

NORWICH POSTAL WORKER APPOINTED TO ADVISE GOVERNMENT

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A Royal Mail employee from Norwich has been selected to help advise Government ministers on further education and training issues.

Graeme Brinded who works at the Norwich Mail Centre on Thorpe Road sits on the National Learner Panel which was set up last year by Bill Rammell, minister of State for Further and Higher Education. The Panel gives learners over the age of 16 a say in the development of further education at national level which helps the Government, the Learning and Skills Council and other organisations make key decisions.

Mr Brinded said: "I was surprised and pleased to be selected to join the Panel. I've always been interested in learning and I am currently working on my NVQ3 in Advice & Guidance to enable me to teach lifelong learning courses. I also have three children at different stages of education so I have a broad base of experience to bring to the panel."

Since taking up the post, Mr Brinded has been able to share his experience as a Union Learning Representative for the Communication Workers Union (CWU) with other members of the Panel. At work, Mr Brinded provides course information and advice to his colleagues about learning opportunities in their local areas. His commitment to learning has led to a national award for Learning and Innovation from the CWU and a Community Learning award from Norwich City College.

Dick Palmer, Principal of City College Norwich, said, "I'm proud to say that Graeme is the second student from City College Norwich to serve on the National Learner Panel. He has set up a successful Learning Centre at the Royal Mail Sorting Office in Norwich to offer Skills for Life opportunities for his members across Norfolk. He really does epitomise what a Union Learning Representative should be all about and has developed a learning partnership between unions and management that serves as a model of good practice."

Bill Rammell, Minister of State for Further and Higher Education, said: "Involving learners in what we do is not optional. It must be integral to every aspect of learning; from decisions in Government, to college and provider management, to the classroom and workshop. We all have a role and a responsibility to ensure learning is guided by and responds to the needs and aspirations of all individuals in further education."

Graeme will meet with Bill Rammell on January 14th at the next National Learner Panel meeting.

-ENDS-

For further information please contact Leila Lahfa at Band and Brown Communications on 01603 417722 or email leila.lahfa@bbpr.com

Notes to editors

The National Learner Panel

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.