

Welcome to the February 2025 WBTC Newsletter

Welcome to the first newsletter of 2025. As we start a new year, many of us are focused on achieving our business aims for the year ahead. One key consideration is the upcoming increase in employer national insurance contributions.

Apprenticeships offer a valuable way to mitigate the impact of this increase. Employers are exempt from paying Class 1 National Insurance contributions for employees aged 25 and under. This exemption provides a unique opportunity to upskill your existing workforce, boosting productivity and addressing internal skills gaps, all while avoiding the increased National Insurance costs.



When planning for new hires or replacements, consider making the role an apprenticeship. This approach provides high-quality training for your new employee while also reducing your overall employment costs. Now is the ideal time to strengthen your organisation and minimise the impact of the upcoming National Insurance changes.

Craig Mincher, Managing Director

National Apprenticeship Week

National Apprenticeship Week is a week-long celebration of apprenticeships in England. It celebrates the benefits an apprenticeship can have on individuals, communities, businesses and the economy, the accomplishments of apprentices and the role employers have in apprenticeships.

This years National Apprenticeship week aims to highlight how apprenticeships are an excellent option for young people looking to start a career, for employees looking to progress in their current role or retrain for a new career and also for employers who wish to fill skills gaps to help grow their business.

With over 600 different Occupational Standards to choose from, there has never been a better time to launch your career as an apprentice. This year to celebrate National Apprenticeship Week, WBTC is delighted to hear from our alumni telling their stories of how the apprenticeship pathway kick started their career, following their WBTC graduation.





Apprenticeships



Chris Hughes

"WBTC found me an apprenticeship back in 2003. I would describe myself as a 'middle of the road/underachieving' student, not 'academic' nor stimulated/ motivated by school life. I did/do however have a keen appetite to progress in business and life. At that time, I had just finished Sixth Form at Kennet School in Thatcham, achieving average grades in Business Studies. I was also working 14 hours a week as a supervisor in a local convenience store, a role that was a great start in life but retail not being a career path that excited me.



21+ years on, I'm still grateful to WBTC for presenting an opportunity for me to carve a career in Business and Electronics, and to my employer at the time, now

called Rebound Electronics UK Ltd for the opportunity. The course took approximately 12 months, and during that time, we discussed real, 'live' business events and fitted that into a work frame that resulted in an NVQ qualification.

In October of 2024 I celebrated my 21st anniversary at Rebound Electronics. To reflect, I began as Sales Support with no industry experience and progressed into Sales (Business Development, Account Management, Senior Account Management) before taking on Sales Management responsibilities. I then took on the role of UK Sales Director before my current wider position of Sales Director, responsible for 8 Sales offices across the UK, Nordics & North America.

2025 will be an exciting year for our business and certainly still more opportunity to progress both myself, this business and equally as important to me, our people. Notably, this month we hired an apprentice via WBTC and I'm confident this individual will excel within our business based on her solid start."



Louise Davies

"I left school in 2005 and did one year at Sixth Form. It quickly became apparent that this wasn't the route for me.

I then took on a temporary administration assistant role at West Berkshire Council and was fortunate to be offered the opportunity to do a Business Administration apprenticeship through WBTC, who were great. I gained my qualification within a year and whilst I have had a couple of varied administration roles over the year, I am now settled at Fair Close Centre in Newbury as Centre Manager and undertake a wide variety of administration tasks. I am proud to say that I love my job here. And we even take on work experience students from WBTC!"

Beth Park

"I started my apprenticeship at WBTC straight from school at 16. I completed my Intermediate level apprenticeship of Business Administration and completed my Advanced level at my current company, Firstxtra Financial Services. My apprenticeship was the stepping stone in my career, and I am now a fully qualified Mortgage Adviser with my CeMAP qualification! The support and training I received during my apprenticeships helped me develop a broad range of skills and gave me the confidence to pursue my career. It also meant I could learn and get paid for it at the same time!"



