

THE EARWIG

UPDATES FROM WEST BERKSHIRE TRAINING CONSORTIUM



Dear Members

Merry Christmas to all our members whether you are an apprentice, employer or mentor. This is the final edition of The Earwig before we close for the festive season.

WBTC will close on Friday 22nd December at 16:30 and re-open on Tuesday 2nd January 2018 at 09:00.

In this edition we unveil the Investment in Training Awards panel results for 2017 and we also report changes to Apprentice Minimum Wages as announced in November's Budget statement.

We also take a look at how high profile sexual harassment cases are reflected in employers' obligations in the workplace.



Matt Garvey
Managing Director

APPRENTICE MINIMUM WAGE TO INCREASE



The recent budget had some positive news for those apprentices earning the basic Apprenticeship Minimum Wage as set by the government. The hourly rate will rise from £3.50 to £3.70 from next April.

As you know, WBTC tracks this wage rate a bit like a tracker mortgage. We currently will only recruit for employers paying £4.25 per hour. We'll be increasing this to £4.50ph effective for any new start on 1st August 2018 and that will be for any apprentice whether we have recruited them or not. This reflects that we live and work in an expensive area where the cost of living is higher even compared to neighbouring counties. £4.50ph for a 37 hour week is £166.50 per week (about £8660 pa). The average apprentice salary in 2017 was between £15,000 - £16,000. WBTC will keep this under review while employment remains strong in the area and Berkshire continues to have strong business growth.

Regular National Minimum Wages are also increasing as follows;

For 18- to 20 year olds, the increase is from £5.60 per hour to £5.90, while 16 to 17 year-olds will see their minimum wage go up from £4.05 per hour to £4.20. And for 21 to 24 year olds, it is going up from £7.05 per hour to £7.38. Remember that apprentices aged 19 or over can only be paid the Apprentice Minimum for the first year of their programme. Thereafter they must be paid the National Minimum Wage

Example: Matt is 19 and starts a 3 year Engineering Apprenticeship on 1st April 2018. The employer is entitled to pay the Apprentice Minimum Wage set at £3.70 from 1st April 2018. On 1st April 2019, although only a third of the way through his programme, Matt becomes entitled to the National Minimum Wage rate for an 18-20 year old which is £5.90 from 1st April next year. Failing to keep track of these entitlements and pay apprentices or staff generally the correct rate can and has led to action against employers from HMRC.

Example: Amy is 16 and starts a 2 year Plumbing Apprenticeship on 1st April 2018. The employer is entitled to pay the Apprentice Minimum Wage until she becomes 19. If she is still aged 18 when she completes her apprenticeship then the employer could have paid the Apprentice Minimum Wage for the entirety of her training programme.

You can find more information here.



Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

WBTC INVESTMENT IN TRAINING AWARDS 2017

Some members will be eagerly anticipating the outcome of our 2017 Investment in Training Awards for employers. For those new to WBTC, our Investment in Training Awards is an accreditation process a little like the Michelin Star award in restaurants. Each year we reflect upon our employers and assess them against 6 criteria:

- 1 Total learner numbers** - how many of your staff are on Apprenticeships or other programmes. We take into account your company size when making this assessment.
- 2 Your involvement with 16-18 year olds** - this is a priority group. This could be apprentices or work experience students.
- 3 Achievement rates** - how many of your employees complete their programme. WBTC is in the top 7% of all colleges and providers, many of our employers enjoy very high achievements among their apprentices.
- 4 Culture of learning** - does your organisation champion learning and development? We observe this through visits and reviews over the year.
- 5 Equality & Diversity** - this is about your commitment to equality, diversity and the safeguarding of staff. Good evidence includes challenging gender stereotypes, offering extra help and support for apprentices and teaching younger staff how to stay safe.
- 6 Progression** - how well your learners progress on to other training and job opportunities. We look for evidence of promotion, added responsibility or progress into higher learning.

