

THE EARWIG

UPDATES FROM WEST BERKSHIRE TRAINING CONSORTIUM



Dear Members

'May you live in interesting times', so the saying goes. It has been a challenging eight weeks that have left no part of our economy unchanged. The very same applies at WBTC as we navigate the acute difficulties of lock down and a sharp decrease in business activity.

*I've found myself in a tussle with the Department for Education over funding apprenticeship providers equally. The government has chosen to guarantee funding for colleges (rightly so) but to not extend the same guarantee to charitable and commercial providers like WBTC. While extensive lobbying has secured some financial 'support', the vast majority of providers are still out in the cold. Help us and other providers by **signing this petition** today calling for the government to provide equal levels of funding to all providers.*

In this edition we have advice for apprentices who find themselves on furlough or redundant; an offer of English and maths functional skills for employees and details of how we plan to meet the ambitions of school leavers who would typically start apprenticeships this summer.



Matt Garvey - Managing Director



RISING STARS 2020

As with many local and national events, we have taken the decision to postpone our Rising Stars event. It will now take place on Wednesday 28th October 2020, at Arlington Arts Centre. We will be celebrating WBTC apprentices who achieved from 1st May 2019 - 30th April 2020.

If you have already confirmed your attendance we will transfer your place to the new event date. If you believe you should have been invited but haven't yet heard from us, please email matt@wbtc-uk.com

- **Apprentice of the Year (16-18)** - sponsored by Benchmark Furniture
- **Apprentice of the Year (19+)** - sponsored by SPX Flow
- **Mentor of the Year** - sponsored by Bayer Plc
- **Great Start Learner of the Year** - sponsored by James Cowper Kreston
- **Micro Employer of the Year** - sponsored by Dovetail Recruitment
- **Small Employer of the Year** - sponsored by The HR Department
- **Medium Employer of the Year** - sponsored by EJBC Chartered Accountants
- **Large Employer of the Year** - sponsored by Newbury Weekly News



WBTC would like to thank the award sponsors for their generous donations and also the Englefield Trust who have donated £2500 towards the cost of the graduation.



ENHANCED TRAINEESHIPS - BRIDGING THE GAP

At this time of year employers are normally gearing up to recruit school and college leavers. As expected, this year we are facing the challenge that employers are not able to take on apprentices. With this in mind, we have developed an innovative new way of working. The Enhanced Traineeship will bridge the gap between learners finishing school or college and the time when employers are confident they will be able to start employing apprentices again.

Employers

We know that there are employers who want to employ an apprentice, but are not able to at the moment. They could, however, be confident that they would be able to employ an apprentice later in the year (e.g. November).

Applicants

The hundreds of 16-18 years olds finishing school and college this year are faced with reduced choice for their future; full time education or potential unemployment. These learners could make ideal apprentices but may not be able to find an employer able to take them on at the moment.

Bridging the Gap - The Enhanced Traineeship

The Enhanced Traineeship is for employers who feel that they'll be in a position to employ a full time apprentice by November 2020. We ask that they pledge a vacancy in June/July and interview applicants as they normally would. However, the successful applicants will initially join as an Enhanced Trainee with a view to transitioning to full time apprentices by the end of November.

How is the Enhanced Traineeship different?

An Enhanced Traineeship is an innovative three month programme that bridges the gap between the tentative return to business and a more buoyant economic recovery. Learners start their programme working part time in your organisation meaning you don't have to find the capacity to mentor a trainee five days a week. At the same time the learner attends relevant Level 2 training with WBTC. As the three months progress, the learner increases their hours in the workplace as you have the capacity to support them more.

At the end of the three months (or before) the traineeship ends with a progression to the originally intended full time apprenticeship.

BENEFITS FOR THE TRAINEE:

- Secure a role that leads to an employed apprenticeship
- Gain work based experience
- Get relevant training and knowledge
- Certainty for the future in an uncertain time

BENEFITS FOR THE EMPLOYER:

- Secure your preferred apprentice applicant and gradually ease them into the business
- No initial cost for the Traineeship
- Lower cost support to get your business running again

BENEFITS FOR THE LOCAL AREA:

- We help mitigate the worst of any youth unemployment and keep alive the prospects for our next generation of apprentices

Who is it for?

