



COLLEGES IN THE BLACK COUNTRY

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

With the Colleges in the Black Country, Apprentices learn on the job, developing their skills and knowledge to gain qualifications while receiving an income.

Learners work towards a work-based qualification such as an NVQ and other nationally based qualifications.

Stourbridge College offers a range of apprenticeships from beauty therapy to business administration and from customer service to children's care.

Ben Shakespeare, an 18-year-old carpentry apprentice, is one of the many success stories, and was named Apprentice of the Year by the Stourbridge-based Western region of Mansell Construction.



Ben Shakespeare

He won the award after working on several major Mansell projects across the region. He was a key member of the team which carried out a refurbishment project at Stourbridge Medical Centre to provide paediatric services for Dudley Infracare LIFT. During the project Ben assisted in the delivery of a highly sensitive project within a short construction period.

Having completed Level 1 and 2 in Carpentry & Joinery, Ben is now taking his Level 3 qualification at

CASE STUDY

Opening the doors to work through Apprenticeships

the college to equip him with the skills and experience he will need to become a fully qualified and experienced carpenter, showing the excellent progression path which is open to students. Ben has ambitions to take a Diploma and progress to a career in Site Management.

Twenty young apprentices from Sandwell College have been hired to work at the heart of The AA's national service delivery centre.

The new recruits, aged 16 to 24, have started at the AA's Oldbury control centre at Birchley Island where they have been employed as customer service advisers under the company's Grass Roots Apprenticeship Scheme.

During their first year of learning the apprentices will be working towards their NVQ Level 2 Customer Service qualifications and learning key skills with a mixture of practical training and classroom-based study.

The course aims to develop young adults with minimal work experience and gradually get them used to the wide world of business.

Sandwell College's Head of Sales and Business Development, James Norris, has been instrumental in forging the brand new link with The AA and lining students up for selection.

He said: "This is a fantastic opportunity in the current economic climate for 16-plus learners to





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Victoria Maher

enter the work place with fabulous career opportunities. The scheme also shows how colleges can build strong and mutually beneficial links with employers.”

He added apprentices would have the chance to advance to a Level 3 programme or move into other areas of the business.

Victoria Maher, studying at Walsall College, has completed ICA and NVQ Level 2 in Painting &

Decorating and is working towards level 3 and ACA.

She said: “I chose to do an Apprenticeship to get into the painting and decorating trade and to get the skills I need to do well.

“I have been enjoying my apprenticeship – I spend four days working with my employer, Seddons, and the remaining day at college.

“I’d be ‘crawling the walls’ if I had to spend all day, every day in a classroom; I much prefer to get on with doing things.

“Painting and decorating is something I’ve always wanted to have a go at and the Apprenticeship allows me to get experience on the job while I learn the trade. Last year, I came runner-up in Seddon’s Apprentice of the Year Awards, which was brilliant. I wasn’t expecting it but it was a great surprise. Being a girl hasn’t been an issue at all – I get treated like everybody else.

“After I have completed my course, I would like to take a BTEC and expand my skills further. In the long run, I’d like to get into Contracts Managing but I’m definitely happy where I am for now!”