






# Engaging, elevating and empowering learners with diverse needs

2024-25 highlights report

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“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’s the first success they have in school because they focus on their areas of interest”

ASDAN member 2025







## A message from our CEO

As we reflect on 2025, I am inspired by how ASDAN has continued to engage, elevate and empower learners with diverse needs. This year has been one of transformation, not only within our organisation and membership but also across the wider educational landscape.

We know that learners face increasing challenges: persistent absence, rising mental health needs and systemic inequalities that restrict opportunity. Against this backdrop, our mission remains clear. Every learner deserves the chance to succeed, and ASDAN exists to make that possible.

This year, we awarded more than 8,000 qualifications in the UK and Ireland and nearly 1,000 internationally, alongside more than 60,000 programmes certificated worldwide. These numbers represent far more than statistics. They tell the story of learners gaining confidence, discovering strengths and building the skills they need for education, work and life.

But our role extends beyond programme delivery. As a charity, **we are the voice of our members, elevating their experiences to shape a fairer, more inclusive system.** In 2025, we strengthened our position in the national conversation by contributing to the government's equity and inclusion taskforce, bringing the needs of learners with diverse backgrounds to the forefront of policy. We deepened our involvement with the **Foundation for Education Development** and **Youth Employment UK**, ensuring that learners' voices influence the design of pathways into meaningful work.

On the global stage, ASDAN's impact has also been recognised. In acknowledgment of our track record over the past decade, we were invited to the **World Inclusion Congress** to share insights and amplify the voice of our members. This invitation was not just an honour; it was a clear signal that **ASDAN is shaping international dialogue on equity and inclusion.**

Being part of this congress allows us to represent learners who are too often overlooked, and to ensure their needs and strengths are reflected in global conversations about the future of education.

Our **cross-sector lab** has become a vital platform for dialogue. By bringing together leaders from education, business, policy and community, we are not only generating ideas but also shaping practical strategies that can change lives. This commitment to open conversation is at the heart of our approach: we listen, **we learn** and **we act.**

We were equally proud to launch **special interest groups**, creating purposeful spaces for our members to share expertise, innovate and influence practice together. Feedback from members reminds us that ASDAN is more than an awarding organisation: it is a **community united by a shared commitment to inclusion and equity.**

Looking ahead, the education landscape will continue to evolve, and with it, the needs of learners. Employers increasingly highlight the demand for essential skills such as **teamwork, resilience** and **problem-solving.** ASDAN is uniquely placed to meet this challenge. By embedding these skills into our courses and advocating for learner-centred approaches, we are ensuring that learners are not only prepared for education and employment but also empowered to shape their futures with confidence and purpose.