Applicants should have good school/college results, a clear vocational focus and the personal qualities employers seek.

Employers should be confident of being able to support a full time apprentice by the end of November.

TIMELINE

May & June

- Engaging employers and applicants
- Advice and guidance for applicants
- Advertising vacancies on gov.uk

July

- Interviews (for an apprenticeship, with the Enhanced Traineeship to bridge the gap)

August

- Enhanced Traineeships Start (Maximum of three days a week in the workplace and a minimum of one receiving training with WBTC)

What's next?

Contact Rachel on Rachel@wbtc-uk.com or call 01635 35975 to find out more.

WELL DONE TO OUR LATEST RECIPIENTS OF THE CERTIFICATE OF EXCELLENCE

Congratulations to Publica Group, Benchmark Furniture and Bayer Plc, on being awarded our WBTC Certificate of Excellence. All have exhibited outstanding performance in the area of apprentice engagement, achievement, progression and the promotion of learning in the workplace.



Publica with their Certificate of Excellence. Pictured left to right; Chris Kent, Adam May, Michelle Clifford, Matt Dring and WBTC's Karen Dodd.



Bayer Plc with their Certificate of Excellence. Pictured left to right; Millie Millam, Lewis Slyfield, Anya Bell, Rebecca Harrison, Lucy Milsom, Charlie Gardner and Diane Lovell.



Benchmark with their Certificate of Excellence. Pictured left to right; Kelvyn Dennis with Alex Tu, Reece Manning, Mathew Rawlings, Alex Simpson, Noah Medlin, Harry Waye-Branch and Tom Fishlock.

ALL APPRENTICESHIP FUNDING TO GO DIGITAL



The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) are making some changes to the way employers can access their apprenticeship funding. While employers who pay the Apprenticeship Levy are already using a digitised system, from 1st April 2021 employers of all sizes will be using the system. There is no immediate change, however we'll be working with our employers as the year progresses to gradually migrate them over to the new system.

In the meantime, the ESFA are also running a trial phase to test the service for employers who do not pay the Apprenticeship Levy. This trial will run in parallel to the traditional funding methods that you may already be used to.

Fortunately, employers are able to delegate authority to their training provider, meaning you can do the administrative work for you.

To find out more, visit the Education and Skills Funding Agency YouTube channel by [clicking here](#).



Our sincerest thanks go to West Berkshire Council who have provided some additional funding to help us provide online advice and guidance to school leavers.

Most sessions will take place online face to face with a qualified adviser who can give advice and guidance on apprenticeships, Enhanced Traineeships and our study programmes.

For more details, please contact:
rachel@wbtc-uk.com or
natalie.elliott@wbtc-uk.com

SAFEGUARDING & PREVENT

CONTACTING WBTC DURING LOCKDOWN



We have written to our learners with advice on contacting WBTC during lockdown if you have a safeguarding or prevent concern. Being at home may make it difficult to call or speak with someone, especially if the abuse is in the family home. With sharp increases in domestic and child abuse being recorded in locked down countries, the need to be vigilant has never been greater.

Our available safeguarding officers are:

Natalie.Elliott@wbtc-uk.com

Martyn@wbtc-uk.com

Tony@wbtc-uk.com

Matt@wbtc-uk.com

Email or text

Email or text any of the safeguarding officers above including the word 'RED' in a sentence. If you prefer to phone us use the word 'RED' in a spoken sentence, this will alert us that you are in immediate risk of harm. This will allow us to call the police on your behalf if needed.

Examples of how it could be used in a sentence could be:

"Yes, I've sent the work in a RED file..."

"I underlined all the bits that were important with a RED pen."

"He often wears a RED t-shirt."

Remember that there are the usual means of contacting the police. Use the **non-emergency number 101** for situations that do not require an immediate **police response**, or **999** if you are in immediate danger. If you aren't able to talk **press 55** and this will alert them that you can't speak.

