



Press release

## Ideal Heating reinvests apprenticeship funding to support local small business

**21<sup>st</sup> December 2023**

Ideal Heating has thrown its support behind a local independent business by funding an apprenticeship for one of its employees.

The UK's home and commercial heating market leader has used part of its Apprenticeship Levy funding to pay for business services provider Bell4Business employee Connor Docherty to undertake a digital marketing apprenticeship.

The apprenticeship will help 21-year-old Connor's professional development and enable Bell4Business to expand by offering additional services, thereby also benefiting its clients.

The Apprenticeship Levy was introduced by the Government in 2017 for all companies paying a wage bill of more than £3m a year. Employers that meet the criteria must pay 0.5% of their pay bill each month as a levy tax.

The levy can be reinvested into the company's workforce in the form of apprenticeship training. If it isn't spent within 24 months, any unused fund will expire and must be returned to the Government.

However, it is not widely known that companies also have the option of transferring unspent funds to SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises), ensuring it is spent supporting local businesses and their development.

Ideal Heating, which is based on National Avenue, in Hull, and is owned by parent company Groupe Atlantic, have pledged to transfer up to £25,000 of their annual levy funding to support local talent. Part of this has been invested to enable Office Administrator Connor to take on a Level 3 Digital Marketing Apprenticeship.

The 15-month programme is being delivered by Hull Business Training Centre (HBTC). The Hull and East Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (HEY LEP) played a crucial role in linking up Ideal Heating, Bell4Business and HBTC through its Business Growth Hub.

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Maria Cunningham, HR Advisor – Development at Ideal Heating, which currently has 27 apprentices across the business, including four who were recruited in September, said: “As a major employer in Hull, we wanted to give something back and support a small independent business that doesn’t have access to the same level of funding we do.

“It’s really important to us to invest in the local area, to address collective skills needs while helping develop the future talent pool.

“Digitalisation is a key priority for us, so it makes sense for us to invest in the development of skills in this area locally, and we’re delighted to be able to support Connor and Bell4Business.”

It is the first time Ideal Heating has transferred levy funds working in partnership with the LEP. It now hopes to continue support for other similar transfers on a case-by-case basis in areas such as digital, creative and design and engineering and manufacturing.

Connor’s apprenticeship covers SEO (search engine optimisation), digital advertising and analytics. It involves both in-person and online training.

He said: “I’m so grateful to Ideal Heating for funding the apprenticeship. I only started recently but I’ve already learned so much.

“I’ll be able to make use of what I learn to benefit the business and it’s also absolutely brilliant for my own career development.”

Louise Bell, owner of Hessle-based Bell4Business, which offers outsourced office services including general admin, telephone answering and marketing, said: “Connor joined us when he was only 16 and he’s done fantastically well, but we were looking for the next stage of his development.

“This training will mean we’ll be able to offer additional digital services, grow as a business and hopefully take on more staff.

“Support like this is essential for a business such as ours and I’m incredibly grateful to Ideal Heating.”

The HEY LEP’s Business Growth Hub provides free, impartial support and connects large businesses and SMEs across the region.

Carl Southcoat, Workforce Business Development Advisor for HEY LEP, said: “The reinvestment of unspent levy funding by major companies is really important to support business development in Hull, East Riding and the Humber.

“This transfer by Ideal Heating is a much welcomed result and hopefully other large employers will follow their lead.”

## OFFICIAL

Louise O'Conner, Business Development Advisor at HBTC, which has training centres in Hull, Grimsby and Scunthorpe, added: "So many large companies don't realise this is an option so they don't utilise their unspent levy funding, which is a real shame.

"If it isn't spent locally, it goes back to the Treasury and doesn't benefit the local area, so this reinvestment by Ideal Heating is really significant."

- If you are a business with the HEY region and in need of workforce development or business growth and development advice and support. Contact Carl Southcoat the Workforce Development Business Adviser at: [c.southcoat@heylep.com](mailto:c.southcoat@heylep.com) to arrange a friendly confidential chat.
- To find out more about how the HEY LEP's Growth Hub can connect major businesses and SMEs, visit [www.heylep.com/business/growth-hub/](http://www.heylep.com/business/growth-hub/)
- To find out more about Ideal Heating, visit [www.idealheating.com](http://www.idealheating.com)