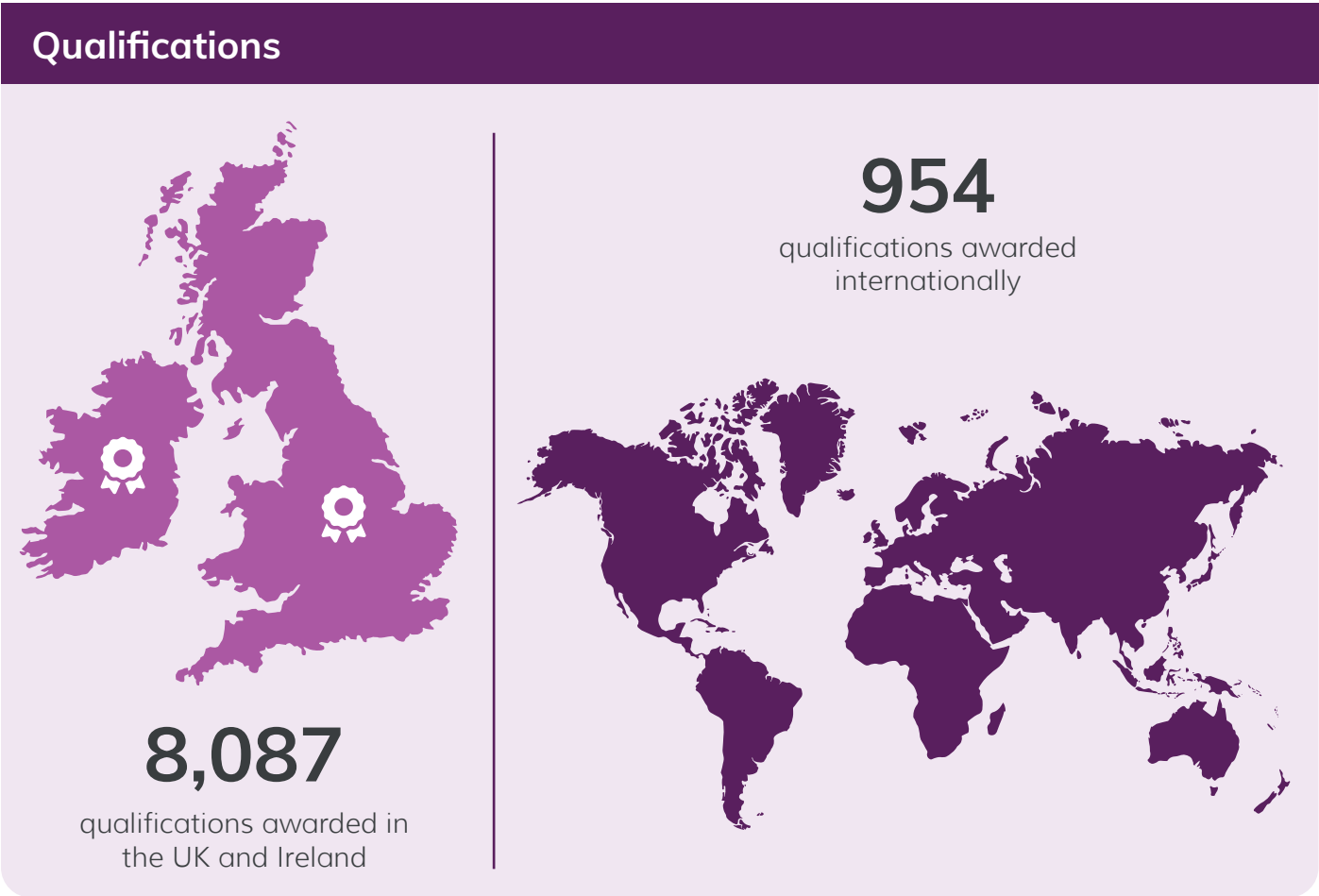
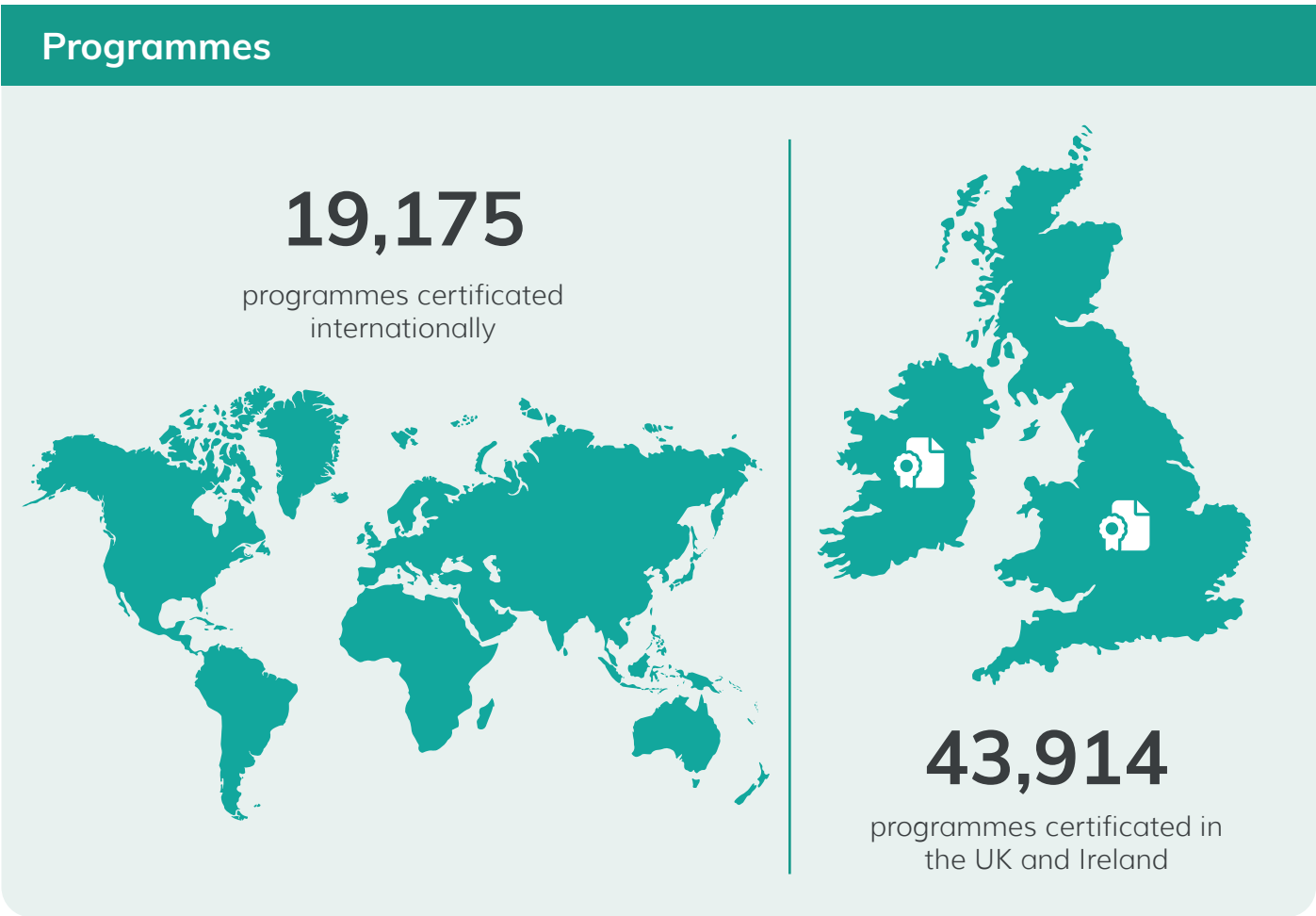
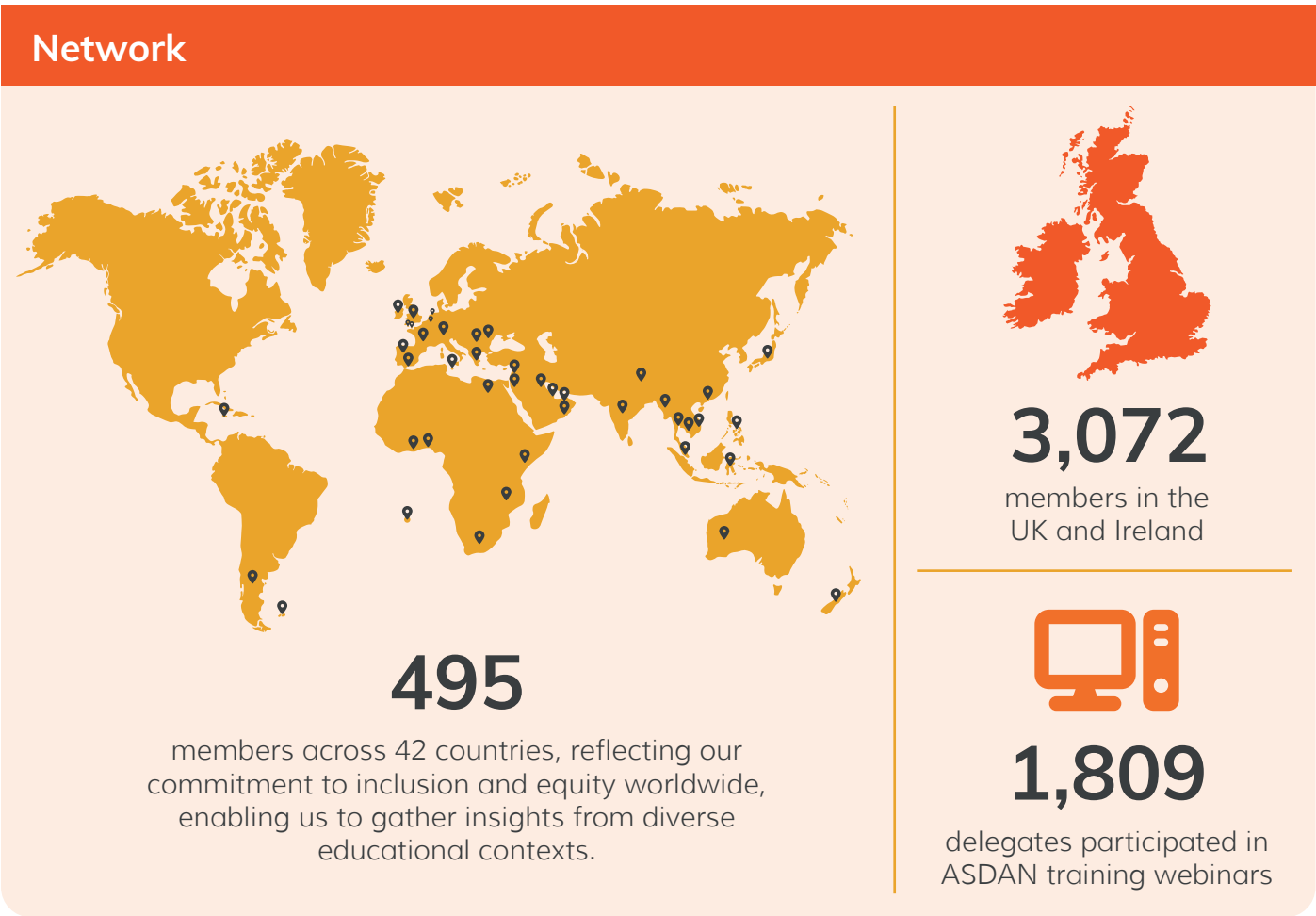
To our members, partners, staff and learners: thank you for your dedication and belief in our mission. **Together, we are building a stronger, fairer system where every learner has the opportunity to thrive.**

