

WBTC NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the October 2024 WBTC Newsletter

As with many in the country, we have been eagerly awaiting solidified plans of the upcoming changes a new government brings. Fortunately, for the prosperity of individuals and businesses, the skills sector and in particular, apprenticeships, remain high on the government's agenda.

In the run up to the General Election The Labour Party pledged to expand the use of the apprenticeship levy to allow employers to fund shorter, non-apprenticeship training. The government has subsequently rolled back on this and will focus instead on the below:

- End of the 12 month minimum duration for some - currently all apprenticeships must be at least a year in duration, the government has pledged to end this for some standards, which standards these are and what the new minimum time frame will be is not yet known.
- Foundation Apprenticeships - these are designed to provide training to young people who are not yet ready for apprenticeships at Level 2 or 3. This scheme will likely be similar in design to traineeships but will be based on employment as opposed to work experience.

We expect to learn more following the Autumn Statement and we'll keep you informed about the progress of those proposals and how they could affect you. It is likely new initiatives will be implemented by the government on 1st August 2025.

I hope you find the remainder of the newsletter useful and informative. If there is any particular subject you would like us to cover please do contact us.

Thank You

Craig Mincher, Managing Director



Happy Diwali!

Diwali is being celebrated by Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists on Friday 1st November this year. Each faith marks different historical events and stories for the celebration, but nonetheless the festival represents the same symbolic victory of light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance, and good over evil. The festival is widely known all over the world as the Festival of Light as the word Diwali means "rows of lighted lamps".

Hindus celebrate to mark the safe return of Sita, after she was kidnapped by the evil Ravan and saved by Ram - victory of good over evil.

Sikhs celebrate to mark the release of a wrongly imprisoned Guru - victory of knowledge over ignorance. In the Sikh faith, Diwali is also known as Bandi Chhor Divas meaning "Day of Liberation"

In the Jain tradition, Diwali is celebrated in the observance of "Mahavira Nirvana Divas", the physical death and final nirvana of Mahavira. Lamps are lit in remembrance of the "great light", Mahavira - light over darkness.

Buddhists celebrate to honour their Emperor Ashoka's decision to convert to Buddhism and follow a path of peace and enlightenment.

In India, the celebrations last 5 whole days, but in the Western world, there is only one day of celebrations.

Typically, observers celebrate by:

- Spring-cleaning the home
- Wearing new clothes
- Exchanging gifts (often sweets)
- Preparing festive meals for family and friends
- Visiting places of worship
- Decorating buildings with fancy lights
- Huge firework displays
- Lighting divas (lamps) in windows and doors



**Wishing those celebrating
a very Happy Diwali!**



Course Spotlight

Customer Service Apprenticeships

Bringing Benefits to your Customers & Business

With the rise of Social Media, we now have access to advice of business experts from around the world. Much of the advice is good, telling us how to boost our sales, financially plan our business and even advise on the number of hours employees should work. However, one of the most important topics doesn't seem to be on trend – delivering excellent customer service.

This is where we come in, at WBTC we run a nationally leading programme to deliver training to boost customer satisfaction and loyalty for your business.

Why should an employer consider a Customer Service Apprentice?

- **Retention, retention retention:** satisfied customers are loyal customers. Loyal customers boost your sales, increasing customer retention rates by just 5% can increase profits by 25% & 95% (Bain & Co).
- **Create a discreet sales force:** 72% of customers will share their positive customer experience with six or more people (Zippia, 2023).
- **Build stability for your company:** 89% of companies with "significantly above average" customer experiences perform better financially than their competitors (Qualtrics XM institute 2020).
- **Future-proof your workforce:** with the Customer Service apprenticeship, your team will be equipped with the latest skills and knowledge to tackle the evolving world of customer service.
- **Boost your culture:** hiring or training an apprentice demonstrates your commitment to staff development and with apprenticeships returning between £26 & £29 (BIS 2023) for every pound spent your investment will go a long way.

Like to know more?

Contact Rachel@wbtc-uk.com to learn more about how our programme can boost your business.



Customer Service
Practitioner



Customer Service
Specialist



Purple Sock day

03 December 2024

The International Day of Persons with Disabilities takes place annually on 3rd December. To mark and celebrate this day Swings & Smiles are calling on people to take part in one single act of united solidarity - to buy & wear a pair of Parallel Lifestyle's purple socks to show their support of the disabled community.