Alex Painter

'Initially I stayed on at school to complete A-levels, however having a part-time job made me realise I was much happier and more productive in the workplace. I started to look at apprenticeship options and WBTC helped me find an apprenticeship at a local company. For me, the apprenticeship route was a great way of getting educated without being in full-time education, gaining new skills in real life situations, meeting new people. I really enjoyed going into WBTC for training with Tony and of course, getting paid!



Since my apprenticeship I have worked for a global company as an Application Support Analyst Team Leader, and now I am a Technical Service/Account Manager with a local telecommunications company.

The apprenticeship route was definitely the right one for me!"



Ella Joyce

"My time at WBTC positively impacted my life both personally and professionally. Not only did my Business Administration apprenticeship provide me with the skills to combat two redundancies, climb through the ranks in three companies, and land a role that I'm passionate about, it also gave me wonderful friendships. Six years on, Ellie, Tierney and I are great friends after meeting at WBTC. We've been on holidays, welcomed a new addition and are looking forward to Ellie's wedding this year. It just goes to show the incredible impact choosing an apprenticeship can have!"

Stephen Caldaralo

"I started my apprenticeship in Event Management at WBTC in 2019. Thanks to all the support from WBTC, I completed my apprenticeship course then continued to work at PAC Events until March 2020 when the hospitality industry shut down due to Covid-19. I worked in various industries until I worked my way into the film/TV industry and become an Assistant Director. I worked on various productions, getting credits on Wonka, Secret Invasion, Masters of the Air, You Season 4 and Fantastic Beasts (Harry Potter Spin-off). I was an Assistant Director until the film strikes happened in 2022/2023 – when the strikes hit, I went back to PAC events and built my relationships back up with clients and suppliers all over the world. I



worked hard and used all the skills that PAC and WBTC taught me to be rewarded a role of Director of Sales – I now oversee over 400 events per annum in all corners of the world."



Emma Hart

"In 1997 WBTC found me an apprenticeship at Prudential in Reading, at a later date I transferred my apprenticeship to work at WBTC as their receptionist, I have never looked back! The skills I learnt gave me an excellent platform to build my career upon and my confidence soared as a result of the supportive, friendly environment that went alongside being an apprentice. I spent over 15 years as Training Consultant, so I really understand the apprentice's journey from all sides and I am passionate about giving learners all the tools they need to succeed. In 2023 I was proud to become WBTC Work Based Learning Manager overseeing all the apprentices, training and the team of Training Consultants, a challenging but

really rewarding role in a company I love. Having just celebrated 28 years of service - this is where my apprenticeship has taken me!"

Where will your Apprenticeship take you?

Course Spotlight

Level 3 Learning & Development Practitioner

WBTC are pleased to be offering the Learning and Development Practitioner Standard, which will enable colleagues to identify, create and deliver appropriate training needs

This Standard is 18 months in duration and will cover a wide range of topics, including:

- Theories and models that underpin effective adult learning and group behaviour
- How different learning delivery methods, face-to-face, blended or digital contribute to effective learning
- How to identify and analyse learning needs in line with organisational performance outcomes
- How to plan, deliver and review a learning programme



Group training would be one day a month and could be offered both face to face or remotely, alongside a monthly 1-1 training and review meeting with their WBTC Training Consultant.

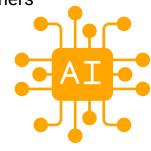
To find more about the Level 3 Learning & Development Practitioner scan the QR code or contact Rachel@wbtc-uk.com | 01635 35975

Introduction to AI for the workplace

"But I don't know anything about AI!"

That's good, because this workshop is specifically tailored for beginners

In this short workshop you'll consider what AI is, know what some of the limitations of AI are and what the key human component is when working with AI. You will start to build a list of AI tools and their work applications and know the importance of developing a critical approach to AI output. By the end of the workshop you'll have started to develop a responsible approach to AI and be equipped with some skills and knowledge to continue your exploration into AI and it's workplace applications.