Melissa Farnham,  
CEO

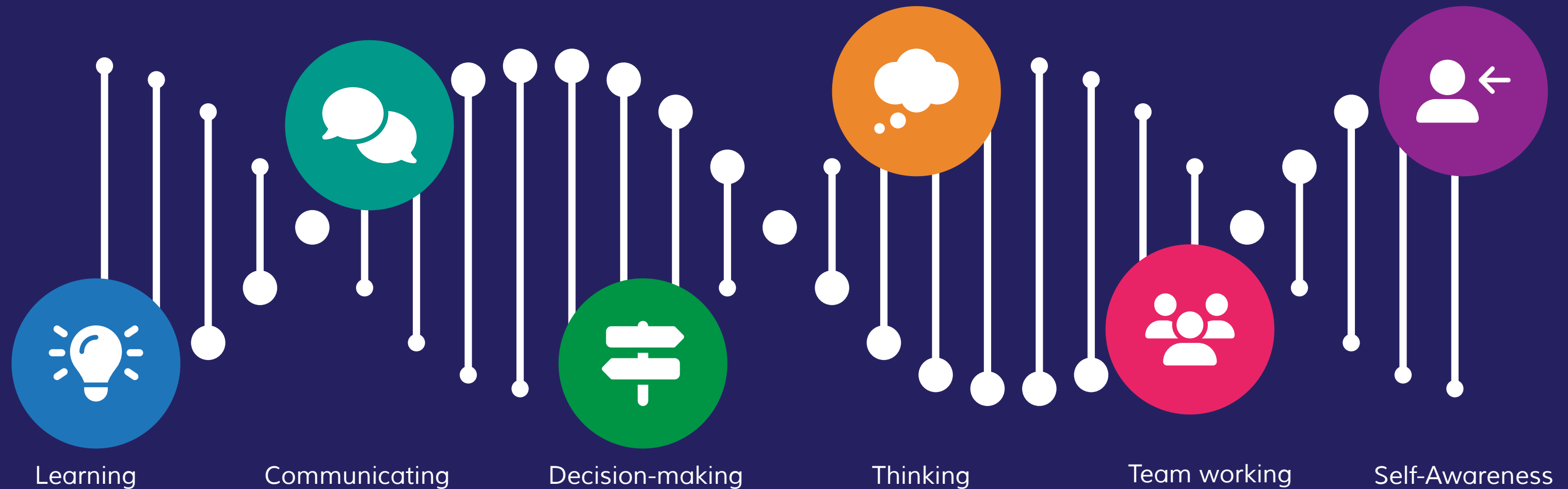




At a glance: impact in numbers







ASDAN is an education charity and awarding organisation on a mission to **engage, elevate and empower learners with diverse needs**. We provide courses, accredited curriculum programmes and UK-regulated qualifications that give learners opportunities to succeed in education, training, work and life.

**ASDAN's mission is to engage learners to achieve meaningful learning outcomes, elevate them to further education, training or work, and empower them to take control of their lives.**

We offer a wide variety of flexible, adaptable courses for learners working from pre-Entry to Level 3. Through contextualised, real-world learning approaches, our programmes help learners discover and develop their personal abilities, build confidence, and contribute meaningfully to society.

Our courses span Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 5, from the **Lifeskills Challenge** to **Personal Effectiveness Qualification (PEQ)** and **Extended Project Qualification (EPQ)**. Grounded in six core skills and the plan-do-review cycle, our programmes embed reflection, self-awareness and agency, giving learners the tools to thrive academically, socially and professionally.

### Skills are in ASDAN's DNA

- Learning:** gaining knowledge and understanding through practice and reflection
- Communicating:** shaping a message and expressing it clearly
- Decision-making:** evaluating options, considering consequences, taking informed action
- Thinking:** understanding information, considering perspectives, solving problems
- Team working:** collaborating, deep listening, and empathy to achieve shared goals
- Self-Awareness:** developing emotional literacy and recognising personal wellbeing

Across the UK and internationally, ASDAN works with schools, colleges, pupil referral units, care settings and community organisations to create an accessible, high-quality, skills-based curriculum.





# Why we exist

ASDAN exists because every learner deserves the chance to reach their potential. We put learners at the heart of everything we do, meeting them where they are and adapting our programmes to their individual needs.

Learners often face multiple challenges beyond the classroom. Poverty, in all its forms, can create significant barriers to engagement and achievement, **for example:**

- 1. **Societal poverty:** isolation and lack of social connections capital, impacting on confidence and belonging
- 2. **Cultural poverty:** limited exposure to creative and cultural experiences, networks, or role models
- 3. **Physiological poverty:** restricted access to healthy physical and/or mental health resources limiting access to employment, learning and wider social opportunities
- 4. **Economic poverty:** lack of opportunity to develop confidence to understand financial resources and assets to provide necessities such as food, clothing, and shelter
- 5. **Political poverty:** lack of awareness of and access to understanding or ability to engage with legal, political systems and governance
- 6. **Cognitive poverty:** heavy mental strain caused by the stress of survival, leading to reduced focus, lower confidence and limited ability to plan for the future
- 7. **Spiritual poverty:** lack of a sense of purpose or belonging limited understanding of diverse expressions of spiritual identities locally, nationally and internationally



Discover the difference we are making to learners' lives:  
[asdan.org.uk/impact](https://asdan.org.uk/impact)



ASDAN's flexible, skills-based programmes are designed to address these challenges. By meeting learners where they are, we provide personalised pathways that foster resilience, confidence, and independence.



