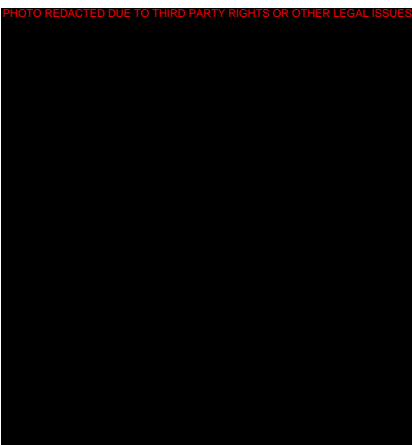




## Ready for phase 2



Television advertising will spearhead the second phase of the LSC national Apprenticeship marketing campaign, which starts on September 20.

The first phase, which began in May, generated almost 11,500 employer responses and resulted in more than 7,500 leads being followed up by brokers aiming to establish new Apprenticeship places with companies throughout the country.

Sue Lawrence

The overall aim of the three phase campaign is to generate around 33,000 employer leads and to achieve between 14,800 and 23,300 new Apprenticeship starts by 2005.

Evaluation of the initial push showed that TV adverts had the biggest impact on employers and were responsible for generating almost 55 per cent of all enquiries.

Television commercials aimed at sparking employer interest in taking on apprentices will run again between September 20 and October 17, with the bulk of advertising scheduled for Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Sundays.

This will be supported over a longer period by national press advertising, continued public relations activity and some direct mailing. The LSC will also be working closely with Sector Skills Councils to refine marketing messages to different audiences.

"In the second phase we are looking to focus our below the line activities on companies with 30 employees or more and to reach human resources decision makers," said Susan Lawrence, National Marketing Manager.

"There are plans to make some changes to the Apprenticeship website [www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk) which will make it easier for employers to respond via the web.

"The first phase of the campaign went extremely well and has laid some really good foundations on which we intend to build during phases two, and three, which will take place in the New Year."

## Qualifications come under debate

The national debate over the reform of the qualification system has begun.

Following the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's (QCA) publication of *New Thinking for Reform*, work has started on how qualifications can recognise achievement across all areas of adult education and training.

As part of this work the QCA, in partnership with the LSC, will soon be consulting on the introduction of a new 'framework for achievement'. This is in response to the Skills Strategy White Paper, which called for a reform of qualifications and training programmes.

The backbone of the new framework will be a range of occupational

qualifications that signify specialist competence. This will allow relevant achievements from employer and private training programmes to be formally recognised.

The QCA and LSC will begin taking informal soundings from stakeholders in September on proposals to introduce unit based training programmes, where the volume of each unit is measured by a system of credits.

"In partnership with the LSC, we will be consulting on the development of a framework for achievement that will be for all qualifications and we are looking at how Apprenticeships could fit into that," said Keith Brumfitt, Principal Adviser at the QCA.

"In late November we will begin a 12 week formal consultation on the proposals involving all the key stakeholders."

The QCA and LSC are also planning to run a series of round table discussions in parallel with the consultation and are looking to present a set of technical papers for consideration. The papers, which will cover Apprenticeships, will set out how the proposed system would work in practice.

"We are also piloting a series of investigations into qualifications in specific sectors based on a credit system and the results from these will be taken into account," added Keith.

# More help on the web

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More information on the new family of Apprenticeships is being placed on the website [www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk) to help brokers and training organisations deal with questions from interested employers.

“We are developing a new resources section which will be open to brokers and providers who are dealing with companies after they have responded to the Apprenticeship marketing campaign,” said Glenn Robinson, LSC National Marketing Manager.

“Small and medium sized companies often do not have specialist training or human resources managers. Brokers and providers regularly have to deal with managers who do

not have a detailed understanding of what Apprenticeships are all about.

“These new resources should help them answer the questions that are posed on their first meetings.”

The new resources will include a mini presentation explaining all about the new Apprenticeships and focusing in particular on meeting the needs of small and medium sized firms.

A section containing frequently asked questions and evidence based answers will be continuously updated to include the latest feedback from brokers and providers in the field.

There are also plans to incorporate a section containing a rolling series of employer case studies that highlight the benefits that apprentices can bring to businesses.

