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Minister gives thumbs up for EmployAbility Scheme

Special Needs Pupils from Dorothy Goodman School taking part in programme to boost their

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• Children's Minister, Edward Timpson MP, praises scheme

Children and Families Minister Edward Timpson MP has given the thumbs up to a pioneering National Grid programme that is helping three students from Hinckley's Dorothy Goodman School prove their worth in the workplace.

Matthew A'H, Beth A and George H told Mr Timpson what it meant to them to be involved in the scheme during his visit to National Grid's Warwick offices last week (Monday 12 January). The 'EmployAbility – Let's Work Together' programme offers internships to young people with special educational needs, giving them valuable skills and exposure to the working environment.

The trio joined the scheme in September at National Grid's Hinckley Operations Centre. Taking up placements in areas such as reprographics, recruitment and information technology, they have already deeply impressed managers and colleagues with their quickness to learn, enthusiasm and dedication.

Matthew said: "EmployAbility means to me the chance to experience what it's like in the workplace. It's giving me the experience I need and I am gaining more confidence out of it."

The Hinckley scheme follows a successful pilot programme with five young people from special schools in Warwick and Coventry. The programme has been expanded to offer placements to a further 12 students in Leicestershire and Warwickshire with a view to raising this eventually to 20 across the company.

Now National Grid is calling on more businesses to take up schemes offering internships to young people with special educational needs.

Dr Emma FitzGerald, Head of National Grid's gas distribution business, where many of this year's interns are working, including the interns from Dorothy Goodman School, 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.

"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."

Dorothy Goodman Headteacher Janet Thompson added: "EmployAbility is a fantastic programme which gives young people with disabilities aspirations, confidence and a step up into working life. At Dorothy Goodman we are very appreciative of the support we receive from National Grid with this programme."

Department for Education statistics state that students with learning disabilities have only a seven-per-cent likelihood of finding paid employment. The cost to the community of supporting someone who doesn't get into employment through their life is £1 million per person.

The programme has a simple but effective model minimising the impact on both the business and the student. National Grid identifies roles that an intern can fill while the special schools we partner with provide Job Coaches. The Coaches go into the business, learn the role, break it into component parts, train the intern and help them settle in. As the intern's confidence grows, the Coach backs away. Each intern spends about three months in the role and will do three internships over their final academic year.

Speaking about the visit Edward Timpson said: "National Grid's initiative fits in with what we are trying to achieve through our SEND reforms – to help children with additional needs to achieve their best by putting their needs at the centre of the system.

"It's absolutely vital young people with SEND are supported in the transition to the workplace when they finish education. Too many talented young people have been left in limbo in the past. That's why I want to see more supported internships and work placements like this to offer a first step onto the career ladder."

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Notes to Editors:

EmployAbility involves current and former pupils from the following schools: Dorothy Goodman School in Hinckley, Leicestershire, Oak Wood Secondary School in Nuneaton, Warwickshire College Group of schools, Hereward College in Coventry, Round Oak School in Warwick

To speak to the Dorothy Goodman School about their involvement in EmployAbility or the importance of employment experience to young people with disabilities, please contact the School directly.

For an interview with Edward Timpson MP please contact the Department for Education press office on 0207 340 8332 – **Ext:** 308332

About National Grid

National Grid is one of the largest investor-owned energy companies in the world and has been named Responsible Business of the Year 2014 by Business in the Community. We own and manage the grids that connect people to the energy they need, from whatever the source. In Britain and the north-eastern states of the US we run systems that deliver gas and electricity to millions of people, businesses and communities.

In Britain, we run the gas and electricity systems that our society is built on, delivering gas and electricity across the country. In the North Eastern US, we connect more than seven million gas and electric customers to vital energy sources, essential for our modern lifestyles.

National Grid in the UK:

- We own the high-voltage electricity transmission network in England and Wales, operating it across Great Britain
- We own and operate the high pressure gas transmission system in Britain
- Our gas distribution business delivers gas to 10.9 million homes and businesses
- We also own a number of related businesses including LNG importation, land remediation and metering
- National Grid manages the National Gas Emergency Service free phone line on behalf of the industry - 0800 111 999 (all calls are recorded and may be monitored).
- Our portfolio of other businesses is mainly concerned with infrastructure provision and related services where we can exploit our core skills and assets to create value. These businesses operate in areas such as Metering, Grain LNG Import, Interconnectors and Property. National Grid Carbon Ltd is a wholly owned subsidiary of

National Grid. It undertakes Carbon Capture Storage related activities on behalf of National Grid.

National Grid in the US:

- National Grid delivers electricity to approximately 3.4 million customers in New England and upstate New York
- We own 3.8 gigawatts of contracted electricity generation, providing power to over one million LIPA customers
- We are the largest distributor of natural gas in northeastern U.S., serving approximately 3.5 million customers in New York, Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

Find out more about the energy challenge and how National Grid is helping find solutions to some of the challenges we face at www.nationalgridconnecting.com

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Notes for editors

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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>

National Grid undertakes no obligation to update any of the information contained in this release, which speaks only as at the date of this release, unless required by law or regulation.

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