Estimated 40% needing extra learning support (Children's Commissioner for England, 2025).



Lower SEND to higher education progression (Department for Education, 2025).



Mental health and educational impact among 16–25s (Resolution Foundation, 2024; Children & Young People's Mental Health Coalition, 2025).



Persistent absence rates high post-pandemic (Department for Education, 2025; Education Policy Institute, 2025).



Employers report young people lack soft skills (Institute of Student Employers, 2025; Open University, 2025).



With 35 years' experience, ASDAN provides high-quality, accessible education that responds to the barriers learners face. By putting learners at the centre, we help them overcome challenges, achieve personal success, and build the skills they need for learning, work and life.



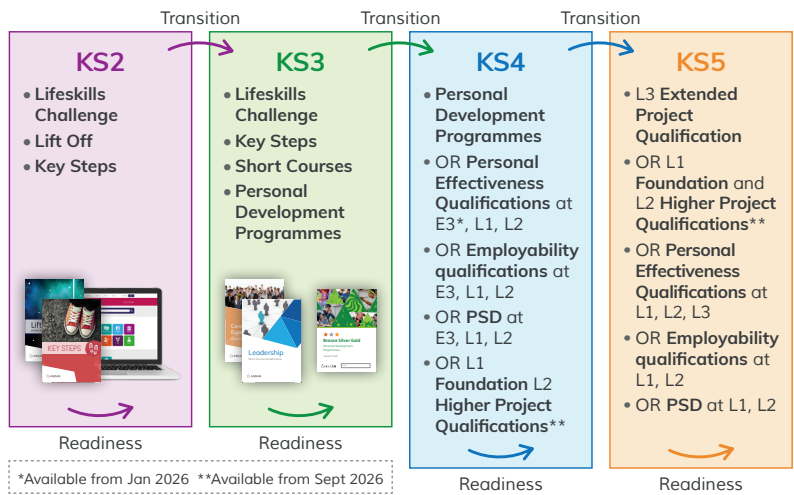
“ASDAN’s personal effectiveness qualifications fit that need perfectly. It’s not just about gaining qualifications; it’s about preparing students for what comes next, whether that’s university, an apprenticeship or employment”

- Victoria Robinson-Junni,  
Student Leadership and  
Post-16 Manager, Prince  
Henry’s Grammar School



Our **personal effectiveness qualifications** at Prince Henry’s Grammar School support sixth-form students in developing leadership, employability, and independent learning skills. By offering flexible and engaging pathways, they help learners explore career options, improve academic outcomes, and access opportunities such as apprenticeships, university courses, and meaningful employment.