We need 12 months evidence so new members don't usually get assessed until the following year. For those eligible, they could receive an award as follows:

- **Certificate of Excellence.** This is the highest award we bestow and recipients will have strong evidence in all six criteria.
- **Certificate of Merit.** Recipients will have demonstrated good evidence in most of the criteria.
- **Certificate of Commendation.** Recipients will have shown good evidence in some of the criteria.

Our Investment in Training Awards started in 2010 so this is our 8th year. Employers who attain the Certificate of Excellence for five consecutive years are also presented with the WBTC Platinum Award.

WHAT DOES THIS SAY ABOUT YOU?

There are 1.2 jobs per worker in Berkshire making it a competitive market. Being able to stand out from other employers is a unique selling point and a commitment to professional development is usually high on job-seekers' agenda. Plus the award demonstrates that you are committed to and investing in your local area. That means a lot for your employees and the community in which you are based. Plus, it's great when someone tells you 'you're awesome!'



The team at Benchmark proudly display their Certificate of Excellence.



THE 2017 RECIPIENTS

2017 CERTIFICATE OF EXCELLENCE

Atkins & Potts
 Bayer PLC
 Benchmark Furniture (p)
 BGM Heating & Plumbing (p)
 EJBC Chartered Accountants
 Intelligent Group Solutions
 James Cowper Kreston LLP
 Phabrix Ltd
 Sovereign Housing Association*
 SPX Flow Control (p)
 The Grey Matter Group

2016 Award

Merit
 Excellence
 Excellence
 Excellence
 Excellence
 Merit
 Excellence
 Merit
 Excellence
 Merit
 Merit

(p) denotes previous Platinum Award Winner

*Sovereign will be presented with the WBTC Platinum Award for achieving the certificate of excellence 5 years in a row (2013 through 2017).

2017 CERTIFICATE OF MERIT

3M UK PLC
 Avia Technique
 Avnet Abacus
 Berkshire Youth
 Big Group Insight Ltd
 CBRE (Norland Managed Services)
 Cottsway Housing Association
 Docherty Group
 Electronic Manufacturing Solutions (EMS)
 Elmdale Maintenance Ltd
 Firstxtra Financial Services
 Hartwood Oak Buildings
 Hypertec
 Inner Range Europe Ltd
 Intelligent Retail Ltd
 Kennet School
 Kirkpatrick & Hopes
 Marley Eternit Ltd
 Mixing Solutions
 Newbury Building Society

2016 Award

Excellence
 None
 Merit
 None
 Merit
 Merit
 Merit
 Merit
 Excellence
 Merit
 Excellence
 Merit
 Excellence
 Merit
 Excellence
 None
 Merit
 None
 None
 None
 Merit
 None

2017 INVESTMENT IN TRAINING AWARDS (CONTINUED)

2017 CERTIFICATE OF MERIT (continued)

	2016 Award
Newbury Central Library	Merit
Power IT Channel	None
Prisym ID Ltd	Merit
Red Balloon Design Ltd	Commendation
RSK Plumbing & Heating Ltd	Commendation
Saica Pack	Commendation
Sharp's Auto	Merit
Swift Logistics	None
The Content Wall Limited	None
Verbatim Call Centres	Merit
West Berkshire Council (p)	Excellence
Wilkins Kennedy LLP	None

2017 CERTIFICATE OF COMMENDATION

	2016 Award
100 Percent IT Ltd	None
Absolute Casing	Commendation
Academy Insurance	None
Ark Homes Ltd	None
BDZ Holdings	None
Beninca Automation UK Ltd	Commendation
Dalziel Ltd	None
Dovetail Human Resource Services	None
Environmental Solutions	None
Waste Management Ltd	None
eShare Ltd	None
Gowrings Mobility Group Ltd	Commendation
Net Team TX Ltd	Merit
Newbury Weekly News	None
PBA Accountants	None
Protect and Invest	Commendation
ROC Technologies	Commendation
Ross Brooke	Merit
Secure Systems	Merit
Sutherland Health Ltd	None
Thatcham Research	Merit
Thatcham Town Council	None
The Watermill Theatre	None

Well done to every one of our winning employers and especially to the recipients of the Certificate of Excellence. We have shown the award from 2016 for comparison and you'll notice movement in both directions. Where nothing is noted for 2016, this could be because we didn't have sufficient evidence to make an award or the member was too new to WBTC for us to make a judgement.

