

THE EARWIG

UPDATES FROM WEST BERKSHIRE TRAINING CONSORTIUM

Dear Apprentices and Employers

Happy New Year and welcome to the January 2017 edition of *The Earwig* newsletter from WBTC. We're now in the final countdown to the full implementation of *The Reform of Apprenticeships*. No employer will be untouched by the changes whether in terms of funding or indeed the content/delivery of apprenticeships as they morph from Frameworks to Standards. I'm a little concerned that the government has become fixated with the 1.7% of employers who will pay *The Apprentice Levy* to the apparent exclusion of those who do not. The Levy Payers will be a keystone in the development of apprenticeships and their unspent Levy accounts will eventually fund all apprenticeships. However, let us not forget that until now the vast majority of apprenticeships for young people have been provided by smaller employers.

The Association of Employment & Learning Providers recently suggested that many larger employers will spend their Levy accounts on Higher and Degree Apprenticeships for established employees. This is particularly true for management training. Yet, we must not enjoy such exciting growth at the expense of the many younger 16-23 year olds who need an apprenticeship as their first route into work. The apprenticeship programme is a proven vehicle for social mobility as well as career development.

Any employer reading this with teenage children, siblings or family members may be rightfully concerned that the number of opportunities in apprenticeships could decrease IF government funding for SMEs doesn't remain in place until 2020. At the last estimate just £480 million of funding is being made available for £1 bn demand from smaller employers.

Will the government find the funding and ensure that apprenticeships remain a sustainable option for young people? I'll keep you posted.

By way of good news for SMEs we announce a final round of European funding for small-medium sized employers in Berkshire. Plus you'll also find a list of all recipients in the *Investment in Training Awards for 2016*.



Matt Garvey, Managing Director



ESF FUNDING FOR SMALL-MEDIUM ENTERPRISES IN BERKSHIRE

The European Social Fund has supported many innovative projects in our area over the last 20 years. This latest and most likely final round of funding is just as exciting.

It is aimed at companies in Berkshire with 249 or fewer employees. It is called Skills Support for the Workforce (SSW) and provides funding for training for staff aged 19+.

1. This is fully funded training, potentially saving a business thousands of pounds
2. Aimed at smaller or bite sized sessions
3. Ideal for existing staff wishing to improve or broaden their skills
4. Includes a training needs analysis of your organisation
5. There is a focus on participants progressing into adult apprenticeships, higher levels of training or gaining job career progression/promotion

We delivered this programme 2013-2015 with great success and we aim to offer opportunities in:

- Management (particularly the Level 3 ILM Award)
- Office Skills
- IT Skills
- Customer Service

This programme is delivered in partnership with East Berkshire College.

Jenny Hyam and Rachel Eaves, along with project manager Jon Thompson will be providing the advice and guidance to local employers. If you are a Berkshire organisation with 249 or fewer staff who would like to benefit from this opportunity then contact: Jenny@wbtc-uk.com, Rachel@wbtc-uk.com or Jon@wbtc-uk.com

REFORM OF APPRENTICESHIPS, THE LEVY AND EMPLOYER FEES (CONTINUED)

In the last edition of *The Earwig* I outlined some of the headline decisions that the government has made for the funding from May 2017. In this edition I'd like to focus on the co-funded arrangements for the many employers who will not pay The Apprentice Levy and who will receive public funding towards the training and assessment of their apprentices.

The new system is complex but generally fair

The government has created a rather haphazard series of funding bands into which it is slotting all existing apprenticeships. A little like tuition fees in HE, the bands are the maximum 'price' that the government will allow funding to be used for. There will be a lot of heat in the press telling co-funded employers that they'll only need to contribute 10% of the cost of the apprenticeship. It would be more accurate to say that most employers will contribute 10% or more of the cost of the apprenticeship.

What is the funding and what is it for?

Generally, for co-funded employers the government will contribute 90% funding in return for the employer contributing 10%. The funding guidance states clearly that this contribution is for the cost of training & assessment only. Recruitment, initial assessment, programme set up and any added value activity is not included in the funding regime.

