

THE EARWIG

UPDATES FROM WEST BERKSHIRE TRAINING CONSORTIUM

Dear Members

Welcome to the November edition of *The Earwig*. Last month I mentioned the collapse of national training provider 3AAA and the ensuing police investigation into fraud. Further revelations in the press reveal allegations of profligate and opulent lifestyles of the company directors and manipulation of achievement rates on a massive scale. It confuses me how Ofsted were so easily fooled and were on the brink of awarding the organisation an 'Outstanding' grade. Just weeks later, the police were in and the company had gone bust. You can read more about this scandal [here](#).

On a more positive note, WBTC did it again, this time in the national Employer Satisfaction Survey 2018 coming top in Berkshire. In this edition we also look at what the October Budget had in store for apprenticeships and we also celebrate our latest learner of the quarter.



Matt Garvey, Managing Director



CHANGES TO THE MINIMUM WAGE

The national minimum wage for apprentices will rise again in April, from £3.70 to £3.90 per hour, the chancellor announced in his budget statement.

The 20 pence extra is a 5.4 per cent rise and follows last year's increase from £3.50, after Philip Hammond accepted recommendations from the independent Low Pay Commission.

The jump to £3.90 is larger by proportion than all other minimum wage groups.

For the regular minimum wage 18 to 20 year olds, the increase is from £5.90 per hour to £6.15, while 16 to 17 year olds will see their minimum wage go up from £4.20 per hour to £4.35. And for 21 to 24 year olds, it is going up from £7.38 per hour to £7.70.

Employers should note there is a clear distinction between the minimum wage for apprentices compared to those employees not on an apprenticeship.



**APPRENTICE GRADUATION
& AWARDS 2019**

SAVE THE DATE

Our Apprentice Graduation & Rising Stars Awards 2019 will be on Wednesday 15th May at Arlington Arts Centre near Newbury. Apprentices who have achieved since April this year or are due to achieve by 30th April 2019 are in scope to graduate. Further details will follow.

INVESTMENT IN TRAINING AWARDS 2018

Most of our longstanding members will be pretty familiar with our annual employer accreditation. WBTC started these awards in 2010 making this year our 9th consecutive Investment in Training Awards event.

All WBTC Employers who have at least a 1 year history with us are included in the process. A panel of WBTC staff then look at each and make a judgement against the following criteria

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.

Your involvement with 16-18 year olds

This is a priority group. This could be apprentices or work experience students.

Achievement rates

How many of your employees complete their programme. Many of our employers enjoy very high achievements among their apprentices.

Culture of learning

Does your organisation champion learning and development. We observe this through visits and reviews over the year.

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.

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

Any employer who achieves the Certificate of Excellence for five consecutive years is awarded the Platinum Award at our annual Rising Stars Awards.

Platinum Award winners since 2010 include:

- SPX Flow (2014)
- West Berkshire Council (2014)
- Compressor Products International (2015)
- BGM Heating & Plumbing Ltd (2015)
- Benchmark Furniture (2015)
- Sovereign Housing (2017)

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Members don't need to do anything. Our panel will meet and make judgements in November and these will be moderated. We'll then announce all of the awards in December/January. WBTC colleagues will then visit each winning member to present them with the Investment in Training Awards certificate.



Sovereign Housing scooped the prestigious 'Platinum Award' in 2017. Pictured receiving the award at our Rising Stars ceremony are Corinna Grace and Steph Akerman.

EMPLOYER SATISFACTION SURVEY 2018

In July results from the Learner Satisfaction Survey, known as FE Choices were published. These have now been followed by Employer Satisfaction results and the figures provide a clear indication of what companies think of colleges and training providers. The survey questioned over 50,000 employers across England about the training received from their chosen college or provider. Responses were required from at least 70% of the employers associated with each college or provider in order for the results to be classed as valid. With the sample size being so large, these results provide a reliable analysis of the business community's views on colleges and training providers.

What a year 2018 has been for WBTC. Not only were we top in the Learner Satisfaction survey we've done it again this time in the Employer Satisfaction survey. WBTC was given a score of 94% in both categories which is not only way above the national average but also the best in Berkshire. It points to a service in which our apprentices and their employers feel listened too, valued and receive top quality training

A national average of 86.2% of employers said that they would recommend their college or provider to others. Private training providers' national average was 87.8% while the national average for FE Colleges was lower at 84.4%. Engineering sector employers generally had the highest levels of satisfaction while agriculture was among the lowest. Overall satisfaction among all employers was down for 2017-18. This paints a picture of highly variable levels of services and satisfaction a sort of postcode lottery for apprenticeships.

