

# Press release: Environment Agency aids scheme promoting fishing in West Bromwich

The Environment Agency has stocked the pool in Dartmouth Park, West Bromwich, with more than 2,500 fish as part of an exciting scheme to encourage angling participation in the local area.

The Environment Agency has put in 2,000 roach, 200 tench, 1,000 rudd and 300 bream to rejuvenate the pool and used Christmas trees to create floating fish refuges as habitats and shelter from predator birds.

Environment Agency Project manager, Darin Alberry, said:

The Friends of Dartmouth Park approached us for help to create a scheme to allow local disadvantaged people to take up angling and we were very happy to oblige.

The Friends of Dartmouth Park Angling Club has bought fishing tackle to be loaned out free of charge and are working to gain their fishing coach badges with the Angling Trust. They hope to launch free weekly angling sessions in the spring for disadvantaged people, with other members of the public being asked to make a donation to go fishing on the pool. Everyone will need to have a licence to fish there.

Dave Lowe from the Club commented:

The Environment Agency has done a great job in restocking the pool as the fish population had been decimated by cormorants and other predators. They have also created refuges for the fish which we're really pleased with and we're looking forward to being able to offer the free fishing sessions on the pool.

A fishing licence costs just £30 and lasts for 12 months from the day it is purchased, and becomes valid around 30 minutes after buying online at <https://www.gov.uk/fishing-licences>.

Money from fishing licence sales is invested in England's fisheries and is used to fund a wide range of projects to improve facilities for anglers including; protecting stocks from illegal fishing, pollution and disease, restoring fish stocks through re-stocking, eradicating invasive species and fish habitat improvements. Fishing licence money is also used to fund the Angling Trust to provide information about fishing, to encourage participation in the sport and to manage a voluntary bailiff scheme.

Children under 13 fish for free. Anyone aged 13 to 16 also fish for free, but they do need to have a valid Environment Agency fishing licence. Anyone over 16 must pay for an Environment Agency fishing licence to fish for salmon, trout, freshwater fish, smelt or eel in England.

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## **Press release: National mentoring initiative to tackle employment inequality across UK**

Jobseekers across the UK are set to benefit from mentoring support designed to help them into work, as Employment Minister Alok Sharma announced the rollout of a successful initiative.

Last year around 500 jobseekers from ethnic minority backgrounds attended sessions hosted by experienced staff from large companies including KPMG, Fujitsu, HSBC and Network Rail to get help with CV writing, goal setting, job applications and interview practice.

Many participants went on to start work, while others have gone into training or further education to help them get closer to the job they want.

Now, Mr Sharma has announced the rollout of the mentoring circles initiative beyond the black and minority ethnic (BAME) community to across the Jobcentre Plus network nationally, for all youth claimants who would benefit from such support. This will start in London in March and then roll-out across the country from April.

The mentoring circles were launched by the Employment Minister last year in response to the Race Disparity Audit and ran in 20 challenge areas across the country.

While the average employment gap between ethnic minorities and the white population is less than 10% – a record low – a number of areas with a high ethnic minority population have significantly wider ethnic employment gaps. For example Hackney, one challenge area, has an ethnic minority employment gap of 22.0 percentage points while Leicester, another challenge area, has a gap of 16.9 percentage points.

Now with the roll-out of the mentoring circles, every jobcentre has access to a local toolkit help work coaches get to know the make-up of their micro-labour market for all claimants on all benefits and will help to determine who will benefit from an initiative of this kind.

Work coaches can also use the toolkit to improve on the personalised service they offer by finding out more about the health profile of people living in

their area and the disability employment rate.

Minister of State for Employment Alok Sharma said:

The whole purpose of the Race Disparity Audit was to get us to face difficult, and sometimes uncomfortable, issues. Where there were differences in representation, participation or achievement across ethnic minorities, we were challenged to explain them – or change them.

I took the road for change.

The mentoring pilots for jobseekers from ethnic minority backgrounds have made a difference by supporting them into further training, work experience placements or jobs and I pay tribute to all employers who have taken part in the mentoring circles programme.

This support has clear value which is why I have asked jobcentres across the country to run more mentoring circles together with employers, supporting youth jobseekers, regardless of their background, to overcome the barriers they face and to find the work they want.