The profits from the purple socks goes to Swings & Smiles. Swings & Smiles relies on fundraising to stay open. Every penny raised goes towards supporting disabled children and their families, both at their centre in Thatcham or in the community. We encourage everyone who buys a pair of socks to post photos on social media with your peers showing them off and demonstrating your support for the campaign!

HOW CAN MY COMPANY OF BUSINESS GET INVOLVED?

Whether you are a large corporate or sporting organisation, brand, SME or sole trader; by just buying one pair of socks at £7 will make a huge difference. We will also list your company as a Purple Sock Day Supporter on our website. Together we can then celebrate 'Purple Sock Day', raise positive awareness for disability inclusion & support the amazing work by swings and smiles. For orders or more information contact Nicola Lawrence Nicola@swingsandsmiles.co.uk or call 01635 285170



HOW MUCH
IS A PAIR OF
SOCKS?

£7



PURPLE SOCK DAY



International
Day of
Persons with
Disabilities
3 DECEMBER

LEARNER CELEBRATIONS

We are delighted to recognise the outstanding accomplishments of our WBTC learners. In this edition, we shine a light on individuals who have recently completed apprenticeships or achieved qualifications.

Meet Ashley Talbot, a dedicated Parts coordinator and Learner of the Quarter

Ashley Talbot has recently taken a significant step in his career by completing a Level 3 Team Leader Apprenticeship and embarking on a Level 5 Operations Management Apprenticeship. Working at Ubico, a waste and recycling company, he plays a crucial role as a Parts Coordinator, managing stock, subcontractor contracts and teams across 5 different locations.

The Impact of the Level 3 Apprenticeship

The Level 3 Team Leader Apprenticeship proved invaluable to Ashley providing him with the essential knowledge and skills to manage his team effectively. While he was already familiar with many of the processes involved, the apprenticeship helped him refine his approach, execute tasks more efficiently, and foster strong relationships with his team.

A Project with Practical Relevance

One of the highlights of the apprenticeship was the opportunity to complete a project directly linked to his role. This practical experience allowed Ashley to apply his newly acquired knowledge in a real-world setting, making his learning even more meaningful.

Effective Communication Skills

As a Parts Coordinator, Ashley interacts with various stakeholders on a daily basis. The apprenticeship equipped him with the communication skills necessary to build strong relationships and convey information effectively.

A Positive Learning Experience

Ashley had a positive experience throughout his apprenticeship, thanks to the support and guidance of his tutor, Lesley. Her patience and encouragement played a significant role in his decision to pursue the Level 5 Operations Management Apprenticeship.

Balancing Work, Life, and Learning

The structured nature of the apprenticeship helped Ashley manage his workload and balance his commitments. He found the flexible approach particularly helpful, as it allowed him to learn at a pace that suited his individual needs, especially while juggling work, family, and school drop-offs.

A Strong Recommendation

Ashley is a firm believer in the benefits of apprenticeships. He highly recommends this pathway to anyone looking to advance their career while gaining practical experience and valuable qualifications.

Future Goals

As Ashley continues his Level 5 Operations Management Apprenticeship, he is eager to take on new challenges and further develop his skills. He recognises the importance of lifelong learning and is committed to personal and professional growth.

Achieving Academic Success

In addition to his apprenticeship, Ashley also achieved a Level 2 in both English and Maths. This accomplishment demonstrates his dedication and determination, and serves as a testament to his hard work and perseverance.

The Key to Success

Ashley attributes his success to effective time management, prioritisation, and the ability to balance his work, apprenticeship, and personal life. He believes that by developing these skills, individuals can effectively manage their workload and achieve their goals.



Great Start Study Programme

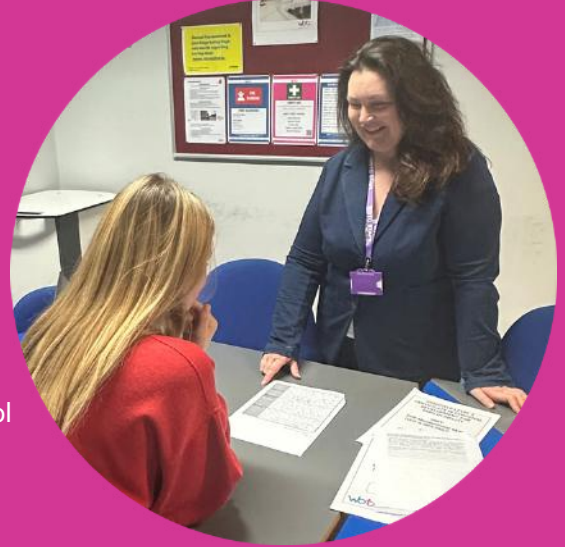
Transforming lives - the power of Study Programme

Why is this programme important?