Frameworks and Standards

The government is desperate for all apprenticeships to move to Standards. Personally I think that Standards are a good idea in that they enable employers to tailor their programme to suit their specific business. To incentivise this, the government has placed Standards in higher funding bands than the corresponding Frameworks. However, Standards only exist for a small minority of apprenticeships. For the most popular i.e. Business Administration, Construction, Childcare etc, the Standards are far from ready. Further, where Standards are being delivered many have no End Point Assessment available. (*The FE Week report on the situation can be viewed here*)

It's like learning to drive in a town with no driving examiner

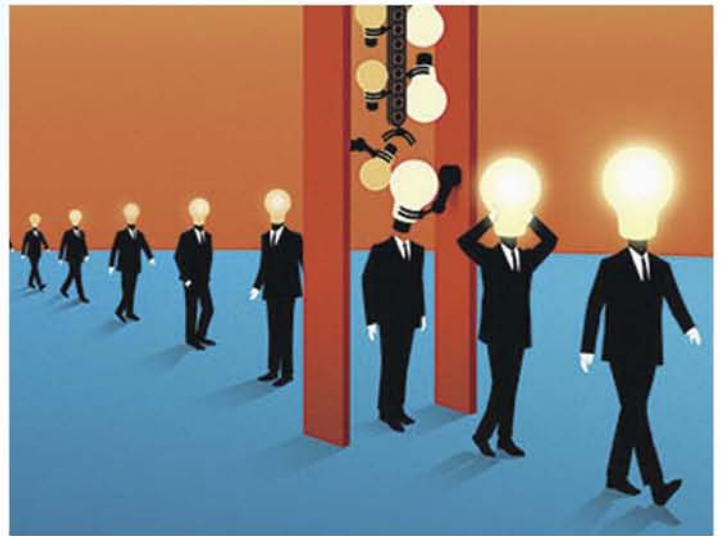
It's a bit of a messy situation. However, in funding terms, absence of a Standard or an End Point Assessment means, for many sectors from May 2017 there will still only be a Framework to choose and that many of these Frameworks are grossly undervalued in their Funding Band. It might mean some employers pay more.

What does it mean for co-funded employers?

In some cases, the cost of delivering the apprenticeship will be greater than the funding available. In these circumstances government believes that the employer should pay the balance from their own pocket. It makes for a rather uneven and challenging environment until all Frameworks have been replaced by Standards, a task that will probably conclude in 2020.

Will it be different at WBTC?

Our 33 years' experience in apprenticeships has taught us that our employers understand that 'you get what you pay for'. There's talk of a 'race to the bottom' and 'cut price apprenticeships'. That's not for us so we'll continue to focus on quality and results for employers and apprentices alike. Our apprentice achievement rates are 86.6% and nearly 80% of all our apprentices stay with their employer and go on to gain promotion, added responsibility and progress to higher learning.



Our priority is to make the transition as seamless as possible and focus on continuity. WBTC is a Charity and for many years has offered our employers a simple and easy service from recruitment through to apprentice completion. Where we have charged, we have done so on simple tariffs that are easy to understand. We have also always offered a totally 'free' service for those smallest employers focusing on the 16-18 year olds in our community.

Our tariffs for employers from May 2017 will follow these principles

1. We'll continue to offer a fully funded option for the smallest employers who employ 16-18 year old apprentices. Those employers will pay nothing for the training and assessment. This will also include 19-24 year olds who are considered 'disadvantaged' defined as care leavers or with a relevant Education, Health & Care Plan.
2. We'll limit our tariffs to three simple bands based upon the occupational cost of the apprenticeship.
3. Our tariffs will have an element that pays for the vast array of added value activities that quality employers enjoy. These include:
 - a. At least 1 extra training session per month for your staff
 - b. Discounted rates on commercial courses of up to 25%
 - c. Free coaching & mentoring workshops for staff supervising apprentices
 - d. Our enrichment activities such as trips to Parliament, Canoeing and the Cowes Small Ships Race
 - e. The annual Apprentice Graduation & Rising Stars Awards

We're currently working on the tariffs to ensure that they are fair and sustainable. However, we believe that the vast majority of customers will see little or no change to their current weekly contribution for apprentice delivery.

More details on the future of apprenticeship funding from the government can be found [here](#).

Reference information on The Levy can also be found by following [this link](#).

INVESTMENT IN TRAINING AWARD RECIPIENTS 2016

Well done to all our employers who have been recognised in our Investment in Training Awards for 2016. We have begun presenting certificates, taking a few photos and below we have listed the recipients.

