Romford Business: Charlie Barrett, 19, on becoming his own boss at Harold Wood's Ladies and Gentlemen salon

Nakala and Charlie Barrett at the Ladies and Gentlemen grand opening

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Many share the ambition of one day being their own boss – but for one Harold Wood barber, dreams have become reality before many of his peers are even out of the starting blocks.

At just 19, Charlie Barrett has set up his own business – Ladies and Gentleman in Station Road – in tandem with his sister Nakala, 22.

As its name suggests, the shop caters for customers from across the spectrum, whether they're after a tan or a shave.

Nakala's a natural when it comes to cutting hair, but she hasn't snipped too many ribbons in her time – so Saturday morning's grand opening was a special occasion.

"I did quite a few things before I left school and I couldn't find anything I wanted to wake up for in the morning," said Charlie.

"I tried out barbering and thought I quite liked the image of it.

"You've got the waistcoats and the nice hair – so I thought: 'I'll give that a go.'

"I did an NVQ at the London School of Barbering in Drury Lane [Camden] about a year ago.

"[Starting the business] was a family thing – my sister was working in insurance and wasn't happy.

"We spoke to our parents and other sources and tried to get as much money together as possible."

Another source of cash was the government's newly founded Start Up Loans scheme, which handed the pair a £2,500 loan to get started.

So what's going to make Ladies and Gentleman a success?

"There aren't too many barber shops in the area," said Charlie. "I found I was travelling out to Essex and Hornchurch to have my hair cut.

"Also, we both live in Harold Wood and we noticed the station is extremely busy but there aren't many sun beds or barbers nearby.

"You've got all the London workers coming off the train so between 5pm and 8pm is an extremely busy down here.

"The shop has a traditional feel with close shaves and traditional cuts. Everything's nice and old, which a lot of barber shops are overlooking at the moment. It's back to basics."

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