For more information on how to book onto a Professional Development Workshop please email **Janet@wbtc-uk.com**



Purple Sock day 03 December 2024

WBTC showing our support for World Disability Day on December 3rd, 2024 with these funky socks! We're proud to be supporting Swings & Smiles, a local charity providing vital services for children and young people with disabilities and their families. If you're an organisation

interested in supporting Swings & Smiles, please reach out to them directly.

#WorldDisabilityDay #SwingsAndSmiles



LEARNER CELEBRATIONS

We are delighted to recognise the outstanding accomplishments of our WBTC learners. In this edition, we are celebrating Natasha and Brayden.



Natasha's Triumph: A milestone for WBTC

We are delighted to celebrate the outstanding achievement of Natasha. Natasha was WBTC's first apprentice to undertake the End Point Assessment (EPA) for the Level 3 Teaching Assistant Apprenticeship Standard v1.1 and she achieved a remarkable Distinction!

Natasha's journey was not without its challenges. As she shared, "There were a few challenges I faced during my apprenticeship, including my confidence, as this was my first time working in a school. But with the support of my colleagues and tutors, my confidence increased as time went on."

Her Training Consultant, Hazel Thomas, noted a significant transformation in Natasha: "I saw a huge change in Natasha across the course of her apprenticeship, noticeably so in the final 5-6 months. She faced significant personal hurdles in her journey from onboarding to entering Gateway. Despite these obstacles, Natasha persevered. She gained invaluable experience across various key stages at Whitelands School, where she received exceptional support from the head teacher, SENCO, and mentors."

"The dedication of the support team around the TA's at Whitelands is second to none," Hazel added. "I was particularly impressed with the way Natasha worked with me in the 4 weeks leading to Gateway, where she worked diligently to complete her portfolio and supporting evidence."

Natasha's achievement is a testament to her hard work, dedication, and the supportive environment provided by WBTC and Whitelands School. We wish her all the best in her future career.

We congratulate Natasha on her well-deserved Distinction and wish her all the best in her future endeavors. Her success is a significant milestone for WBTC's apprenticeship program, and we look forward to celebrating many more such achievements in the years to come.

"I am grateful for my apprenticeship for where I am now"

Brayden: Overcoming Doubts and Building Confidence

Brayden started the year lacking some confidence in himself but, since that time, his confidence and also leadership has grown leaps and bounds. Brayden joined the maths programme with some huge doubts about his own ability, attempting only the questions he was certain of. Since that time he has taken more and more risks, pushing himself, trying different methods and, as a result, has grown in skill and courage. He is always keen to learn and takes an active leadership role, getting folders and equipment out for his peers before the start of the lesson to save them some time and help them.

For all these reasons, his courage, his eagerness to learn and his service to others, this is why he is Great Start Learner of the Quarter.



"Great Start has helped me focus on my future goals"

Volunteering in Local Schools: A Seed for Future Recruitment

In today's competitive landscape, businesses are constantly seeking innovative ways to attract and secure top talent for the future. One often overlooked strategy is fostering relationships with schools through employee volunteering. By investing time and resources in educational initiatives, companies not only contribute to their communities and CSR, but also cultivate a pipeline of future recruits by growing awareness of their company and highlighting careers in their industry.

WBTC are proud to partner with Education Business Partnership who annually support in excess of 20,000 students across the Thames Valley through business volunteering opportunities in schools. From mock interviews to spotlighting your industry,

the opportunities to get involved are very varied. To find out more contact CEO Kate Barrow at KateB@ebp.org.uk

West Berkshire Award Successes

WBTC recently had two winners at the West Berkshire Adult Learning Awards. The ceremony took place in November.

Our winners were Michelle Gilbert who won Tutor of the Year and Tom Allport, one of our Apprentices, who won skills for life.