Mainstream careers education Curriculum map from KS2 to KS5

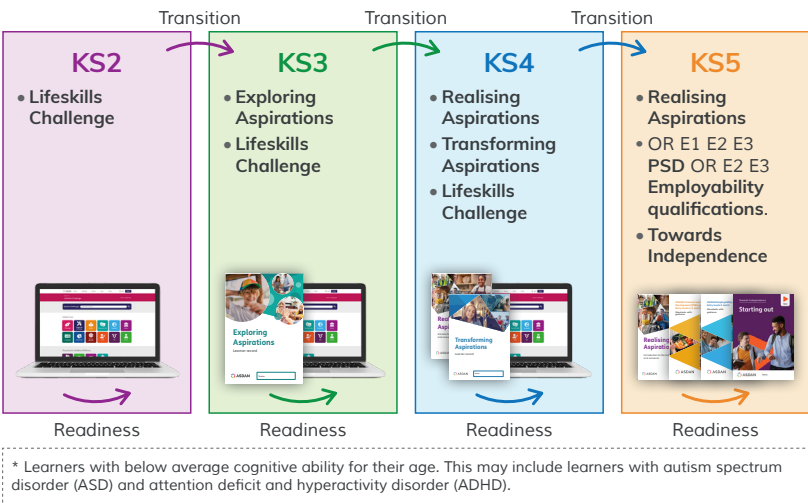


Explore our  
updated Personal  
Effectiveness  
Qualifications



ASDAN’s flexible courses, such as **Towards Independence**, empower adults with additional needs at ValePlus to develop essential life skills. By offering adaptable learning pathways, learners gain confidence, pursue personal interests, and achieve milestones like paid employment, all within a supportive and inclusive environment.

Moderate needs\* Curriculum map from KS2 to KS5



“If you’re working with learners of all abilities, ASDAN’s flexibility is a game-changer. You can include everyone, and the support from ASDAN is second to none -answers come quickly, and everyone is approachable. I’d 100% recommend it: the differentiation, the support, the variety - it works for all kinds of learners, and most importantly, it works for ours”

- Ela Denley, Education  
Manager, ValePlus



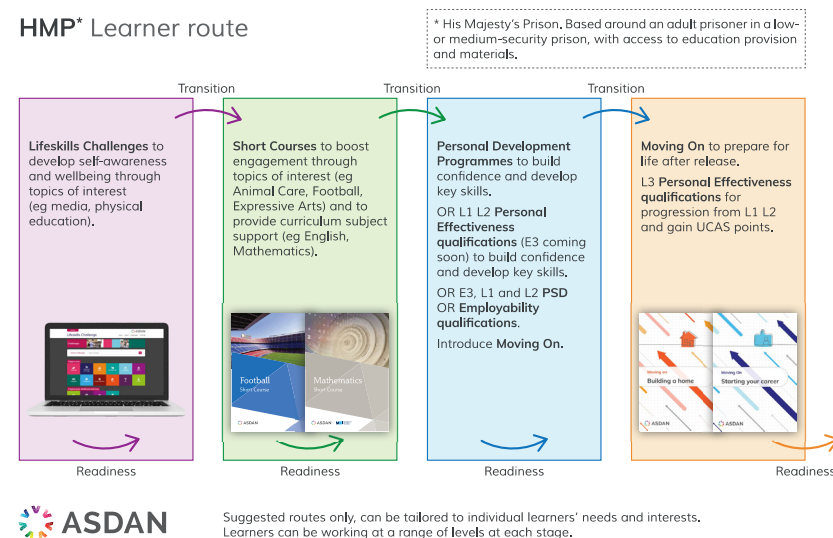
“Receiving their first ASDAN certificate is a huge moment for our learners. It’s not just a piece of paper – it recognises effort, creativity, and growth. For many, it sparks confidence and motivation, showing them they can achieve. From that first qualification, they begin to believe in their potential. That’s what it’s all about – giving people the belief and tools to create positive change in their lives.”

- Jo Lane, Senior Project Manager, Odd Arts



Odd Arts delivers ASDAN’s **Expressive Arts and Leadership Short Courses** in prisons and secure units, **empowering** learners to explore identity, build self-esteem, and develop key life skills. Through creative expression and trauma-informed approaches, participants gain confidence, achieve qualifications, and transform their futures

### HMP\* Learner route



## Explore ASDAN pathways

We’ve developed example curriculum maps to show how ASDAN courses can support a variety of learner pathways from Key Stage 2 through to Key Stage 5.

Scan the QR code to explore the maps and find the pathway that best supports your learners and setting.







Cross-sector Lab

ASDAN’s cross-sector lab brings together senior leaders from education, business, policy, and community to shape the future of learning and opportunity. Guided by ASDAN’s mission to engage, elevate, and empower learners with diverse needs, the cross-sector lab provides a collaborative space to explore ideas, examine existing systems, and develop practical strategies that create meaningful opportunities for all learners.