Certificate of Excellence

Bayer Plc
 Benchmark Furniture
 BGM Heating & Plumbing
 Compressor Products International
 Durrants Calleva Accountants
 E J Business Consultants
 Electronic Manufacturing Solutions (EMS)
 Firstxtra Financial Services
 Hypertec
 James Cowper Kreston LLP
 Sovereign Housing Association
 West Berks Council
 3M

Certificate of Merit

Amatis Networks
 Atkins & Potts
 Avnet Abacus
 Big Group Insight Ltd
 CBRE (Norland Managed Services)
 Cobal Signs
 Cottsway Housing Association
 Docherty Group

Elmdale Maintenance Ltd
 Gardner Leader Solicitors
 Garner Osborne Circuits
 Hartwood Oak Buildings
 Intelligent Group Solutions
 Intelligent Retail Ltd
 JV Foods
 Mixing Solutions
 Netteam TX
 Newbury Central Library
 Phabrix Ltd
 Please Plumbing
 Prisym ID Ltd
 Rebound Electronics
 Ross Brooke Chartered Accountants
 Secure Systems
 Sharp's Auto
 SPX Flow Control
 Stacatruc
 Thatcham Research
 The Grey Matter Group
 Tigers Nursery School
 Verbatim Call Centres
 Wilkins Kennedy LLP

Certificate of Commendation

Absolute Casing
 Achievement for All
 Advanced Compressor Engineering Services Ltd
 AMJ Auto Services Ltd
 ATB Accounting
 Beninca Automation UK LTD
 Burdwood Surgery
 Engineering Solutions and Supply Ltd
 Executive Serviced Apartments
 First Intuition Reading
 GHE Solar Ltd
 Gowrings Mobility Group Ltd
 Henwick Properties
 Ideas Industry (Reading) Ltd
 IPC Windows
 IT Repair Gurus
 Julian Turner Gardening
 Protect and Invest
 Red Balloon Design Ltd
 Rivar Sand and Gravel Ltd
 ROC Technologies
 RSK Plumbing & Heating Ltd
 Saica Pack
 The Car Clinic



Well done to Elmdale Maintenance and Phabrix who both achieved the Certificate of Merit in our Investment in Training Awards

APPRENTICE GRADUATION & RISING STARS AWARDS

Time sure does fly by. Our 3rd annual Apprentice Graduation & Rising Stars Awards will be on Wednesday 19th April 2017 at Arlington Arts Centre near Newbury. Invites are going out to those who have completed their apprenticeship or are due to do so by 31st March 2017. We sure do hope to have a great turn out again celebrating our graduating apprentices. If you haven't received an invite you can drop us a line by contacting mandy@wbtc-uk.com

Graduation attire

Once again, thanks to our sponsors, we'll be laying on complimentary graduation attire for the ceremony. This will be arranged by WBTC directly with the attending graduates. We'll just need your height and head size (S/M/L) and everything will be taken care of, just send us your size via email to: temp@wbtc-uk.com:

- Intermediate Apprentices: Black cap, gown and purple stole
- Advanced Apprentices: Black cap, gown and gold stole
- Higher Apprentices: Black cap, gold tassel, black gown and purple & gold stole
- Please note that level 4 & 5 ILM students will be graduating in Higher Apprentice attire.



HEALTH & SAFETY INFORMATION WORKPLACE TEMPERATURES

In the bleak mid-winter...we still have to work. However, employers have a duty to ensure that the temperature both indoors and outdoors complies with relevant health & safety guidance. While much of this is common sense, employers & staff may wish to be aware of their rights and responsibilities during cold and warm periods.

Here is some guidance from the Health & Safety Executive:

INDOOR WORKPLACES

You must provide:

- a reasonable working temperature in workrooms usually at least 16°C, or 13°C for strenuous work (unless other laws require lower temperatures); These temperatures are not absolute legal requirements; the employer has a duty to determine what reasonable comfort will be in the particular circumstances.
- local heating or cooling where a comfortable temperature cannot be maintained throughout each work room (eg hot and cold processes).
- thermal clothing and rest facilities where necessary, eg for 'hot work' or cold stores.
- heating systems which do not give off dangerous or offensive levels of fume into the workplace.
- sufficient space in work rooms.

OUTDOOR WORKPLACES

When working outdoors the effects of the weather in this environment can potentially have a very serious impact on an employee's welfare if the risks have never been previously considered or managed properly. This impact may be immediate or it may occur over a long time period. For example, exposure to the sun can cause skin damage including sunburn, blistering and skin ageing and in the long term can lead to an increased risk of skin cancer. Skin cancer is one of the most common forms of cancer in the UK with over 50,000 new cases every year.

It is not unreasonable for employees to tell their employer when they find the temperature uncomfortable and employers should take reasonable steps to mitigate the cold or heat in the working environment.

The guidance for employers can be found [here](#).



SAFEGUARDING ALERT YOUNG PEOPLE TARGETED IN MODEL-SCAM

From BBC News: Fake social media accounts have been used to deceive teenage girls into sending indecent images of themselves.