Tom deserved to win for his determination and perseverance to achieve what he sets his mind to. Tom signed up for the Business Administration Level 3 apprenticeship and within this, he needed to achieve his level 2 maths functional skills. The journey to achieve the maths wasn't an easy one Tom struggled to attend group sessions but he persevered and attended the training sessions. About 6 months into his apprenticeship Tom faced Further challenges, however he continued to work towards his maths Tom made time to attend the math sessions, attend extra 1-2-1 sessions and complete revision in his own time. It wasn't easy and Tom didn't let this stop him. He continued with his 1-2-1 sessions and revision and he achieved the Level 2 exam.

This paid off as it meant Tom could go own and take his End Point Assessment for his apprenticeship and he smashed this and was awarded a Distinction. Tom worked so hard and thoroughly deserved to win this award.

Michelle is an inspirational Tutor and Training Consultant at WBTC. She joined the company three years ago and implemented the Teaching Assistant Apprenticeship. She designed the curriculum plan and training sessions, and has supported many Apprentices to achieve their Teaching Assistant Apprenticeships. Michelle's learners all rave about how great she is as a tutor and how committed she is. The programme is successfully running, so the longer term future plan is that Michelle will design the curriculum for the Level 4 Higher Level Teaching Assistant qualification/Apprenticeship and this will enable those who achieve the Level 3 to progress and continue with their learning.

We Did It Again! Retaining Our Matrix Standard Accreditation

We are thrilled to announce that we have successfully retained our accreditation of the Matrix Standard! This prestigious achievement is a testament to the dedication and hard work of our entire team, our partners, employers and learners.

The Matrix Standard is a rigorous quality framework that ensures organisations are delivering the highest quality education and training. Achieving and retaining this accreditation demonstrates our commitment to providing exceptional information, advice and guidance to our learners and employers. The assessor who evaluated our organisation was particularly impressed by the quality of our provision and the expertise of our staff. They also highlighted the richness that our partners, employers, and learners brought to the process. This collaborative approach is essential to our success, and we are grateful for the contributions of everyone involved. An employer quoted in the report said "WBTC is excellent with staff going above and beyond what we could ever expect from a Training Provider"

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to our partners, employers, and learners for their continued support. Your involvement in the accreditation process was invaluable, and we are proud to achieve this accomplishment together. We are committed to continuous improvement, and we will use the feedback from the assessor to further enhance our services. We look forward to continuing to provide our learners with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the workplace.

We hope you are as excited as we are about this achievement!



Community

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Safeguarding Focus

Safer Internet Day 2025



Online Safety, for staff and learners, has always been very important to WBTC, which is why we continually provide teaching, advice and information around this topic.

Safer Internet Day 2025 will take place on the 11th of February 2025. Coordinated in the UK by the UK Safer Internet Centre, the celebration sees thousands of organisations get involved to promote the safe, responsible and positive use of digital technology for children and young people.

Over the years, Safer Internet Day has become a landmark event in the online safety calendar. Starting as an initiative of the EU SafeBorders project in 2004, and taken up by the Insafe network as one of its earliest actions, in 2005, Safer Internet Day has grown beyond its traditional geographic zone and is now celebrated in approximately 170 countries worldwide.

Safer Internet Day is the UK's biggest celebration of online safety. Each year The Safer Internet Centre cover an online issue or theme that speaks about the things young people are seeing and experiencing online. Created in consultation with young people across the UK, this year the day will be focussing on the issue of scams online and for young people, how to protect themselves and others, as well what support is available to them.

The Safer Internet Day will access the real scale of this issue, and allow young people to share their experiences and ideas on how to tackle the problem. The Centre will build on the important work being done to raise awareness of issues such as online financial sextortion, and will also consider the future of scams, answering questions such as:

- · How is changing technology, like generative AI, going to impact the approach of scammers?
- What role can the government and internet industry take to tackle this threat?
- And what changes would young people like to see to help protect themselves moving forward?

In the meantime, stay safe!