Hosted by ASDAN’s CEO, Melissa Farnham, the cross-sector lab fosters curiosity, dialogue, and creative thinking — where ‘What if?’ is the start of positive change.



Cross-sector Lab podcast: reimagine education together

The cross-sector lab’s insights extend to the podcast series, where Melissa Farnham hosts leaders from education, business, policy, and community to explore ideas and challenge existing systems. The podcast encourages reflection and creative thinking, highlighting practical strategies to create valuable learning opportunities.



Special interest groups

As part of ASDAN’s membership offer, we are excited to launch new specialist interest groups, running termly and focused on specific areas of practice. These groups provide a space for discussion, information sharing, and networking between members.

Each special interest group will be hosted by our Education Development Partners and may feature a guest speaker with expertise or experience in the chosen theme. Members are encouraged to share their own insights and experiences, fostering peer learning across similar settings.



Stakeholder event

We were delighted to welcome education leaders, policymakers, and changemakers from across the UK. The evening featured a distinguished line-up of speakers, celebrating inclusive, interest-led learning and exploring the future of education.

Our patron, Lord Jim Knight, former Minister of State for Schools, delivered a keynote addressing the growing challenges learners face today. He emphasised the importance of engaging, meaningful learning experiences and praised ASDAN’s learner-centred, project-based approach:

**“Being bored at school is a really negative thing. It implies what you’re being fed isn’t engaging. ASDAN is tackling this by creating courses linked to learners’ interests and encouraging creativity and real-world skills.”**

Lord Knight also highlighted concerns about mobile phones and excessive screen time, which can limit opportunities for creative reflection outside the classroom – a vital space for imagination, focus, and deeper engagement in learning.



Influencing national policy

In 2025, ASDAN strengthened its role as a voice for inclusion, shaping national policy through contributions to the government’s Equity and Inclusion Taskforce. By elevating the lived experiences of our members, we are helping to build a fairer education system where every learner is seen, heard and supported.

Our influence is strengthened through partnerships and advisory roles, including:

- Membership of the Foundation for Education Development advisory board
- Partnership with the National Association of Special Schools
- Collaboration with Whole Education to support more inclusive practice across schools
- Engagement with the Federation of Awarding Bodies
- Serving as expert advisers to the Institute for Public Policy Research Taskforce
- Partnership with Youth Employment UK to promote skills and opportunities for learners



As we look ahead to achieving the goals in our new strategy for 2026-27, our headline developments for the coming year include launching:



Digital development

In 2026, ASDAN will launch its **digital learning platform**, an interactive, secure workspace that enables learners and educators to produce, submit, assess, and quality-assure evidence. Fully integrated with ASDAN's systems, it hosts programmes and qualifications, providing a flexible, engaging environment. Look out for new releases throughout 2026 and beyond.



Foundation and Higher Project Qualifications (FPQ and HPQ)

ASDAN is developing Foundation and Higher Project Qualifications, first taught in September 2026. Complementing existing courses, these qualifications provide clear progression pathways and support independent, contextualised learning. Learners at Levels 1–3 can showcase skills across academic, vocational, and apprenticeship pathways, demonstrating creativity, problem-solving, and practical achievement.



Developing outcomes through partnerships:

ASDAN continues to work with members and organisations outside its network to explore ways to support learners. In 2026, we will focus on lived experience courses, co-designed with learners. These initiatives create meaningful, context-rich learning opportunities, reflecting real-world needs and enabling learners to gain skills and confidence for life and work.



Charitable focus and member voice:

ASDAN remains committed to ensuring that our members' voices are heard in policy, education, and care. In 2026, we will advocate for inclusion, equity, and learner-centred approaches, using insights from our network to influence decisions. Our goal is a fairer, more accessible education system that empowers learners to achieve their potential.