



Sailing towards success

Natalie Noble, of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council, was named as the APSE Sports and Leisure Apprentice of the Year at a prestigious awards ceremony held in Stoke on Trent on Thursday 29th March. Natalie, a 19 year old young apprentice with Wakefield Metropolitan District Council, was selected from amongst other young apprentices for her commitment and enthusiasm in promoting physical activity to Wakefield's residents at Pugneys Country Park. Paul O'Brien APSE Chief Executive stated "**Leisure services can often be viewed as a Cinderella service within local government. These apprenticeship awards demonstrate that in fact our leisure services are worthy of the highest level of investment, not just in terms of shiny new assets but investment in the committed individuals who make leisure services function and work to benefit the wider community**".

- APSE launched the awards in response to the Governments commitment to tackling obesity using the talents of local government officers who promote leisure and physical activity across the community.
- Sports and leisure is increasingly seen as an attractive option to young people who are interested in careers within local government and community sports and leisure issues.
- Despite sectoral problems, with recruitment and retention, local government is increasingly viewed as a market leader in training leisure workers, developing bespoke apprenticeships and enabling trainees to gain nationally recognised qualifications within the sports and leisure industry.
- Pugneys Country Park was developed in 1985 by Wakefield Council and is a specialist water sports facility with two activity lakes

Natalie speaking of her success said "**I am absolutely thrilled to receive this award. I have a great job working with the public. Being recognised for my own contribution to the leisure sector has filled me with pride**".

Ends

Notes to editors

1. APSE is the Association for Public Service Excellence and works with over 300 local authorities throughout the UK

2. Nationally Government has recognised the role that local authorities play in promoting healthy communities warning that almost one in every six 2-10 year olds in the UK face obesity

3. Government has promised action to help local authorities tackle obesity through the promotion of physical activity through local authority sports and leisure facilities.

4. The Government has also set a target that the number of school children participating in at least 2 hours of physical activity a week should be at 85% by 2008

5. Attached Jpeg is of Paul O'Brien, APSE Chief Executive, Natalie Noble, Sports and Leisure Apprentice of the Year Winner, Cllr John Kerr Brown, APSE National Chair.

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