Adult Learner NEWSLETTER

Edition 2 - *Autumn 2026*

RNN GROUP

Welcome to the RNN Group E-Newsletter for adult students. This newsletter aims to ensure we communicate key information that is happening within the Group (made up of Rotherham College, North Notts College, Dearne Valley College and University Centre Rotherham) so you are up to date with all our news as an adult learner.

These newsletters will be sent out three times a year and we hope that they will provide a good spread of useful information for you so you can support your young person or indeed make the most of all that is available as an adult learner.

Autumn Term 2026

In this edition, there are bite-size pieces of information on each section with more detailed information included in links if you would like more information.

- **RNN Group is Ten Years Old This Year!**
- **Free Lunchtime Webinars**
- **Adult Information and FAQs**
- **Adult Courses Available For You!**
- **New News**
  - The Importance of English and Maths: Skills for Everyday Life and Future Opportunities
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RNN Group is Ten Years Old This Year!

RNN Group is celebrating 10 years of being a Group of Colleges.

RNN Group is made up of Rotherham College and North Notts College (the first colleges to join together), followed by Dearne Valley College and then the building of University Centre Rotherham in 2018.

Click For more information on the RNN Group

RNN GROUP

10 YEARS

FREE Lunchtime Webinars

RNN Group has a webinar series which are totally free to sign up to.

These webinars are for adults, employers, partner organisations, school careers leads, Headteachers, prospective and current learners and parents who might be interested in some or all of the topics that we will be running.

Click to find out more about what topics are coming up and book on or even watch previous webinars.

Adult Information and FAQs

We have recently updated our web pages to include information on supporting adults specifically with a list of FAQS.

Please do have a look at these below including induction information and the adult course guide which also include helping and supportive information for you - our adult learners.



Click to view our Futures for Adults course guide.



Click to view our Adults welcome pack

Rotherham College
Click for more information for adults at Rotherham College

North Notts College
Click for more information for adults at North Notts College

Dearne Valley College
Click for more information for adults at Dearne Valley College

Adult Courses available for you!

We have a number of adult courses available for you to upskill, retrain and gain that dream job and career.

Adult Skills Courses

Adult skills courses are flexible training programmes designed for individuals aged 19+ to gain qualifications, retrain o improve their employability.

RNN Group offer courses for adults on a part time and evening basis covering a variety of areas.

Click to find out more about our Adult Skills Courses



Community Courses

RNN Group offers community courses at its College locations and via distance or online learning.

We develop and roll out courses with our local partners to ensure we are responsive to the needs of our local communities.

Click to find out more about our community courses.



Commercial Training Courses

The RNN Group has created strong relationships with local employers and has listened to the needs of these local employers with regard to training courses that employers would like to see offered for their staff.

Click to find out more about our commercial training course



Distance Learning Courses

Distance learning allows you to do just that – study on a course and complete, in many cases *free online courses and *free online training, in the comfort of your own home.

Click to find out more about our Distance Learning Courses

Employment Support Courses

RNN Group offers Employment Support Courses which can benefit unemployed individuals – including you – in a multitude of different ways. These short courses will help you gain further knowledge, skills, and look attractive on your CV for future employers.

Click to find out more about our Employment Support Courses

The Importance of English and Maths: Skills for Everyday Life and Future Opportunities

English and Maths are two of the most important skills we use throughout our lives. From sending an email and managing our money to applying for a job or progressing in education, these everyday skills play a bigger role than we might sometimes realise.

Although GCSE English and Maths can feel like subjects you simply need to pass at school, their importance goes far beyond the classroom. They can help build confidence, open doors to new opportunities and give you the skills needed to succeed in both your personal life and future career.

Whether you are studying for your GCSEs, resitting GSCEs next week, returning to education or looking to improve your career prospects, developing your English and Maths skills can make a real difference.

English: More Than Just Reading and Writing

English is something we use every day, often without even thinking about it. Whether we are having a conversation, reading a message, filling in a form or writing an email, being able to communicate clearly is an essential life skill.

Good English skills help us express our thoughts, understand information and communicate with others effectively. In the workplace, this might mean writing a professional email, following instructions, speaking to customers or working as part of a team.

Employers value people who can communicate confidently and understand written information. Strong English skills can therefore help when applying for jobs, attending interviews and progressing into more senior roles.