For young people aged 16-19, the transition from school to adulthood can be both exciting and daunting. This is where our study programme comes in. By providing a structured and supportive environment, we equip young people with the essential skills and knowledge they need to succeed in further education, employment or training.

The Impact on NEET Rates

One of the most pressing issues facing young people today is the risk of becoming NEET - Not in Education, Employment or Training. Statistics show that a significant number of young people leave school without the necessary qualifications, leading to a higher likelihood of becoming NEET.



The Department of Education NEET data shows

- 6.9% of young people aged 16-18 are currently NEET in the South East. This is an increase on the previous year.
- 25.8% of young people in West Berkshire left year 11 without achieving their maths and English

Improving Life Chances

Our Study Programme plays a crucial role in addressing this issue. By offering a second chance to gain essential qualifications, we help young people improve their life chances. We deliver Functional Skills (FS) maths and English. FS exams can be taken throughout the year not just during the GCSE window.

Beyond Qualifications

Our programme goes beyond academic achievement. We also focus on developing essential life skills, such as communication, problem-solving and teamwork. These skills are invaluable in both personal and professional life.

By participating in our Study Programme, young people can:

- **Gain confidence and self-esteem:** our supportive environment fosters personal growth and development.
- **Explore career options:** we offer guidance and support in choosing the right path.
- **Build a strong foundation for the future:** our programme provides a solid base for further education or employment.

Alex Pye who is the Careers and Participation Officer at West Berkshire Council works closely with WBTC on engaging young people who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET. He says - "WBTC consistently manages to create a welcoming, nurturing and positive environment for their learners. They are supportive and encouraging - allowing young people to overcome barriers to learning, and offering an opportunity to not only succeed - but also to thrive. As well as gaining skills and qualifications, the young people on Great Start are able to harness WBTC's extended reach - giving them the opportunity to speak with and see local businesses in action, broadening their horizons and helping them reach their potential" (October 2024).

For further information on Great Start please contact Natalie Elliott on Natalie.elliott@wbtc-uk.com or call 01635 35975

Scan here for more information on our Study Programme.



Empowering Apprentices for success

Remembering that each apprentice is unique, with different strengths, weaknesses and learning styles is so important. By adapting mentoring sessions and the support that is shaped to each person's needs helps ensure that they can progress at their own pace, focusing on their strengths whilst working towards tangible goals.

Open and regular communication is crucial. Providing consistent feedback, both positive and constructive helps apprentices progress and work on areas for development.

We have regular check-ins both 121 and as a cohort which gives apprentices the confidence and space to voice opinions. These sessions help foster a supportive and open working environment.



At Bayer we highlight the importance of hands-on experience. Each apprentice has a defined role with clear responsibilities ensuring from day one apprentices are involved in real projects and tasks. They can take pride in their progress whilst learning practical skills and gaining a deeper understanding of business environment.

These real-life experiences are invaluable and is much more impactful than theoretical knowledge alone.

I encourage apprentices to reflect on their experiences and learning. Self-reflection helps them understand their progression, recognise their achievements and it helps identify areas for further development. It also promotes a sense of ownership and responsibility as they grow within our business.

Occasionally there can be bumps in the road for young apprentices, so when this happens, we work proactively with them to identify and address any concerns. Providing additional resources or offering 121 support from a manager and team perspective often is all it takes to get back on track. By being flexible and responsive I would say is important to ensure that apprentices succeed.

The success of an apprentice is a team effort, made possible by the support of excellent managers, mentors and colleagues throughout our organisation. I feel lucky to be involved in the early stages of their careers, they all have bright futures ahead.