The aim is to have the new section of the website up and running by September 20 when the second phase of the Apprenticeship marketing campaign begins.

“When the new resources are in place we will e-mail everyone out in the field to let them know they are there,” added Glenn. “It is important that we provide them with as much product knowledge as possible and let them know what is in the pipeline as well as what is already happening.

“With over 1,000 training companies and around 400 brokers dealing with businesses across the country, it is vital they have the best possible information to help them communicate the benefits of Apprenticeships to companies.”

## Regional road show

A regional road show on Apprenticeships for Learning and Skills Council heads of work-based learning and marketing staff will be taken across the country next month.

It follows a successful series of nine sales workshops attended by more than 150 brokers that took place during June and July. These highlighted the need to improve knowledge of new Apprenticeships among those responsible for promoting them to employers.

“It became clear from these workshops that it was not sales training that brokers such as Business Links, Chambers of Commerce, learning partnerships and individual training companies needed but a greater understanding of the product they were actually selling,” said Glenn Robinson, National Marketing Manager.

“Understanding the new Apprenticeships was clearly the greatest challenge that brokers faced and the feedback we received from these events has enabled us to assess where they are and to offer more support.

“The new section of the Apprenticeship website, which will offer detailed information about Apprenticeships, how they work and how they can benefit companies, is being developed partly as a result of what we learned.”



**Employers interested in Apprenticeships should call 08000 150 400**

**To find out more about Apprenticeships, visit [www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk)**

# Making the commitment

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Kevin Marrow, LSC North Yorkshire.

More than 54 per cent of employers who have responded to the first phase of the LSC's national Apprenticeship marketing campaign are making a commitment in principle to introduce apprentices into their workforces.

The figure far exceeds the 20 per cent target for commitments set when the campaign was first launched back in May.

Enquiries from employers to the central telephone number **08000 150 400** or the website [www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk) are passed through to LSC co-ordinators who then assign a business broker to visit the company.

It is only after a broker has talked to an employer and set up a further meeting between the company and a training organisation to arrange an Apprenticeship that the commitment in principle is recorded in statistics. The success rates of training organisations in turning referrals into actual Apprenticeship starts are currently being calculated.

Analysis of commitments received during the last three months has shown some significant variations in success

rates, from more than 86 per cent in some regions of the country to around 20 per cent in others.

The LSC's national marketing team is working with co-ordinators to examine the variations and determine what works best so that it can be adopted across the country.

Nicky Brunner, Head of National Marketing, said it was taking on average between four to six weeks for brokers to meet employers and determine their commitment to taking on apprentices.

"We have to be pleased with the overall figures but we now really have to understand why rates in some areas are so much higher than in others," she said.

"It is something we are working on now and we should soon be in a position where we will know what is working and what is not so that we can develop a best practice model for everyone involved.

"It gives us the opportunity to consider how we can speed up the process through which leads are passed on to training organisations and to ensure that feedback from the training companies is gathered and used effectively."

The Yorkshire and Humber region feels it has performed well in converting leads into commitments from employers during the opening months of the campaign.

"The main reason for our success is that all of the brokers being used across the region have worked with their respective local LSCs on a number of initiatives prior to the Apprenticeship campaign," said Kevin Marrow, Regional Co-ordinator.

"They have a lot of experience of working with local employers and hit the ground running because they were so enthusiastic about Apprenticeships."

## Buoyant in the Black Country

Paul Haines, an Apprenticeship broker for the Black Country, is gearing himself up for a busy few months once the second phase of the marketing campaign gets underway at the end of September.

He is the first point of contact with employers in his area who ring the central telephone number or log on to the website to register their interest in taking on an apprentice.

"I have been extremely pleased with the way things have gone since May and more than half the companies I have visited are very keen to offer places," he said. "Of the 40 per cent where the lead goes cold, most just want more information about Apprenticeships and, in some cases,

actually want to know how much they will get paid to take one on."

Paul, who works for the Black Country Training Group in Oldbury near West Bromwich, receives his leads from LSC regional co-ordinators by e-mail and visits every employer who registers an interest. His work so far should result in around 80 new Apprenticeship placements.

