

SME AWARD sponsored by Willmott Dixon

Organisation's commitment

A TRAINING organisation based in Horwich and established almost 50 years ago is a finalist in the SME of the Year category in the 2015 Business Awards.

Alliance Learning is one of the North-west's largest independent training providers and is a not-for-profit organisation as well as a registered charity.

It was originally formed in 1966 as Bolton Engineering Training Group to deliver engineering apprenticeships.

Following its amalgamation with CLEA Training in 2001, Alliance became a training provider with a reputation for quality, commitment and outstanding success rates.

The organisation is led by 10 voluntary board members, each of whom plays a lead role in companies in the sectors within which Alliance operates.

Alliance also has a training centre in the middle of Leigh.

There are three parts to the business: apprenticeships, commercial courses and e-business/learn2direct.

Each year, Alliance trains around 500 apprentices on Level 2, 3 and 4 qualifications as well as more than 6,000 individuals - all gaining vital skills to take back to the workplace.

The organisation holds OFSTED Grade 2 - rated "Good" - and

ALLIANCE LEARNING
Horwich



Investors in People. Its apprentices are employed by around 250 businesses across the region with whom the company works closely. Alliance itself employs 60 staff, who all take an active part in the business.

Chief executive Julie Robinson said the company was "extremely delighted to have been shortlisted for this award."

"Following some changes to the business over the last two years, this is a fantastic recognition of all Alliance Learning staff and the board of trustees."

"Next year will be our 50th year in business, which shows our dedication and outstanding commitment to training and apprenticeships."

"Winning this award would be the icing on the cake, and true acknowledgement of all the hard work and exceptional contribution everyone here at Alliance provides."



Chief executive Julie Robinson and staff at Alliance Learning

Chief's determination to help



Julie Robinson, chief executive of Alliance Learning

AS CHIEF executive of a Bolton training organisation, Julie Robinson ensures the ethos of "Success through learning" is instilled into everything the company and its staff do daily.

Now, that determination is being publicly acknowledged as she is chosen as a finalist in the Business Person of the Year 2015.

Mrs Robinson rose through the ranks at Alliance Learning at Horwich from sales and marketing manager 21 years ago to deputy chief executive and then, two years ago, to her current post.

She started her career at Gullick Dobson as an office junior and moved to Metro-Tec in Wigan as an NVQ Co-ordinator before joining Alliance in 1994.

Under her guidance, Alliance Learning is thriving. The non-for-profit organisation and registered charity was started almost 50 years ago and has three sides covering apprenticeships, commercial courses and e-business/learn2direct.

Annually, it trains around 500 apprentices on Level 2, 3 and 4 qualifications as well as more than 6,000 individuals in vital skills to take back to the workplace. Its apprentices are employed by around 250

JULIE ROBINSON
Alliance Learning
Horwich



businesses across the North West, with whom Alliance works closely, covering a broad spectrum of fields and services.

When Mrs Robinson was appointed to her current role by the Board of Trustees, the company had recorded a loss. One of her first steps was to put in a new management structure, resulting in a turning around of the business.

Mrs Robinson said: "I am delighted to have been shortlisted for this award. Over the last 21 years, Alliance Learning has been a major part of my life and I never lose the passion to contribute to its growth and success. Seeing a youngster develop skills which contribute to the local economy in the future is extremely rewarding."

Julie's **double**

The Standish-born chief executive was doubly delighted when she scooped two top business awards.

Julie Robinson, who now lives in Shevington, has been named Business Person of the Year in the Bolton and Bury Business Awards 2015 for her role at Horwich-based Alliance Learning. Just moments before, Julie headed the team which picked up the SME of the Year trophy.

Julie began her career at Wigan engineering company Gullick Dobson as an office junior, then moved to Metro-Tec as an NVQ co-ordinator before joining Alliance in 1994.

"It was absolutely amazing," said Julie, "When we were made finalists in two categories, I would have



chosen the SME award to win. But when we won both – well, all I can say is that it was very emotional. The first person I wanted to share the news with was my 81 year-old father, Tom Holcroft, who is my hero."

