



APPLICATION NOTES 2009-10 (please read carefully before filling in your application form)

What is the National Learner Panel?

Since the National Learner Panel (NLP) was set up by government in November 2006 it has ensured that a wide range of learner voices are heard at national policymaking level. The work of the NLP has been strongly supported by government and other partner organisations, and the panel has been consulted on many diverse initiatives and policies.

Am I eligible for the National Learner Panel?

If you are aged **16 or over**, and **taking part in learning in England at a college, adult education centre or at work**, then you can apply. Learners on degree courses or postgraduate courses are not eligible.

You don't need to be an expert in how policy or further education (FE) works – you just have to be an expert in what it's like to be a learner in FE and to bring your experiences with you.

Last year's NLP consisted of 20 volunteer members drawn from across FE. Aged between 17 and 65, their experiences as learners ranged from those studying A Levels, BTECs and NVQs, to those in work-based learning and apprenticeships, from those who had returned to study in later life to those who were learning for pleasure in retirement.

This year we are looking for a similar number of members who reflect a diverse range of backgrounds, learning environments, ages and regions. So, whatever your age or experience, we'd love to hear from you. We will provide all panel members with an induction and training opportunities, so that they feel confident to carry out their role.

Why should I get involved?

Being a member of the panel gives you the opportunity to:

- possibly meet government ministers to discuss your views on FE
- give your point of view about FE and adult learning: what's good about it, what's not so good about it and how it could be improved
- influence the people who make national policy decisions that significantly affect how your local college, adult education centre or apprenticeship operates

- learn some new things about FE, how policy works, and how to be part of a successful working group
- get involved in something that you might enjoy, travel to different parts of the country and meet other learners from across England

How will I benefit by being a member of the panel?

Here is what some of last year's members had to say about their time on the panel:

"The NLP is crucial in promoting the importance of the learner voice in policy development. If you are passionate about learning, the NLP is a great vehicle to share that passion and make a difference."(Graeme Brinded, NLP vice-chair 2008-09, Unionlearn representative)

"I am very proud to be a member of the NLP. It has personally empowered me to express my views about what learners want." (Sahr Yambasu, studying for the BTEC National Diploma, FE college)

"The panel involves the customer – the learner – bringing a fresh perspective from themselves, the ultimate beneficiary. It gives learners a voice where it matters and feeds into national initiatives and policymaking." (Lynette Wieland, apprentice)

Membership of the panel is voluntary. However members are usually given some recompense for their time, for example in the form of vouchers or other incentives, and all travel, hotel, subsistence and childcare expenses are covered. If you have any special needs we will provide the necessary support to enable you to carry out your role as a panel member.

What would be expected of me as a member of the panel?

If you were successful in your application to become a member of the NLP, you would be expected to attend a number of events over the course of the next year. Some of these would be optional and some mandatory. Last year, as a minimum, we asked panel members to attend **an induction event** and **four full panel meetings** during which we asked for their opinions, ideas and suggestions and gave them an opportunity to question people who make education and training policy. We want to make sure that you only lose the minimum amount of time from your studies and/ or work, and we will plan meetings around your commitments as much as possible. If you were appointed as a panel member:

- Immediately you would be **expected to attend a residential induction event** on 19/20 November in London (this date is *provisional*). You would need to be able to travel to London on Thursday 19 November to arrive by approx 6.00pm, and you would be free to leave by 5.00pm on Friday 20 November

- Shortly afterwards you would be **offered the opportunity to attend a training day**, covering topics such as how policy is developed, how the further education system works etc. Other optional training and development opportunities are available to you throughout the year
- Normally, panel members would be **expected to attend four full panel meetings** during the year, all of which will require all panel members to attend. These are usually held at various cities around England, and (depending on where you live) will often require that you travel to the venue the night before. Government ministers may also attend some of these meetings
- You may also be **offered the opportunity to attend subgroup meetings** that are of interest to you. They are shorter meetings of about 3 hours and we try to schedule these so that members can travel to/ from the meeting on the same day.

Safeguarding panel members under 18

The National Learner Panel takes its responsibility for safeguarding learners under 18 very seriously. It is usual for panel members under the age of 18 to be chaperoned by a family member. Chaperones' expenses will be paid in full (including overnight stay where appropriate).

Any successful panel members will need to undergo a CRB check, and in accepting your place on the panel you are indicating that you are happy to do this. If you have any queries about whether this might affect your eligibility on the panel, please call 020 7242 5504 for further details.

What do I do now?

You can download a copy of the application form by visiting www.excellencegateway.org.uk/nlp and clicking on 'Applying to the NLP' or you can email us at nlp@shm-ltd.co.uk to request an application form. If you prefer to email your response, you can then submit your completed form by email, please send it to this email address. If you prefer to fill out the form by hand, you can post it to: Claire Askam, SHM, 20-22 Bedford Row, London WC1R 4EB.

If you would like to speak to someone before applying, or require assistance with the application process, please call the NLP support team on 020 7242 5504.

We will be accepting applications until **Friday 23 October 2009**. We will then carry out telephone shortlist interviews. Successful applicants will be informed by **13 November 2009** at the latest. Unsuccessful applicants will be informed at this time too, and invited to keep in touch with the panel's work by joining the distribution list. The induction event is provisionally planned for the **19/20 November 2009**.