"You never know what you are going to get until you sit down and talk to an employer. In some cases they just want more information but in others you can get a very pleasant surprise.

"I went to see a lady at a traditional engineering company which was looking for administrative staff. While

we were meeting, the Managing Director walked in and after talking to me said he also wanted apprentices in drop forging, engineering and hot metal work. It was a real bonus.

"You have to go in with an open mind, explain how Apprenticeships work and how young people can be trained to fit the company. Most companies are very interested to know that they can tailor their workforce – it's a common theme.

"I was rushed off my feet when the campaign first started, but the number of leads has slowed down in the last few weeks since the TV advertising stopped. I am expecting it all to pick up again though when the next round of the campaign begins."

# Advice line for providers

A new Apprenticeship advice and support line is being run for the Learning and Skills Council by the Association of Learning Providers to help training companies in their dealings with employers interested in taking on new apprentices.

Training companies can now ring 07960 753 444 or e-mail [sramkissun@learningproviders.org](mailto:sramkissun@learningproviders.org) if they have questions arising from meetings with employers or want advice from sector specialists.

Glenn Robinson

Lines are open during normal office hours between Monday and Friday and the association will respond by telephone or e-mail within 48 hours of receipt. In its first two weeks of operation the service has responded to more than 30 contacts.

Training organisations only become involved with companies after they have registered their interest in Apprenticeships through the central national telephone number or website, calls have been referred to LSC regional co-ordinators and employers have then been visited by brokers. It is then up to training companies to meet employers and discuss their training requirements in detail.

Glenn Robinson, LSC National Marketing Manager leading on the regional follow-up to the marketing campaign, said: "We recognised that, because of the campaign, providers will find themselves going out to a host of new employers they have had no contact with in the past.

"We have contracted with the Association of Learning Providers to provide this service because the organisation is best placed to offer support and advice before training companies go out to meet a new employer or come back from a meeting with questions they could not answer at the time.

"Many training companies will be going into uncharted territory because of this campaign and this is a proactive initiative aimed at improving their expertise and offering practical specialist support when it is needed."

Stephen Ram Kissun, who is running the service for the association, said the bulk of early enquiries had been from training companies wanting to know more about Apprenticeships. "It has highlighted a need for a central knowledge resource," he added.

"The second phase of the marketing campaign starts in September and we are expecting the number of calls to increase then. We have a number of experts across all sector areas who we can call on to provide advice and guidance."

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## Apprenticeships in the media

The success of the LSC's first national Apprenticeship Awards held in London this summer continues to be reflected in sustained media coverage of individuals and companies which walked away with prizes.

The Sunday Times highlighted the wide range of Apprenticeships on offer in its August feature spread headlined 'Get ahead with Apprenticeships' and quoted John Burrows from the Upper Cut Hair Salon, a runner up in the small employer competition. "We would not be able to operate our business

without apprentices because this is the way we get quality staff," he said.

Reporter Rachel Bridge said Apprenticeships had moved on from the days when they were dominated by construction and engineering. "The world of work has changed and so has the nature of Apprenticeships. Newer areas such as media, finance, retailing and IT now account for almost half of the Apprenticeship places taken up."

The Daily Express reported in its Blackfriar column that

the Bells Stores from Tees Valley had won the large employer of the year category with GA Roberts from Cheshire and Clarkson Evans from Gloucestershire respectively picking up small and medium company wards.

Construction News quoted Gerald Crittle, director of Clarkson Evans, talking about the importance of having a highly trained, high quality workforce.

"For us, Apprenticeships have been integral to the development and success of the business and we

would recommend them to anyone", he said.

The CBI Magazine featured British Gas and BMW, both runners up in the large employer category, as examples of how Apprenticeships can be tailored to drive forward business performance.

"Apprenticeships are making a big difference to all sorts of companies across the UK," it said.

"They motivate, retain and educate staff – they are an investment in people that pays off."

More than 1,000 companies and individuals entered the Learning and Skills Council's first national Apprenticeship Awards and in our last issue we featured the winners in each category.

