



SPECIAL 'CELEBRATING SUCCESSES' EDITION 2008

career update

Vocational qualification success is "a real achievement" says MP

When more than a hundred people met to celebrate the success of adults who had completed vocational qualifications, Nick Hurd MP declared that a certificate was "much more than a piece of paper. It represents a real achievement".

Be as good as you can be

Mr Hurd, MP for Ruislip-Northwood, was at the JGA Group's Learning Centre in Ruislip to meet successful learners and hear some of their stories about tackling training to improve their ability to do their jobs or, in some cases, increase their chances of getting work.

Mr Hurd said, "We only have one life and my philosophy is to be as good as I can be." He firmly believed that those who had achieved vocational qualifications had demonstrated that philosophy.

As well as learners, some of their employers, tutors and assessment staff were also present.

JGA's 'Celebrating Successes' Event was planned to coincide with the first National VQ (Vocational Qualifications) Day on 23rd July.

The desire to be different

"Congratulations to all the teachers and assessors," Mr Hurd said, "and most of all congratulations to the learners." In his eighteen years in business, what he had looked for in a CV was something different, something that stood out.

All the learners had demonstrated "the desire to be different" and their CVs could now show that. He was looking forward to presenting a certificate to each and every one.

Skills will help me find a good job

At the 'Celebrating Successes' Event, Kokab Ahmed of Hayes told everyone that her achievement of qualifications in numeracy and English for speakers of other languages would help her find a good job.

Having spent four years doing kitchen work, packing jobs and other agency work, Kokab wants to get office work instead. She was advised by the Jobcentre in Hayes to join JGA's **Employability Skills Programme**, where she could increase her skills for work.

Her story "will stay with me for a long time"

Clare Arnold, Area Director of the Learning and Skills Council London West, which paid for the programme, wrote later, "The talk given by Kokab Ahmed about improving her language skills and the feeling of empowerment she'd gained will stay with me for a long time!" (More on page 3.)



Kokab Ahmed being congratulated by Nick Hurd, MP

Stars of training for work

At the heart of JGA's 'Celebrating Successes' Event were presentations by learners who had achieved qualifications. The stories these 'stars' told are impressive, with some telling facts about JGA's work.

Carer's NVQs open the door to new caring options

Professional carer, Sandie Heales, who for the last eighteen years has been a live-in, 24-hour carer for a series of sick and elderly people, has passed two vocational qualifications in succession and in record time with the JGA Group.

Make some space for myself

"The NVQs in Health and Social Care at Levels 2 and 3 have given me the option to consider work that is not 24 hours a day," Sandie says. "I care deeply for my client and want the best for him, but I'm now ready to make some space for myself and to consider other options in caring work."

Sandie began working as a carer in England in 1990, but needed the qualification to meet the statutory minimum requirement for carers. She secured a place with JGA under the Government's 'Train to Gain' programme funded by the Learning and Skills Council.

Support me whole-heartedly

Having completed the NVQ at Level 2 in just two months, Sandie reflected that it had not been as daunting as she thought it would be. In fact, she went straight on to do a Level 3. She has worked closely with her JGA Assessor, Babatunde Akanni, who visited often, at times twice a week. "I was fortunate that Tunde was as keen as I was to keep up the pace and was prepared to support me so whole-heartedly."

Tunde, in turn, says, "I was excited by Sandie's motivation and found it refreshing. She was keen and I was pleased to be able to help her."

Sandie completed her Level 3 in just four months. She believes that, "The qualifications legitimise what I have always tried to do in the care I've provided through the years."



Sandie Heales

Key facts about JGA's NVQ Centre

In the twelve months to the end of July 2008, 372 people achieved an NVQ with the JGA Group in a variety of work-related subjects.

At any one time, more than 300 people are pursuing an NVQ with JGA, supported by a team of more than 50 professional assessment staff.

JGA has been accredited as an NVQ Centre by OCR, the awarding body, for ten years.

If you would like to know more about NVQ training opportunities in the workplace, please call Wei or Michael on 020 8426 2666, or e-mail trainingservices@jga-group.co.uk, or visit our website www.jga-group.co.uk.

Key facts about JGA's Employability Skills Programme

In the nine months since ESP began, 149 people have completed the course, achieving 275 qualifications in literacy, numeracy, ESOL and skills for work.

ESP runs in four venues, Hayes, Harlesden, Woolwich and JGA's Learning Centre in Eastcote. Anyone who is 18 or over and in receipt of benefits can ask their Jobcentre Plus Personal Adviser about ESP. To find out more about the programme, please call Nayna or Robert on 020 8426 2666, or e-mail esp@jga-group.co.uk, or visit our website www.jga-group.co.uk.

Thankful to the JGA Group for the opportunities

(From page 1.) In her presentation at the 'Celebrating Successes' event, Kokab Ahmed, expressed her gratitude to JGA and especially to her tutors, because she now has "more opportunities to get a job".