A special congratulations to Sovereign Housing who'll be receiving the Platinum Award at our next ceremony. Also, for James Cowper Kreston & Bayer Plc, this is the 4th year they have attained the Certificate of Excellence. Keep it up in 2018 and you too will be joining that august group of Platinum winners.

Shortly we'll be contacting each and every winner to arrange a presentation of your award and a photo that you can use for your own marketing. Remember, this award is great evidence should you enter the WBTC Rising Stars Awards in 2018.



LAST CHANCE FOR SME'S TO BENEFIT FROM 100% FUNDED TRAINING



Time is running out for SMEs to benefit from this funding which 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+. We've been helping lots of local businesses access this generous pot of funding and we've created many bespoke and exciting training packages.

Fully funded, it can potentially save a business thousands of pounds

Aimed at smaller or bite sized sessions

Ideal for existing staff wishing to improve or broaden their skills

Includes a training needs analysis of your organisation

There is a focus on progressing participants into Adult Apprenticeships

All employers who are interested also benefit from a free Training Needs Assessment which is a useful addition to your business planning.

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 Rachel@wbtc-uk.com or Jon@wbtc-uk.com

A NOTE ON THE GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATIONS

The General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) comes into effect next May. WBTC currently collects, stores and uses data on apprentices, learners and employers. We use this for funding purposes, to ensure apprentices get their qualifications, to resolve safeguarding issues and to provide a good service. We also use data for marketing and publicity purposes including here in The Earwig.

Like many organisations we'll be updating our practices in line with the regulations and contacting our members accordingly. We may be issuing updated contracts and agreements with you and/or seeking further permission to keep you on mailing lists for marketing. Please note, we only intend to market the following:

Potential applicants for apprentice vacancies

Our added value courses for members

Details of awards and graduation ceremonies

Information that we feel employers will find useful in their operations

We also use Mailchimp providing each contact the chance to unsubscribe. If you have any questions about how we use data then please contact me on matt@wbtc-uk.com

THE WORK CHRISTMAS PARTY - AN EMPLOYERS ROLE

'tis the season to be jolly... But when jolliness turns to alcohol fuelled 'incidents' at a work party, where does the employer stand? Let's be honest, the office Christmas-do can be both a blessing and a curse from an employer's point of view. Most companies want their staff to have a great time, to eat, drink, dance in moderation and celebrate a hard worked year. Then again, there is always the worry that some staff will over indulge leading to inappropriate behaviour, lapses of judgement or even criminal activity.

This may come as a shock to some managers. Once the working day is finished it is easy to believe that work is over. However, events held in the company name fall under the responsibility of the employer. As a result managers, directors and owners can be held liable for the fall-out of a work party, away day or even a work sponsored excursion. Employers have been held liable for their staff's actions at a work parties including fights, accidents and sexual misconduct.

So before you give your blessing to a party, risk assess it. Consider your workforce and their attitude to drinking and socialising. Aim to balance the fun of a social event with the risks and responsibilities.

Exercise some common sense when sponsoring a work related party.

- **Remind everyone of your policies** - send a note round on the day of the party just so people know the company rules apply outside the office too.
- **Have a dress code** - it helps to keep things professional (probably best to avoid anything contentious).
- **Hand out drinks tokens** - it might help regulate consumption. Your employees can use these at an open bar; once they've run out they can buy their own drinks.
- **Arrange taxis or a minibus** - or if funds don't allow, at least make sure everyone can get home after. Finishing before the last train leaves helps, too.
- Make sure your employers' liability insurance (to cover your staff's welfare) and your directors' and officers' insurance (to cover your managers' liability) are up to date.
- If you are having a free bar, limit it so people don't take advantage and have too much to drink - this lowers the risk of fights, accidents and harassment incidents.