Among other things employers were questioned about the quality of advice & guidance, the ability to influence training content and the communication between employer and provider,' added Matt. 'Given that more and more employers are investing their own money into apprenticeship training, these figures help companies determine where that investment is best placed. Clearly those with low satisfaction scores may need to up their game to attract local companies.



FIVE BENCHMARKS OF QUALITY

Employers considering investing in apprenticeships should use satisfaction survey results as just one measure of a quality college or provider. Other measures that could prove to be helpful include:

- National Apprentice Achievement Rates (average is 67%)
- Learner Satisfaction Survey Results (median is 86.2%)
- Employer Satisfaction Survey Results (median is 86.2%)
- Apprentice progression rates (not recorded nationally)
- Ofsted Grade of
Outstanding - Good - Requires Improvement - Inadequate

Used in combination, these 5 measures can paint a strong picture of a quality provider or indeed a weak one.

The table below compares some colleges and providers in the 2017-18 Employer Satisfaction Survey. At WBTC we are delighted not just to be the best Berkshire provider when it comes to learner and employer satisfaction, we're also thrilled to have bucked the national trend. While general satisfaction levels have gone down WBTC's Learner score was up over 6% and our employer score remained well over 90%. Part of the reason for our high ratings could be the added value services that we offer to our employers. As WBTC Members, our companies can send any of their staff on our 1 & ½ day training courses for free. This helps build our members' capacity across their whole business adding to their confidence when investing in apprentices or work experience.

EMPLOYER SATISFACTION SURVEY RESULTS 2017 -2018

	Provider Score
West Berkshire Training Consortium	94
Basingstoke ITEC Ltd	91.5
Basingstoke College of Technology	88.6
The Windsor Forest Colleges Group	87.9
Qube Qualifications and Development Ltd	86.7
QA Ltd	85.6

	Provider Score
Key Training Ltd	81.1
Aspire Achieve Advance Ltd	78.6
Bracknell and Wokingham College	76.7
CITB	71.7
Activate Learning	67.5
Newbury College	40.5

The full tables can be viewed by [clicking here](#).

LATEST YOUTUBE VIDEO CLIP FOR LEVY EMPLOYERS WHO WISH TO MAKE A TRANSFER

The ESFA has produced further guidance for employers with an Apprenticeship Levy account and who wish to make transfers to other employers. [You can view the clip here.](#)

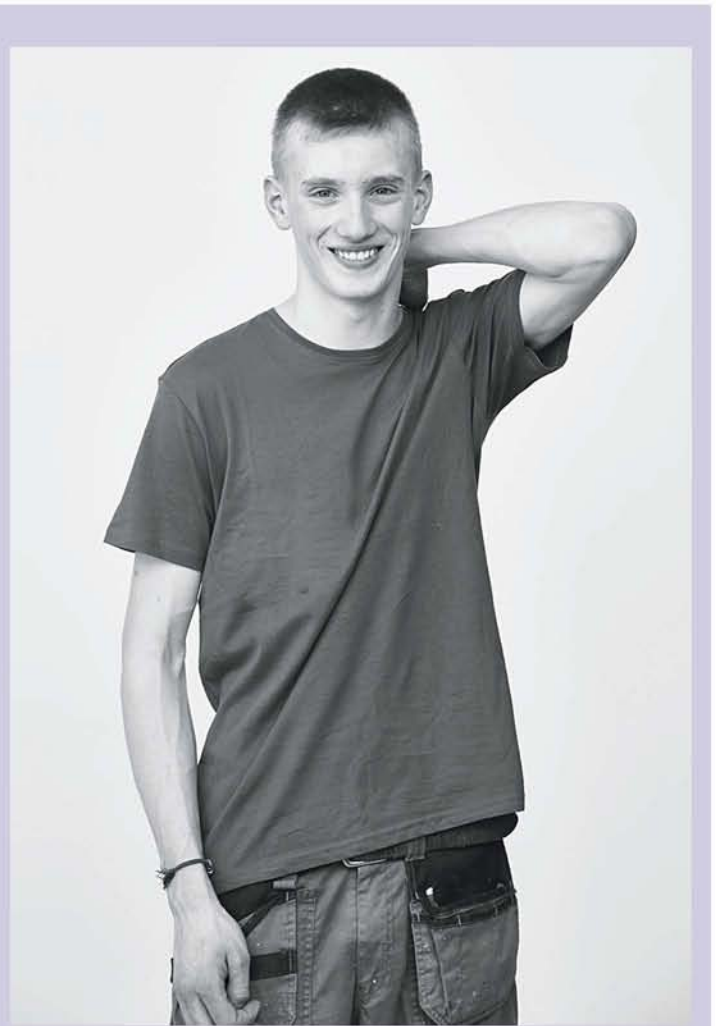
CONGRATULATIONS TO...

