



European network for adult literacy and numeracy  
Réseau européen pour l'alphabétisation des adultes

## 8. Peter RENNIE (Scotland – UK)

Before I took up adult learning I had a full time job as a butchery manager and I was also a karate coach and a marathon runner. I was quite happy with that life. Then all of a sudden I developed a debilitating illness called ME (Myalgic Encephalomyelitis) and for the first 15 years of this illness, because I was so weak and tired, I was mostly confined to my house.

My daughter decided, when she was going to High School, that she wanted a computer so we had to help her with this computer of course. I didn't know anything about computers so I had to make the effort to learn all about them. I discovered that I had a flair so I went to a learning centre for 2 hours a week. I would come home exhausted after learning a little but because I am such a competitive person I decided I was going to complete all the modules in this particular class. Once I'd done that I moved on. I went to another learning centre. Of course here they had lots of modules and qualifications on offer. I decided that I was going to complete all of these. So I worked my way through them and got more qualifications. Because I am good with people I was asked to become an ABE Buddy which involves helping other learners.

I've always been a person who likes to give something back so, of course, everything I learned I passed on to other learners. Then I moved on and, through adult learning, made a film. I also did a lot of public speaking. I've been Learner of the Year several times. I went to Carnegie College for a while and I was included in their prospectus and also video-taped.

However, now, although I am still helping people and volunteering I have decided to take a back seat. Because I learned a lot about computers I've now decided to learn what I wasn't good at school, which is mathematics. I've just achieved a Level 4 qualification and now I'm doing a Communication qualification. Hopefully, once I've done that I could possibly look into volunteering again. So that's my goal.

Well, I found that I had gone from being a really confident person to rock bottom. Once I had the confidence to return to learning I realised that my confidence was coming back. Because I was helping others again I was more confident and felt this fulfilled what was missing in my life, because I didn't have the energy to do things that I'd done in the past. So I changed my life and got back my self respect because I felt that I was needed again and I was able to pursue something that I like to do.

When I applied to attend the Eur-Alpha workshops this was the pinnacle of my learning experiences. Now I was putting my name forward for this and I was accepted, along with the other learners, to go to Barcelona. And of course, personally, I've always wished I could represent Scotland in some capacity – something I'd not been able to do through sport because I never had the ability.



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But all of a sudden I was being picked to represent my country in Barcelona. So, I decided I would really go for it and use all the skills I'd learned in my adult learning life to go there. Of course, when I got here I discovered that it was better than I thought it would be because I'm a people person. I got to know all these people out here, all these different languages, all these different cultures and ways of life. I discovered that these people have had the same learning problems as me. And, of course, we share these problems with each other. After the course was finished and I went home, it was like there was a big hole in my life for a while. However, I got invited back and we're doing the same again. It's been such a great experience for me and I hope that once this project is finished that it could be in some way extended.

Well, I believe that we can keep this going, especially networking with other learners, locally and world-wide. And, if we can get the politicians on our side by showing them that if this shared experience is beneficial for us, it can be beneficial for learners throughout the world and not just for a few years but forever. So that's my dream.