English also plays an important part in education. Many college courses, apprenticeships and university programmes require a GCSE in English, often at grade 4 or above, although entry requirements vary. Having this qualification can give you more choice when deciding what to do next.



Samantha decided to study GCSE English as she would like to progress onto a business course. She is able to fit her studies in around her other commitments.

Click to read about Samantha

Maths: A Skill for Everyday Life

Maths is just as important, and you probably use it more often than you think.

From working out the cost of your weekly shopping to budgeting for bills, comparing prices or calculating how long a journey will take, maths helps us make informed decisions every day.

Understanding numbers can also make it easier to manage money, plan ahead and avoid unnecessary spending. These are useful skills at every stage of life, whether you are living independently, supporting a family or saving towards something important.

In the workplace, maths is essential across a wide range of industries. Construction workers use measurements, healthcare professionals work with calculations, and people working in business need to understand budgets and figures. Even roles that do not appear to involve much maths can require basic numeracy.

A GCSE in Maths can also be an important requirement for further education, *apprenticeships* and many job opportunities. Achieving this qualification can help you keep your options open and move towards your chosen career.

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Opening Doors to Careers and Opportunities

For many people, gaining GCSE English and Maths is an important step towards achieving their ambitions. Some employers require both qualifications as part of their recruitment process, while colleges and training providers may ask for them before allowing students to progress onto certain courses.

If you are considering an apprenticeship, a career change or further study, having these qualifications can make the process easier. They can also provide a foundation for developing other skills and gaining additional qualifications in the future.

However, not having a GCSE in English or maths does not mean your opportunities have disappeared. Many colleges offer opportunities for adults and young people to improve their qualifications alongside other studies or training. With the right support, it is possible to build your confidence and work towards the grades you need.

It's Never Too Late to Improve Your Skills

Returning to education can feel daunting, especially if it has been a long time since you last sat in a classroom. You might feel unsure about maths, struggle with spelling or worry about taking an exam.

The good news is that everyone learns differently, and improving your skills does not happen overnight. Taking small steps, asking questions and practising regularly can help you make progress.

For adults who do not already hold the required qualifications, there may be opportunities to study GCSE English and Maths or work towards a suitable alternative, depending on individual circumstances and course requirements.

Getting the right support can help you overcome challenges, develop confidence and recognise what you are capable of achieving.



It's never too late to learn, David decided to go back to college in his 8th decade to study GCSE Maths.
Click to read about David

Invest in Your Future

English and Maths are about much more than passing an exam. They are skills that support us throughout life, helping us communicate, manage our finances, solve problems and make the most of new opportunities.

Whether your goal is to secure a job, progress in your current role, start an apprenticeship or continue into further education, improving your English and Maths can be a valuable investment in your future.

If you are thinking about your next steps, take the time to explore the learning and qualification opportunities available to you. You may be closer to achieving your goals than you think.

Every step counts, and gaining your English and Maths qualifications could be the start of something bigger.

Good luck to all those students resitting English and Maths GCSEs next week at the *RNN Group.*

Find out more about English and Maths courses at RNN Group.

How will the Lifelong Learning Entitlement benefit adult learners?

If you're an adult considering doing a *higher education course*, you've probably asked yourself how you're going to afford it.

And you're not alone. For adult learners, the biggest barrier to further study isn't always about ability or ambition. It's often the practicality.

How will I pay for it? Can I study while working so I don't lose my income? What about childcare? And am I going to end up with a big student debt to my name?

Almost all students, no matter their age, pay their course fees with the help of student finance, meaning there is no upfront cost and anything borrowed only needs to be repaid after you graduate and are earning over £25,000 a year.

However, from January 2027, student finance in England is changing with the introduction of the *Lifelong Learning Entitlement* (LLE), so the way you fund higher-level courses could look very different.

It's set to make funding higher education more flexible for adults, especially those looking to retrain, upskill or *return to learning*. But the new system also comes with rules about what can be funded, who is eligible and how loans are repaid.

So, what will the LLE actually mean for you?

In this blog, we break down the LLE, looking at what's changing, what's staying the same, and what adult learners need to know about funding their next step in education.

What is the Lifelong Learning Entitlement?

The Lifelong Learning Entitlement is a new student finance system being brought in by the UK Government for courses or modules starting in January 2027.

It's initially for higher-level study in England and will eventually replace Student Finance England so that there is one single funding system that includes *tuition loans*, *advanced learner loans* and *maintenance loans*.

