

# BEST NEWS

December 2013

## Best Year Ever for TBC Group

Last year Neil and I were pleased to be invited to the Sunday Times Top Track 250 for privately owned companies. This year we were once again invited to attend the awards dinner in London, but we were not aware of the position the company had achieved! As you will read we had jumped to position 147 which is an amazing achievement for us all at The Best Connection. We should all feel very proud of our accomplishment and the recognition that this award brings us.

As would be expected from the above news, we are just finishing our best year ever. The group's potential has again increased with the acquisition of FleetMaster, a training company specialising in driver training.

Yes, this has been our best year to date but I believe we are in a better position than ever to continue to build strongly as we head into our 24th year. Our business is all about people and in particular the development of their careers. This year has seen another set of development courses geared towards the careers of our senior managers and as a consequence towards that of their teams. This emphasis has provided a great platform for consolidation and further controlled growth. We have never been in a stronger position to ensure the continued development of all our branches, both existing and new.

There has also been a different kind of career development during the past year. As you will all know we have acquired a number of companies in the past three years with a view to developing a broader based Group. A consequence of this is a more stable and varied future. This has made possible two quite different opportunities for TBC employees; Joe Middleton and Ami Smithers. Joe has joined a Group company in Canada and Ami is developing the Bailey Care name by setting up a new office in Worthing with plans for others in the South East. You can read all about them in this issue and I wish both of them every success in their new roles. These are very exciting developments for TBC personnel, which must make a career with the Group ever more attractive.

Congratulations are due to Fay Filsell. Her hard work has paid off with a further qualification within the framework of the CIPD. I am very committed to the development of all personnel within the TBC Group. It is wonderful, therefore, to see the



*Andrew Sweeney & Neil Yorke receive the Top Track 250 Award*

training and development team gathering more knowledge and experience to ensure our training and development department is second to none.

You will see lots more achievement and progress by members of our teams within this issue of Best News, along with new initiatives across many branches. May I take this opportunity to thank you for your hard work over the past year. I hope you enjoy the Christmas holiday and wish you all well for 2014.

Andrew Sweeney  
Chief Executive



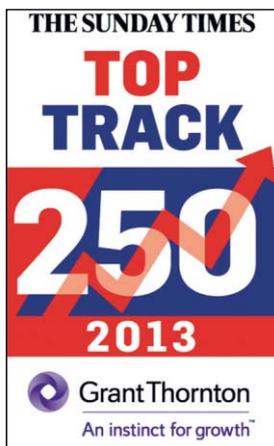
### NEXT ISSUE...

Could you please contact Jan Blann if you have any topics for inclusion in the next issue of Best News or with subjects for future Press Releases.

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## The Best Connection Jumps 101 places in Top Track 250

The Best Connection has been ranked 147 in The Sunday Times ninth annual Top Track 250 national awards for privately owned mid-market companies - climbing 101 places on last year's performance figures with a turnover of £198 million (2012) with a growth of 17%.



Typical Top Track 250 companies employ between 100 and 5,000 staff, have sales ranging between £150m and £650m and are owned and run by established families, entrepreneurs and private equity firms. The Best Connection's ranking provides an insight into the UK service sector market performance following the prolonged UK economic downturn.

Neil Yorke, said: "Our industry mirrors market activity and has to respond accordingly to the ebb

and flow of labour demands. It has been a tough few years but we are now emerging a much stronger and diverse operation. The Top Track 250 award acknowledges our steadfastness to our sector and commitment to our customers through thick and thin."

According to the report, the combined turnover of the 250 companies increased from 2012 by £8.6 billion to £67.9 billion, whilst employment figures jumped 10% to 409,791 people. The Best Connection joins the other 81-strong entrepreneur-owned businesses in the UK and the prestigious group of 54 businesses based outside of London.

"We are of course delighted to have moved up the league table 101 places and be listed alongside so many successful businesses but are under no illusion that market conditions are back to pre-2008 times. We have to react flexibly to the changing business landscape as many of our clients continue to experience a steady improvement in their business activities. Our focus on customer service and diversification in our sector has helped to strengthen our market position," Neil continued.

## Fay Gains CIPD Qualification

The training department's Fay Filsell has completed the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development qualification in Learning and Development Practice after 14 months of independent study. Well done Fay!

After working for The Best Connection Group for nearly four years, Fay was keen to gain a formalised and recognised qualification which would also support and enhance the training and development she undertakes.