Rupal Karia, Head of UK&I – Public and Private Sector and Executive Sponsor of the Cultural Diversity Network at Fujitsu said:

Mentoring circles are an excellent initiative and one Fujitsu is delighted to be involved in. I am committed to this initiative and it was an honour to host the first in-house industry led mentoring circles session in our Manchester office.

This initiative helps people to maximise their potential, develop their skills and enable them to be completely themselves in the workplace. If we help one person get into work it will have been worth it.

Speaking at an event today with mentees and mentors from the initiative, Mr Sharma thanked them for their support and hard work.

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## News story: Call for universities to improve support for disabled students

Universities are being urged to boost the number of students with disabilities going into higher education and do more to help them succeed, as the Universities Minister calls for greater action today (Thursday 17 January).

Figures published today show that the numbers going to university from this underrepresented group has increased to a record amount. There were 94,120 new students with a disability that started university in England in 2017/18. Representing 13% of entrants this is still below the proportion of working-age adults with a disability, and the minister wants universities to review their offer and provision for disabled students.

To build on the encouraging figures out today and to drive forward his ambition for even greater participation of disabled students in higher education, the Universities Minister will call for a roundtable of key stakeholders to discuss how the higher education sector can continue to break down barriers and secure improvements for students with disabilities.

Mr Skidmore has also highlighted the financial help at hand to all prospective students with a disability through the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA). Previous [figures](#) show that students in receipt of the DSA are more likely to continue on their course (91 per cent) than not only disabled students not receiving the allowance, but also more likely to than students without a disability (90 per cent).

Universities Minister Chris Skidmore said:

No-one's background or circumstances should hold them back from the opportunity of a university education and there is no reason why disability should be a barrier to fulfilling someone's potential.

I am encouraged by the figures out today showing record numbers of students with a disability going to university – but there is more work to be done, and I want to see the access and participation plans that universities are beginning to produce increase the ways they can support this group.

Institutions such as Brunel University, with their award-winning Disability and Dyslexia Service, and the University of Worcester, who have built their entire campus with accessibility in mind, are leading the way – there is no reason why other universities can't follow suit and match their provision. Working with key stakeholders and disabled students, I believe that we can do more to break down access and participation barriers in higher education by focusing on spreading good practice and listening to disabled students about their needs.

We have a collective responsibility to make that happen and I am calling on universities to consider the barriers that disabled students experience and the support on offer to them so we can help them succeed in higher education.

The figures from the Higher Education Statistics Authority (HESA) out today show that in 2017/18 there were 26,100 more new students with a disability at English universities than in 2013/14 – an increase of 38% per cent.

Alongside these figures, the Department for Education has published research today showing that the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) has helped to break down barriers that can exist for disabled students at university. The research shows results from a survey of disabled students, which found that 69 per cent felt confident about completing their course and 68 per cent felt confident about passing their course.

In addition, more than half (59 per cent) of students who receive the DSA said they would not feel confident about passing their course without receiving the allowance.

As part of the Government's ambition for everyone to have the opportunity to benefit from higher education, whatever their background, universities that charge fees above the basic level must draw up an access and participation plan agreed by the Office for Students.

The Universities Minister expects the plans to be ambitious in driving increased numbers of students from underrepresented groups and for their use of DSAs. Higher education providers have legal responsibilities to support disabled students under the Equality Act 2010, and the Minister wants access and participation plans to meet these obligations in order to support those with disabilities thrive in higher education.

A National Association of Disability Practitioners spokesperson said:

The National Association of Disability Practitioners (NADP) welcome

the findings from this research, which evidences the current experience of disabled students' in accessing DSA. DSA continues to provide valued support to disabled students, and ensuring students have timely awareness of the DSA and the application process in advance of starting university remains a vital and clear ongoing priority for the sector.

Effective DSA support along with ongoing developments in inclusive and accessible teaching and learning will enable future generations of disabled people to participate successfully in higher education.

In 2018/19 higher education providers plan to spend £860m on measures to improve access and successful outcomes for students from disadvantaged backgrounds and under-represented groups, including students with disabilities.

Last year saw a record proportion of English 18-year-olds from disadvantaged backgrounds going to university, but more is still more to do to ensure all young people have the opportunity to succeed in higher education and break down any barriers they encounter.

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## **Press release: Bognor Regis business saves lives with UK aid**

A Bognor Regis business in West Sussex is helping children in some of the world's poorest countries to receive lifesaving vaccines