

# THE EARWIG

UPDATES FROM WEST BERKSHIRE TRAINING CONSORTIUM

## Dear Members

**Spring is upon us and we have an action packed few months ahead not least because from 1st May we're into the reform of apprenticeships. We have another Levy Lunch on 6th April if you want some facetime with WBTC and other employers to get to grips with these profound changes.**

Also in this edition we list our finalists for Rising Stars 2017 and list further training workshops available to members. Speaking of the term 'Member', I'd like to clarify what makes a WBTC member and the perks that come with it. Employers become a member of WBTC by virtue of one of the following:

1. Enrolling apprentices (of any age) through WBTC
2. Enrolling staff on formal qualifications such as ILM
3. Hosting a work experience student from WBTC

Once you are a member (we issue certificates in April & October each year) you can send ANY employee on our training events and enrichment activities. You can also access member prices for commercial activities for any employee. While we especially welcome apprentices and mentors on our added events please do not feel shy about putting forward other employees. We aim to have one workshop per week in a wide range of subject areas from management to digital marketing and all those crucial 'soft skills' that employers crave. Clearly, the cost saving for our members to access these sessions either for free or subsidised is a big perk. This is our way of thanking members for their partnership with WBTC.



Matt Garvey  
Managing Director



## FREE EMPLOYER SEMINAR TO HELP EXPLAIN THE REFORM OF APPRENTICESHIPS



### LEVY LUNCHTIME SEMINAR

Thursday 6th April

12:00 -14:00

Bookings via email to: [rachel@wbtc-uk.com](mailto:rachel@wbtc-uk.com)

Owing to popular demand, we have added a further seminar date for WBTC employers to examine and explain the Apprenticeship Levy due to come into force. Free of charge, the event takes place at our Cheap Street office, and we'll provide lunch. Spaces are limited so be sure to reserve your place quickly.

Any employer with an annual payroll of £3m or more will pay the Apprenticeship Levy from 1st April 2017 and be able to 'spend' their Apprenticeship Levy Digital Account from 1st May 2017. This is a new tax and we have to assume that it is forever. This seminar brings together Levy payers for information, advice and guidance from WBTC's Managing Director Matt Garvey. It will also be a chance for attendees to network and share ideas.

The Apprenticeship Levy is potentially an exciting but intricate arrangement for larger employers to fund their apprenticeships. There are plenty of issues that spin off from this revolution in vocational learning that go beyond the mechanics of the tax itself. This seminar will explore:

- How the Apprenticeship Levy works in practice
- How the Digital Accounts for employers work and some useful tools to help you
- What benefits can be gained from the Apprenticeship Levy
- The move from apprenticeship frameworks to apprenticeship standards and how this helps employers

*A nice lunch will be provided (not just a few dog-eared sandwiches)!*

## 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. It 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 progressing participants into Adult Apprenticeships

We delivered this programme in partnership with East Berkshire College in 2013-2015 with great success and offer opportunities in;

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

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



## WBTC ACHIEVEMENT RATES

In a previous edition it was stated that our achievement rate for 2015/16 was 86.6%. This is correct. However, along with many other colleges and providers we have seen the published rate downgraded by the Skills Funding Agency. While we know this is an error we don't wish to confuse readers. Therefore, for marketing purposes we will use the nationally recorded rate which is 85%. This is still 18% above the national average and 20% above similar training companies.

It goes to show that you get what you pay for. Our members are quality employers working with quality apprentices and looking for a quality provider. Along with our impressive progression rates (79% of apprentices stay with their employer progressing into a promotion or higher learning) it pays to choose a provider that invests in quality outcomes.



## LEVY PAYING EMPLOYERS SOME VITAL LINKS

With less than 50 days to go before the new tax known as The Apprenticeship Levy commences, employers are being urged to get registered. The process, as it stands is as follows:

1. Employers can calculate the amount of Apprenticeship Levy they will pay by visiting [here](#).
2. Employers will then register for a Digital Account so that their Levy contributions (plus a 10% government top up) can be paid into it. Visit [here](#).
3. Employers will also sign a contract directly with the Skills Funding Agency. This legal document aims to protect public funds and also discourage 'gaming of the system' aka Fraud. The pdf document can be viewed [here](#).