Bells Stores was voted large employer of the year by the judging panel, GA Roberts and Clarkson Evans were winners of the small and medium employer awards respectively and the micro-business The Topiary Tree received a special award.

This month we look at the small, medium and large businesses which took the runners up positions in the hotly contested company competition.

# A cut above

## Small Employer Award

Runner up: Upper Cut Hair Salons  
Weston-super-Mare,  
Somerset

The far sighted approach to training and staff development adopted by Upper Cut Hair Salons over the past 20 years has helped the business expand and build a strong reputation for quality.

Of the 18 full-time and 10 part-time stylists now employed by the family run firm, 15 started as apprentices on training programmes which led to the business becoming the first salon to be recognised with a 'Beacon' status award, presented in the House of Commons.

Owners John and Carol Burrows feel the strong training culture within the company is integral to its success.

"We pride ourselves on making everyone feel valued and this enables us to really get the most out of our apprentices," said John. "On a personal level, the satisfaction of being involved with Apprenticeship training is tremendous and I take great pride in all of their achievements. Apprenticeships are an investment in our future success."

The company currently runs a spacious high street salon with more than 25 workstations and has plans to expand into next door premises, creating an operation with more

workstations, a lecture room and new beauty salon for clientele.

Stylists in the business are fast establishing themselves within the industry as innovators in new colour and style techniques. The Upper Cut team, led by Melanie Venn, who began as an apprentice 13 years ago, won the Western Regional L'Oreal Colour trophy in 2003. Melanie, a colour technician, has since been chosen by L'Oreal to provide training to salons throughout the UK.

John and Carol encourage all of their apprentices to take part in national and local events, including photo shoots, competitions and artistic team training.

They describe their methods as a 'filter through' style of learning. Skills and knowledge are passed down from senior stylists, many of whom started as apprentices, to the present learners. The company also provides a fast track system for older apprentices.

"From an apprentice's point of view the positives are huge as they get to follow a work-based route with on-the-job, paid training," added John. "As for employers, Apprenticeships make perfect sense."

Quality training guarantees growth and the more skills your staff have, the more effective your business will become."

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Members of the Upper Cut Hair Salon and Tan Fast Studio team.

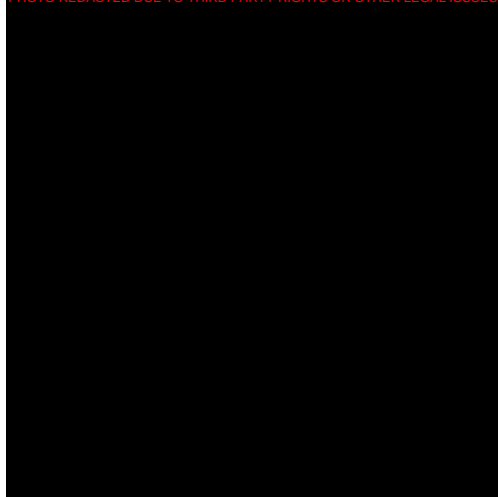


# Training sparks success

## Small Employer Award

Runner up: Barlows Electrical Engineers  
Hove,  
Sussex

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Darren Barlow (left) pictured with some of his apprentices.

Darren Barlow has come a long way since his own Apprenticeship more

than two decades ago. As company Director of Barlows, he now employs 30 staff and operates a successful electrical contracting business on the outskirts of Brighton.

Darren started his career as a freelance electrician and took on his first apprentice 14 years ago. He has continued to recruit Apprentices as the business has grown in order to build a skilled and dedicated workforce.

“I learned my trade through an Apprenticeship and the skills it equipped me with were invaluable,” he said. “Apprenticeship training provides a head start in life. Trainees are already in the world of work and constantly developing their confidence, customer skills and team participation levels.

“The effects on any business of offering an Apprenticeship to the right person are hugely positive and cannot be under estimated. I have found it has been the most successful way I have to ensure a form of business growth which is both cost effective and a guarantor of skilled employees.

Apprentices at Barlows are encouraged to work on their own under supervision from day one to help build their confidence and expertise. Regular one-to-one meetings are held to review staff welfare and development.

Darren is so committed to the concept of vocational training that he now works closely with Brighton College of Technology and has helped refresh its training programmes for electricians.

