

Teenager from Dunstable speaks out in Parliament

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An office administrator from Dunstable has stood up in Parliament to give a speech about her positive experiences of vocational learning and to explain how people of all ages can receive careers advice.

Lynette Wieland, aged 19, sits on the National Learner Panel (NLP). The NLP gives learners over the age of 16 a say in the development of further education and helps the Government, Learning and Skills Council and other organisations make key decisions. It was through the National Learner Panel that Lynette was invited to speak out at the Skills Commission event in Parliament last Tuesday (1st April).

The event took place to present the findings of the Skills Commission's six month inquiry into information, advice and guidance (IAG) services and to launch their Final Report which builds on the recommendations made in the inquiry's Interim Findings, released in December 2007.

Lynette, who is currently studying for an NVQ level 3 in Business and Administration at Management and Personnel Services Ltd. (MAPS), said: "It was a very nerve-racking to speak to over 100 people at the House of Parliament but I'm very glad to have done it. I've been given some public speaking training at the NLP, so that made the experience a lot easier. The Skills Commission liked the ideas I put forward and I hope to make a difference to learners and others hoping to further their careers by learning new skills."

Since joining the National Learner Panel in September last year, Lynette has met with OFSTED, Bill Rammell, founder of the National Learner Panel and Minister of State for Further and Higher Education, and has shadowed David Lammy, Minister for Skills at the Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS). She is also currently working on reviewing apprenticeships and promoting the positive aspects of vocational training.

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Notes to editors

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The National Learner Panel (NLP)

Bill Rammell announced the establishment of the first ever National Learner Panel for Further Education in November 2006. The first Panel consisted of 15 learners aged 16 to 75 drawn from a range of backgrounds and learning settings from across the FE sector. The Minister agreed that the Panel would be independent with a remit focussed on ensuring that the learner voice can be heard at a national level able to influence policy design and delivery. To find out more about the National Learner Panel go to www.direct.gov.uk/nationallearnerpanel.

The panel held its first working panel meeting in January 2007 and since then has:

- Developed a response to the Leitch review for the DIUS.
- Written the foreword to the LSC's Learner Involvement Handbook.
- Worked with Ofsted to identify ways in which learners could become more involved in the inspection process.
- Highlighted the lack of support for work-based learners.
- Considered the implications of demand-led funding, and made recommendations for the support and approach that they believe will be necessary to ensure that Learner Accounts

are successfully introduced.

- Met with Bill Rammell to discuss the implications of raising the statutory participation age.

The Skills Commission is a steering body for the National Skills Forum and Associate Parliamentary Skills Group (APSG), consisting of a select group of key individuals with a stake in skills policy.

Co-chaired by Barry Sheerman MP and Dame Ruth Silver, Principal of Lewisham College, the Skills Commission oversees and gives direction to the work of the Forum and APSG, bringing fresh thinking to the skills debate and campaigning on major skills issues in Parliament and beyond.

Recent areas of focus for the Skills Commission have been preparations for WorldSkills 2011 and ensuring the successful implementation of the diplomas. The Skills Commission is currently conducting an inquiry into information, advice and guidance services chaired by Professor Mike Thorne, Vice-Chancellor of Anglia Ruskin University.