I discovered another world

Kokab told everyone that she had come to England from Pakistan. "I was a typical housewife and used to stay at home all the time. After coming here I discovered another world in which women have got rights to deal with their own matters."

The Employability Skills Programme (ESP), which Kokab joined in Hayes, offers 3 days a week training for up to 20 weeks. It combines training in reading, writing, maths or speaking English with employability training: readiness for work and skills for work.

To improve my life in England

Kokab explained that, in addition to "learning how to pronounce and spell words and make sentences", she had "learnt how to write a CV and different ways to find a job", like "how to use the internet to do a job search".

Having achieved her first qualifications, Kokab is now working towards an employability skills qualification. She concluded, "The JGA Group has helped me learn how to improve my life in England."

See Key facts about ESP on page 2.

Dream of joining the army can now come true

Now that Oscar Wasike has achieved his qualification in English, his dream of joining the British Army can come true.

There is a family tradition of coming from Kenya to join the army and Oscar's father, uncle and two cousins are already serving. Oscar wanted to enlist as well, but his application was not a success because he needed to improve his English.

Students learn easily and make friends

Oscar joined JGA's **Better English** course for speakers of other languages, which concentrates upon speaking and understanding English. Small, workshop-style classes allow the students to learn easily and make friends.

After a seven-week course, Oscar passed and was able to renew his application to join up. He has now moved from West London to take up his post, but he was very pleased to come to the 'Celebrating Successes' Event and tell everyone about his success.

"I am very happy," Oscar said. "My confidence has improved, and the teacher was very professional. I want to be in the army for the rest of my life."



Nick Hurd with Oscar Wasike

Key facts: English for Speakers of Other Languages

In the last year, 77 passes have been achieved in the English Speaking Board ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) Skills for Life qualification at JGA - a success rate of 89%.

Students on JGA's ESOL courses come from a vast number of countries to live and work in West London: Brazil, France, India, Iran, Japan, Mauritius, Nepal, the Philippines, Poland, Russia, Somalia, Spain, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

An opportunity for speakers of other languages to improve their English is part of a number of the programmes which the JGA Group delivers. To find out what is available at a particular time, please call Lewis or Michael on 020 8426 2666, or send an e-mail to: lewis.huxley@jga-group.co.uk, or see our website: www.jga-group.co.uk.

Age is not an obstacle to finding a new job

The advice which Katie Lumsden received from her JGA Careers Adviser began to convince her that age was an advantage not an obstacle when looking for a new job.

Katie had been made redundant from her post as Adult Education Centre Manager with Surrey County Council and was worried that her age would prevent her from finding a similar senior role. In fact, age was a crucial factor in landing her new job of Branch Office Administrator.

Boost confidence and re-assess skills and qualities

Having worked for Surrey CC for 19 years, as well as worrying about her age, Katie was unfamiliar with the current format for a CV and was concerned about attending job interviews. "I did not know what to wear, how to behave, what to say, but I was very impressed with Valeria," Katie said, referring to her Careers Adviser Valeria Coots. "She taught me how to sell myself at interviews and not be afraid of being myself."

Like hundreds of others, Katie found that the

one-to-one careers advice and guidance available from JGA practitioners like Valeria helped to boost her confidence and encouraged her to re-assess the skills and qualities she had to offer employers.

They really value experience

For Katie, working with Valeria was key to staying positive. She successfully applied for the Branch Office role with Edward Jones Ltd. "I am very happy with my new job. The company tends to go for a more mature person; they really value experience." To demonstrate that fact, Edward Jones even increased Katie's starting salary from the advertised figure to match what she had been earning.

"I have moved to a completely new field and I have a lot of learning to do. Thanks to Valeria, I am looking forward to it. She proved to me that age is not the obstacle I once thought it was."

Key facts about Careers Advice and Guidance

JGA qualified practitioners have delivered impartial **Careers Advice** sessions to 1,600 adults in Central and West London in the last twelve months; to 1,100 in Surrey and Sussex; and, in a new service, to 120 in Milton Keynes, Oxford and Bucks.

In the last twelve months, in Central and West London, Surrey and Sussex a total of 870 customers were provided with **Advice, Guidance and Coaching** through a government-funded programme.

JGA offers careers services to as many people as possible. Eligibility criteria apply. Please call Merle, Helen or Toral on 020 8426 2666, or send an e-mail to: careersservices@jga-group.co.uk, or visit our website: www.jga-group.co.uk.

One final quote from a successful learner at 'Celebrating Successes':

“ I am proud of myself for the first time. Thank you. ”
 Claire, NVQ Level 2

The JGA Group

Television House, 269 Field End Road, Eastcote, Ruislip, Middlesex HA4 9XA

tel: 020 8426 2666 fax: 020 8426 2999

email: jga@jga-group.co.uk web-site: www.jga-group.co.uk