"During my apprenticeship, the guidance from my mentors has significantly influenced my development during my Apprenticeship. Their support has enhanced my confidence and has equipped me to navigate challenges with greater certainty. In addition, my mentors have helped me in expanding my professional network. This has allowed me to establish connections with industry experts and peers that have opened doors to new opportunities. Overall, the mentoring experience has been crucial in my growth and development throughout my apprenticeship."

Melissa Strong, Bayer PLC
Relationships Manager
Supply Chain Management & Order to Cash

Congratulations to last quarter's achievers:

Karen Adkins
Georgina Ainsley
Judith Bennet
Natasha Bint
Stephen Chard
Heidi Cockram
Daniel Evans
Polly Gibson

Michelle Glasheen
Elzbieta Gnutek
Paul Graham
Amanda Harris
Florence Ireson
Gabija Knight
Joseph Krauesslar
Emily Malcher

Katherine Masoero
Amelia McClland
Hannah Mitson
Charlie Mountain
Ella Newman
Sian Norris
Sadie Owen
Leanne Phillips

Stephanie Purvis
Timothy Rayns
Attah Rehman
Honor Ryan
Alesha Sahans
Leia Shorney
Kelly Stevens
Kate Toone

Thomas Ventham
Emma Westwood
Georgina White
Thomas Woodrow
Charlotte Wray
Jack Youster

Choose WBTC for high-quality apprenticeships that ensures for your business and workforce.

LEARNER CELEBRATIONS

We are delighted to recognise the outstanding accomplishments of our WBTC learners. In this edition, we shine a light on individuals who have recently completed apprenticeships or achieved qualifications.

Meet Kate Toone from West Berkshire Council

Level 3 to 5: A Career Journey with Apprenticeships

Traditionally when people considered apprenticeships, it often evoked the image of a 16 - 18 year olds starting out in their careers. But there has been an increasing trend for many years, of those with established careers and advanced degrees. Kate Toone of West Berkshire Council, is a living testament to the fact apprenticeships can be a valuable path for learners at any stage of life.

Kate embarked on a journey that saw her complete both a Level 3 Team Leader and a Level 5 Operations/ Departmental Manager Apprenticeship. Despite already holding a degree and a master's degree, she chose this route to expand her knowledge, boost her confidence, and gain practical work-related qualifications.

One of the most rewarding aspects of the apprenticeship was the opportunity to connect with colleagues and organisations from diverse backgrounds. By sharing experiences and learning from others, Kate gained a deeper understanding of different approaches to her work. The face-to-face training sessions were particularly valuable, fostering a sense of community and and collaboration.

Of course, balancing the demands of work, life, and two apprenticeships wasn't without its challenges. It required dedication, time management, and a strong support system. Kate found that doing the apprenticeships back-to-back was the right choice for her, as her knowledge was fresh and there was some overlap between the two levels. The Level 5 apprenticeship, in particular, demanded a high degree of self-directed learning.



Mentoring and Giving Back

Kate is now applying her new found knowledge and skills as a mentor to an associate project manager. Drawing on the coaching and mentoring training she received during her apprenticeships, she is able to provide valuable guidance and support to her mentee.

Over the course of her 16-year career at West Berkshire Council, Kate has held various roles, culminating in her current position in Adult Social Care. She has found the apprenticeships to be instrumental in her career progression and has expressed immense gratitude for the support she has received from her organisation.

A Word of Thanks

Kate is particularly grateful to the team at WBTC, especially her tutor and training consultant. She has found all the staff to be friendly, approachable, and supportive. Her line manager has also played a crucial role in empowering her to succeed both in her work and studies.

Looking ahead, Kate plans to continue embedding her learning, mentoring her colleague, and promoting apprenticeships within her organisation. She is also excited to contribute to WBTC in a new capacity by delivering sessions and sharing their experiences with other learners.

The Power of Apprenticeships

Kate's story is a testament to the transformative power of apprenticeships. Whether you're just starting out in your career or looking to upskill, an apprenticeship can provide valuable opportunities for learning, growth, and professional development.

If you're considering an apprenticeship, Kate encourages you to embrace the challenge and seize the opportunity. With the right support and dedication, you can achieve great things.

"Embrace the challenge and seize the opportunity. With the right support and dedication, you can achieve great things!"

Interview with Rachel Eaves

Learner and Employer Engagement



What is your job at WBTC?

