

Press Release: Embargoed until 12pm on 15 April 2005



*****PRESS RELEASE*****

SUCCESSFULLY HELPING UNEMPLOYED IN WEST MIDLANDS

A project in the West Midlands is using the power of sport and physical activity to engage local unemployed people and help them find work.

Since it began in 2004 the SkillsActive-led Equaliser project has helped over 50 local unemployed people gain qualifications in life guarding, community sports leadership and fitness instruction.

Today Adrian Bailey, former MP and current Labour candidate for West Bromwich West, presented the successful trainees with their hard earned certificates at an awards ceremony.

Teresa Townsend, a participant in the scheme, said: "Before Equaliser I was going nowhere, doing nothing. I'd been unwell and didn't have any experience but because of SkillsActive things are looking up."

Teresa has been out of work for some time but has always had an interest in health and fitness. "I enjoy swimming and jogging and am interested in health and nutrition as I used to be overweight and I would like to help other people." This January Teresa began studying towards her YMCA Fitness Coaching NVQ Level Two and is determined to succeed. "I find the course hard at times, but I'm muddling through!"

Adrian Bailey said: "It's great to see a project like this achieving results in the West Bromwich West constituency. Every learner on the scheme can be proud of what they have achieved, for taking control and making changes in their lives for the better."

Sonia Birch, SkillsActive West Midlands Programme Manager, said: "The Equaliser project has been a great success and demonstrates the power of sport and physical activity to reengage learners at all levels. The immense contribution to be made by physical activity to public health is widely known but we must also remember the contribution it can make to social inclusion. It is clear from Equaliser that these kind of learning opportunities have an important impact on an individual's self esteem as well as increasing their employability. But the scheme couldn't have been a success without the commitment and dedication of the learners, many of whom have overcome difficult circumstances to achieve their qualifications."

"The Equaliser" project is funded by EQUAL (a European Social Fund programme) and is part of the Sports Pathways to Employment Programme (funded by Advantage West Midlands).

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NOTES TO EDITORS

1. Adrian Bailey, former MP and current Labour candidate for West Bromwich West, will visit the Equaliser project at Tipton Sports Academy, Wednesbury Oak Road, Tipton, West Midlands, DY4 0BS on 15 April 2005 at 12pm.
2. Adrian will present the successful candidates with their certificates for the training they have completed. The visit is part of a series of cross party MP visits organised by SkillsActive to demonstrate the work being undertaken to upskill the Active Leisure and Learning Sector.
3. There will be a photo opportunity at 12.30pm, the chance for media to meet Adrian Bailey and the local people on the Equaliser scheme as well as the opportunity to interview the SkillsActive staff who run the Equaliser project over a buffet lunch.
4. SkillsActive is the Sector Skills Council (SSC) for Sport and Recreation, Health and Fitness, Playwork, The Outdoors and the Caravan industries.
5. SkillsActive's mission statement is: "To ensure best quality, best business and best value within the Sector to achieve its economic and social potential."
6. SSCs are employer-led organisations that aim to tackle the skills and productivity needs of their sector throughout the UK. SSCs provide employers with the opportunity to provide leadership to meet their sector's skills and business needs.
7. For more information about SkillsActive, please visit our website @ www.skillsactive.com
8. SkillsActive is currently developing a Sector Skills Agreement for the Active Leisure and Learning Sector which will define the Sector's skills needs and ultimately form an agreement between employers, Government and funding partners to shape the workforce for the next ten years.
9. "The Equaliser" project is one of 9 projects within the Sports Pathways to Employment Programme which is funded by Advantage West Midlands. It aims to:
 - Tackle barriers to growth in the sport and leisure industry
 - Tackle disaffection, inequality and exclusion and
 - Contribute to healthier lifestyles
10. The Equaliser Project is offering unemployed Sandwell residents an opportunity to access training and e-learning environments in the sport and leisure industry. If you would like more information or would like to become involved in the project please

call: 0121 569 3889. If you would like more information about the Sports Pathways programme please call: 0121 569 3074

11. A number of training courses are on offer to eligible participants, these include:
 - NPLQ Lifeguard Qualification
 - Community Sports Leadership Award
 - YMCA Fitness Coaching NVQ Level 1
 - YMCA Fitness Coaching NVQ Level 2

12. The first series of courses commenced in late June 2004 and others are scheduled up until the end of 2005.