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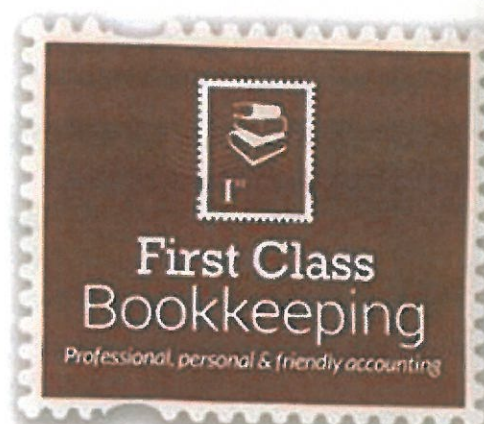
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JULIE ROBINSON WINS "OUTSTANDING WOMAN IN BUSINESS" IN E3 BUSINESS AWARDS 2016

0 Comments 7th June 2016



Julie Robinson, the Chief Executive of Bolton based Alliance Learning has been named "Outstanding Woman in Business of the Year" at the 2016 E3 Business Awards. The event took place on 3rd June at the Macron Stadium in Bolton.

Alliance Learning is one of the North West largest independent training providers and has been delivering Apprenticeships and training since 1966. Julie faced intense competition from nominees across the North West but took the title thanks to

About the Author

Gaynor R
Member since: 10th July 2012

Hi I am Gaynor Ramsden and am passionate about all things Bolton. I hope you enjoy reading my blogs and find them to be interesting and thought provoking. I would love you to add your personal comments...

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Mayor makes ringing endorsement of training provider

A HORWICH firm was given a ringing endorsement by the town's mayor.

Cllr Ken Denton visited the offices of training provider Alliance Learning, based in Horwich Loco Estate, which provides apprenticeships and training courses to thousands of people every year.

The firm will celebrate its 50th anniversary next year and will be holding numerous events throughout 2016 to celebrate the milestone.

Cllr Denton said: "I really enjoyed the visit and it certainly surprised me. I knew of Alliance Learning previously but I certainly was not prepared for the scope of the business."

"It is good to see so many apprentices under training and bodes well for the future of industry. I have not stopped telling people about a jewel in Horwich's crown. If only they had had this sort of thing when I was a lad."

"I will continue to sing Alliance Learning's praises among people who do not know about the progress."



VISIT: Alex Kitchen, Alliance Learning board member, Julie Robinson, Alliance Learning chief executive, Cllr Ken Denton, mayor of Horwich, and Kelly Perkin, operations and quality-improvement executive

Education

TRAINING

With Saiqa Chaudhari

Tel 01204 537275 Email sch

Schoolgirls engineer a successful future

Smithills School pupils start forging their career at a special taster day

By Saiqa Chaudhari
saiqa.chaudhari@nqnw.co.uk

BRIGHT young things are engineering their way to a successful future.

Year 10 girls from Smithills High School took part in an engineering taster day. They enjoyed a taste of vocational related activities hosted by Horwich-based Alliance Learning and GTA — Group Training Association — England. The group of 10 students visited Alliance Learning's training centre to gain an insight into engineering and the different opportunities that this area could lead onto.

They had a chance to take part in classroom and practical activities so pupils experienced how they become a qualified engineer, by Alliance Learning Engineering tutors, Andrew Crawford and David Hilton.

The pupils each made a fidget spinner, they used a range of engineering equipment such as reamers, surface tables, angle plates as well as using a vernier height gauge which enabled accurate marking out.

The pupils also found out techniques such as product design, hacksawing, filing, reaming and in addition to this they were also taught how to calculate the correct speed of the drilling machine to carry out the drilling process.

Julie Robinson, CEO of Alliance Learning, said: "We view our partnerships with local schools as an essential development tool in local



AIMING HIGH: Andrew Crawford, Alliance Learning Tutor, Smithills students Mahira Ismail and Kudsey Patel at an engineering taster day

learning. Alliance know how important it is for young adults to be exposed to as many career avenues as possible, in order to give them a clearer direction in later education."

She added: "Well done to the pupils of Smithills High School, who showed great understanding and initiative in all areas of the different engineering activities."

Figures from the Women's Engineering Society show that only nine per cent of the engineering workforce is female.

And only six per cent of registered engineers and technicians — CEng, IEng, EngTech — are women.