All three of these steps must be in place before employers can use their digital accounts. Thereafter, once the account is set up, employers can authorise WBTC to manage/input data. However, actual authority for transactions to take place rest solely with the employer.





Once again we had a splendid response to our call for nominations. Employers, apprentices, our staff and many others waxed lyrical about the great achievements over the last 12 months. Our judges and moderator had the unenviable task of assessing the anonymised nominations however, we can now proudly reveal the finalists as follows:

## EMPLOYER CATEGORIES

### Large Employer of the Year (250+ employees)

*Sponsored by Newbury Weekly News*

- Bayer Plc
- CBRE
- West Berks Council

### Medium Employer of the Year (50-249 employees)

*Sponsored by BGM Heating & Plumbing*

- Benchmark Furniture
- James Cowper Kreston
- PRISYM ID

### Small Employer of the Year (10-49 employers)

*Sponsored by Environmental Solutions*

- EJBC Accountants
- Phabrix Ltd
- The Grey Matter Group

### Micro Employer of the Year (9 or fewer employees)

*Sponsored by Bayer Plc*

- AMJ Auto Services
- Durrants Calleva Accountants
- Red Balloon Marketing

## INDIVIDUAL CATEGORIES

### Workplace Mentor of the Year

*Sponsored by Benchmark Furniture*

- Neil Kitch (Phabrix Ltd)
- Heather Wild (Thatcham Research Centre)
- Nicola Young (Atkins & Potts)

### Great Start Learner of the Year

*Sponsored by James Cowper Kreston*

- Megan Bunce
- Kilford Dziva
- Emma Spink

### Apprentice of the Year (19+)

*Sponsored by Verbatim Call Centres*

- Millie Millam (Bayer Plc)
- Vernon Pocock (BGM Heating & Plumbing)
- Daniel Smith (Durrants Calleva Accountants)

### Apprentice of the Year (16-18)

*Sponsored by Sovereign*

- Josie Pearce (Ross Brooke Accountants)
- Charlotte Pocock (EJBC Accountants)
- Chloe Whatley (Executive Serviced Apartments)

## APPRENTICE ACHIEVEMENT RATES - A NATIONAL DISAPPOINTMENT

The Skills Funding Agency, which funds apprenticeships, has undertaken a recalculation of apprentice achievement rates recently. This controversial decision has put the cat among the pigeons among colleges and providers. It is controversial because their methodology has been flawed and they have chosen to apply the new calculations retrospectively to 2013.

The national picture as a result of this is disappointing. The achievement rate has been 67% since 2013 and it hasn't budged. In plain speaking terms, it means that for the 3 million new apprentices that the government has committed to - 1 million will not achieve!

### What's to blame?

There are simply too many colleges and providers in operation who are rubbish when it comes to outcomes for learners and employers. Thousands are enrolled at institutions whose achievement rates are below 50%. Little has been done to effect change or improvement and so these miscreants have dragged down the good colleges and providers who are fighting the good fight for their customers.

### Poor return on investment?

The national picture suggests so. However, the devil is in the detail. For every bad provider there is a very good one. Employers and apprentices must act judiciously when selecting their chosen training partner. **Luckily, the WBTC achievement rate is significantly higher than the national average!**





## SAFEGUARDING & PREVENT DUTY LONELINESS: A HIDDEN PROBLEM

Before she was murdered last year, the Labour MP Jo Cox was campaigning about an issue that has come to the fore in recent times. The commission she started is investigating loneliness in the UK, which it says is an epidemic affecting people of all ages in different walks of life.

It may be surprising to learn that Teenagers, a group often thought to have strong social ties, are reported to experience loneliness. 62% are 'sometimes lonely' and one in 20 never spend time with friends at weekends.

