

# Learning Champions



Steve was helped by a learning champion



Susan became a learning champion



Do you meet people who have difficulties with reading, writing or speaking English?



There are people who want your help to improve their English.



## Will you be their learning champion?



# Campaign for Learning Champions!

Could you be a Learning Champion in your Church, Fellowship, Community or Organisation?

Do you come in touch with people who are held back by difficulties with understanding, speaking, reading and writing English?

**YOU could be their Champion!**

We can provide you with training to develop the skills needed to support adults and young people who may need help

- with basic skills in order to access a variety of formal and informal learning opportunities offered by their local churches and communities
- building up their confidence and skills in reading their bible and other literature
- with orientation and integration into the community; for example asylum seekers and refugees
- accessing services/employment (e.g. assistance with forms and letters)
- supporting their children's learning

The Adult Learner Support Programme is an initiative of Birmingham Churches Together: Training, the Maryvale Institute, an international distance-learning Catholic college based in Birmingham and Matthew Boulton College of Higher and Further Education. Read on for stories of some of our Learning Champions and their Learners

**“ The Most Reverend Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Birmingham.**

I am delighted to commend the work of Learning Champions and this magazine. I am proud of the work already achieved through this initiative, and of the part played in it by our Churches and Church communities.

Many more Learning Champions are needed. So I hope this campaign is very successful. It is rewarding and much needed work! ”

**“ Rev Brian Nicholls, Regional Minister Team Leader: Heart of England Baptist Association**

Some people just don't get a chance. It's not that they aren't capable. It's just that no one is around to give them a start. The Campaign for Learning Champions gives to those of us who've already been given a start the vital encouragement to work alongside others as they unlock their own potential for learning and development. ”

**“ Dr Petroc Willey, Deputy Director: Maryvale Institute**


From the very beginning, Christ's disciples have burned with the desire to lead every person to knowledge of Him, to 'know Christ and His benefits'. This desire has led Christians, over the centuries, to focus in particular on the basics of education, so that this loving knowledge of Christ might become a governing reality in people's lives. Today, the mission of the Church can receive a new impetus in so many practical ways through learning champions who generously give of their time and energies to make parishes and Christian communities true centres of learning. ”

**“ Charles Worth, Training & Development Officer: Methodist Church**

Supporting community development and action for justice, especially among the most deprived and poor, is a priority for the Methodist Church, and I commend the initiative for Learning Champions as an effective way of putting this into practice at the local level. ”



**Zyanab** has recently become a Christian. She wants to read the bible in English so that she can join a local bible study group. One of the group members, a trained Learning Champion, met with Zyanab regularly to help her with her English. She now feels more confident in communicating in English wherever she goes and enjoys the fellowship of the group.

 Diane remembers the stigma attached to attending what was known in the '60's as a secondary modern school. The country needed operatives for its booming manufacturing industry so qualifications were considered unnecessary for vast numbers of young people.

Since becoming the Training and Development Officer for Birmingham Churches Together, Diane has promoted ways in which Christians can reach out to people with the Word of God. In particular by encouraging them to be sensitive to and provide support for their learning needs; especially those who are most marginalised in our communities. She directs the training for 'Learning Champions' that is offered by Birmingham Churches Together and co-ordinates the two projects below that offer befriending and learning support to adults in the community. This service is free of charge and is open to all. Building on the principle of lifelong learning she has recently gained a qualification as an ESOL Specialist (English for Speakers of other Languages). Her hope is that soon every church and fellowship in Birmingham will have at least one 'Learning Champion' who will be able to use these learning support skills to accompany others in their quest for fulfillment.

Rosalie became a volunteer tutor in our city centre project at the beginning when it was originally situated in St Martin in the Bull Ring training centre. She is a member of Moseley Road Methodist church and to complement her post graduate studies she decided to join the Birmingham Churches Together Training for Trainers Programme (see our new qualification: Working with Adults – City and Guilds 7302). This is an extensive course for those who wish to develop their skills and knowledge in adult education.