If you need any further advice and guidance contact martyn@wbtc-uk.com



DISCOUNTS FOR APPRENTICES!



NUS Apprentice extra is the discount card for UK Apprentices with lots of discounts in-store and online, helping your hard earned cash stretch a little further!

There are hundreds of participating retailers, restaurants and online sellers. Discounts are available for fashion, food, driving lessons, flights and many more. Some of the well-known participating organisations include: Alton Towers, Amazon, Apple, ASOS, Co-op, Domino Pizza, Durex, Microsoft, Odeon, Prezzo, RED driving school and Soletrader.

It costs £11 and you can start saving immediately. It's open to apprentices of any age and you'll need to apply as a WBTC apprentice.

Visit <https://www.apprenticeextra.co.uk/buy-now.aspx> for more information and to apply.

CONGRATULATIONS TO TWO OF OUR LATEST APPRENTICE ACHIEVERS



Virginia Leonard, Advanced Apprentice Business Administrator at St Bartholomew's School

Congratulations to Virginia Leonard of St Bartholomew's School who has achieved her Business Administrator Advanced Apprenticeship

Virginia said *"My apprenticeship has given me the confidence that I am capable of more than I think I am and that I am still able to learn. It was a fantastic opportunity to learn about something new as I had not done any formal education for 30 years. WBTC have been very supportive; I couldn't have done it without their help and encouragement. Apprenticeships are a fantastic opportunity and if you are considering doing one then you should go for it."*

Andrea Wood, Virginia's Training Consultant said *"It has been great working with Virginia. Throughout her apprenticeship her work was outstanding, full of detail and professional discourse. Completing this apprenticeship has given Virginia the drive to take on an Open University course showing the transformative power that an apprenticeship can have on someone's career objectives. I wish her all the best."*

"Apprenticeships are a fantastic opportunity and if you are considering doing one then you should go for it."

Congratulations to Russell Fletcher-Bott of Elmdale Maintenance who has achieved his Advanced Apprenticeship in IT Telecoms.

Russell said *"The apprenticeship has been extremely useful for me as going directly to a place of work without this programme would have been hard. Although I started off with a basic understanding, the programme has helped with my knowledge which in turn has improved my confidence. Over the past 18 months I have matured as a person; I am a more confident and less anxious person now. I'd advise new apprentices to try and focus on the little things, doing this will make the bigger tasks easier."*

Hazel Thomas, Russell's Training Consultant said *"It's been a pleasure to support Russell through his apprenticeship. The change in confidence that Russell has exhibited is truly amazing, he has grown as a person and into a true professional. Russell has a fantastic attitude to his work, and with the support of his excellent employer, Elmdale Maintenance, he has a very promising future."*

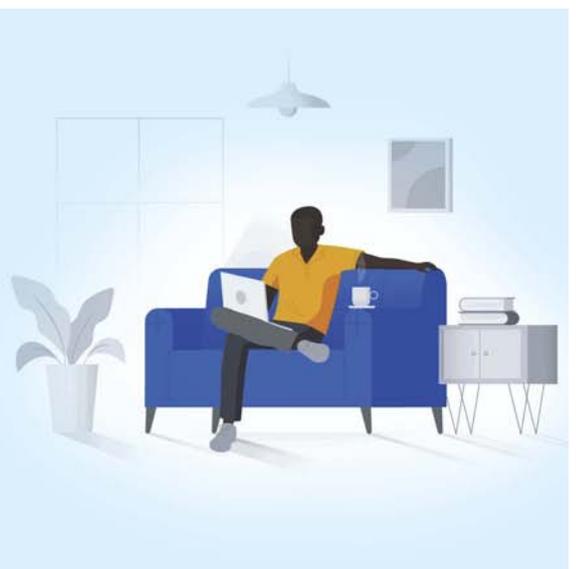


Russell Fletcher-Bott, Advanced Apprenticeship in IT Telecoms at Elmdale Maintenance

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Necessity is the mother of invention! We are now an entirely digital-based delivery provider with workshops, 1-2-1 coaching, pastoral support and reviews all taking place online. BCoT have also risen to the challenge to ensure our technical occupation apprentices continue to receive training in engineering, construction, IT and other programmes. Thanks to Thames Valley Berkshire LEP we will be receiving a grant of over £80,000 to invest in digital tools and resources for learners. This will help us enrich content and make our training more accessible. We'll also be looking at how we can support apprentices through a digital lending library for the duration of their programme.