My role at WBTC is to support people looking to begin or develop their career, typically through an Apprenticeship, Study Programme or Commercial training. I work with schools and colleges to ensure young people know about the opportunities and support we offer. At the same time, I work with employers who are looking to recruit an apprentice or upskill their team through training and help them understand what funding is available and finding the right qualification. It is about giving the right advice and guidance to individuals and organisations to ensure people achieve their desired outcomes, and that the process is as smooth as possible before handing over to our Delivery Team to work their magic!

You have been at WBTC a long time, has much changed?

Of course, over time everything changes - funding, qualifications, processes and people. The biggest change I have worked through was in response to the Covid lockdown. The team were incredible, everyone played their part and went above and beyond to ensure our learners were well supported, alongside supporting each other. What has remained consistent is that the learners really are at the heart of everything we do and that the team here are committed to getting the best possible outcomes for them.

What do you find most enjoyable about your job?

Watching people succeed, achieving their goals, it really is that simple - knowing I have been a tiny part of it, tiny but enough that it makes me love what I do! Meeting people, talking to people, it is fascinating to learn about organisations and jobs people do. 14 years later, I still get a real buzz making the call to tell someone they have been successful in being offered an apprenticeship.

It is also about the team around you, I have met many wonderful people over the years who have formed part of the team at WBTC and as I tell young people, if you find a job you enjoy with people you like (who make you cry with laughter) then it's a good pathway to happiness.

And the hardest part?

Having to tell someone they have been unsuccessful at interview when they really wanted the apprenticeship, there is something out there for everyone but in that moment, you know how disappointed they are feeling.

Best piece of advice to give a young person?

Get work experience, employment or volunteer whenever you can - not only does this give weight to a CV but it's these experiences that shape you. I had a paper round, worked as a cleaner and a chambermaid while I was studying and these experiences had a big impact on the person I became and got me ready for the world of work!

And when you are not working?

Spending time with family and friends, love a good Sunday lunch with all the family, walking the dog and reading - but only 'real books'. I love Tudor murders, like the Shardlake series. I can spend hours doing Sudoku, sometimes after talking all day you just need a bit of quiet!

What superpower would you have and why?

The ability to slow down time - as and when I like! I blink and it's bin collection day again, blink twice and it's Christmas - how does it all come round so quickly? I embraced being 50, lucky enough to see in another big birthday, but wow, how has time flown. Imagine, spending a day doing something you really enjoy with your favourite people able to slow down time.

Favourite Holiday?

Too tricky to call. From Weymouth as a child, partying in Spain in my teens to Morocco with my mum and sisters last year - all holidays are special, but I loved this summer, a week in Alcudia with my hubby and both 'kids' (16 and 19) which was fantastic. Next stop is a week on the Durham Coast in November (chilly!) to see my son and a long weekend in Derbyshire to see Chatsworth House at Christmas.

A big **Thank You** to AP&C for their support



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DATES FOR THE DIARY

As a WBTC Partner you have access to a range of Professional Development workshops for you and your staff. Every one of our employers is a WBTC Partner which means you can send any of your staff on our workshops either for free or for a subsidised cost. Each course is run by one of our skilled trainers all of whom have years of experience in their subjects. Understandably, our Professional Development workshops are very popular so if you are thinking of attending one, we advise you book as early as possible. To secure a place please email karenf@wbtc-uk.com.

Virtual delivery will be carried out either via Teams or Google Classroom and links will be sent out with joining instructions nearer the date. Courses may be rearranged depending on numbers booked on. If this is the case we will aim to inform you as soon as possible.

British Safety Council Certificate in Health & Safety in the Workplace (Half Day - Virtual)

This workshop provides a basic understanding of workplace health and safety. It focuses on defining hazards and risks, identifying common workplace hazards, and learning how risk assessment can prevent accidents and injuries. Upon completion, attendees can take an online test to earn the British Safety Council Certificate in Workplace Health and Safety this will cost an extra £23.95.

Price: Apprentice: Free

Partner: £75 + test

Course dates: Thursday 13 March 2025

Course times: 9:30am to 12:30pm

Mentoring an Apprentice (Half Day - Virtual)

This workshop is designed to help employers and mentors understand the key components of apprenticeships and their responsibilities. It focuses on supporting learners and developing effective mentoring strategies, including the use of tools to improve behavior.