She used her linguistic skills as a tutor on the Adult Learner Support Programme at Maryvale as part of her placement and also supported ESOL learners in at St Martin's and latterly at the Carrs Lane Centre.

This lady of many talents is pursuing her research studies at the present time but we know she will be back!



**CARRS LANE LEARNING CENTRE** (next to Marks and Spencer in Birmingham City Centre)

Open on Mondays



**THE BAPTIST CHURCH CENTRE** (Victoria Road, Handsworth, Birmingham)

Open on Wednesdays

For those who need help with understanding, speaking, reading and writing English



Here are two of our Learning Champions on a day out. The delights of the seaside are not for them! They are attending the launch of a 'Learning for Life' (basic skills) network for those working within the Christian churches and voluntary sector in Birmingham.

Elizabeth, on the left, works full time in an Accounts office and is heavily involved in her parish of Our Lady of the Rosary, Saltley where they have recently opened a multi faith centre to serve the community.

Doris lives in Weoley Castle and is a legend in her own lifetime. She has attended numerous courses at the Maryvale Institute, including the Adult Learner Support Programme, and is currently in her second year of the BA Divinity course for which she is achieving high grades. She is passionate about providing opportunities for people to reach their full potential both within their personal lives, as well as in the workplace and in the church.

Doris helps with a literacy group at the Shenfield Centre where she works with people who have mental health issues. She has enjoyed particularly working with one lady who at the beginning did not have the confidence to put pen to paper but through building up her self – esteem and skills she now writes fluently.

At the moment she is working with youngsters in a Junior Branch of the Legion of Mary turning their handbook into a version of 'Who wants to be a Millionaire'. She tells them that they may not get a million pounds but will receive a million graces!



**Fosia** has lived with her family in Handsworth for many years. She found English very difficult to learn. She relied on her husband to answer the phone, do the shopping and deal with the family affairs. As the children grew up they were able to help her also. Recently her husband became ill and, although the children live close by with their own families, there were many things she had to deal with herself. Two of her friends attend a drop in centre for English support at the local church on the corner of her road. She heard how well they were doing and so decided to go along. Within a few weeks Fosia felt confident enough to do her own shopping and ask the doctor questions about her husband's health.



Mike gave up his job as a map maker to work for a Christian charity offering supported accommodation for vulnerable young people. He works across the centres as the Training and Development Manager developing the skills of the workforce and delivering life skills programme for the residents.

His gentle but firm Christian faith has been an inspiration to all those on the first run of the Adult Learner Support Programme. He feels that this course has helped him understand the barriers to learning that young people face and provided some techniques for helping them get on in their lives.

**Jas and Emma** are young parents of two small children. They heard that there were 'Supporting Parents' sessions at the local primary school. Through this programme they were able to develop their literacy and numeracy skills and they particularly enjoyed the support of the volunteer Learning Champion who showed them how they could help their children learn. She became a good friend of the family.

Helen, in the background, is currently a student on the Adult Learner Support course provided by Birmingham Churches Together and the Maryvale Institute. One of the requirements of the programme is that a student should have supervised practical experience in supporting adults with their literacy, numeracy or language learning. Currently Helen is working with a group of Somalian women at the Birmingham Churches Together Carrs Lane Centre in Birmingham

Here she is with Anab who has been with the city centre project for over a year now. Anab has health problems which make college courses difficult for her to attend on a regular basis. However, when she feels well enough she knows that there will always be a welcome and a cup of coffee for her on Monday mornings at the Centre.



Helen is one of three people from her Methodist church in Halesowen who are currently developing their skills as Learning Champions. They are doing this with a mission in mind! With the help of volunteers, the church is currently renovating a house to be used for the benefit of the community. The house has a cosy lounge for meetings and counselling, a resource centre for their vast library of Christian videos and books, a prayer room and of course a learning room where it is hoped to offer one to one support. Teresa from Maryvale has already helped to get things rolling by running a Parenting course and this had led one or two mothers whose first language is Arabic to ask for help in learning English.

