

📷 Cover photo: A learner at St Werburgh's City Farm, Bristol, undertaking an ASDAN Short Course

# Engaging, elevating and empowering learners with diverse needs

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Engage, elevate, empower



**Our highlights for 2024:**  
building for a new strategy

# Engaging, elevating, empowering

ASDAN is an education charity and awarding organisation **providing courses, accredited curriculum programmes and regulated qualifications** to engage, elevate and empower learners with diverse needs.

ASDAN exists to advance education and improve outcomes for all learners, with a particular focus on those facing barriers to success. Our vision is to **create inclusive educational opportunities that develop learners' personal, social, and work-related skills.**

Our mission is to **engage** learners to achieve meaningful learning outcomes which **elevate** them to go on to further education, training and work, and

**empower** them to take control of their lives. We are committed to our values; we are ethical, diverse, collaborative and innovative.

We believe every learner deserves the opportunity to discover, develop, and use their abilities through education. By doing so, they can affirm their identities, contribute to society, and challenge educational and social inequalities.

**“ ASDAN provides our learners with a framework that shows them what they can do and recognises all of their achievements. ”**



## Melissa Farnham, CEO of ASDAN, shares her perspective on our impact:

"I've seen first-hand how ASDAN courses support learners not thriving in traditional education settings. Using ASDAN's qualifications, I've helped learners transition into post-16 education, including those from special education and youth offending teams. Since then, I have been inspired by ASDAN's

forward-thinking approach and the positive impact we can make together.

At the core of ASDAN, is our commitment to providing learners with the best opportunities to access adaptive education so that they feel equipped for the best possible future. I am honoured to lead ASDAN into its next phase."

# Our top 10 highlights in numbers



## We engage

In 2024, at least **1.5 million children in England struggled to engage in learning each week**, with 97% of classroom teachers observing difficulties in student engagement.

Our courses are designed to develop skills for learning, work, and life through practical and accessible pedagogy. They help learners discover their passion and purpose as they move forward into further education, work, or training.

We **engage** learners through accessible, high-quality, and impactful programmes and qualifications, collaborating with partner educators to foster the personal, social, and work-related abilities of learners with diverse needs.

In 2024, **over 47,000 learners were registered as participating in an ASDAN course**, helping disengaged individuals rediscover their passion and purpose.

“ I have seen ASDAN turn the lives around of many students. It is an **engagement tool**, it builds on the strengths of individuals, it builds up resilience and confidence. Often it is **the first success they have in school because they focus on their areas of interest.** ”

ASDAN member, 2024 customer survey

## We elevate

In 2024, approximately **12.6% of young people aged 16 to 24 in the UK were not in education, employment or training** (NEET).

That same year, **we awarded around 7,500 qualifications and certificated over 42,000 programmes**. For many learners, these were their first formal recognitions, helping them realise their potential and elevating them towards further education, work or training.

“ These courses have been ideal for my students that need that little bit extra. They give them the opportunity to learn extra life skills which will benefit them in their future careers. It also allows the students to work at their own pace and their own level ”



# Examples of our work in practice



## Mainstream schools

**ASDAN's qualifications give young people the best of both – interest-led topics and tangible outcomes**

WN7 Outreach CIC are a centre working with young people with complex needs who are out of education or at risk of being excluded. They use the Certificate of Personal Effectiveness and Employability qualifications to enhance learners' employability skills and offer an essential alternative to mainstream GCSEs.

"Our learners are moving into adulthood with just their English and Maths GCSEs, so having CoPE and Employability as qualifications alongside these is a huge achievement and results in a really well-rounded set of qualifications," says Tansy. WN7 Outreach CIC's young people shared how the course complements their learning style:

"I don't enjoy strict classroom situations, so being able to get out and feel like I am learning practical things as well as helping others to learn has been good."



## His Majesty's Prison Service

**"ASDAN reaches people that society has ignored" – Prisoners in Northern Ireland create Macbeth adaptation'**

ESC Films are a film-making company and arts education charity based in Belfast. They believe in the power of storytelling to transform lives and have been delivering ASDAN's Short Courses since 2003.

"ASDAN reaches people that society has ignored or who didn't think were capable," says Tom. "I love ASDAN because it's needs-driven and it values and accredits lived experience. With ASDAN, we could accredit our prisoners by using video as evidence of achievement. We could use film to prove the prisoners' skills development. ASDAN is so flexible, relevant, accepting and innovative," says Tom. "Thanks to ASDAN, literacy is not a barrier to accreditation. That's what sold ASDAN courses to us, completely."