The main aim is to give people more opportunities to gain qualifications throughout their working lives, rather than making higher education feel like something you can only do once you've finished college or A-levels.

It's intended to give learners more flexibility and choice about how and when they study, so you no longer have to think about higher education as an all-or-nothing commitment.

That matters if you're an adult learner.

You might want to study full-time you're looking to retrain in a new career, or you might need something that fits around work, family life and other commitments while you build on the skills and experience you already have.



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What's actually changing – and what's staying the same?

As the name suggests, the LLE will mean that you could have lifelong access to student finance that can help fund shorter, stackable qualifications as well full bachelor's degrees.

Under the new system, eligible learners will have a personal tuition fee entitlement that can be used towards approved study. At present, this equates to four years of post-18 study, which is around £39,000.

This can be spent in chunks over your working lifetime rather than all at once, meaning you could do a short module now if you need to get a promotion or new job, and then come back years later to do another qualification.

You can draw down on your loan entitlement to study up to 180 credits per year, either for a full course or in selected modules.

However, in the initial stages, only certain courses and modules will qualify, so it's worth checking the details before making any plans.

In the future, the LLE will also incorporate what is currently known as Advanced Learner Loans, those that are used by adults to fund level 3 courses such as *Access to HE courses*. You will still have your access course loan written off if you complete a HE course, but this will likely need to be a full course rather than a module.

Although the LLE changes how funding is organised, some familiar parts of student finance will remain.

As well as the tuition fee element, some learners, depending on their individual circumstances and course, they may also be able to access a maintenance loan to help with living costs.

And most importantly, the LLE is still a loan, not a pot of free money. Anything youb orrow will need to be paid back once you are earning over £25,000 a year,

So, you don't have to commit to a full degree? - Not necessarily.

Not everyone can or wants to commit to a three- or four-year degree, and initiatives like our HN Flex means that they don't have to.

Across higher education, we're seeing a demand for shorter, bite-sized courses that enable people to upskill or retrain in stages alongside other commitments like work.

For example, you might be working in an administrative role and want to move into a more technical position. You could look at developing your digital skills before deciding whether a longer qualification is right for you.

Or you might work in construction and want to move up the career ladder into a site supervisor role. Through modular learning, you could do a course in leadership and management to build on your existing construction skills and qualifications.

If you're only looking at shorter, bite-sized modules, then of course the fees will be far less than what you'd pay for a full degree. Each module will be priced accordingly depending on how long it takes and how many credits it is worth.

It's also important to point out that *our course fees* for full higher education courses here at *University Centre Rotherham* are far less than the average of £9,250. A full-time course is around £6,900 per year, and a part-time course is less than £5,000 a year.

Many of our higher education courses, such as HNCs, HNDs and HTQs, only take one or two years to complete, so the total cost may be far more affordable for you than doing a full degree, should it meet your requirements.

Story continued on next page

Is my subject eligible for the LLE?

Although the LLE is intended to make funding more flexible, the initial offer for individual modules is targeted at specific subject areas.

The government has worked with Skills England to ensure the LLE aligns with skills priorities. That means that, in the early roll-out period, LLE funding will focus on skills shortage areas such as:

- Computing
- Engineering
- Architecture, building and planning
- Physics and astronomy
- Mathematical sciences
- Nursing and midwifery
- Allied health professions
- Chemistry
- Economics
- Health and social care

The module you take must be worth at least 30 credits or be a bundle of modules that equal at least 30 credits
(e.g., two 20-credit modules).

At University Centre Rotherham, we currently offer HN Flex modules in priority areas such as *computing, engineering, health science*, and *modern methods of construction.*

If you've found a course that interests you, check its funding eligibility with the provider before assuming you can use the LLE to pay for it. Exploring your options and asking questions early can help you understand which routes may be available to you.



Who could benefit from the LLE?

The LLE is intended to support people at different stages of their working and learning lives. That could include:

- Career changers who want to retrain or move into a different industry.
- People looking to progress who need additional skills or a qualification to take the next step at work.
- Adults returning to education after a break to work, raise a family or care for others.
- Learners balancing competing commitments who need to consider study alongside employment and home life.
- People who want to keep learning and build their skills as their role, industry or ambitions change.

The right route will depend on your circumstances and what you want to achieve.