Acting in a leading advisory role, he has provided guidance on how courses should be conducted, syllabus areas that should be covered and he has even supplied raw materials for young apprentices to use in training.

“You only have to look at Barlows to see why Apprenticeships should be offered,” he added. “Apprenticeships give us the ability to bring new staff into the company who know our business and work ethic. As a business, Barlows is built and has grown around its successful training programme.”

# A key to business strategy

## Medium Employer Award

Runner up: Slack and Parr Ltd  
Kegworth,  
Derby

More than half of the 206 staff at Slack and Parr Ltd began their careers with the precision pump manufacturing business as apprentices and, over the last 40 years, all have learned their trade in the company's on-site training centre.

The centre was opened at the firm's headquarters in Kegworth in 1960 to ensure apprentices benefited from the highest quality of training. It caters for between six and 10 new apprentices each year, providing them with dedicated space in which they can develop their skills and learn their trade.

“For as long as I can remember, we have offered vocational training as a

way to build our workforce,” said, Richard Wilson, the company's Business Development Manager. “Today the centre is a tool of strategic company development and one which we hope will continue to build on our excellent reputation for results.”

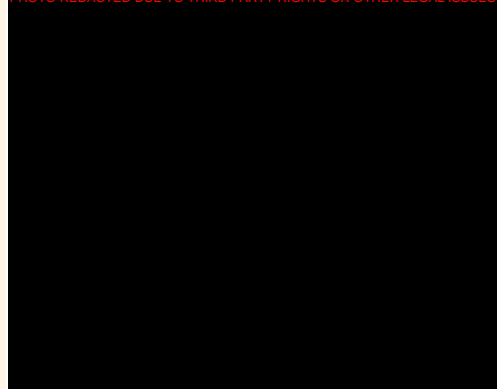
Statistics confirm that the company's training methods are extremely successful. Eighty per cent of Slack and Parr apprentices complete all elements of their Apprenticeship and the company prides itself on offering full-time contracts to them all. A remarkable 76 per cent of apprentices also go on to higher education.

Slack and Parr is keen to maintain the strength of its Apprenticeship training and has established strong links with local schools and colleges. It provides work experience placements for schools each year and runs regular ‘taster’ days for students who are keen to learn more about engineering.

These links, along with the quality of training, have allowed the company to recruit and develop staff in the face of a general skills shortage in the sector.

Those who are successful know that their Apprenticeship can lead to bigger and better things within the business. Sixteen of the company's current management team are former apprentices.

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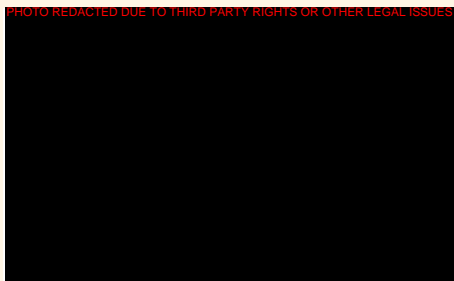


Training at Slack and Parr.

# Working the Weaver way

## Medium Employer Award

Runner up: Weaver Plc, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire



Mark Weaver (left) and Jeremy Lydiatt.

Much of the remarkable success achieved by Weaver Plc in recent months is attributed to the quality of its workforce and the strong training foundations it has laid through Apprenticeships.

The one time family run business now provides construction services nationwide and has seen turnover rise from £26 million to £40 million over a period of six months.

“Our commitment to Apprenticeships goes beyond training. We see apprentices as an integral part of our business,” said Jeremy Lydiatt, Group Planning Manager.

“Vocational training has provided us with a highly skilled, loyal and productive workforce which, in turn, has boosted our profile and financial success.”

Taking on new apprentices each year to expand its workforce is viewed by the company as being critical, as its business strategy relies on its ability to recruit and develop the right type of people.

To ensure a healthy intake of Apprenticeship applicants, Weaver promotes the opportunities available within the construction industry at major events and has developed close links with local schools and colleges within the area.

The company currently offers Apprenticeships in carpentry, bricklaying, technical and managerial areas and is considering offering additional Apprenticeships in business administration and management following its rapid recent growth.