The CIPD Certificate in Learning and Development Practice provides a firm foundation in all the areas of Learning and Development including its impact on

business sustainability. The course consisted of 12 written assignments and attendance on two weekend residential workshops. The core content of the course covered HR Practice and Organisation Roles as well as delivering, evaluation and compiling training material and concluded with Coaching and Mentoring for success.

A delighted Fay said: "Because the course was self-study, it took a lot of discipline and management of time to combine training requirements with assignment deadlines and the company was supportive in this. The course has given me new skills and



techniques which I have already started to use and hopefully will ensure the training delivered is even more beneficial to delegates and the business."

# Apprenticeship Scheme 12 months on

In last December's Best News we covered the launch of the Apprenticeship Scheme which was introduced to give enthusiastic newcomers a 'leg-up' with establishing their career with TBC. Nearly a year on, we thought it would be interesting to get some honest feedback on how the scheme has been working from the 'horse's mouth' so Best News asked apprentices Ross Tyler Howard, Jade Colton and Hannah Wilson for some insight into their experience – and this what they had to say!

## Resourcer Apprentice Ross Tyler Howard

I started out life at TBC Crawley as a resourcer apprentice on the industrial division on 3rd December 2012. Before then, I worked for a well-known retail business – every little helps - guess who! I am now nearly a year into my new career – and loving it!

I really enjoy the Crawley office environment and the progressive nature of the training given.

I particularly like the varied aspect of my job - especially customer visits. Being a resourcer apprentice is a good starting point to learn the role of a recruitment consultant as it helps you experience all aspects of the job and prepares you to progress and take on more responsibility as you become more skilled. It is an added bonus that by the end of my apprenticeship I will have achieved an NVQ in customer service which is invaluable.

On a typical day I would get involved in a range of activities that might include check-ins first thing in the morning; liaising with the consultant on-call to verify if there have been any out of hours changes to the plan, arranging the structure of the day with 'desk buddy', meeting interview targets, advertising for all the division's current vacancies, covering all ad-hoc and pre-bookings, booking and attending service visits and constantly monitoring the IND divisions CV folder. There is never a dull moment!

I am now an integral member of the Crawley team and have aspirations to move into a sales position at the appropriate time.



## Resourcer Apprentice Jade Colton

On leaving full time education I had been training as a dental nurse but was not finding it challenging and had decided it was not something that I wanted to do long-term. I was looking for a more exciting, people-oriented role in a company which could offer me long-term career prospects.

I saw the advert on the Reed website for an apprentice resourcer position at The Best Connection in Maidstone. It sounded perfect so I applied. Andy Clark, the branch manager, quickly contacted me and after a short telephone conversation invited me in for an interview. I was very nervous about the interview because I knew how much I wanted this position.

During my first interview, Andy soon put me at ease with some general conversation and we quickly built a good rapport. During this interview I completed a numeracy assessment and discussed the expectations of the role. I left the interview feeling that The Best Connection was a company I could really see myself working for. Following a successful second interview with area manager, Rene Hawkes, I was offered the position of Apprentice Resourcer and joined the company a week later in the Maidstone office.

On my first day I started on the Foundation Course. Andy explained how the course worked, its content and what I would learn. My initial role involved supporting a large recruitment drive on IND2. It was a steep learning curve for me but I was pleased to be part of an experienced, supportive team and felt that I had certainly found the challenge I had been looking for!

Since those early days I have become an integral part of the team in Maidstone and continue to work on my NVQ with the support of my colleagues in Maidstone and Richard from the training department.

I am now looking forward to a bright future with a company I am happy to work for and a team of people that always offer a service of the highest level.





## Resourcer Apprentice Hannah Wilson

I started working at The Best Connection in Tyseley last year as a temp in the office undertaking referencing. I was working in my spare time between my exams at school to earn some money and gain some work experience. During this time the apprenticeship opportunity became available and I was accepted on the scheme. I then left school and started at TBC full time on 1st October 2012.

I am currently finishing my NVQ in customer care and I have completed days 1-3 of the training course. This will be followed by further training which will cover sales. Things have progressed a great deal over the year and I am now sitting on my own plan with my colleague Iris, running the Birmingham City Council Account. We started the plan off from scratch and now have a base with over 50 clients. It is a very busy and reactive plan. We have set up a new division in our office for the Council as it is very different from the industrial companies we usually supply. The majority of our clients are catering and cleaning in schools and also waiters and waitresses working at the Council's offices.