The LLE won't remove every barrier, and funding won't be available for every course. But it couldcreate new options worth exploring.

What if you've studied before?

If you've already been to university, completed a HE qualification or used student finance in the past, that doesn't mean you're automatically excluded from the LLE.

The amount of funding you will have available to you will depend on your circumstances, including any previous government-funded higher education study.

Previous study can reduce your remaining entitlement, so it's important to check your position before applying.

Course fees are seemingly a lot higher than they were 15 years ago, so if you studied before 2012 you will potentially have more personal allowance than someone who has been to university since the cap was tripled to £9,000 a year.

Story continued on next page

Can you still get help with living costs?

As we are a local university centre, most of our learners live at home rather than in *student accommodation.* However, you will still have costs associated with study, particularly if you're trying to fit it around your job.

If your course or module requires face-to-face attendance, then you may still be able to apply for a maintenance loan. But, like before, the amount you're eligible for will depend on factors such as where you live, what you're studying, and your household income.

One thing that is changing from the old systems is that there won't be different rules for part- or full-time study.

Here at University Centre Rotherham, we can provide additional *financial support for learners* who have children or dependent adults, have a disability, or come from a low-income household.

You can apply for help with childcare costs for any children under 15, or 17 if they have SEN.

It's worth looking at your finances as a whole before enrolling. Think about the cost of the course, the time you'll need to study, any travel or equipment expenses and whether your working hours might change.

Knowing what support you could receive – and what you may need to cover yourself – can help you make a more informed decision about whether it's affordable.

Okay, so it's still a loan. How will I actually repay it?

The LLE is like any other student finance loan, and you will normally repay it under the applicable student loan repayment rules.

However, student loans work differently from a conventional bank loan. Repayments are based on your income, rather than simply requiring you to make a fixed monthly payment regardless of what you earn.

Under the current Plan 5 rules, repayments begin when your income is above £25,000 a year. You repay 9% of the amount you earn above that threshold.

For example, if you earn £30,000 a year, that's £5,000 above the current threshold. Nine percent of £5,000 is £450 a year – equivalent to £37.50 a month.

This is taken directly from your net pay like your tax and NI and pension contributions, so it's not something you need to worry about paying directly back to the student finance company every month.

If your income falls below the repayment threshold, your repayments stop until your income rises above it again.

Under current Plan 5 rules, any outstanding balance is cancelled after 40 years, subject to the rules that apply to your loan.

That doesn't mean you should borrow without thinking carefully. The total amount you will need to repay will combine both tuition loans and any maintenance loans you take out, so it's important to understand the amount you're borrowing.

Overall, it's not a case of 'Let's apply for the maximum I can get' but looking at what you actually need to fund your course and how the repayment could affect your future finances.

Story continued on next page



Will my age matter?

The age of the applicant is a deciding factor of eligibility. The LLE is intended to support people through their working lives, so it will be capped at 60 at the course start date.

This is because those in or approaching retirement are less likely to pay their student loans back in full. The priority, therefore, is on those who will have a longer working life ahead of them after finishing their course.



What should you check before applying?

Before you make a decision, take a little time to work through the details and look at the following pointers:

Course eligibility: Is the course or module approved for LLE funding?
Provider eligibility: Can the education provider offer the course with this funding?
Your previous study: Could previous student finance affect your remaining entitlement?
Tuition fees: How much will the course cost, and how much funding could you receive?
Living costs: Could you qualify for maintenance support or other help?
Your commitments: Can you realistically fit the study into your working and home life?
Repayments: Do you understand the loan terms and how repayments work?

It's much easier to make a confident decision when you have a clear picture of both the opportunities and the responsibilities.

If you've been thinking about going back into education, developing your skills or taking your career in a new direction, the LLE is worth understanding.

At University Centre Rotherham, we're here to help you explore your options and understand the routes that may be available.

Find out more about the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE)



Higher Education Options for All: Finding the Right Path for You

When people think about higher education, university degrees are often the first thing that comes to mind. However, there is much more to higher education than a traditional university route. Whether you are leaving college, *returning to education* as an adult or looking to progress in your career, there are plenty of options to help you achieve your goals.

At *University Centre Rotherham* and its campuses in *Dearne Valley* and *North Notts*, there are different pathways to consider, depending on your qualifications, interests and future ambitions. The important thing to remember is that there is no single route into higher education, and it is never too late to take the next step.