## SEND provision

**"You can do anything with Lifeskills Challenge"**

Uplands School is a specialist school for students aged 11 to 19 with complex needs, such as autistic spectrum condition (ASC), severe learning difficulties (SLD), and profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD).

"The programme is fully inclusive, which is so important for our students. It's been lovely to see a student with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) working alongside a more able student. It's been so rewarding to see those mixed abilities coming together. They can be in the same group, working on similar challenges, but with different levels of support and complexity." Claire continues: "I'd definitely recommend ASDAN. The flexibility has enabled us to make the programme work for our students. It puts learners at the centre and that's what we believe in. Everyone has embraced it, and we couldn't be happier with the results."



## Care leavers

**Moving On programme prepares care leavers for their future**

Blue Mountain Homes provides residential care primarily to looked-after children who have been excluded from, or are long-term refusers of mainstream education. Transforming lives through its bespoke approach to education, the organisation was an early adopter of the Moving On programme.

"We were looking for a way to deliver important life skills and prepare young people for their future. Moving On gives them the best possible tools to do just that. The activities frame all the practical, crucial information that young people needed in the real world and gives them the chance to experience it in a meaningful way. I would absolutely recommend that other settings deliver Moving On as part of their curriculum. It's so easy to use. The adaptability means that one piece of work can be delivered to any level and that's so important to reach young people in care. You will not regret it and will really see the difference it makes".

# We empower

In 2024, the Youth Voice Census Report highlighted that **only 36% of young people in secondary school felt they understood the skills employers are seeking**, and **a third felt supported by their school** (Youth Voice Census Report 2024).

At ASDAN, we **empower** learners by equipping them with the skills, confidence, and self-belief to take control of their future. Through our qualifications and programmes, learners develop **learning, communication, decision making, thinking, team working** and **self-awareness skills** that support their transition into further education, training, employment, and independent living.

“ I deliver ASDAN as it’s so relevant to today’s world, empowering students with essential skills for life beyond education. ASDAN lets students select their own challenges, fueling their enthusiasm and motivation. ”

ASDAN member, 2024 customer survey



“ The course has been an effective tool in getting young people to university who may not have been able to otherwise. So many learners who did CoPE Level 3 have gone on to pursue degrees. One student went for a university interview and they were keen to hear about the great work she has achieved through CoPE. She almost certainly wouldn’t have been offered her place without it. ”

Annabelle Pattinson, teacher at Old Swinford Hospital School, 2024

# The impact of our personal effectiveness offer

Research underscores the impact of our work. Our Certificate of Personal Effectiveness (CoPE) qualification has been shown to:

- **Improve academic outcomes** in Key Stage 4, particularly in GCSE English
- Support **reflective skills** and **written communication**, enhancing performance in traditional subjects
- **Boost achievement** in schools that widely adopt ASDAN courses

As CoPE, and the Award of Personal Effectiveness (AoPE) reach the end of their lifecycle (last registration date for learners 31 December 2025/30 September 2026 in Wales), we are evolving our personal effectiveness qualification suite,

taking the learning and enhancing the content to benefit thousands more learners in the years ahead.

“ ASDAN offers different levels of achievement, a wide range of learning areas, and a mix of practical and theoretical tasks, all aimed at developing independence and essential life skills. ”

ASDAN member, 2024 customer survey



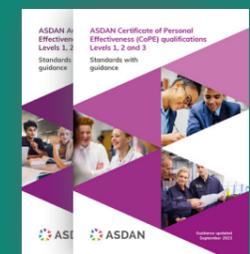
Key Steps



Short Courses



Personal Development Programmes



CoPE and AoPE qualifications: Levels 1, 2 and 3



Extended Project Qualification (EPQ): Level 3

# What is coming in 2025-26

As we look ahead to achieving the goals in our new strategy for 2025-28, our headline developments for the coming year include launching:



Our innovative **Digital learning platform**, providing flexible access to courses, qualifications and resources, supporting learners in schools, alternative provisions, prisons and community hubs. This initiative reduces member workloads and makes learning more equitable.



Our **new personal effectiveness qualification**, a modern approach to equipping learners with essential life skills, bridging the gap between academic learning and practical demands of the real-world.



A suite of new courses and challenges aligned to **digital and environmental literacies**.



A review of our longstanding **Employability qualifications** to align to our new employment-ready pathway for learners.



An enhanced **SEND curriculum programme** offer.