

ADVERTORIAL: Discover how your workplace can benefit from hiring a trainee through Strode College

Ahead of National Apprenticeship week in February, a Somerset-based college is looking for local businesses to take on young people in the form of a traineeship.

At a time when many businesses are still recovering from the last two years and when life still feels uncertain, employers may feel unsure about taking on new staff.

However, with traineeships at Strode College, both the financial and logistical pressures come off the employer, meaning you can find new talent without the extra worry.

Business Live spoke to Suzie Drew, the new business development manager at the college, to find out more about traineeships and her plans for her new role.

A career reboot

[Suzie Drew's role at Strode College](#) is to work closely with apprentices and employers to close the skills gap.

She has a plethora of experience in team management, sales, and new business development, having worked for some of the top 100 medical device companies in the UK.

Suzie spoke of how she came to join Strode College: "It will be two years in January that I started with the college and I think the key thing that I would say is career progression happens all the way through your life and your career. My background is as national sales manager from a previous organisation."



Suzie Drew brings a wealth of knowledge to the role, as well as buckets of enthusiasm

(Image: Strode College)

A heartbreaking life event led to Suzie needing to make some changes. She said: "On the passing of my husband I carried on with the job [national sales manager] and I actually burnt myself out if I'm honest.

"I decided to actually leave that job [...] and took three months to do a 'career re-boot' and I joined the college as a coordinator, dealing with the new T-Levels."

After excelling in that role, Suzie was then offered the opportunity to become the college's business development manager.

Suzie spoke enthusiastically about Strode College: "Obviously I can sing its praises [...], we listen, and I think that's the key thing. We listen to our customers, be it the apprentice or the employer, and that, I think, makes us stand out amongst other organisations where it's a bums on seats exercise."



Thomas Bailey who works as Apprentice Commis Chef at The Swan Hotel won Outstanding Apprentice of the Year at the Bristol & Bath Apprenticeship Awards

(Image: Strode College)

She offered up her mantra: "It's the right student, on the right course, with the right employer."

Suzie's change in roles and progression over the last two years gives her the expertise to talk to the students and advise the employers. She's happy to sit down and have a conversation with anyone who's unsure where to go next or whether it's the right time for their business to take on a trainee or apprentice.

So, let's learn more about why taking on a trainee can be beneficial...

What is a traineeship and how does it benefit my business?

For the student, a traineeship is a course with work experience that gets 16-24-year-olds ready for work or an apprenticeship. Not all young people are prepared or feel confident and ready for the world of work and so traineeships provide a supported and informed environment to guide and move into an apprenticeship, workplace or further study.

How does it benefit the employer?

Unlike an apprenticeship, a traineeship is an unpaid role, meaning as an employer, you can get up to eight weeks of free support in turn for providing the student with invaluable skills. Suzie said: "It's like a 'try before you buy' for an employer and for an apprentice it's 'try before you decide'."



Suzie Drew leads a business hub meeting
(Image: Strode College)

Recruitment is expensive, so if you're an employer who isn't sure whether you need more staff or whether you can take on an apprentice just yet, you can start with a traineeship.

By taking on a trainee, you will be able to identify gaps in your business and where you might need to fill staff. Suzie put it in her own words: "It's opening the eyes of employers who perhaps just think around the normal recruitment route – that there are other avenues that are cost-effective [...], it's somebody with new, fresh ideas, it's motivational for their staff to actually become mentors so their current staff can actually mentor these new trainees. So it's all very positive from the employer's point of view."

And if you're wary of taking on a young person who may have little or no work experience in your sector, not to worry. For every new apprentice that joins Strode, Suzie runs an assessment day that involves mock interviews to stand them in good stead for joining your business and future roles.

She said: “In the same breath with employers, I do a training needs analysis. Now, a lot of places would charge you for that training needs analysis but we don’t charge.”

The [free training needs analysis](#) helps you identify the range of options available for your business, the benefits to you, and the financial support available.



Whatever your business, you can offer traineeships to young people in Somerset

(Image: Strode College)

When taking on a new trainee through the traineeship scheme, there are a few important sets of criteria that you must be aware of:

- You must offer a legal minimum of 70 hours of work, although Strode College recommends working on a 100 hours basis, meaning you’d be looking at one full day of

unpaid work a week for six to eight weeks

- There is a government incentive of £1,000 for the employment on completion of the full course
- Although you are not obliged to pay your trainee, the college suggests you assist them with expenses such as lunch or travel costs – some businesses choose to use a fraction of the incentive money to help fund this
- The trainee must be unemployed and not in education
- Traineeships are for young people aged 16-24

Along with the government's financial support, when you pledge to take on a new apprentice before Monday, January 31, 2022, the college will [promote your business through its website](#), social media channels and provide press coverage. The experts there will also be on hand every step of the way to support your business and your new apprentice.

So, why not enter the new year by welcoming one of Somerset's young people into your workplace? You'll be surprised at how they can benefit your business.

To find out more, contact Suzie Drew on 01458844419 or 07967 773707. Alternatively, you can learn more about how Strode College works with employers and local businesses by [heading to the website, here](#). Or for regular updates, follow the college on social media: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).