

# THE EARWIG

Updates from West Berkshire Training Consortium



wbtc-uk.com



## Hello!

Welcome to October's edition of **The Earwig**. Our team have been very busy! As well as organising our graduation earlier this month, we continue to recruit and onboard many fresh-faced apprentices, following the fantastic news that the government has extended both its Apprenticeship Incentive and Kick Start schemes into 2022.

This month, we reflect on our wonderful Learner Graduation, highlight some of our recent learner achievers, and announce a brand-new initiative for businesses and apprenticeships alike.

Matt Garvey - *Managing Director*

## 2021 LEARNER GRADUATION



On Wednesday 6th October 2021, our apprentice graduates from the class of 2020 and 2021 graduated in front of employers, family and friends at Arlington Arts Centre. As Covid restrictions prevented our annual apprentice graduation in 2020, everyone was delighted to finally come together and celebrate our learners' achievements, especially after such a challenging 18 months.

DOWNLOAD YOUR GRADUATION  
PICTURES [HERE](#)

We were honoured to have MP Laura Farris, Conservative MP for Newbury, at the event, who gave an upbeat motivating graduate address that captured the optimism and excitement of the occasion.

We were also delighted to announce our 2021 Honorary Fellowship of WBTC, Tammera Easterling, for services to young people in Berkshire. Our 2021 WBTC Platinum Award was also awarded to the wonderful EBJC Chartered Accountants for providing a consistently excellent apprenticeship and training programme.

We like to thank our fantastic sponsors, staff, graduates and their supporters for making this event possible. Well done and we look forward to celebrating the graduates of 2022 next year!



MP Laura Farris



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# INCENTIVE SCHEMES EXTENDED

Earlier this month, Rishi Sunak announced the extension of apprenticeship employer incentives and the Kickstart scheme to encourage employers to take on new staff.

## Apprenticeship incentive scheme

Under the apprenticeship incentive scheme, employers could receive up to £3,000 to take on a new apprentice before the end of January 2022. [Click here](#) to find out more or email [rachel@wbtc-uk.com](mailto:rachel@wbtc-uk.com) to discover how to start your apprenticeship recruitment process.

## Kickstart Scheme

Under the Kickstart Scheme, until the end of March 2022, employers will receive £1,500 by creating a work placement for 16 – 24-year-olds on Universal Credit. As part of the agreement, employers must evidence the provision of high-quality training, and this is where WBTC can help.

If you're interested in taking on a Kickstarter, WBTC provides effective customised online training. For more information visit [wbtc-uk.com/kickstart-scheme-training](https://wbtc-uk.com/kickstart-scheme-training) or contact [karen@wbtc-uk.com](mailto:karen@wbtc-uk.com)

# ADULT MATHS AND ENGLISH

Our English and Maths Functional Skills courses continue to prove popular with a variety of learners, and we continue to achieve a pass rate 20% above the national average.

## ***What is the difference between GCSEs and Functional Skills?***

We have realised that prospective learners and the public are sometimes not aware of the difference between English and Maths GCSEs and Functional Skills. Therefore, we enlisted our friendly WBTC Tutor Martyn to create a handy explanation video.

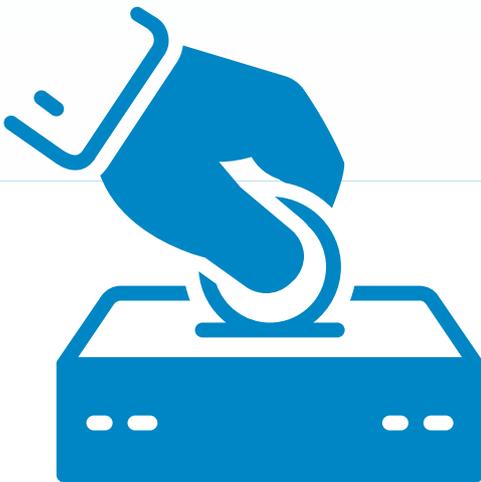
## **Watch it here**

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](mailto:karen@wbtc-uk.com).



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# 100 APPRENTICE CHALLENGE



It's been widely reported that many big organisations are not taking full advantage of their levy to fund and train new apprentices. More so, many big organisations are not aware they can donate up to 25% of their unspent levy funds to smaller employers.