Well done to Kyle Green of Benchmark Furniture who is the latest WBTC Learner of the Quarter. On a personal note I had the pleasure meeting Kyle when we crewed TS Maybe in the Cowes Small Ships Race. Kyle becomes our latest celebrated Learner of the Quarter and here is what his Training Consultant, Andrea Wood had to say about him.

I am nominating Kyle Green for the transformation on his commitment towards gaining his full Apprenticeship. Kyle finds maths and English challenging and never really enjoyed these subjects whilst at school. Consequently, having to achieve his functional skills has been frustrating for Kyle. Recently, Kyle has been working hard at home on his functional skills and has been completing many mock tests and sending these into WBTC for feedback. His attitude has completely changed around and he is now determined to achieve his Level 2 Functional Skills in Maths and English and has been passing the mock tests. I visited Kyle this week and his whole persona is much more positive and he was so much more confident.

I feel that Kyle deserves to win Learner of the Quarter in recognition for the hard work he is putting into his functional skills as this is something he doesn't find easy or enjoy. His hard work has paid off as he has recently passed his level 2 writing exam.

...he is now determined to achieve his Level 2 Functional Skills in Maths and English...



HEALTH & SAFETY NEWS

EYES AND EYESIGHT TESTING AT WORK – WHO PAYS?

For many of our apprentices, working in front of a computer or display screen is an essential activity. Some employees may feel that the work requires them to wear glasses and can be uncertain about who should pay for an eye test or spectacles. This useful guidance from the Health & Safety Executive may assist.

The law says employers must arrange an eye test for display screen equipment (DSE) users if they ask for one, and provide glasses if an employee needs them only for DSE use. DSE work does not cause permanent damage to eyes. But long spells of DSE work can lead to:

- tired eyes
- discomfort
- temporary short-sightedness
- headaches

DSE work is visually demanding, so it can make someone aware of eyesight problems they have not noticed before (including changes in eyesight that happen with age).

Employees can help their eyes by:

- checking the screen is well positioned and properly adjusted
- making sure lighting conditions are suitable
- taking regular breaks from screen work



Employers must assess **DSE workstations** and take steps to reduce any health risks.

You can read more about employer obligations in this regard [here](#).

At WBTC we will pay for any risk assessment that is required. For higher risk environments we will send a NEBOSH qualified consultant to support employers. This is our added value service to thank employers for offering work placements.

APPRENTICESHIP LEVY

From April, organisations paying the Apprenticeship Levy will be able to invest up to 25% of their apprenticeship levy to support other organisations. This is an increase from the current 10%.

This will allow employers to move their funds around to other organisations who need it. Locally, Sovereign Housing made a donation of levy funds to Kennet School which enabled the latter to increase their staff capacity. This further initiative by the government will hopefully see organisations buddying-up to support one another through Levy donations.



THE OCTOBER BUDGET AND APPRENTICESHIPS

The October Budget held a few key messages for employers when it comes to apprenticeships. Since the introduction of The Apprenticeship Levy, total enrolments have fallen sharply. The Budget announcements appear to attempt to stem that decline and encourage greater employer take-up. Additional support is being planned for small-medium enterprises who currently make cash contributions to the apprenticeship training. This will come as a welcome relief to sectors such as retail, care and hospitality who have found the existing contribution requirement onerous.

SAFEGUARDING & PREVENT DUTY #METOO: ONE YEAR ON

It was recently the one year anniversary of the establishment of 'The Me Too movement' (or #MeToo movement).

#MeToo spread virally in October 2017, as a hashtag used on social media, in an attempt to demonstrate the widespread prevalence of sexual assault and harassment, especially in the workplace. It followed soon after the sexual misconduct allegations against the Hollywood film producer Harvey Weinstein.

The phrase 'Me Too' started being used in early 2006 and was later popularised on Twitter in 2017. Victims of sexual harassment were encouraged to tweet about their experience and 'give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem'. This was met with success that included, but was not limited to, high-profile posts from several American celebrities, including Gwyneth Paltrow, Ashley Judd, Jennifer Lawrence and Uma Thurman.

