

The world's youngest plane captain... who flies with the UK's youngest pilot: Kate, 26, and Luke, 19, take charge of holiday flight from Gatwick to Malta

- Kate McWilliams has become the world's youngest commercial captain
- The 26 year old, from Carlisle, is a rising star at budget airline easyJet
- She took up flying in the air cadets at 13 and made her first solo flight at 16

By [Sara Smyth for the Daily Mail](#)

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Just a decade after taking to the skies as a teenage air cadet, Kate McWilliams has proved she is a real high flier - by becoming what is believed to be the world's youngest commercial captain at the age of 26, according to easyJet.

The 26-year-old, a rising star of budget airline easyJet's crew, has been promoted from first officer to captain, a feat usually achieved by much older pilots.

And a spokeswoman said they believe Kate McWilliams is the youngest commercial airline captain in the world.

After taking up flying in the air cadets aged 13, Miss McWilliams made her first solo flight aged 16 and went on to train as a pilot on her 19th birthday.



Kate McWilliams (left, pictured with Luke Elsworth) has become the world's youngest commercial captain at the age of 26



Miss McWilliams, pictured with Luke Elsworth, took up flying in the air cadets aged 13

She said she gets quizzed about her age by cabin crew and passengers almost every day and most are 'impressed' to learn she has fast-tracked her way to the cockpit.

Miss McWilliams said: 'Personally I don't think my age matters. I've been through the same training and passed the same command course as every other captain so I've proven myself capable regardless of my age.'

'I do now get asked how old I am on an almost daily basis which didn't used to happen when I was a first officer.'

'Usually that question comes from the cabin crew but sometimes passengers ask too.'

'When I tell them I'm 26, most people are pleasantly surprised and impressed with my achievement at such a young age.'

She is also one of the few women to be promoted beyond the rank of first officer.

Just 5per cent of commercial pilots are female and last year easyJet announced an initiative to double the proportion of female new entrants to 12per cent over two years.



Miss McWilliams made her first solo flight aged 16 and went on to train as a pilot on her 19th birthday



An easyJet spokesman said they believe Miss McWilliams (pictured) is the youngest commercial airline captain in the world

Miss McWilliams said the lack of female role models made her 'never even thought it could be an option' to become a commercial pilot.

And she felt she had no one to 'ask for advice' in order to pursue her dreams.

Determined to succeed, she was flying loop-the-loops at 15 and made her first solo flight at 16.

She joined a training programme at CTC Aviation in Southampton on her 19th birthday.

In May 2011 she joined EasyJet as a first officer and recently took up the rank of captain after passing the airline's command course.

Originally from Carlisle, she is now based in Reigate, Surrey, and works from Gatwick Airport.



Originally from Carlisle, she is now based in Reigate, Surrey, and works from Gatwick Airport. She flies Airbus A319 and A320 planes to around 100 destinations, including as Reykjavik, Tel Aviv and Marrakesh.

'With Gatwick having such an extensive route network my roster is very varied so I rarely fly to the same place twice in the same month.

'That keeps things interesting. I love being a commercial pilot for easyJet, and I am proud that I have now achieved my ambition of becoming a captain.'

Julie Westhorp, chairwoman of the British Women Pilots' Association (BWPA), said she hopes Miss McWilliams' progression inspires more women to consider pursuing a career in aviation.

She said: 'Both the BWPA and easyJet are aware of the importance of visible role models for girls and young women when making career choices and continue to work together to encourage young women to consider a pilot career.'

'Kate's achievement clearly demonstrates to other young women that it is possible to succeed as a pilot in commercial aviation.'

'We wish Kate continuing success in her career and are delighted that she is now an excellent role model for other females.'

Last week Miss McWilliams flew from Gatwick to Malta alongside Luke Elsworth, who earlier this year became the UK's youngest pilot at 19 years old.

Extracted from:

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3806882/The-world-s-youngest-plane-captain-flies-UK-s-youngest-pilot-Kate-26-Luke-19-charge-holiday-flight-Gatwick-Malta.html>

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