was describing by a colleague as being a “one-man learning campus”. Some high praise! We look forward to another fantastic tutor being recognised this time around.

Jenny Jarvis

CEO (interim), Education and Training Foundation

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Here at the Skills and Education Group, we are delighted to support Festival of Learning in 2022. After all the challenges of the pandemic, it has been fantastic to attend in-person events again this year, and I am looking forward to another wonderful celebration of lifelong learning.

This year marks the 110-year anniversary of the Skills and Education Group. Throughout our history, we have been committed to supporting lifelong learning and enabling individuals of all ages to succeed. The further education and skills sector makes a real impact on the lives of both young people and adults, and Festival of Learning is a great opportunity to celebrate this.

Our organisation provides a range of services to support lifelong learning, from qualifications to professional development programmes to grant funding. We recently held our annual conference, at which several speakers and learners shared their personal stories in education and how they have changed their lives through learning. I cannot wait to hear about many more inspiring stories at Festival of Learning.

As someone who started my career in hospitality and now works in further education, I firmly believe that it is never too late to change direction, and that learning should be accessible for all. It is our pleasure to sponsor the New Directions Award again this year.

Congratulations to all of the nominees, and I look forward to the announcement of the winners in July.

Paul Eeles

Chief Executive, Skills and Education Group

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In the world we live in, we passionately believe that lifelong learning has a hugely important part to play in building a fairer and more inclusive society. Adult education opens up opportunities for individuals and communities who are often forgotten.

That's why City Lit is delighted that Festival of Learning celebrates those individuals who have returned to learning later in life, and through this learning transform their own lives. We look forward to presenting the award for Return to Learning, marking the great achievements of the winner and nominees.

City Lit is famous for bringing people together to enrich lives through learning. Since we opened in 1919, well over a million people have benefitted from our unique offering. This year, City Lit continues its mission to offer courses to Londoners, as well as opening up to even more people throughout the UK through online learning.

We are proud to support Festival of Learning, which plays an invaluable role in ensuring that lifelong learning is recognised for the vital contribution it makes to developing people's skills and confidence. It also helps to underscore the economic importance of adult education in helping transform people's lives on a professional and personal level.

Mark Malcomson CBE
Principal and Chief Executive, City Lit

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