

# Education Secretary meets apprentices on his first visit

Visiting the Royal Mail's Mail Centre in Leeds, Mr Williamson met and spoke with some of the company's 460 apprentices. They were joined by representatives from the ambulance service and children's charity Action for Children both of which are benefitting from a share of Royal Mail's apprenticeship levy funding.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson, who earlier this week announced he would be leading the ministerial skills brief, said:

Further education and skills will be a big priority for this government and it's fantastic to see first-hand today how apprenticeships can help people land a great job and embark on a brilliant career.

We are reforming technical education and apprenticeships are offering excellent options for everyone while helping our country build the skilled workforce it needs for a productive economy.

That's particularly important as we prepare to leave the EU and I'm determined to do all I can to make sure more people and businesses take advantage of these excellent opportunities.

The government has transformed apprenticeships, working alongside employers like Royal Mail, to create high-quality opportunities to help people forge a rewarding career while providing industry and employers with the skilled workforce they need.

Royal Mail employs apprentices of all ages and backgrounds across the country in jobs from engineering to finance and logistics including opportunities to train at every level right up to degree.

While he was in the region, Mr Williamson also visited a scheme run by the volunteer-led charity Catch in Harehills, Leeds that offers fun activities for young people during the summer holiday followed by a nutritious lunch.

The scheme is one of a number across the country supported by a £9million government investment to provide around 50,000 of the most disadvantaged children across the country with free holiday clubs.

Mr Williamson added:

The government has quadrupled funding for free holiday clubs this year to help ensure thousands of children from disadvantaged

backgrounds are supported and are active over the summer.

Mr Williamson also visited Portakabin in Huntington, York where off site manufacturing is being used to build school buildings. These innovative buildings mean schools can be built to a consistent high standard and quicker, meaning less disruption to students and staff. The Education Secretary also took a tour of the factory and met with some of Portakabin's 21 apprentices who are training in a range of professions including joinery, digital design and quantity surveying.