The availability of social media and image-based apps has been used by criminals to snare unsuspecting would-be models. Snapchat profiles were set up in the name of Base Models, a legitimate company, not involved with the activity whereby girls received messages from the accounts, from someone who claimed to be recruiting models for the agency.

Base Models, a legitimate London model agency, said it had received more than 40 reports from girls who said they were contacted online by someone claiming to work for the company as a model scout. These 'scouts' are in no way connected with the agency.

Using Snapchat accounts named after the company, somebody posing as a Base employee contacted girls aged between 14 and 19. These girls were told they could earn between £500 and £50,000 working as models. One report, shown to the BBC by the agency, indicated that a child was asked to send a naked picture of herself.

Clearly this is a serious offence and real safeguarding risk for young people. In an image conscious society the promise of fame and fortune can be seductive but these scams underscore the need for e-safety training and awareness. If something seems too good to be true; it usually is. Double check the claims of on-line scouts before engaging with them. Don't be afraid to seek advice from friends and family who may be able to spot a scam and help you steer clear of it.



The full BBC report can be found [here](#). Advice for parents and employers on online safety can be found [here](#).

Advice for teenagers to help protect yourself online can be found [here](#).

For further advice or guidance, contact martyn@wbtc-uk.com



WORKSHOPS, COURSES AND ACTIVITIES

Most of the events below are free of charge to WBTC learners and work place mentors. To book, please use the email address against each event. Spaces go fast so please let us know ASAP if you wish to make a reservation.

FEBRUARY

INTRODUCTION TO SALES WITH MATT GARVEY

This half-day session is ideal for anyone new to sales or working in a customer facing role promoting additional products and services. The workshop will focus on identifying different customer types to sell more effectively plus promoting features & benefits.

Venue: WBTC
Date: Wednesday 15th February. 09:30-12:30
Contact: bethp@wbtc-uk.com
Cost: Free for WBTC members. £100 for non members



PROFESSIONAL BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

This morning workshop is about the written communication we produce and making it look professional. A poor letter or email can reflect badly on a company so this session explores:

- How to construct a professional business letter
- Good practice in the use of emails and their content
- Giving a professional image of you and your company

Venue: WBTC
Date: Tuesday 21st February, 09:30-12:30
Contact: bethp@wbtc-uk.com
Cost: Free for WBTC members. £100 for non members



MARCH

NEGOTIATING SKILLS

We all have to negotiate at sometime, whether it is commercially or with colleagues. It is a valuable and powerful skill.

- Preparing to negotiate
- Understanding how to achieve a win-win outcome
- The power of persuasion in negotiating

Venue: WBTC
Date: Friday 24th March 09:30-12:30
Contact: bethp@wbtc-uk.com
Cost: Free for WBTC members. £100 for non members



MANAGEMENT MASTERCLASS WITH HANNAH GIBSON

We recognise that managers, team leaders and directors don't always want to commit to a qualification but do want to further their professional development. This one day workshop brings in some of our most popular ILM content into a convenient and engaging training event. You will learn:

- Managing people and dealing with conflict
- Techniques for motivating people
- Developing inner strength as a leader

Venue: WBTC
Date: Monday 6th March, 09:30-16:30
Contact: Jenny@wbtc-uk.com
Cost: £199 for WBTC members. £259 for non members



APRIL

SELF MOTIVATION AND TEAM WORK

This workshop focuses on techniques to keep energy levels high at work and build great team relationships. In this session you will explore:

- What motivates you and how to stay focused
- Understanding the dynamics of teams and leaders
- Starting with the end in mind to achieve team success



Venue: WBTC
Date: Friday 7th April 09:30-12:30
Contact: bethp@wbtc-uk.com
Cost: Free for WBTC members. £100 for non members



West Berkshire Training Consortium
Consortium House
7 Cheap Street, Newbury
Berkshire. RG14 5DD
Tel: 01635 35975
www.wbtc-uk.com

facebook.com/WBTCNewbury
twitter.com/WBTCNewbury
Matt Garvey LinkedIn



PARLIAMENT TRIP THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 16th

A repeat of an always popular excursion to the home of our democracy, the Palace of Westminster aka The Houses of Parliament.

This trip, perhaps our last opportunity once the building undergoes extensive repairs, is an absolute must. You'll not only get to experience the wonders of this amazing historic landmark but also learn how laws and politics happen in our country. This trip is aimed at apprentices and learners but we welcome enquiries from workplace mentors too. For more information email natalie.elliott@wbtc-uk.com or nicola@wbtc-uk.com

