

# National Young Aviators Weekend

By **Steve Robson**

**W**e are always hearing about demographics and the shift towards an aging population but what does that mean to us, the LAA. The recent membership survey suggests that we are fairly representative of the national picture, we are an aging lot and none of us are getting any younger! But what of the people who will be our replacements in the years to come, where are they now?

One of the ways that we can invest in our future is to give a young person a very worthwhile flying experience by holding a Young Aviators event at our local airfield or strip. The National Young Aviators scheme has its roots in the EAA Young Eagles programme that succeeded in taking one million young people flying in the years leading up to the centenary of powered flight in 2003.

The educational value of this programme was quickly recognised and a similar scheme was adopted by the PFA some years ago. The aims of what is now the LAA Young Aviators scheme are to:

- **Help promote a more positive and open-minded view of light aviation**
- **Raise awareness of sport and recreational aviation to the next generation of pilots**

The Association is once again planning to run a National Young Aviators event and invites your strut, wing, club or flying group to participate. It is planned to take place over the weekend of 10th – 11th May on either day, hopefully one of them will be flyable!

The membership survey reveals that around 30% of those who responded have taken part in a youth event of some description over the past couple of years, but when asked how likely to take part in a youth event in the future an amazing 56% said they would consider it. So here is an opportunity for you to join in!

It is also a good opportunity to gain some good local and regional press. Whilst the Young Aviators scheme has been very successful, it is not widely known outside of the LAA. By writing a short article for

your local newspaper, or indeed for LA or other GA publications, it is possible to raise the awareness of the general public and also demonstrate that we put something back into the

community for the good of young people. Most local newspapers will welcome local interest stories, especially if they are supported with a few photographs. These articles are best written by those who have taken part in the events themselves, this way you can write about the event in a positive way that will fit within your neighbourhood.

So, how do you go about organising one of these events? Well, to a large extent that's up to those who want to organise one for themselves, they don't have to be elaborate or complicated. First of all, if you are planning on running an event please let LAA HQ know in advance. There are guidelines available on the LAA website, including information about child protection.



Safety has to be a key feature in the planning of any event and the Young Aviators is no exception. Once you have a group of willing aircraft owners and pilots and some ground

helps you can go on to the next step and invite some young people (accompanied by their parents or a responsible adult) or youth groups such as Scouts or Air Cadets, along with their leaders.

It is also worth considering taking young people with physical disabilities as well. Obviously the level of disability will need to be taken into account, particularly with regard to getting the young person in to and out of a suitable aircraft.

On completion, ensure that the young person gets a Young Aviators Certificate and remember to capture the event on camera and keep a list of names of those who have flown to become part of the National Young Aviators register. ■