The UK has the lowest percentage of female engineering professionals in Europe, at less

than 10 per cent while Latvia, Bulgaria and Cyprus lead with nearly 30 per cent.

Alliance Learning visits local schools / careers centres to discuss taster days and Apprenticeship programmes in more detail.

For more information contact the Alliance Learning Marketing team on 01204 677888 or visit www.alliancelearning.com



OPPORTUNITY: Bolton West MP Chris Green visiting Alliance Learning, with tutor Lee Walker and apprentice Sam Hamilton

EXPERIENCE

MP to take on a new apprentice at office

■ Youngster will be hired to support staff as part of policy to help launch a career

By Liam Thorp
liam.thorp@nqmw.co.uk

NEW Bolton MP Chris Green is continuing to champion the cause of apprentices – by taking one on himself.

The Tory MP for Bolton West, who came to power in May after ousting Labour's Julie Hilling, has regularly talked about the important role that apprentices can play in the country's economic recovery.

He has now revealed that he will be taking on an apprentice to work at his newly-established constituency office in Westhoughton.

Mr Green revealed the news following a visit to Horwich-based Alliance Learning, which is one of the largest apprenticeship providers in the UK.

Speaking after the visit, he said: "We are looking to take on an apprentice to work in my new constituency office, which is opposite Westhoughton Town Hall.

"The person we select will be working in an administrative role and supporting other staff in the office.

"I have always believed that apprentices can make a huge contribution and it is vitally important to give people that experience, which can often help them to launch a career or move onto other employment."

In his summer Budget earlier this month, the Chancellor George Osborne announced that three million new apprenticeships would be created

by 2020 – funded by a levy on large employers.

It was also announced, as part of the Welfare Bill, that young people aged between 18 and 21, who are on Universal Credit, will have to apply for an apprenticeship or traineeship or go on a work placement six months after the start of their claim.

Mr Green added: "The government knows that apprenticeships are vital for our economic future and locally they can play a very important role in bringing forward the Chancellor's Northern Powerhouse vision.

"It was great to come to Alliance Learning and see all the things being done to help both people looking to become apprentices and firms who want to take people on in these roles."

■ Have your say on this story: email letters@theboltonnews.co.uk.

Alliance Learning help grateful Jodie

ONE of the largest independent commercial training and apprenticeship providers in the North West is helping this youngster achieve her career dreams.

Jodie Middleton, aged 17, left Deanery High School in Wigan in July 2014 and decided that she didn't want to go down the usual college route — she decided instead to gain some real life work experience and that an apprenticeship would be her best option.

Having not got the GCSE grades she hoped for in maths and English, Jodie applied for a traineeship with Alliance Learning in Horwich, Bolton.

A traineeship is a course with work experience that gets you ready for the world of work or an apprenticeship. Jodie thought that undertaking a traineeship would be a great way to gain some valuable work experience to ensure that she was ready and would have the confidence to take the

first step into an apprenticeship.

Straight from school, Jodie joined her traineeship programme, attending Alliance Learning three days per week, gaining meaningful work experience in business administration as well as achieving her level 1 qualifications in maths and English.

On completion of her traineeship, Jodie was successful in gaining a business administration apprenticeship and is now employed at Wrightington, Wigan & Leigh Foundation Trust NHS, where she is working towards her NVQ Level 2.

Jodie said: "Alliance Learning is a great training provider and the staff there are really kind and always support me."

On completion of her apprenticeship, Jodie would like to progress to university and become a social worker. Alliance Learning will do all they can to help her achieve her dream.



SUCCESS: Trainee Jodie Middleton

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ALLIANCE LEARNING CEO JOINS E3 BUSINESS AWARDS JUDGES

Posted by: Dave Fletcher • Tue 27th January 2017 9:00AM

Updated: Wed 14th March 2017 10:24AM

Horwich-based Training Provider Alliance Learning has revealed that Chief Executive, Julie Robinson has been asked to join the judging panel for this year's E3 Business Awards.

Designed to celebrate achievement in the fields of Enterprise, Education and Employment (the three Es), the Awards recognise companies and individual entrepreneurs who are making a positive contribution to local communities and the wider regional economy.

The awards evening will take place on July 13th at the Maccron Stadium.

