

NAIMAH'S STORY



Naimah, 19, is from Manchester and has just completed a gap year scheme with Ashton Youth Club. She went from being a young person to a full-time staff member and had funding for the year to put towards her personal development. She chose to participate in an Alpine Preparation Course! Keep reading to find out how it went.

I live in Ashton-under-Lyne, a majority ethnic area. There is a real stigma around outdoor adventures.

To put it simply it's not "normal", especially for a Muslim woman. However, my dad used to run holiday activities for local kids and dragged me and my siblings along with him camping and hiking. I can't say I liked the outdoors when I was younger. Fast forward a few years and I joined Ashton Youth Club, where I continued doing outdoor activities and eventually started to really enjoy being outdoors and couldn't wait for my next adventure.

I'm now working at Ashton Youth Club full-time on a year-long Gap Scheme with Lindley Educational Trust, generously funded by the Rank Foundation. Each individual on the Gap Scheme gets a bursary to put towards their own development. I chose to use my bursary to further my outdoor skills, experience and qualifications, resulting in some great adventures that included:

- A full-on mountaineering week in Scotland with the Martin Moran Foundation.
- 7-day winter mountaineering weeks with both Lindley's Ashton and Pitsmoor Youth Clubs.
- Attending a Climbing Wall Instructor (CWI) training course (I plan to do my assessment soon!).
- Completing my Duke of Edinburgh Gold award.
- Attending the Jonathan Conville Alpine Preparation Course.

One of the best adventures this year was the Jonathan Conville Alpine Preparation Course in Wales. What really pushed me to do this course was the realisation that I hadn't seen anyone in my local community or anyone my age attempt it before. It was down to me to apply for a place, there was no link to the Youth Club, and I wouldn't know anyone. This made it a bit daunting, but also made me super keen to go.

Day 1: Travel and Welcome

I offered to car-share with another successful applicant, which gave me the chance to get to know someone before the course started and ease into things. It also created a foundation for a friendship, and we helped each other a lot throughout the course. In our little group of four we had Libby Peters as our Mentor (she's a famous mountain guide!).

Day 2: Where the fun began!

Libby took our group rock climbing and taught people how to belay, manage ropes and taught us how to rig an abseil, which we then had to test out for real. This was good fun and a great way to remember how someone new to the outdoors would feel on their initial abseil. It also definitely made me aware of

the importance of good rigging, a good anchor and highlighting the dangers of what could go wrong.

We went on to do some lead climbing, focusing mainly on the placement of gear to protect the lead climber in the event of a fall. We climbed in pairs with one person leading, placing gear and the other belaying, and then changed over on a ledge.

Day 3: This was a big day out

All the training was put into practice on a longer multi-pitch climb. For someone who hasn't done much outdoor climbing, to go on to do a full multi-pitch trad climb was great. I was nervous to say the least. Everything went to plan and we successfully completed our climb! It was a huge adventure with big drops and we carefully selected foot and hand placements. I was in disbelief when we had reached the top of the climb, the view was so beautiful and I couldn't believe we had finished the pitch. Libby got us thinking about techniques for when you're with someone who may be a little nervous, how to protect and support them on the uneven ground to get off the top of the climb. We were also taught confidence in roping.

Having conquered our route, we wrapped up the trip with a well-deserved ice cream! Needless to say, the course was fantastic, and I learnt loads. I'm still so proud of how well we worked as a team and looked after each others' safety. Libby Peters inspired us all and was a great Mentor. I was the youngest, had the least experience and I've never been to the Alps. I didn't let that stop me and gave everything a really good go. I can proudly say I successfully completed everything and was the first one to do the abseil.

Next for me is to complete my CWI qualification. Looking back, the trip felt so surreal, and I will cherish it forever, it was such a good stepping-stone and gave me confidence to do more rock climbing! ▲



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