

THE EARWIG

UPDATES FROM WEST BERKSHIRE TRAINING CONSORTIUM

WBTC
HIGH QUALITY
APPRENTICESHIPS
AND TRAINING

wbtc-uk.com



Dear Members

We can safely say that 2020 has had its challenges and ups and downs. Despite this fact we were still very keen to celebrate and award our learners and employers with the Rising Stars Awards. Take a look at the winners list on the next page. I'd like to thank all the winners and nominees for their hard work and dedication to their apprenticeship programmes.

While we have had a gradual return to the training centre for some learners and staff, we are always closely monitoring the situation and post any changes on our social media accounts. If you have any questions about this please get in touch on matt@wbtc-uk.com.

We have been pleased to see some of the government initiatives that will support employers and young people through this challenging time. Find out more below about the apprenticeship incentive schemes and how this could help you recruit an apprentice this year.

In the meantime, stay safe and well.

Matt Garvey - Managing Director

APPRENTICE GRADUATION 2021

As you will know, we had to cancel the 2020 graduation ceremony for our apprentices. We still very much want to celebrate and praise all the work of our learners. With this in mind, all learners who achieved their apprenticeship between April 2019 and 31st March 2020 will be invited to graduate at the 2021 ceremony. This will be held at Arlington Arts on Wednesday 19th May.

Find out more information about this event on our website by [clicking here](#).



GOVERNMENT EMPLOYER INCENTIVES FOR APPRENTICESHIPS

Earlier in the year Rishi Sunak announced the introduction of incentive schemes to encourage employers to take on new apprentices. In some circumstances, employers could receive up to £3,000 to take on a new apprentice before the end of January 2021.

Click here to find out more or email rachel@wbtc-uk.com to discover how to start your apprenticeship recruitment process.

RISING STARS AWARDS - THE WINNERS

As you may know, our 2020 Graduation and Rising Stars Awards had been rescheduled the end of October, however, due to changes in government guidance we decided it would be safer to cancel the event entirely. We still wanted to celebrate our learners and employers and so took the decision to present the Rising Stars Awards to the winners offline. We were extremely impressed with the calibre of all of the nominees and it is a reminder of the great learners, employers and mentors that we are so privileged to work with. Take a look at the list of winners below:



Large Employer of the Year

Sponsored by Newbury Weekly News

Thames Valley Police



Medium Employer of the Year

Sponsored by EJBC Chartered Accountants

Newbury Building Society



Small Employer of the Year

Sponsored by The HR Department

Sharp's Autos



Micro Employer of the Year

Sponsored by Dovetail Recruitment

Durrants Calleva



Great Start Learner of the Year

Sponsored by James Cowper Kreston

Owen Armstrong



Mentor of the Year

Sponsored by Bayer Plc

Donna-Louise Gwatkin
Bayer Plc



Apprentice of the Year 19+

Sponsored by SPX Flow

Lewis Slyfield
Bayer Plc



Apprentice of the Year 16-18

Sponsored by Benchmark Furniture

Aimee Richardson
Firststra Financial Services



ENGLISH & MATHS FUNCTIONAL SKILLS

As our English and maths Functional Skills learners start to complete and achieve their qualifications, we have received some great feedback like this one from Helen. We have had a mixture of large cohorts from one organisation as well as individuals who are keen to take the next steps in their career.

If your organisation would like to offer FREE English and maths functional skills qualifications to your employees then get in touch with Karen on karen@wbtc-uk.com.

“ Claire, Laretta and Fiona made learning a pleasant experience for me. They made feel more confident and were so encouraging throughout. From somebody that was terrified of learning they have all made me have faith again and this will have a massive impact on my future in a positive way.

Helen, English and Maths Functional Skills Learner

SAFEGUARDING: FREE SCHOOL MEALS



There has been a lot of conversation this year about free school meals as Footballer Marcus Rashford MBE has been challenging the government to make sure that no child goes hungry.

His campaign aimed to ensure that free school meals were available to those who needed them in school holidays. The campaign has received extensive support across the country from small pub and café owners offering free meals during half term, to large corporations such as Deliveroo, Aldi and Sainsbury's joining together to establish a task force.

Aside from school holidays, free school meals are available to children of all ages (nursery to sixth form) if they are eligible (e.g. living in households receiving income-related benefits.) During lockdown, while the school were closed, children were able to access free school meals through:

- Food parcels for collection or delivery
- The government's centrally-funded national voucher scheme
- Alternative vouchers for a local shop or supermarket (e-vouchers or gift cards)

To apply for free school meals please **click here**.

Alternatively find out who locally is offering support during school holidays online by visiting 'alofustgether.com' by **clicking here**, or the Newbury Today website which can be found **here**.



Martyn Staines
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HEALTH AND SAFETY: PROTECTING HOME WORKERS



As many employees have had to start working from home this year, organisations need to be aware that they have the same health and safety responsibilities to home workers as they do for any other worker.

When someone is working from home, permanently or temporarily, as an employer you should consider:

- How will you keep in touch with them?
- What work activity will they be doing (and for how long)?
- Can it be done safely?
- Do you need to put control measures in place to protect them?

(Source: hse.gov.uk)

Another consideration for employers will be the mental health of their employees. Without contact many can feel disconnected, isolated and abandoned.

Having a robust plan in place for your team who are working from home at this time will help support every employee and maintain a good level of work output and a positive organisational culture.

More information can be found here on the UK Government website by [clicking here](#).

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 cinema, 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. For details and more information visit the Apprentice Extra website by [clicking here](#).



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