“The general preconception is that jobs in the building trade involve either bricklaying or carpentry. In fact, there are far wider career opportunities available to young people,” added Jeremy.

“For example, here at Weaver, we have employees in marketing, design, accounts, administration, site management and operatives, estimating, surveying, contract management, buying and planning. Our apprentices are given the opportunity and encouraged to develop skills in the area they are most passionate about.”

# Custom made by BMW

## Large Employer Award

Runner up: BMW Bracknell, Berkshire

BMW's commitment to provide top quality training for its yearly intake of apprentices is evident in its purpose-built training centre in Bracknell, Berkshire, which is soon to be expanded to cover almost 5,000 sq ft.

Complete with new lecture rooms and workshops with the latest fibre optic technology, it also contains a fleet of 12 cars for dedicated use by apprentices, who cover units on body shop and servicing, technical and mechanical engineering, health and safety modules and key skills.

“At BMW we regard every apprentice as a valid team member,” said Adrian Davies, BMW's Career Strategies Manager. “We strive to teach them how to think for themselves, use their initiative and explore all issues. We don't just give them a calculator and tell them to do the sums.

“Our apprentices are integral to the continued success of BMW. It is imperative that they are equipped with the highest possible skills. The BMW brand equates to quality, so we make sure that this ethos underpins our Apprenticeship courses.”

The quality of the training it provides ensures that BMW enjoys a high rate of retention of trainees, with 97 per cent of apprentices going on to hold down careers within the company.

The success of past BMW apprentices also speaks volumes. Robin Goss became an apprentice after leaving sixth form college and is now a permanent member of the team responsible for developing and implementing the very training course he began on.

Daniel Houghton completed his Apprenticeship and went on to work for a 'Formula 1' racing team. Though reluctant to lose him, the company was delighted to see that its in-house training had applications outside the general motor industry.

“Not only are Apprenticeships immensely rewarding but from a business perspective they really deliver results,” added Adrian. “Like any business, we work to a budget and our development of high quality apprentices and our retention rate is one of the reasons we are successful today. Without these training standards, we would not have the competitive edge.”



Apprentices at BMW's purpose built training centre in Bracknell.

# Turning up the heat on training

## Large Employer Award

Runner up: British Gas

British Gas has turned up the heat on the recruitment of apprentices, increasing its annual intake from 50 young people a decade ago to around 500 today.

The British Gas Engineering Academy, the recruitment and training arm of the company, has 13 dedicated training centres around the UK of which three, in Leeds, Basingstoke and Glasgow specialise in Apprenticeships. Annual spending on Apprenticeships alone is around £13m.

Practical training is given as much precedent as theory work, with each centre providing a range of domestic scenarios including several mock-up kitchens and living rooms where appliances and systems can be worked on in as a realistic an environment as possible.

Among the training methods used is the company's unique 'Real World Environment', which uses the latest computer technology to develop customer service and fault diagnostic skills.

Apprentices access the system via a laptop using a 'Playstation' style games pad. By entering the virtual world, they get the opportunity to examine and repair 'real' appliances and speak with imaginary customers, experiencing typical real life situations before encountering them in the field.

All these training programmes play a crucial part in the company's drive to continually improve customer service, according to Rod Kenyon, Director of the British Gas Engineering Academy.

"We are judged by how we treat our customers in the home and that, of course, rests with our 7,000 engineers, many of whom began as apprentices. Customer service is as much a part of our training programmes as learning how to test, service and repair."

An increase in the number of apprentices taken on each year lies at the heart of the British Gas business plan. The company is on target to recruit and train 5,000 engineers over the next five years, half of this growth coming from advanced apprentices.

The company has 90 female engineers but wants to attract more. "We are making progress in this area but it's a slowly growing minority and we would still like to see more," added Rod.

"The job requires many attributes, not least good time management, organisational skills, and interpersonal skills. The only reason stopping more females coming forward, I suspect, is that we still don't have enough young female role models within the industry."

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Members of the British Gas Engineering Academy.

## Apprenticeships Contacts



Apprenticeships

> To find out about the business benefits of Apprenticeships, contact

**08000 150 400**

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