Post lockdown we will continue to build our provision around remote learning and, when it is safe to do so, we will restart face-to-face workshops. Apprentices will have a truly blended delivery model combining the best of face to face and digital learning.





COVID-19 ADVICE FOR OUR APPRENTICES AND EMPLOYERS

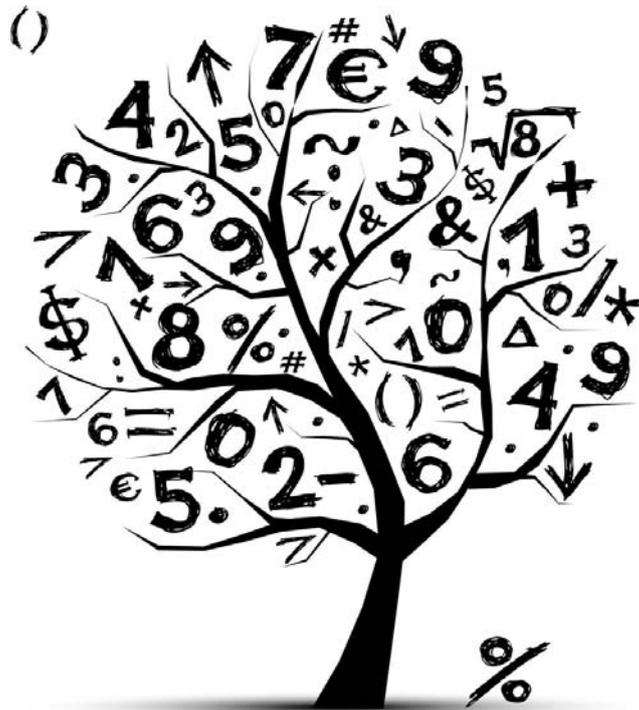
A large number of our apprentices are currently on furlough from work. Any employee on furlough can undertake training (including an apprenticeship). See a short video from me with more detail [here](#).

Being on furlough can be disorientating and even dispiriting. Keeping a structure to your day will help give a sense of achievement and purpose. It is important to continue with your apprenticeship training, and, if you are a little behind, this is a great opportunity to catch up. We are on hand to help you, and will make sure this break in your apprenticeship doesn't prevent you from achieving.

So far only a small number of apprentices have been made redundant. Watch a short video with advice if you've been made redundant [here](#).

The government will continue to fund apprentices who have been made redundant for 12-26 weeks so that they can continue their studies. We will also help you find an alternative employer so you can finish your apprenticeship.

It is important to continue with your apprenticeship training, and, if you are a little behind, this is a great opportunity to catch up.



GET YOUR MATHS AND ENGLISH QUALIFICATIONS

We are currently offering our customers the opportunity to get their maths and English functional skills (GCSE equivalent of A-C or 4-9). In just one hour per week, you can work towards your level 2 English and/or maths.

Who is it for?

Anyone aged 19+, employed or unemployed is fully funded, this also includes furloughed employees.

How is it delivered?

You will attend one online session each week for up to 13 weeks. The sessions will be 60 - 90 minutes on Google Classroom and will either be 1-2-1 or in a small group.

How is it passed?

Depending on when you're ready, this could be an assessed or examined qualification. Exams are currently suspended and are not expected to resume before 31 July 2020. So those who are ready to complete their qualification before 31 July 2020 will be assessed.

Enrol today

Contact Natalie.elliott@wbtc-uk.com for more advice and guidance or to enrol. If you plan to do this in 'work time' then you will need to support of your employer. Remember this is fully funded so there is no cost to you as an applicant or to your employer.



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