

How to Sign Up for Free Courses with Your Local Council

(For Someone Who Has Just Left Prison)



Why It's Worth Doing

Taking a course can really help after release — it can:

- Build your skills and confidence
- Help you get qualifications for work
- Connect you with new people in the community
- Give you structure and purpose
- Support your resettlement and independence

Most councils offer free or low-cost adult learning courses, especially if you're unemployed or on benefits.

What You'll Need

Before signing up, try to have:

- **Proof of identity** – e.g. prison release papers, driving licence, or passport
- **Proof of address** – hostel letter, probation letter, or support service letter
- **National Insurance number** (if you have one)
- **Details of benefits** (like Universal Credit) – this can help you get free courses

Don't worry if you don't have everything — staff can often help you register anyway if you explain your situation.

Find Your Local Council

If you're not sure who your local council is:

1. Go to www.gov.uk/find-local-council
2. Type in your **postcode** or **town name**
3. Click on the correct council name to go to their website

Look for Adult Learning or Community Education

On your council's website, look for words like:

- "Adult Learning"
- "Community Learning"
- "Lifelong Learning"
- "Education and Skills"
- "Training and Employment Support"

This is where you'll find information about:

- Free English, maths, and IT classes
- Courses for jobs (construction, care work, catering, etc.)
- Personal development (confidence, wellbeing, art, budgeting, etc.)
- Support for people with criminal records

Check If You Qualify for Free Courses

You can usually get free courses if you:

- Are on benefits (e.g. Universal Credit, JSA, ESA, or Income Support)
- Are unemployed or earn below a certain amount
- Don't already have GCSEs or equivalent in English or Maths
- Are rebuilding your life after prison (some councils have specific funding for this)

If you're unsure, ask the adult learning centre — they'll tell you what you qualify for.

How to Register for a Course

You can:

- Apply online through the council's website (there's usually a "Book Now" or "Enrol" button)
- Call the Adult Learning team – the number will be on the website
- Visit a local adult learning centre or library and register in person
- Ask your probation officer, resettlement worker, or Jobcentre to help you apply

When you register, they may:

- Ask about your background, interests, and goals
- Offer you a quick assessment (for English or Maths level)
- Help you choose the right course for your needs

If You Need Extra Help

If you find forms or websites confusing, you can:

- Ask your probation officer or support worker to help fill them in
- Visit your local library — librarians often help with online applications
- Call the council's customer service line and say:
- "I've just come out of prison and I'd like help signing up for free adult learning courses."

They'll connect you to someone who can help.

After You Sign Up

Once enrolled, you'll get:

- A start date and time for your course
- Details about where to go (or how to join online)
- Info about materials or equipment (most are free)

Try to attend regularly — it helps you build a good routine and makes it easier to access more advanced training later.

Extra Opportunities

Many councils link with local services that can also help you:

- Find work (through job clubs or training schemes)
- Get help with CVs or interviews
- Access wellbeing or mental health support
- Get funding for travel or childcare while studying

Ask staff at your adult learning centre what extra help is available.

Who we are

New Connections is an organisation which provides support for prisoners and ex-offenders with addiction and mental health challenges who are preparing for Parole or release after a substantial period of imprisonment.

New Connections provides support and guidance in prison through individual and group sessions and the agreement of individual recovery plans to give the ex-offender the opportunity to recover from their addiction and change the direction of their life away from drugs and crime.

If you are interested in hearing more about our work, have any questions, or know someone who could benefit from our services, please contact us via our website.



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