



By GRAHAM GUEST, Telford College principal

It's a challenging time for many young people in Telford & Wrekin right now, with unemployment among 16 to 24-year-olds running at a high of over 3,000.

Telford College is doing its bit to help. Here on campus, as we enter the new year with restrictions still in place, we are continuing to operate, and provide maximum support to students.

We already have stringent Covid-19 safeguarding systems in place on campus, and a significant proportion of our curriculum is now being delivered remotely.

For example, all of our adult learning provision is now online with very good attendance, and remote learning accounts for around 40% of the curriculum for our 16-18 year-olds.

Our priority throughout the last few difficult months has been to get the balance right - keeping disruption to learning to a minimum to protect student achievement, while ensuring the safety of students and staff.

Elsewhere, we're also offering Government-funded cash incentives to employers who can give young people a helping hand with their careers.

Our employer engagement team is currently running a series of initiatives designed to help recruit new staff, or upskill existing workers.

And there is significant funding available for companies who hire new apprentices – in some instances as much as £3,000 per person.

Employing an apprentice is easier than you think. And if an employer has taken on a new staff member at any time since the start of August, they can still put them through an apprenticeship and qualify for financial support.

Businesses can get £3,000 for 16 to 18-year-olds, £2,000 for those aged 19-25, and £1,500 for each new apprentice taken on who is over 25.

Right now, Telford College has apprenticeships available across a range of sectors, including business administration, IT, customer service, adult care, early years, teaching assistant, warehousing, ILM management, and more.

And it really can make a difference. Latest figures show that 86% of employers feel apprenticeships help them develop skills relevant to their organisation – and more than three quarters say they have directly improved productivity.

The beauty of hiring an apprentice is that you can adapt their training according to the needs of your business, and you know that they in turn are motivated to learn new skills.

Working in close collaboration with the Chamber, Telford College has also become an official 'gateway' for the Government's Kickstart scheme, a £2 billion programme providing subsidised jobs for any young people who are at risk of long-term unemployment.