Price: Free for everyone

Course dates: Thursday 13 February 2025, Thursday 22 May 2025

Course times: 9:30am to 12:30pm

Presentation Skills (Full Day - Face to Face)

Put an end to your fear of presentations! This course will help you prepare your presentation effectively using a universally recognised format. You will also learn how to take control of your nerves and use them positively together with taking charge of your audience and getting them on your side. The course includes the opportunity for each delegate to make a short presentation.

Price: Apprentice: Free

Partner: £100

Course dates: Thursday 13 February 2025, Thursday 1 May 2025

Course times: 9:30am to 4pm

Healthy Relationships, Citizenship and Wellbeing (Full Day - Face to Face)

This mandatory workshop requires all 16-18-year-old apprentices and highly recommended for apprentices 19+, to complete mandatory training in defining healthy 'working' relationships, citizenship, and wellbeing. This workshop will cover topics such as defining healthy relationships, understanding citizenship skills, and recognizing signs of poor mental health.

Price: Free for everyone

Course dates: Thursday 5 December 2024

Course times: 9:30am to 4:30pm

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (Half Day - Virtual)

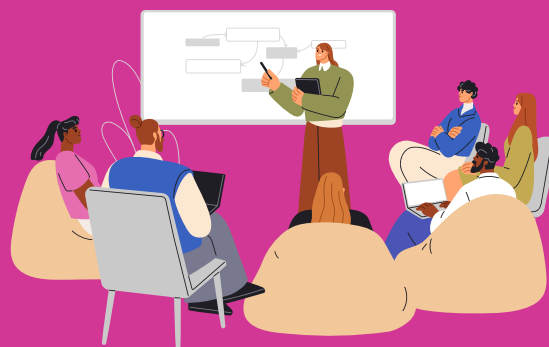
This workshop covers; Understanding the Equality Act 2010 and protected characteristics, Identifying unacceptable actions and behaviours such as discrimination, indirect, stereotyping, harassment and victimisation, How to treat others with respect and offer everyone fair access to opportunities, How to build an open and inclusive workplace and the benefits of a diverse and inclusive workforce. Learners will be encouraged to use reflective learning to complete an action plan for practical application of the knowledge back in the workplace.

Price: Apprentice: Free

Partner: £75

Course dates: Thursday 29 April 2025

Course times: 9:30am to 4:30pm



Safeguarding Focus

Government vows to better protect women and girls from violence.

This month we turn our attention to the issue of domestic violence against females.

In September the Home Secretary spearheaded a new initiative designed to tackle domestic violence carried out against women and girls, an issue of great concern for UK citizens and campaigners.

Almost 100 domestic abuse related offences were recorded by the police every hour, on average, last year. This new initiative will ensure calls for help are treated with the urgency needed, and victims get the specialist support they need straight away. On the night Raneem Oudeh was killed by her husband, in 2018, she rang 999 four times. This new approach to control rooms has been formulated in response to past failures of this kind. The aim of the new 'Raneem's Law' is to ensure that victims get a fast response when needed and are referred to support services as quickly as possible.

In a further step to keep women and girls safe, from November more domestic abusers will be ordered to stay away from their victims and face tougher sanctions if they fail to do so through the launch of the new domestic abuse protection order pilot. The new orders go further than current laws, with measures such as making it a legal requirement for perpetrators to inform the police of any change in name or address, imposing electronic tagging, and ordering assessments for behaviour change programmes. There will also be no maximum duration for these new orders. Currently, victims are only protected for up to 28 days.

The orders will cover all forms of domestic abuse, including violence, stalking and controlling behaviour. Breaching one of these new orders will be a criminal offence, punishable by up to 5 years in prison.

The government have also pledged to give more support to schools and educational institutions in teaching children and young people about healthy relationships, respect and consent. Prevention and education are key pillars of the government's broader strategy, alongside enforcement and victim protection.

Minister for Safeguarding and Violence Against Women and Girls Jess Phillips said:

'For too long, we know victims haven't had the protection they deserve. We have set out an ambitious mission - to halve violence against women and girls in a decade - and offering the strongest and most effective response to incidents of domestic abuse is absolutely fundamental to this.'

The news will come as strong reassurance to educational professionals, and people across the country more generally, for whom this issue has been a source of concern for many years.



SAVE THE DATE

Rising Stars Graduation and Employer Awards

Thursday 15th May 2025

Arlington Arts Centre
Newbury