Helen sees that the new literacy techniques she is learning will also be invaluable as she works with new Christians who want to learn more about their faith.



God is really blessing our Learning Centre at Carrs Lane by sending some highly experienced and caring tutors. Jane is seen here working with Mariam. Mariam is an Asylum Seeker from Turkey. She has four children at school who are outstripping her in English and she needs to learn fast.

Looking on is Lillian who is currently training to be a Learning Champion through the Adult Learner Support Programme. It is her first placement day and she is learning the ropes. Lillian used to be a primary school teacher but understands how terrifying new learning groups can be especially for adults. She visibly shook when asked to look at teaching resources on the Internet during a session at Maryvale. But she was brave and the other students, who had varying levels of competence in using computers, rallied round and supported each other. All came away from the session with loads of ideas for teaching resources.

Lillian is looking forward to working with Helen and John as they develop the H.A.L.O. community house in Halesowen.



**Grace's friend was going on a visit to Jamaica for three months and asked her to take the minutes at the church council meeting in her absence. She was pleased to be asked but needed help in writing up the notes. Through working with a Learning Champion at her church she can now not only produce minutes by hand but can also word process on the church computer. She now enjoys helping with the church administration and keeping in touch with her many friends by email.**





As a qualified teacher, Shelagh worked as a home tutor for schoolgirl mums. This helped her to understand and empathise with the difficulties they experienced. She also worked for Dudley College as a basic skills tutor.

Shelagh was approached some time ago by the Manager of the Haven Centre, a community house set up on the Welsh House Farm Estate by the people of St Boniface's Church, Quinton to consider qualifying as an Adult Learner Supporter with Birmingham Churches Together. She has now completed the course and has taken on the role of Learning Champion for the Estate. She is available to all those who come to the centre, whether they are members of the Teddy's Group (usually it's the parents rather than the teddy's that need help), members of the youth group, the over 50's club or those adults who just drop in for a chat.



Graeme has recently joined the tutor team at the Carrs Lane Learning Centre. Although no longer working as a teacher he enjoys putting his experience to good use by offering support to those who are on the margins of our society. Here he is working with José.

José escaped from a volatile political situation in the Congo and is trying to build a life here in the UK.. He has been with us on and off for over a year. He does attend an ESOL course at a college as well as studying for a qualification in French (his first language) but at times life can be very lonely and he needs the extra support and friendship that our Learning Centre can provide.



Shelagh stands at the door of the Haven Centre on the Welsh House Farm Estate with Steve her student.

She will soon be saying farewell to him as he heads off to help at the Riverside Church at Moseley and then on to Wales to work with young people at an Outdoor Pursuits Centre.



During his formative years Steve had great problems with his reading and writing and has found it difficult to get a job. Reading advertisements and filling in application forms was a nightmare. He found acceptance and encouragement at the Haven Centre where he worked as a volunteer assisting with the maintenance of the premises and providing furniture and clothing distribution to those in need on the Estate. Everyone who moves onto the Estate receives a Welcome Pack from the people of St Boniface's Church and so they quickly discover where they can find help and support.

It was help with his English that Steve desperately needed and Shelagh came to the rescue. Over the months they worked together Steve's confidence began to grow in speaking, reading and writing. These new skills made him feel better about himself.

Steve's compassion extends beyond the parish to helping homeless people in Kings Heath and running a football team for young people for the Riverside Church. The love of God has inspired Steve to venture to other parts of the world. Each year he goes to Brazil with Soapbox to work with the street children. Whilst in the country his team helps with building work, organises sports and drama for the children and last year they were taken on a camping expedition – it was an amazing experience for both the children and the team. The organisers remarked how well Steve had completed his application for the trip this year.



