

Pilot Project opens new Horizons for 'NEET' Teens



A group of Derby teenagers are being given flying lessons by Nacro as part of an innovative new pilot project designed to re-engage young people who have dropped out of mainstream education.

Many of the 16 to 18 year-olds on the Nacro Air League Flying Scheme have achieved few or no qualifications and are not in education, employment or training (NEET).

New skills

This project is designed to boost their confidence and skills through a more practical approach to learning.

During the six week course, the group are learning to fly glider aircrafts at RAF Syerston. In addition to this they take part in team challenges, learn about the RAF and spend a day at Rolls-Royce.



On completing the programme the young people will gain qualifications in Team Work, Health and Safety, basic Literacy, Numeracy and Key Skills. The two young people who demonstrate significant progression and motivation on the programme will earn a scholarship with the Air League and spend two weeks at RAF Syerston learning to fly solo.

The aim of the project is to make enable the young people to feel more confident in themselves and their ability to achieve. Our vision is that engaging activities will go some way to undoing any negative experiences of education some young people have experienced in the past, so that they can go on to gain employment or engage in further education.

“ I left home at fifteen and ended up sleeping rough for a few months. I dropped out of school so I didn't get any qualifications. ”

Changing Lives

Michael Freeman

Seventeen year-old Michael Freeman is one of the young people taking part. He has experienced a range of hardships at home including constantly rowing with his stepfather. This was a difficult time in Michael's life; "My Mum kicked me out at fifteen and ended up sleeping rough for a few months. I dropped out of school, so I didn't get any qualifications. I was going through a really tough time and felt like I had no direction in life."

Michael describes his experience of living in a tent at the beginning of Winter "I was so cold I thought my toes would drop off" recounts Michael; "My income support was stopped because I wasn't in education." Michael ended up in court after stealing from a local take-away. This lead to his referral to Nacro and Michael started with us on our Entry to Employment Programme in September 2008.

At that time Michael really struggled with his behaviour and his attendance. Thom Young the Entry to Employment Training Organiser recalls Michael's early days with Nacro: "Michael found it very hard when he started with Nacro the structure and routine was not something he was used to. At the beginning he yo-yoed on and off programme while he took time to adjust to the kind of structure and support Nacro offer. Nacro would always take him back because we



believe everyone deserves a second chance. We knew that with Nacro's support Michael could learn the skills that would enable him to succeed in life and society.

Creating opportunities

Michael steadily progressed with Nacro and over time, he has worked really hard and shown commitment to improving himself. When Nacro started the Air League project Michael was offered the opportunity of applying for a place on the programme and jumped at the opportunity. He interviewed along side all the other applicants and was successful at gaining a place.

“I feel much more positive about the future now and I'm determined to get a job when I finish here.”

Michael Freeman

Craig Williams, Trainer on the Nacro Air league Programme talks of how Michael has progressed; "Michael Freeman excelled during all the Nacro Air League activities, being a relatively new member of staff at Nacro I was surprised to hear that he had had some serious behavioural problems in the past.

The way that Michael applied himself made an immediate impression on me, his leadership qualities and teamwork were exemplary for a student of his age and status. Examples of this are too numerous to list, but two that stand out are his dedication and hard work during the gliding day and motivational skills and helpfulness as he led another student off some serious terrain."

Michael's views of his time on the Air League Programme; "Coming on this course has just been amazing, it's been so much better than I was expecting. I really enjoy the physical aspects of the course, as I'm quite an active guy. Flying the glider over Belvoir Castle was the best thing I've ever done in my life. I feel much more positive about the future now and I'm determined to get a job when I finish here."

Michael has shown such commitment and dedication on the Air League programme that he has successfully gained one of only two scholarships to return to RAF Syerston for two weeks and learn to fly solo.

Thom Young the course organiser explains what the young people have achieved on the programme; “This has been a fantastic life changing opportunity for a lot of these young people, the experiences they have had on this course have really helped them grow as individuals. There have been some great activities: gliding at RAF Syerston, visiting Rolls-Royce, the Rolls- Royce Heritage Centre and some of the team building activities the young people have done, like climbing Thorpe Cloud.



Mathew Gaulton and Michael Freeman in the cockpit of a Lancaster Bomber at the Rolls Royce Heritage centre

Not only have the young people developed their personal and social skills from this course but they will also finish with accredited qualifications.

On completing the programme, Michael and all the other learners will leave with qualifications ranging from Key Skills in Communication, Improving Own Learning and Working with Others, British Safety Council Health & Safety Level 1 and the OCN Progression Award in Teamwork.”

“ It's taught them that learning doesn't have to be in a classroom and doesn't have to be about failure, ”

Arnot .C (2009)The Guardian: *Sky's the limit with Nacro flying scheme.* 09/12/09

Pilot up and Flying

“Both Nacro and the Air League have successful track records in engaging with young people and by combining our skills we can create excellent opportunities for them. We feel confident that this will provide huge benefits to the young people taking part and to the general public through the positive contributions these young people can and will make to society.”



Media Links

BBC East Midlands Today Video -

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/derbyshire/8377292.stm>

The Guardian Newspaper -

www.guardian.co.uk/society/2009/dec/09/nacro-flying-youth-project

BBC News -

<http://sportalert.bbc.net.uk/1/hi/england/nottinghamshire/8344265.stm>

Heart FM -

www.hearteastmids.co.uk/Article.asp?id=1602872

Children and Young People now Magazine -

www.cypnow.co.uk/news/OnTheGround/965887/Nacro-Air-League-Flying-Scheme/