In response to this, WBTC is launching the **WBTC 100 Apprentice Challenge** for 2021-22, an initiative to help encourage levy paying businesses to pledge enough of their unused funds to support 100 new local apprenticeships. The booster effect of big local business supporting the smaller business community in this way is potentially huge!

## **Benefits to your organisation**

- Allows your business to demonstrate Corporate Social Responsibility
- Free positive promotion from WBTC and partners
- An efficient and effective way to use unused levy tax
- Promotes good working relationships and enhances the potential for further opportunities

If you are interested in taking part, we will promote the news of your pledge across all our WBTC platforms to ensure your business receives plenty of positive publicity. To find out more and discuss further, please contact [matt@wbtc-uk.com](mailto:matt@wbtc-uk.com)

# LEARNER CELEBRATIONS

We love to see our apprentices complete and hearing their stories of success makes it all worthwhile!



## LEARNER OF THE QUARTER

Well done to Rosie Flower from West Berkshire Libraries who was recently named as our Learner of the Quarter!



## NEW STARTERS

Wishing the best of luck to all our new apprentices including:

- IT Solutions Apprentice at Elmdale IT Services Ltd
- Two new Science Industry Maintenance Technician apprentices at Thermo Fisher Scientific.

## OUR RECENT APPRENTICE ACHIEVERS

Louise Paffey | Advanced Team Leader/Supervisor Apprenticeship with Dometic

Cameron Doswell | Intermediate Warehousing Apprenticeship with Rob Pond Ltd

Emily Gray | Higher Accountancy Apprenticeship with EJBC Chartered Accountants

Jemma Burgess-Taylor | Operations Departmental Management Apprenticeship with The Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM)

Karen Grantham | Customer Service Specialist Apprenticeship with Checkpoint Systems

Victoria Holland | Higher Accountancy Apprenticeship with PBA Accountants

***Congratulations!***

[CLICK HERE](#) TO TALK TO US ABOUT TAKING  
ON AN APPRENTICE TODAY!

# ADDED VALUE COURSES FOR MEMBERS



Develop your workforce with training courses delivered by our highly experienced, industry trainers. Grow your business and get valuable skills and knowledge for you and your team. Workshops are all free to our partner employers (or £199pp to non-partners) and are all held at our training centre in Newbury or online.

These training courses are aimed at both organisations who want to upskill their staff, and individuals looking to develop their career.

- Health and Safety
- Digital Skills
- Project Management
- Wellbeing
- Mental Health
- Team Leading
- First Aid
- Customer Service
- Time Management
- Presentation Skills

[BOOK NOW](#)

## SAFEGUARDING AND PREVENT DUTY

### Vaccine hesitancy is being linked to Social Media

As people who look to social media for information, particularly YouTube, are less willing to be vaccinated against COVID-19, according to a new publication from the universities of Oxford and Southampton whose researchers are urging the government and social media firms to take urgent action over the findings.

Professor Mills, an author of the study, has said: 'Misinformation proliferates on some social media platforms because users receive content suggestions aligned with their fears and watch histories, driving them into deeper 'rabbit-holes'. Information is often presented by non-experts, with limited fact checking, making it difficult to gauge the accuracy or balance the information.'

Scepticism around COVID-19 and vaccines were linked to beliefs that the unequal deaths in certain population groups were a form of population control, that herd immunity had been reached, and that the virus was man-made or not as deadly as reported. Professor Mills added: 'There was often a knowledge void in understanding the risks. Although there are some who hold conspiratorial beliefs, many were simply trying to make sense of fragmented, dynamic and confusing information, often accessing social media for clarity.'

The publication says more than 80% of Europeans and more than 70% of Americans use the internet as a source for health information, and finds growth in internet use and reliance on social media sources such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and TikTok has changed the landscape of information gathering.

Action is essential, according to the Oxford team, which maintained: 'Governments should establish an engaging web presence to fill knowledge gaps'. Sites remain unregulated, they say, and are not operating as "publishers", and therefore, are not forced to present balanced information, with misinformation or conspiracy theories quickly becoming "viral".'

Official UK Government advice remains to be that coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccines are safe and effective and that they give you the best protection against COVID-19. [Click here to find out more about getting the vaccine.](#)