For further information visit safterinternet.org.uk

Congratulations to last quarter's achievers:

Jamie Bennett - Avia Technique Alexander Cates - Benchmark

Michaila Cleaver - St Leonards C of E Primary School

Luken Coleman - Amberjack

Charlotte Cork - West Berkshire Council

Oliver Fritz - Stacatruc

Ben Godding - ROC Technologies

Angelika Kukowska - Slough Children First

Megan Littlechild - WBTC

Sean Long - Barnfield Engineering

Chelsie Paxford - Beenham Primary School

Hayley Prestoe - West Berkshire Council

Harry Pullen - Cleanova

Andrew Rainey - Ubico

Emily Rowe - St Andrews C of E Primary School

Ellie Sinclair - Phabrix Ltd

Nerice Smith - The Chartered Intitute of Marketing

Ethan Togher - Adbro Controls

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



WBTC RISING STARS / GRADUATION & EMPLOYER AWARDS 2025

Thursday 15th May Arlington Arts Centre Mary Hare, Snelsmore Common Newbury, RG14 3BQ

English and Maths Functional Skills

1 in 6 adults find not having their English and maths functional skills (or other qualification) is holding them back. These skills are essential for your **education**, **working** and **personal life**.

They can help you:

- · Feel more confident
- Improve your chance of employment or promotion
- Apply for higher education courses
- Enhance your sense of wellbeing

Who is eligible?

To be eligible for this course to be fully funded you must be:

- 19+
- Employed or unemployed
- They may be some restrictions based on your home postcode
- You also need to be a UK national, other person with right of abode or an EEA national in the UK who has been a resident for at least the previous 3 years.

How is it delivered?

- Online Choose daytime or evening
- Small group sizes allowing plenty of time for 1-2-1 attention
- Run weekly over 4 months
- · You can also request 1-2-1 support if needed

For more information, advice or guidance please email Natalie.elliot@wbtc-uk.com

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For employers these courses can help:

Improve productivity

Increase Staff Confidence

Enhance Retention

Apprenticeship Study Sessions

WBTC will be providing dedicated days when you can come into WBTC and work on your Apprenticeship.

You can use the time to work on actions set, portfolios, presentations, updating off-the-job logs, English and/or maths revision or anything else that you may have to do for your apprenticeship.

You could attend one session or all of them and you can drop in for part of the day or stay for the whole session.

On the day there will be a Training Consultant available who will be able to support, although they may not be specific to your sector.

The dates for the apprenticeship study sessions are:

- Wednesday 19th February 10am to 3pm
- Wednesday 19th March 10am to 3pm
- Wednesday 23rd April 10am to 3pm
- Wednesday 28th May 10am to 3pm
- · Wednesday 9th July 10am to 3pm
- Wednesday 13th August 10am to 3pm
- Wednesday 3rd September 10am to 3pm



If you would like to attend a session, please email Emma@wbtc-uk.com

Interview with Michelle Dunn

Functional Skills Tutor



What is your job at WBTC?

My role is all about delivering online Functional Skills maths and English lessons to a wonderfully diverse range of learners. Most of my time is spent teaching group sessions, but I also provide one-to-one support for students who need a little extra help.

My learners are mostly adults, who need a GCSE-equivalent qualification for all sorts of reasons—whether it's climbing the career ladder, switching roles, getting into university, or finally conquering a subject they've struggled with in the past. I also work with Apprentices who need Maths and/or English qualifications as part of their programme, and this year, I've had the privilege of supporting some of our Great Start learners too.

What do you find most enjoyable about your job?

I love equipping learners with practical, real-world maths and English skills that help

them tackle everyday challenges, boost their job prospects, and achieve personal goals.

The absolute highlight of my job? Telling a student they've passed their exams. Hearing their excitement and knowing how much effort they've put in over the months is truly rewarding.

I also enjoy hearing the stories my learners share—like how they can now help their children (or grandchildren!) with maths homework, confidently proofread emails at work, or even spot a mathematical blunder during a board meeting. It's amazing to think I've played a small part in those moments.

And the hardest part?