Prof Graham Davey from the University of Sussex explains: *"Younger people appear to be focused on friendship networks - the number of relationships they have - and experience loneliness as a function of the fewer friends they have. And in today's society, friendship networks are represented nowhere more obviously than on social media, which can present a superficial picture of friendship. You won't find too many status updates about feeling lonely because ultimately - Prof Davey argues - loneliness has a stigma and few people want to admit they're lonely."*

Another is the example of the young Mum: A 'sociable person', Molly, then 26, was one of the first of her friends to have a baby. Her husband was out at work all day and she did not have any close family living by. *"If you admit you're lonely"*, she says, *"you might be labelled as not coping."*

Parenting generally, reports Action for children, can be a lonely experience. They found 24% of parents surveyed were always or often lonely. Carers, the elderly, refugees and migrants and the disabled are some other groups identified by studies as feeling deeply affected by loneliness.

For Michelle Ornstein, who has a learning disability, there is nothing worse than being alone. *"When I'm here on my own, I feel really down and anxious,"* she said. The 22-year-old, from Essex, said her anxieties had got worse in recent years, leading her to leave college.

Spending time out of the house and with friends can be key to countering loneliness but, Rossanna Trudgian, of Mencap explained, almost a third of youngsters with learning disabilities spend less than an hour outside their homes on a Saturday.



'Bottling-up' is often an issue. Michelle Ornstein's advice is "talk".

The shroud of a 'relationship' can also be, at times, deceiving. Just because two people are together, does that mean they are really talking and communicating? Modern technology can also lead to diversions from face-to-face communication.

The Mix is an online support service for under-25s. This year, it has seen a 26% rise in the numbers of those accessing their loneliness support service.

See: <http://www.themix.org.uk/>

Further advice and guidance contact [martyn@wbtc-uk.com](mailto:martyn@wbtc-uk.com)

## HEALTH & SAFETY INFORMATION IT FIREWALLS

The internet hosts a wide range of harmful websites that could be viewed at work on an employer's IT systems. From online gambling to extremist materials such websites can be just a click away. It is worth considering whether you have an explicit e-safety user policy in place that tells your employees what is or is not acceptable use of IT. This is especially important for vulnerable users such as those aged under 18.

IT firewalls can be set at a server level and filter out harmful sites. They can also be used for your wifi so that other devices such as mobile phones are protected by the firewall. Here are some questions to consider

1. Do employees know what constitutes safe and appropriate use of the internet at work?
2. Do you have controls that filter harmful websites and block access?
3. Can you monitor internet usage to ensure that inappropriate websites aren't being accessed?
4. Do you extend your policy on internet usage in work time or on work premises to personal devices?

Some free advice and guidance can be found [here](#).





## WORKSHOPS, COURSES AND ACTIVITIES

Most of the events below are free of charge to WBTC members which means apprentices 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.

We operate a £35 no-show fee for anyone who doesn't attend without notice on any free of charge course. This will be invoiced care of the employer. WBTC have enhanced the confirmation process as follows

- We'll confirm your attendance by email and send a meeting request that you can import to your outlook or webmail calendar.
- We'll confirm your space with your employer and **call** you 2-3 days prior to the event.

### APRIL



#### LEVY LUNCHTIME SEMINAR

This information, advice and guidance session with Matt Garvey will explore the implications and practicalities of the Apprenticeship Levy. This new system is a dramatic development having a financial and operational impact on those who want to 'spend' their Levy funds. Come and share your thoughts and concerns with other levy-payers and enjoy lunch on WBTC.