Last year Julie was crowned 'Outstanding Woman in Business' at the E3 Awards and has been invited to act as judge because she has vast experience of business leadership, strategic planning and marketing and the organisers, 1 Events Media felt that this expertise would be invaluable when the time comes to assess the shortlisted nominees.

More than 500 delegates from different sectors, industries and backgrounds are expected to attend business owners, economic development specialists, academics

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New Bolton President and Vice Presidents Appointed

MAY 31ST, 2017 - LAST UPDATED AT JUN
1ST, 2017

"I'm delighted to welcome our new
President and Vice Presidents and
look forward to working with them."

**Diane Elebert-Morgan, Regional
Membership Manager for Bolton
at Greater Manchester Chamber
of Commerce**



Tim Entwistle has been appointed as the new Bolton President of Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce

Tim, who is Managing Director of Movetech UK, takes over from Lesley Sharrock, of James Robertshaw & Sons Ltd. Tim has been working in Engineering since graduating and now runs a successful engineering movement solutions business based out of Bolton. As Bolton president of Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Tim is keen to promote Bolton businesses and speak out for the Bolton business community.

Bolton also has two new Vice Presidents - Belinda Beaver of Agitare Ltd and Chloe Ramsden of Alliance Learning.

Belinda Beaver has been a proactive member of the Bolton business community for nearly 30 years. A co-director of Attention to Retail Ltd via Agitare, she works with businesses to provide support and advice with a particular expertise in culture and engagement. As Vice President, Belinda is looking forward to providing a strong voice for Chamber members in Bolton.

As Marketing Manager at Alliance Learning, Chloe Ramsden manages the company promotions, exposure, partnership links and the matching of the apprentices to vacancies. As a former apprentice herself, Chloe has a great understanding of the progression opportunities apprentices can lead to. Chloe has 10 years' experience in

BOLTON AND BURY BUSINESS AWARDS 2016

Successful young engineer Neal thinks out of the box

A young man who has a very bright future ahead of him

AN INNOVATIVE 20-year-old apprentice topped off a year to remember scooping the award for Young Person/Apprentice.

It was the third award of the year for Neal Wareing who works for wax experts Kerax Ltd in Chorley.

He has been recognised for going the extra mile and his supervisors have been amazed at his progress.

He received his apprenticeship training through Alliance Learning in Horwich.

The training provider made him Apprentice of the Year for electrical engineering and overall Apprentice

“

It has been a great year for me, picking up three awards

Neal Wareing

of the Year — beating 50 others for the title.

Despite his success earlier this year his award on Thursday came as a surprise to him.

He said: “I’m really pleased but very surprised. It has been a great year for me, picking up three awards.”

“I’m still not used to winning though, it is very nerve-racking getting up there in front of all of those people.”

“It was a preferred route for me than college and it shows to people that you don’t have to follow the usual routes.”

“I really enjoy what I do



CELEBRATE: Neal receives his award from sponsor Bernard Waldron of MBDA

and I have learnt so much, I’m looking forward to the rest of my career.”

Neal beat Ashley Haslam from Wilsons Autos and Victoria Stigwood from Bolton

College to win the prestigious award.

His supervisor, Steve France, said he was “amazed at how well Neal has progressed.”

One example of his excellent work is that he made a working model of one of the company’s machines which took him more than 50 hours of his own time.

This was then presented at an exposition in Paris.

Neal regularly stays after work thinking out of the box to complete tasks to the highest standards.

Mr France added: “Neal has made numerous contributions in the workplace. His quality of work like that of someone who has decades of experience.”



WINNER: Neal with a previous award



AT WORK: Neal Wareing at Kerax



100 DAYS THE 200 APPRENTICESHIP CHALLENGE



Holiday job Lewis now an apprentice



How can I become an apprentice?

IF you feel you are ready to consider becoming an apprentice, you can apply for vacancies online on the National Apprenticeships Service website.

The NAS is responsible for all apprenticeship programmes delivered across the country. You can search for local opportunities or register your details for future vacancies.

Some employers and providers (colleges) will allow for applications to be sent directly to them. In all cases, the vacancy will have entry requirements and a selection process that you will need to go through.