Brandon is studying the ACCA Level 4 Diploma in Accounting and Business at University Centre Rotherham, after completing Levels 2 and 3.

Click to read more about Brandon

Exploring Your Options

Higher National Certificates (HNCs) and Higher National Diplomas (HNDs)

One option for those looking to gain practical skills is a Higher National Certificate (HNC) or Higher National Diploma (HND). These qualifications focus on developing knowledge and skills that can be applied directly to the workplace. An HNC is a Level 4 qualification, while an HND is Level 5. Both can lead to employment opportunities or further study, depending on the course and entry requirements.

Foundation Degrees

For learners who want to progress towards a degree, a foundation degree can also be worth considering. Combining academic learning with practical experience, foundation degrees are ideal for people who want to develop their skills while preparing for a particular career. They can also provide a route to a top-up degree, allowing students to complete a full bachelor's degree.

Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs)

Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs) are another option for those who prefer a more hands-on approach to learning. Designed around the skills employers need, these qualifications can help students prepare for specific industries and develop the confidence to take their next steps into employment.

Higher and Degree Apprenticeships

There are also opportunities for people who want to learn while working. Higher and degree apprenticeships allow individuals to earn a salary while gaining valuable workplace experience and working towards a recognised qualification. This can be particularly appealing for those who want to avoid putting their career on hold while studying.

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What If You Don't Have the Right Qualifications Yet?

Access to Higher Education Courses
Not having the qualifications you need does not mean higher education is out of reach. Access to Higher Education courses can help adults develop the knowledge and skills required to progress to university-level study. They are particularly useful for people returning to education after a break or considering a change in career.

HN Flex

For those who want a more flexible approach, HN Flex provides opportunities to study individual units from Higher National qualifications. This can be a useful way to develop specific skills or explore a subject before committing to a full qualification, although progression and credit arrangements depend on the programme.

The variety of options available means that previous experience, age or a non-traditional educational background do not have to hold you back. What matters is finding a course that suits your circumstances and helps you move towards your goals.

Choosing the Right Pathway

With so many qualifications available, deciding which one is right for you can feel a little overwhelming. A good place to start is by thinking about what you want to achieve.

Are you hoping to start a new career, gain a promotion or develop skills in your current job? Do you prefer practical learning or a more academic approach? You should also consider how you will balance studying with work, family and other commitments.

It is worth looking at course entry requirements and progression opportunities before making a decision. Some qualifications can lead directly into employment, while others provide a stepping stone to further study. Taking the time to research your options can help you choose a route that works for you, both now and in the future.



Jane studied the BA (Hons) in Education and Professional Development at University Centre Rotherham.

Click to read more about Jane

Your Future Starts Here

Higher education is not just for school leavers, and success does not look the same for everyone. For some, it might mean achieving their first higher education qualification. For others, it could be changing careers, gaining new skills or working towards a degree they have always wanted.

Whatever your starting point, there are opportunities to help you move forward. The key is to explore what is available and find a pathway that fits your ambitions and lifestyle.

If you are thinking about your next steps, take a look at *the University Centre Rotherham guide* to understanding higher education qualifications. It is a useful starting point for understanding the different qualifications available and where they could take you.

Your journey does not have to follow a traditional path. With the right course and support, you can take the next step towards a future that works for you.

Click to Take a look at the courses offered at University Centre Rotherham.

What's Happening?

To keep up to date with all that is happening across the Group and the Colleges, click on the relevant news pages below.

RNN Group News and Events
Click to read more RNN Group News
Click to read more RNN Group Blog

Rotherham College News and Events
Click to read more Rotherham College News

North Notts College News and Events
Click to read more North Notts College News

Dearne Valley College News and Events
Click to read more Dearne Valley College News

University Centre Rotherham News and Events
Click to read more Dearne Valley College News

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Don't forget to follow our social media platforms

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Click to follow RNN Group on X

Click to follow RNN Group on Linked In

Click to follow RNN Group on YouTube

Recommend Us

Why not recommend a learner who might benefit from the RNN Group *courses and programmes* we have to offer. Contact the relevant college for you:

Rotherham College
Tel – 01709 362111
Email – info@rotherham.ac.uk
www.rotherham.ac.uk

North Notts College
Tel – 01909 504500
Email – contact@nnc.ac.uk
www.nnc.ac.uk

Dearne Valley College
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