**Frank** is an altar server. He was asked to train the young servers but had difficulties in explaining the order of service to them. Since brushing up his literacy skills, with the help of the Learning Champion at his church, he has been able to work more effectively with the young people.



Sandra is another student currently on the Adult Learner Support Programme. She works as a classroom assistant in a primary school and has considerable experience of children with special learning needs. Her motivation for doing the course was to develop her understanding of how to support adults; particularly thinking of how these skills could be utilised within her church and local community.

She began her placement at Matthew Boulton College working with English for Students of Other Languages. Her knowledge of methods and techniques for use with students who have special learning needs was quickly put to good use by Haream who had difficulty with reading and writing in English. He could have so easily given up on his learning but he persevered and since Sandra started to work with him he has seen great progress. He hopes to return to northern Iraq for a visit later this year and is looking forward to telling his family about his achievements and the help he has received. Meanwhile the college were so pleased with Sandra's efforts they decided to employ her as a Student Support Worker.



**Leroy** runs a boys football team in the inner city. He would like to work with young people full time but thinks he couldn't manage the necessary training needed to become a youth worker as he was expelled from school at the age of 14 and never returned. He was encouraged to sign up for an Introduction to Youth work course with Birmingham Churches Together and received the literacy support he needed to achieve a national certificate.



Due to the political situation in Kenya Susan had to flee the country with her young son, then three and a half, in February 2002. She remembers arriving at a hostel in Birmingham late in the evening in a confused and disoriented state. The people in the hostel welcomed her and someone (she believes it was an angel) put her in touch with Sr Margaret Walsh at Brushstrokes who found her a school for her son. Susan had been a teacher in her own country and Sr Margaret got her to help some of the women linked to the project with their English. At the beginning depression overwhelmed her but she would go each day to talk with them. She is convinced that those who supported her during those dark days were doing the work of Christ. She said, "They didn't let me slip away. They fished me out of the dark place .....the depression made me see nothing but darkness....

and they guided me hand in hand." As she began to feel better she worked with a group of women at Brushstrokes and also gave classroom support in a basic skills group at Ladywood Leisure Centre.



Susan completed the BCT Adult Learner Support programme at Maryvale and then continued her studies at Newman College to become a specialist ESOL teacher. She continues to work at Brushstrokes and since Christmas has become the Co-ordinating Tutor at the Carrs Lane Centre.

Susan is campaigning for the churches to be more involved in reaching out to people in their communities who have basic skills needs.

You can train as a Learning Champion on  
**The Adult Learner Support Programme**  
City and Guilds 9295 Award

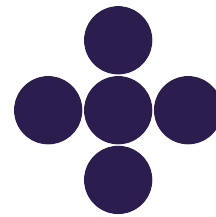
Delivered in partnership with Matthew Boulton College and the Maryvale Institute, this exciting course is for all those who are interested in widening access to learning in the church and local community

The programme will

- Raise awareness of how to recognise those who have basic skills needs
- Develop an understanding of how to sensitively support those with disability or special learning needs
- Increase understanding of the problems and difficulties many adults have in engaging with the Christian Faith and Church Life
- Address different aspects of the support role within the framework of the Christian faith
- Develop skills to support people with literacy, numeracy and language needs by building appropriate relationships and helping people grow in confidence.

This short, three unit, course is delivered in the context of the Christian Faith. It includes a taster day plus five training days, three tutorials and a placement (can be work in which the student is already involved). At the end of the first unit and the successful completion of an externally set assignment students receive a City and Guilds Award of Credit followed by a Level 2 Certificate in Adult Learner Support at the end of the course.

A progression route is available to the Level 4 Specialist Teacher Award.



**Find out more by contacting us at:**

- Birmingham Churches Together Training
  - The Place of Welcome
  - 172 Herbert Road
  - Small Heath
  - Birmingham B10 0PR
  - Telephone/Fax: Direct Line 0121 766 5599
  - Email: [training@birminghamchurches.org.uk](mailto:training@birminghamchurches.org.uk)
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