I am really enjoying my job and like all the people I work with. I hope that when I have completed all my training I will be able to gain more experience working and developing a larger plan. I have recently passed my driving test so I am also looking forward to undertaking more client visits.

# Dave Stanford Reflects

**You may remember that Dave Stanford featured in Best News in 2010 after having returned to the company following a three year break. Since then, things have changed for Dave and the business so we thought it would be interesting to get his perspective on life at TBC 2013. This is what he said.**

"I joined TBC in September 2001 and left for family reasons at the end of 2007. During that time I opened the Southampton branch and subsequently managed Southampton and Portsmouth. Prior to leaving I also worked for National Accounts for over a year where I gained a considerable amount of experience. I returned in October 2010 as Senior Branch Manager for Poole, (with responsibility for) Portsmouth and Southampton.

On returning in 2010 there had not been many changes with regard to the personnel, in particular with the managers in Marcus's region. Also, the teams at Halesowen had remained pretty much the same. This made my job easier as it was like picking up where I left off. My role still has its challenges at the moment but I firmly believe there is still even more potential for both business growth and personal development than ever. This is due to the support provided by training and the staff at HQ that allows you to focus on core business. In hindsight, it was

easy to forget the value of the support given to managers and teams at TBC. This is something I now rely heavily on - in particular when dealing with issues around procedure and legislation changes. There is always a support mechanism behind the branches for all issues outside the day to day business the branch has to deal with.

One of the most notable changes at TBC is the focus on training. There is now a greater variety of courses and this allows managers to tailor content to consultants' needs more effectively. Young, bright people joining TBC now receive the on-going training required to equip them with the skills needed to build a good career. In my region, I manage eight consultants who are at varying stages of C1, C2, and C3. Several are now new consultants or about to become a consultant. This has not been an easy transition but the support from the training teams and Marcus Jepson (RM) has been paramount in their continued development and improvement. To ensure I am up to date with industry knowledge and sales techniques, I have also attended the same courses. As I am generally the first point of contact for questions it is important for me to have most of the answers. If all else

fails, however, I can always call the Halesowen hotline!

From a business perspective, all three branches have achieved year-on-year growth since my return with trainees maturing into good consultants. This is reflected in the momentum of growth and team dynamics within the branches. Continued recruitment and growth of business is now the immediate target and I feel the teams are in a better position to do this. It is encouraging to know that all the managers in Marcus's region started as trainees and this is a great selling point when promoting TBC to potential applicants."



Dave Stanford



## A day in the life of ... **Paul Atkinson** Branch Manager Stoke on Trent

**How do you start your working day?** Every day starts with a text before I arrive at the office with the morning's attendance figures from my onsite team at ND L (M&S). This gives me an initial idea of how the morning is looking onsite. On arrival at the branch and with coffee in-hand I have a full update with the team regarding activity on calls and any bookings that require immediate attention. It is not unusual to have plenty of bookings in as soon as the office opens, which need to be filled urgently. I'll then speak to my onsite account manager and the onsite coordinators to run through the day's volumes, activity and any issues that have arisen or are anticipated.

**What does a typical day consist of?** Having a large team, both in the branch and onsite, means I spend a lot of time supporting my team members, organising the day's activities, providing advice and helping them make the right decisions throughout the day. This might range from prioritising bookings to dealing with a new call or a difficult prospect. With very experienced team members and new starters I try to be fully flexible to their varying needs, whilst ensuring they receive continuous support and development. In addition, with more and more clients requiring site tours and briefings and increased demand in all aspects of the process, there's a lot of client and temp interaction throughout the day. And it's

true - no two days are ever the same! Not forgetting, of course, keeping the branch compliant in all aspects of AWR, which can be a job in itself.

**What keeps you going through the day?** The busy environment that defines the Stoke branch! I like things to be fast paced and with the great team spirit in the branch, we really do pull together. When stress levels are high and all the phone lines are non-stop, having some fun and banter whilst getting the job done really carries me through - as well as plenty of coffee! I am also really proud of the fact that recently Stoke branch/onsite beat its own personal best, exceeding 850 temps out and over 70 clients trading in one week.

**What is a good day for you?** A good day is a busy day with lots of bookings -perhaps a new client on the plan (especially when taken from a competitor!) and plenty of laughter along the way.

**A bit about myself** My wife and I are about to have our 4th child and I really enjoy spending as much time as I can with all the characters at home. Any other free time is spent playing golf - to a very average standard I should say - although I have become a bit obsessive about it. I used to enjoy a bit of sleep now and then but that's a pastime I need to work on!