If you don't feel ready to start applying for an apprenticeship and just want information and guidance at this stage, you can speak to a careers adviser either face to face or on the phone.

There are a range of organisations across Bolton which offer information and deliver apprenticeship programmes.

Here are some Team Bolton organisations providing this service:

- Arch Apprentices
- Babington Business College
- Bolton College
- Bolton Council
- Training for today
- Alliance Learning
- Rathbone
- Bolton Wise



From left, Angela Harrison, recruitment officer at Alliance Learning, Lewis Proudfoot, Lynn Farrell of SGH Moulds, Cllr Martin Donaghy and Chloe Ramsden, marketing co-ordinator at Alliance Learning

It's a first for moulding firm as it takes on 17-year-old

A HOLIDAY job turned into a position as an apprentice for one lucky young man from Tonge Fold.

Lewis Proudfoot, aged 17, is the first apprentice to be hired as a result of the Mayor of Bolton Cllr Martin Donaghy's drive to find 50 young people an apprenticeship during his 50 weeks in office.

Lewis is now an apprentice at SGH Moulds, a family business based in Tonge Bridge Industrial Estate in Bolton — and his appointment is a first for the firm, too.

"We've never had an apprentice before, but we had been thinking about it for a while," said Lynn Farrell, director at SGH Moulds, which makes tools and plastic mouldings for everyone from car manufacturers to the medical industry.

She said fellow director Stephen Howarth had

read about the apprentice campaign in The Bolton News and he contacted Alliance Training in Horwich.

Lewis had caught the bosses' eyes and, once Alliance Training got involved, he was soon set up on an apprenticeship which was a straightforward procedure, said Lynn.

She added: "Lewis came to us on a holiday job, as his grandma Diane Baldwin already works here and has done for a number of years."

"He showed an interest in what he was doing and a lot of initiative — he is a very practical person."

"We had our eye on him to be an apprentice as we felt he would be a good person to have working here."

Lewis is supported by a



mentor from Alliance Learning and a mentor from SGH Moulds who help him further his career, while he follows a performance manufacturing operations' course in-house.

"It's not an easy position, but we feel Lewis will pick it up over time"

Lynn Farrell

"It's not an easy position, but we feel Lewis will pick it up over time," said Lynn. "He's showing great signs."

The ex-Sharples High School pupil said he enjoys his apprenticeship.

"It's really good because I'm learning a lot of new

things all the time," said Lewis, who last week met the Mayor of Bolton as the first apprentice to start work since the launch of his campaign.

Cllr Donaghy said: "I am very pleased the firm has agreed to take the apprentice on and I'm sure Lewis is proud now to be in a job and to be serving his time learning skills that will stay with him for the rest of his life."

He added: "There's no such thing as a bad young person; they just need to be given a chance, like somebody gave me a chance when I was an apprentice engineer."

"It's my duty to do all I can to try and get as many young people into work in Bolton as I can, so they can learn a skill and earn some money."

Angela Harrison, recruitment officer at Alliance Learning, said: "I am really pleased about the new partnership with SGH Moulds and Alliance Learning. They genuinely care about Lewis's progression and it is great to see a family business investing time and energy into apprenticeships."

What's in it for employers

BUSINESSES already employing apprentices say that:

- Training apprentices can be more cost effective than hiring skilled staff, leading to lower training and recruitment costs
- Training apprentices can help your business to develop the specialist skills needed in your sector, now and for the future, keeping up to date with technology
- Staff turnover can reduce as apprentices are seen to be more committed to employers that are investing in them
- A great opportunity to 'grow your own'

There are financial incentives available when you take on an apprentice and free recruitment support is available. Team Bolton can guide firms through the grant options available and offers support services to help recruit.

Training support
Each apprentice will have a training provider. Training for 18-18 year olds is fully subsidised by the government (in addition to the grant). For those aged 18-24, the government pays 50 per cent of the cost of the training (in addition to the grant).

Wages
Like all employees, apprentices must receive a wage. The national minimum wage for apprentices is £2.65 an hour, though many employers choose to pay more than this.

Through Bolton's Apprenticeship Working Group and its relationship with the Greater Manchester Apprenticeship Hub, Team Bolton is delivering activity aimed at increasing the number and quality of apprenticeships (including higher and advanced) in the borough.