- Try and find one or two staff who agree to stay sober (maybe senior managers), so that they can look out for any unwanted behaviours.
- Ensure that there are non-alcoholic options available
- **Consider the needs of all attendees** - Will workers be able to arrange childcare at the time of the party? Are there food requirements to meet all cultural needs? Have you taken into account any disabled staff? How will everyone get home?
- Tell staff what is expected of them and remind them of the disciplinary action should inappropriate be an issue.
- Inform staff if they are expected in work, on time, the next day!

If you are a manager or leader yourself think of your own responsibilities. Can you exercise these responsibilities if you are inebriated? How will you be viewed if you drink to excess and make a fool of yourself in front of your employees? Take time to consider the most appropriate way of rewarding your staff without incurring undue risks. For example, you may choose to pay for a lunch time meal on company time rather than a drink orientated evening party. You can read the whole article on this subject [here](#).



'The first thing to know is office parties, even those held outside office hours and not on your premises, are still considered work'

www.policybe.co.uk



SAFEGUARDING & PREVENT DUTY

Under Fundamental British Values citizens with disabilities represent a protected group. Disabled people are much more likely to suffer unemployment and find it difficult to secure work. At the same time some employers lack confidence or awareness of the reasonable steps they can make to accommodate an employee's disability. This extends to apprentices as well as seasoned workers. The government has launched a 'Disability Confident' campaign to help address this.

Disability Confident - offering an interview to disabled people Information

Vacancies on find an apprenticeship for employers who have committed to Disability Confident will now have the Disability Confident logo showing on their vacancies.

A Disability Confident employer will generally offer an interview to any applicant that declares they have a disability and meets the minimum criteria for the job as defined by the employer.

It is important to note that in certain recruitment situations such as high-volume, seasonal and high-peak times, the employer may wish to limit the overall numbers of interviews offered to both disabled people and non-disabled people.

For more details please visit the Disability Confident page on GOV.UK by [clicking here](#). If you would like advice and guidance on supporting or recruiting employees with a disability then contact me via martyn@wbtc-uk.com

FOCUS ON NEW STANDARDS BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR

One of the country's most popular apprenticeships is in Business Administration with around 33% of all learners on this programme. Last month the new Business Administrator Standard was released and WBTC has now created a delivery model (curriculum) to share with members.

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR STANDARD

This is a new level 3 standard aimed at the versatile world of office occupations. It is a user friendly and flexible programme ideal in any office setting with the office functions we are familiar with. It can be a single programme in itself or serve as an initial course prior to specialisation in a different area such as financial services, procurement, marketing etc

WBTC MODEL OF DELIVERY

The Business Administrator Standard has no mandatory qualifications. However, WBTC has worked to build a programme that does lead to formal qualifications. We've done this to professionalise the programme and give a benchmarking opportunity for employers

- Pearson Level 3 Diploma in Business Administration
- NCFE Intermediate or Advanced Award in Skills and Behaviours in the Working Environment
- Level 1 or 2 Functional Skills in maths (if required)
- Level 1 or 2 Functional Skills In English (if required)

END POINT ASSESSMENT

As with other standards this programme has an End Point Assessment which is attempted once all learning aims have been completed. The EPA for this standard includes:

KNOWLEDGE TEST (20%)