As recently as last month, high profile cases such as the Philip Green case are coming to the attention of the public and, in some respects, the Me Too Movement has encouraged more people to speak out over the last year.

Green has been accused by former employees of sexual harassment, and despite a legal agreement (Non-Disclosure Agreement), a loophole in the law meant a government minister could name him in Parliament. Sir Philip - who owns the Arcadia Group of high street brands including Topshop, Topman, Burton and Dorothy Perkins - has said he 'categorically and wholly denies' allegations of 'unlawful sexual or racist behaviour'.

Green has claimed that his behaviour was merely 'banter', and insisted 'there was never any intent to be offensive', however, in the interviews, the former and current employees alleged there was a workplace culture that ranged from the verbally abusive to the surreal, claiming that Green:

- Harangued and threatened people in meetings with expletive-filled diatribes that left his staff feeling humiliated.



- Benefited from an atmosphere where employees were expected to 'grin and bear' his treatment without complaint.
- Flew off the handle in an unpredictable fashion, on one occasion using homophobic language to describe a marketing display involving male models that he then tore down.
- Repeatedly grabbed the bottoms of senior female members of staff.

One worker said Green was seen as immune to normal workplace rules. "The large part of why he's never held to account - he's seen as the owner, that's the beginning and end of it," they said. "If you don't like it you know where to go."

The case, even though not yet proven, is a pertinent reminder that sometimes one person's perception of 'banter', can sometimes be very seriously offensive to another.

If you would like further advice and guidance then contact me via martyn@wbtc-uk.com



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 of your 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 remind you prior to the event.

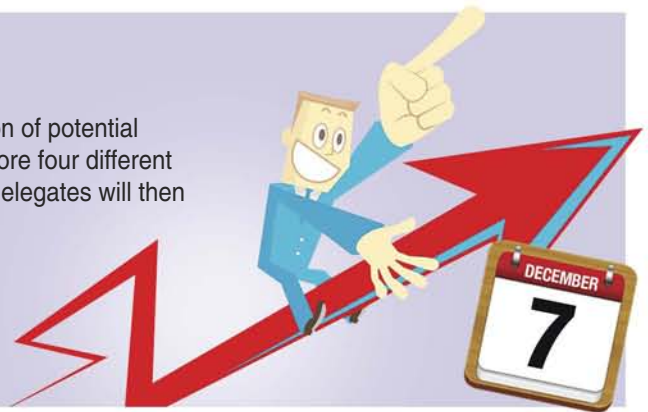
DECEMBER

INTRODUCTION TO SALES

In this session we will explore 'Elevator Pitches' as a way to capture the attention of potential customers. Delegates will prepare and deliver their pitch and then go on to explore four different customer types. Through analysis of how different customers make decisions, delegates will then learn how to adapt their pitch for maximum effect.

Venue: WBTC
Time: 09:30 - 12:30
Cost: **FREE for WBTC members**
£100 for non members

Date: Friday 7th December
Contact: maria@wbtc-uk.com



JANUARY 2019

PRESENTATION SKILLS

Avoid those death-by-PowerPoint sessions where a presenter drones on and learn to wow and engage your audience. This session will equip you with the confidence to create eye catching, ear catching and involving presentations that capture your audience. It will explore audience engagement, projecting your voice and using presentation aids in a sparing but innovative way.

Venue: WBTC
Date: Friday 11th January 2019
Time: 09:30 - 16:00
Contact: maria@wbtc-uk.com
Cost: **FREE for WBTC members**
£149 for non members



MANAGING QUALITY PROJECTS

This module encourages the learner to practically apply the knowledge gained by planning, implementing and evaluating a work based project within their own organisation. Delegates will cover:

- Understand the principles of Project Management.
- Describe the stages of Project Management.
- Explain the skills required for effective Project Management.
- Define factors that influence the outcome of a project.

Venue: WBTC
Date: Friday 18th January 2019
Time: 09:30 - 16:00
Contact: maria@wbtc-uk.com
Cost: **FREE for WBTC members** £149 for non members



BRITISH SAFETY COUNCIL LEVEL 2 HEALTH & SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE

This popular one day course is ideal for health and safety purposes and equips delegates with the skills and confidence in the workplace.

Full details are on this link.

Venue: WBTC
Date: Friday 25th January 2019
Time: 09:30 - 16:00
Contact: bdt@wbtc-uk.com
Cost: **FREE for WBTC members** £199 for non members



WBTC

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