One of the biggest challenges is helping learners overcome the personal barriers they bring to the classroom. Many have low self-confidence, a fear of failure, or less-than-fond memories of school. Building their trust and engagement takes patience and a lot of encouragement.

Then there's the tricky balance of catering to a range of skill levels within one group. Keeping lessons engaging, accessible, and challenging for everyone can sometimes feel like spinning plates, especially when juggling curriculum demands and individual goals.

External pressures also play a role—learners are often stretched thin with work, family responsibilities, or other commitments. It's tough, but I enjoy a good challenge (and plenty of coffee helps!).

What advice would you give to an adult thinking about studying maths and English?

Go for it! Seriously, take the plunge. A lot of my students start off feeling nervous or convinced they'll never pass—they've been told they "can't do" maths or English or have convinced themselves it's just not their thing.

By the end of the course, so many of my students comment on how proud they are of what they've accomplished. I've even had students admit they've started enjoying it (yes, even maths!). So if you're hesitating, just remember: it's never too late, and you might surprise yourself.

And when you are not working?

Outside of work, I'm usually curled up on the sofa with my husband and our two French Bulldogs, watching films. If the weather's nice, I'll be pottering around in the garden—growing chillies in the greenhouse or keeping my vegetable patches in check.

When I'm not at home, I'm likely on the basketball court. I play with a women's team we started in May 2024, and on Friday nights, you'll find me at a mixed scrimmage (and yes, I mean basketball—no sword fighting involved!).

What superpower would you have and why?

If I could have any superpower, it would be omnilingualism—the ability to understand, speak, and write every language fluently. It'd break down communication barriers and help connect with people from all walks of life, no matter where they're from. Plus, it fits perfectly with my passion for teaching and sharing knowledge. And let's face it, being able to confidently order food anywhere in the world is a pretty great bonus!

Favourite Holiday?

I've been lucky to have some fantastic holidays over the years—from water parks in Tenerife to enjoying paella on a Spanish beach or braving muddy dog walks through Somerset's countryside.

But if I had to pick a favourite, it'd be our honeymoon in Mexico. As a foodie, I was in heaven with the fresh seafood and endless nachos. Let's just say it's a good thing airlines don't weigh passengers on the way home!

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 Janet@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)

Price: Apprentice: Free Partner: £75 + test

Course dates: 13/03/2025, 10/07/2025,

Effective Recruitment (Full Day - Face to Face)

Price: Apprentice: Free Partner: £75

Course dates: 11/06/2025

Presentation Skills (Full Day - Face to Face)

Price: Apprentice: Free Partner: £100

Course dates: 13/02/2025, 01/05/2025

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

Price: Free for everyone

Course dates: 24/04/2025, 26/06/2025

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (Full Day - Virtual)

Price: Apprentice: Free Partner: £75

Course dates: 20/05/2025

Time Management (Half-Day - Virtual)

Price: Apprentice: Free Partner: £75

Course dates: 17/04/2025

Mentoring an Apprentice (Half-Day - Virtual)

Price: Free for everyone **Course dates:** 29/05/2025

Introduction to AI for the Workplace (Full Day - Face to Face)

Price: Apprentice: Free Partner: £75

Course dates: 10/03/2025, 09/07/2025

Effective Recruitment (Full Day - Face to Face)

Price: Apprentice: Free Partner: £75

Course dates: 11/06/2025

Safeguarding (Half-Day - Virtual)

Price: Apprentice: Free

Partner: £75 (+ Qualification)

Course dates: 07/04/2025, 02/06/2025

Resilience & Growth Mindset (Half-day - Virtual)

Price: Apprentice: Free Partner: £75

Course dates: 25/03/2025, 30/09/2025

Change Management (Half-Day - Virtual)

Price: Apprentice: Free Partner: £75

Course dates: 14/05/2025

Coaching and Mentoring (Half-Day - Virtual)

Price: Apprentice: Free Partner: £75

Course dates: 29/04/2025

For more information please visit our website wbtc-uk.com

Thank you!



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