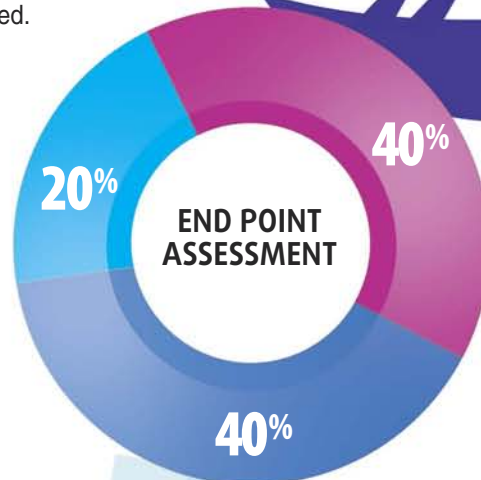
A multiple choice test that lasts a maximum of 60 minutes and includes 50 equally weighted multiple-choice questions.

PROJECT / IMPROVEMENT PRESENTATION (40%)

A presentation on a project completed or a process improved. The presentation must last between 10-15 minutes with a further 10-15 minutes Q&A.

PORTFOLIO BASED INTERVIEW (40%)

A 30-45 minute interview scored out of 100. The portfolio of Learning provides the structure for this conversation.



MEMBER BENEFITS

Don't forget that if you have an apprentice with WBTC then you, the employer, become a member. Consequently you can enrol any of your staff on our additional training sessions and enrichment activities at the member rate!

This could save you hundreds if not thousands of pounds over a year.

FUNDING

The price cap for this Business Administrator Standard is £5000 and WBTC's price is £5000 plus a small awarding body fee. Non-Levy customers will pay our tariff of £17.50 per week until the apprentice completes their programme.

WORKSHOPS, COURSES AND ACTIVITIES

Most of the training workshops below are free of charge to WBTC members which means apprentices, work place mentors or any other staff can attend. 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.

JANUARY 2018



EFFECTIVE BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

This workshop looks at professionally written correspondence and the way it impacts upon company image and reputation. A poorly worded email or letter can make the sender and their employer look amateur or even careless.

During this session you will explore composing professional business letters and emails. The session will also investigate using appropriate forms of communication and good practice in the application of written English in business.

Venue: WBTC
Date: Friday 19th January 09:30 - 16:00
Contact: matt@wbtc-uk.com
Cost: **Free for WBTC members** £100 for non members



FEBRUARY 2018

LEVEL 2 BRITISH SAFETY COUNCIL AWARD IN HEALTHY & SAFETY

Having a qualified person for health & safety is a great benefit to any employer. It is so easy to fall afoul of regulations and this course will give staff the confidence to make improvements, minimise risks and protect staff. It is an accredited qualification and **further information can be found here.**

Venue: WBTC
Date: Friday 2nd February 09:30 - 16:00
Contact: matt@wbtc-uk.com
Cost: **Free for WBTC members**
£149 for non members



LEVEL 2 CERTIFICATE IN EMERGENCY FIRST AID AT WORK

This qualification accredits the candidate to be a nominated first aider in the workplace.

It investigates a whole range of first aid activities including:

- Treating minor wounds
- Administering CPR
- Identifying victims of shock
- The recovery position

Venue: WBTC
Dates: Friday 16th February 09:30 - 16:30
Contact: matt@wbtc-uk.com
Cost: **FREE for WBTC members.** £149 for non members

COACHING AND MENTORING

This session is aimed at managers, team leaders, peer-to-peer mentors and those guiding an apprentice or trainee at work. It explores the skills of mentoring and the different techniques that are effective when passing on skills. You'll investigate different learning styles, effective feedback techniques and how to measure progress.

It is perfect for anyone who passes on their skills and expertise to others and especially helpful for those with management roles or aspiration.

Venue: WBTC
Date: Monday 12th February 09:30 - 16:00
Contact: matt@wbtc-uk.com
Cost: **FREE for WBTC members**
£100 for non members



Remember, if you are an employer that has an apprentice, is on one of our qualifications or hosts a work experience student then you are a member. This will entitle you to subsidised or FREE access to our one-day workshops and enrichment activities.

WBTC

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