## TBC Driver Endorsement

My name is Ian James and I have been a heavy goods driver for twelve years. I used to live near Warrington and as such gained work from a lot of local agencies around the North West. As with most agency drivers I have experienced all the usual horror stories such as 'confirmed' bookings being cancelled too late to find anything else; the early morning and late night phone calls to 'do us a favour' when a driver has let the agency down, promises of work that didn't materialise, the great rates of pay which never reach the payslip! I could go on but expect many of you will be familiar with these stories.

In 2008, with mounting frustration from the poor service I was experiencing, a friend

suggested that I try The Best Connection in Warrington (the nearest branch to my home). During my interview I was told that I was already known to the branch as I had worked for an agency which had since been taken over by The Best Connection. Within thirty minutes of leaving the office I received a phone call offering me work for the next day and thereafter I was never short of work. I enjoyed an extremely good relationship with the local staff and it was only because I left the area that I stopped working for the Warrington branch. In 2012, I moved to York and because of the positive experience gained working for The Best Connection in Warrington I had no hesitation in contacting the nearest branch which is in Leeds. I was

subsequently offered work through the Leeds branch and I am continuing to enjoy working on behalf of The Best Connection.



Ian James

## (East)Bourne Supremacy!

The Best Connection opened its doors at 99 South Street, Eastbourne, in September this year and is gearing up for regional growth with additional consultants and support staff expanding the team. The branch serves the burgeoning industrial, driving, warehouse & distribution, retail and freight sectors in and around Eastbourne.

Situated on the edge of Little Chelsea, five minutes' walk to Eastbourne's award-winning 'Sunshine Coast', the branch is just a short walk from main transport links.

We wish the Eastbourne team Good Luck and look forward to reporting their success in future issues.



Left to right: Eric Knight HGV consultant, Franco Santonocito IND cons, Lyndsay Hodges HGV cons, Teresa Mitchel divisional manager, Harry Heard IND cons, James Walker IND cons

## Leeds Branch ... sound bite

Lee Harris, regional manager, was delighted to inform Best News, that the Leeds Branch has helped 22 drivers to successfully complete their CPC courses. This is the highest result in his region which is paving the way for TBC in driver compliance. The mandatory training aims to ensure better trained drivers who are familiar with current legislation. In turn, this results in improved road safety and fewer road accidents.

**Well done Leeds!**

## Career Opportunities Home & Away

**For Worthing's Ami Smithers and Joe Middleton, 2013 has been a great year that has taken their careers down unexpected paths. Best News investigates.**

Ami began her career with TBC in 2004 as a trainee consultant, "I was over the moon when I got the job as I had always wanted to work in recruitment! After working hard on WGIND02, making sure my weekly targets were met, bringing on new business and seeing a steady growth on my margin, I was promoted to senior consultant in May 2007," said Ami.



Ami Smithers

In May, TBC decided to expand Bailey Care Services, which provides care and support workers to residential and nursing homes, with the opening of a new office in Worthing. All that was needed was the right individual to kick-start the operation and that person was Ami!

"After 10 years with TBC, Ami has proven to be a dedicated and hardworking senior consultant. Her commitment to her clients and temporary workers has been second to none," said Marcus Jepson, regional manager.

In preparation for the role, Ami has spent several weeks training at Bailey Recruitment in Melksham, even working two shifts in a care home to gain as much knowledge and experience as possible. "I can't wait to get started and know that continuing to work hard will bring much success to the business," added Ami.

For Joe Middleton, the story takes us across the Atlantic! Following a trip to Chicago in 2012, Joe had expressed an interest in working abroad. Like Ami, Joe had joined TBC as a trainee consultant 10 years ago and had demonstrated his abilities which led to being promoted to branch manager in 2009. He has since led a high-performing team whilst maintaining



Joe Middleton

a great sense of humour!

With the acquisition of CPA recruitment, TBC had taken on an international office in Toronto, Canada and an opportunity became available that Joe found too hard to resist. He has since packed his bags and has started his new life at CPA under the guidance of Luke Biscoe.

"Joe will be a big miss in the Worthing branch, but I was pleased to be able to keep him within the Group. It is a very exciting time to be at The Best Connection with great opportunities opening up for people," added Marcus.

We wish Ami and Joe all the best in their new roles.

## TBC Signs Corby Code of Practice

TBC has signed up to a code of practice for employment agencies in Corby, Northamptonshire. The initiative was launched by local MP, Andy Sawford and aims to standardise employment business processes and to improve how some agencies treat temporary workers.

