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Wokingham youngsters trade classroom for workplace stint with National Grid

A dozen pupils from Addington School in Wokingham swapped the classroom for a week in the workplace courtesy of National Grid's 'Work Inspiration Week' initiative.

23 Feb 2015

The youngsters were among more than 50 pupils from eight schools in Warwickshire, Leicestershire, Birmingham and Berkshire, who were invited to spend a week's work experience at National Grid sites across the country.

The aim was to give students with additional learning needs and disabilities experience of different jobs and raise their confidence in their own ability to fulfil a role in the workplace.

Jean Lee, Careers Teacher at Addington School, said: "Addington School is really delighted to have taken part in this Inspirational week. It has given our students the most amazing opportunity to experience the world of work with such a great company in a very practical way."

She added: "Everyone was very excited to take part and enjoyed the week very much."

Emma Thompson from National Grid, who co-ordinated the initiative, said: "It's an incredible statistic that only seven per cent of young people with disabilities will end up in paid employment. It's estimated that the cost to the state to support those not in work is around £1 million per person over the course of their lifetime.

"But more importantly, there's a huge number of young, capable people, who want to contribute but aren't, either because they feel they're not able to or because their disability is seen as a barrier. That's something we're trying to change."

It's hoped that many of the students who took part in the week, will go on to take part in National Grid's 'EmployAbility – Lets Work Together' scheme, a year-long internship where they really get to hone their employability skills and experience.

Taurai Horton, 19, is a former EmployAbility intern who now has a permanent job with National Grid after impressing on his placement:

He said: "People never thought I could make it in life. Being bullied for being autistic made me hate my condition and myself. This condition has affected me greatly and has always given me disadvantages.

"Being in 'EmployAbility - Let's Work together' made me realise that anything is possible and that I can do things I never thought I could do. It's been an amazing experience and I'm so thankful I got the chance."

Taurai added: "If there were more companies using models like this then people like me would be so much better off. EmployAbility has shown me that it doesn't matter if you have autism or disabilities you still can do it. Now, I can dare to have ambition."

National Grid is trying to encourage other businesses to run similar work experience and internship schemes for student's with Special Educational Needs and Disability.

Dr Emma FitzGerald, Head of National Grid's gas distribution business, who is championing the scheme said: "So many companies will be inadvertently screening out young people with additional needs just by the way they run their recruitment processes. It's not deliberate but it's a barrier and one that can easily be addressed.

"The results we've seen from EmployAbility have been amazing. Students are quick to fit in to their job roles, their self-belief grows, as do their aspirations. Their National Grid internship is an important part of their CV and demonstrates that they can bring value to a business environment."

She added: "What we've found is that not only do we have competent, engaged, committed young people working with us, but also our existing staff gain greater disability confidence and a real sense of pride that they're working for a company that offers these kinds of opportunities. It's encouraged them push the boundaries of what's possible in their own careers and development. It's absolutely been a mutually beneficial scheme."

For more information go to:

www.employabilityletsworktogether.com

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Notes for editors

Notes to Editors:

National Grid is pivotal to the energy systems in the UK and the north eastern United States. We aim to serve customers well and efficiently, supporting the communities in which we operate and making possible the energy systems of the future.

National Grid in the UK:

- We own and operate the electricity transmission network in England and Wales, with day-to-day responsibility for balancing supply and demand. We also operate, but do not own, the Scottish networks. Our networks comprise approximately 7,200 kilometres (4,474 miles) of overhead line, 1,500 kilometres (932 miles) of underground cable and 342 substations.
- We own and operate the gas National Transmission System in Great Britain, with day-to-day responsibility for balancing supply and demand. Our network comprises approximately 7,660 kilometres (4,760 miles) of high-pressure pipe and 618 above-ground installations.
- As Great Britain's System Operator (SO) we make sure gas and electricity is transported safely and efficiently from where it is produced to where it is consumed. From April 2019, Electricity System Operator (ESO) is a new standalone business within National Grid, legally separate from all other parts of the National Grid Group. This will provide the right environment to deliver a balanced and impartial ESO that can realise real benefits for consumers as we transition to a more decentralised, decarbonised electricity system.
- Other UK activities mainly relate to businesses operating in competitive markets outside of our core regulated businesses; including interconnectors, gas metering activities and a liquefied natural gas (LNG) importation terminal – all of which are now part of National Grid Ventures. National Grid Property is responsible for the management, clean-up and disposal of surplus sites in the UK. Most of these are former gas works.

Find out more about the energy challenge and how National Grid is helping find solutions to some of the challenges we face at <https://www.nationalgrid.com/group/news>

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