Venue: WBTC  
Date: Thursday 6th April, 12:00 - 14:00  
Contact: rachel@wbtc-uk.com  
Cost: Free for WBTC members. £100 for non members

#### SELF MOTIVATION AND TEAMWORK

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



#### INTRODUCTION TO DIGITAL MARKETING

This workshop with guest trainer, Adrian Bishop, looks at the revolution in business marketing that has arisen from online sources. This workshop is aimed at anyone who wants to boost their company profile online, promote their business and explore how social media sites can increase customers:

- Using Facebook, LinkedIn & Twitter in a business setting
- How Instagram, Pinterest and Whatsapp can boost your marketing message to achieve team success

Venue: WBTC  
Date: Friday 21st April, 09:30 - 16:00  
Contact: bethp@wbtc-uk.com  
Cost: £49 for WBTC members. £149 for non members



#### MANAGEMENT MASTERCLASS 2 LEADING & MANAGING FOR RESULTS

This is our 2nd session in the Management Masterclass suite for aspiring and current managers. This one day workshop is delivered by our ILM tutor Hannah Gibson. In this session we will explore:

- Leadership styles to increase productivity from teams
- Target setting and monitoring
- Techniques to improve the performance of individuals

Venue: WBTC  
Date: Monday 24th April, 09:30 - 16:30  
Contact: jenny@wbtc-uk.com  
Cost: £199 for WBTC members. £259 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 will explore:

- 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: Friday 28th April, 09:30 - 12:30  
Contact: bethp@wbtc-uk.com  
Cost: Free for WBTC members. £100 for non members





## WORKSHOPS, COURSES AND ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)

### MAY

#### FACE-TO-FACE CUSTOMER SERVICE

There's nothing like face to face interaction when it comes to presenting a professional and welcoming image. Of course some people lack confidence or even experience in handling customers in such a setting. This workshop explores:

- How to present yourself in face to face customer service
- Reading body language and signals in problem solving
- Dealing with confused, angry or upset customers

Venue: WBTC  
Date: Friday 12th May, 09:30 - 12:30  
Contact: [bethp@wbtc-uk.com](mailto:bethp@wbtc-uk.com)  
Cost: Free for WBTC members. £100 for non members



#### TELEPHONE TECHNIQUES

This perennially popular workshop is aimed at anyone who has a professional need to use a phone. Even though most people have a phone in their hand, employers remark how unprepared some can be to use this vital medium for actually talking to customers. This session covers good practice and ways to build confidence in telephone techniques.

Venue: WBTC  
Date: Thursday 18th May, 09:30 - 12:30  
Contact: [bethp@wbtc-uk.com](mailto:bethp@wbtc-uk.com)  
Cost: Free for WBTC members. £100 for non members

### JUNE

#### MANAGEMENT MASTERCLASS: CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Change can be a threat or opportunity. Yet change has to be managed, taking people beyond denial and fear into acceptance and exploration. Great managers help staff cope with and embrace change and this session will help delegates to do just that. It will also explore:

- Understanding how change can be driven by strategic direction and organisational design
- Developing an understanding of Change Management theories
- How to plan and implement change within an organisation

Venue: WBTC  
Date: Friday 9th June, 09:30 - 16:30  
Contact: [jenny@wbtc-uk.com](mailto:jenny@wbtc-uk.com)  
Cost: £199 for WBTC members. £269 for non members

#### DEVELOPING MENTAL TOUGHNESS FOR MANAGERS

Mental toughness is the new concept in leadership potential. It explores the techniques that leaders need to cope with the pressure of staff, conflict, deadlines and difficult decisions. Anyone can manage when things are going well. This session will explore how people cope when the chips are down! As part of this session delegates will undertake a Mental Toughness assessment to help them explore their areas for development.

Venue: WBTC  
Date: Friday 30th June 09:30 - 12:30  
Contact: [bethp@wbtc-uk.com](mailto:bethp@wbtc-uk.com)  
Cost: Free for WBTC members. £100 for non members



#### MANAGEMENT MASTERCLASS: INTRODUCTION TO HR FOR MANAGERS

This session is aimed at those who interview, appraise and performance manage staff. It will look at those thorny issues that managers have to consider when dealing with HR. It will help clarify some HR issues that keep managers awake at night and it is delivered by an experience HR Director and management trainer Debbie Gargin. This is an invaluable aid for managers.

Venue: WBTC  
Date: Thursday 25th May, 09:30 - 16:30  
Contact: [jenny@wbtc-uk.com](mailto:jenny@wbtc-uk.com)  
Cost: £199 for WBTC members.  
£269 for non members



# WBTC

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