The Corby code of practice was borne out of the large amount of complaints being received by several local forums including Citizens Advice and the MP's local surgeries about employment related issues. Most concerned the poor treatment of temporary operatives.

The Code was developed by a joint working Forum with representatives from temporary employment agencies, client companies and temporary workers together with the Association of Labour Providers, the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate, Trades Unions, Corby Borough Council and the MP's office.

Jeff Williams, senior manager said: "This is a massive endorsement of the way TBC has been conducting services in Northampton for many years. I attribute this to the standards upheld in the team, our quality processes and the excellent training and support we receive from the business."

TBC was one of three agencies that signed up as pioneer

supporters along with client representative founder member, RS Components. The Code of Practice, which aims to ensure that agencies operate in a legal, fair and socially responsible manner, is now being rolled out to other clients as a kite mark for agency practice.



Back row – left to right: Debbie Egan, Citizens Advice Services  
Cllr Tom Beattie, Leader of Corby Borough Council Andy Sawford,  
MP Corby David Camp, Association of Labour Providers

Front row, left to right:  
David Stott, PMP Recruitment Jean Lenton, operations director,  
Interaction Recruitment Chris Davey, RS Components  
Jeff Williams, senior manager The Best Connection

## Driver Technical Refresher Course

For the past three years TBC has run a three-day Driver Technical Course to ensure driving consultants are fully aware of the legislation and technical issues surrounding the supply of drivers. Although technical and legislative updates are communicated via regular management bulletins, there is a need for 'classroom' refresher-type training; therefore a commitment was made by TBC to carry out one day regional refresher courses every three years. The first group of courses has now been conducted with positive and encouraging feedback.

The content was based on discussions with directors and regional managers, focusing on 'real world' issues including managing Working Time Regulations and schedules for the CPC qualification.

"I attended the Driver Tech Refresher Course thinking that it would simply be a Legislation Update but it turned out to be far more in depth! It was extremely worthwhile being reminded of the things we need to be checking regularly and a chance to discuss with other delegates their experiences and ideas," commented Dave Walter, branch manager at Sheffield.

"The Driver Tech refresher course reminded me of procedures and processes regarding certain issues you may come across whilst working on a TBC driving desk. I found it very useful and informative being on the course with branch managers and senior managers as it was an opportunity to see things through their eyes and vice versa. The course is well worth attending," said Sian Kolakovic, senior consultant, Stoke.

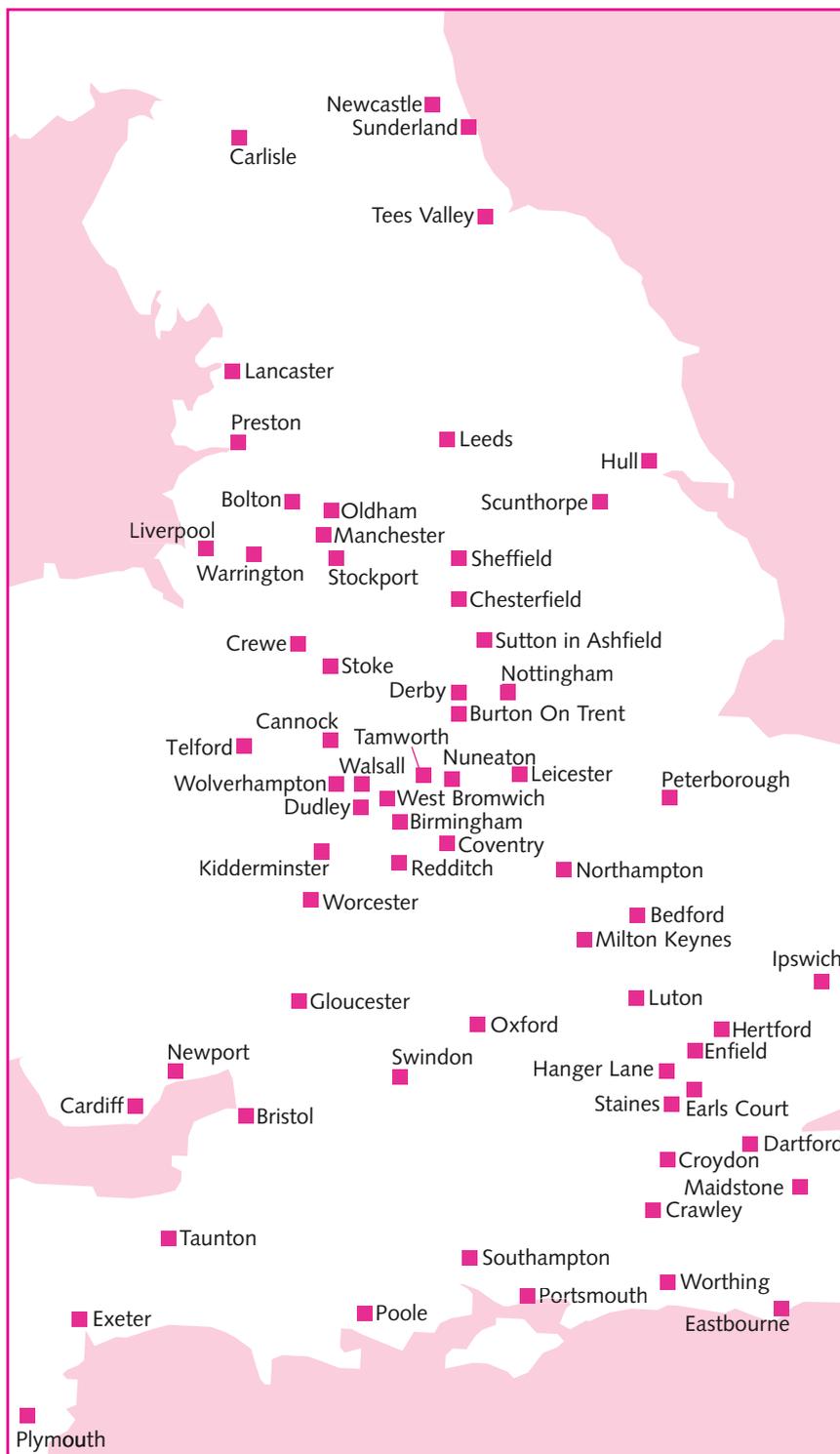
The next group of regional courses will be scheduled mid-way through next year with topics relevant to business requirements.

# WHERE TO FIND US

Location	Tel Number
Bedford	01234 212123
Birmingham	0121 628 8000
Bolton	01204 394400
Bristol	0117 957 6999
Burton	01283 545333
Cannock	01543 468260
Cardiff	02920 494700
Carlisle	01228 590690
Chesterfield	01246 209222
Coventry	02476 228040
Crawley	01293 515333
Crewe	01270 251100
Croydon	0208 256 0120
Dartford	01322 277257
Derby	01332 291444
Dudley	01384 253201
Earls Court	0207 373 1129
Eastbourne	01323 887111
Enfield	0208 362 1430
Exeter	01392 435468
Gloucester	01452 383303
Hanger Lane	0208 998 9910
Hull	01482 610160
Ipswich	01473 210584
Kidderminster	01562 66555
Lancaster	01524 383438
Leeds	0113 243 1033
Leicester	0116 251 2363
Liverpool	0151 236 0111
Luton	01582 405 444
Maidstone	01622 664999
Manchester	0161 237 9333
Milton Keynes	01908 699466
Newcastle	0191 230 2007
Newport	01633 842164
Northampton	01604 629888
Nottingham	0115 958 5880
Nuneaton	02476 382211
Oldham	0161 626 4222
Oxford	01235 550077
Peterborough	01733 555672
Plymouth	01752 672222
Poole	01202 682282
Portsmouth	0239 286 4411
Preston	01772 201777
Redditch	01527 591141
Scunthorpe	01724 876111
Sheffield	0114 275 8181
Southampton	0238 033 3188
Staines	01784 450555
Stockport	0161 968 1964
Stoke	01782 209666
Sunderland	0191 567 1100
Sutton In Ashfield	01623 857976
Swindon	01793 542211
Tamworth	01827 53333
Taunton	01823 330621
Tees Valley	01642 672655
Telford	01952 898242
Walsall	01922 639000
Warrington	01925 629666
West Bromwich	0121 553 7755
Wolverhampton	01902 773000
Worcester	01905 731777
Worthing	01903 234500

# The Best Connection

EMPLOYMENT GROUP

The e-mail address for each branch is the branch@thebestconnection.co.uk  
e.g. burton@thebestconnection.co.uk

Opening soon: Guildford

For a complete list of branches and contact details,  
please visit [www.thebestconnection.co.uk](http://www.thebestconnection.co.uk)