



SHREWSBURY
BUSINESS CHAMBER



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Chairman's Foreword

Kevin Lockwood

Manager of Shrewsbury Shopping Centres

Welcome to the latest edition of the Shrewsbury Business Chamber Magazine.

As Spring approaches, we are seeing businesses continuing to adapt to an ever-changing environment. Although COVID restrictions have been lifted, the recent increases in transmissions continue to throw a shadow over a full recovery. This recovery is compounded further with increases in inflation, utilities, petrol and food to name but a few, meaning consumer spend is being squeezed.

Having said that, Shrewsbury is recovering well, with many businesses reporting good sales and positive footfall growth along with hoteliers and B&B owners reporting strong bookings for the upcoming holiday season.

Over the next few months, Shrewsbury Business Chamber will be seeking your views and opinions on a number of upcoming strategic developments which include the Riverside /Smithfield Road Redevelopment, Bid Town Plan Movement Strategy and any updates regarding the long awaited North West Relief Road.



On behalf of The Shrewsbury Business Chamber, I hope you enjoy this edition of the magazine and look forward to welcoming you to the events we will be hosting during 2022.



**SHREWSBURY
BUSINESS CHAMBER**

ARE YOU READY TO GET BACK OUT NETWORKING AND CONNECTING WITH SHREWSBURY BUSINESS?

Shrewsbury Business Chambers Events are OPEN for 2022

We've been working hard on our plans and we're delighted to be able to share details of our next events with you!

"Let's get back out there" – no speeches, no presentations. just a chance to reconnect with Chamber members through networking and socialising with drinks and Tapas at Origins (London Road) – Wednesday 27th April at 6pm.

It's FREE for Chamber Members and £10 per person for non-members

Wednesday 18th May at 6pm in Origins (London Road) sees the first of our Business Connections/Information evenings and we're keen to spotlight our members. Would your business like to be considered for a 5 minute presentation slot on **"How Shrewsbury Business can adapt through a challenging financial year ahead?"** Then email shrewsburybc.events@gmail.com and book your slot!

It's FREE for Chamber Members and £10 per person for non-members

WHAT'S COMING UP FOR THE REST OF THE YEAR?

June sees our ever popular Summer Social BBQ with a 'Great British Occasion' theme.. when we plan our own version of the 'Pudding Challenge'; and we'll be out and about reconnecting with Shrewsbury Businesses through networking (and net walking!) 'Beyond the Loop' throughout the Summer.

So let 2022 be the year you gained valuable business links and potential new clients by reconnecting through Shrewsbury Business Chamber!

SHREWSBURY COLLEGES GROUP

Ten Shrewsbury Colleges Group students offered places at Oxford and Cambridge universities.



Ten SCG students from across the county have been offered places to study at Oxford and Cambridge universities. Following months of fine-tuning their personal statements, attendance at specialist extension and preparation classes and mock interviews the students have recently received the exciting news that they have been successful in their applications.

All ten students have done phenomenally well to be offered places by the elite universities as they have seen a record number of applications this year.

The successful students will be studying a wide variety of arts and science courses ranging from Medicine to Law to Classics. To celebrate their remarkable success, the offer holders were invited to a lunch with the Principal, James Staniforth, so he could congratulate them in person and wish them the best of luck in their upcoming A Level exams.

At the lunch the students all thanked their A Level teachers, as well as Careers & Progression Advisor Paul Kelly (who runs the Oxbridge and Competitive Universities Society), for providing crucial guidance and support throughout the application process.

James Staniforth said: "Well done to each of the ten students who have been offered well-deserved places at Oxford and Cambridge universities and thank you to all the staff who have supported them. All ten students have made excellent progress during their time at college I am delighted that Shrewsbury Colleges Group has helped them build the exceptional skills, knowledge and experience that is essential to securing a place at Oxford or Cambridge."

"I am really pleased that the students will be studying such a range of subjects at university, across both arts and science disciplines, as this reflects how valuable it has been to provide our students with a broad choice of A Level courses."

The students offered places are:

Emily Burton: Emily has received an offer to study Music at Magdalen College, Oxford.

Reuben Constantine: Reuben has an offer to study French & Greek at St. Peter's College, Oxford.

Oliver Minns: Oliver is one of two SCG students who have been offered a place to study Natural Sciences at Cambridge. He will be studying the course at Girton College

Sam Owen: Sam will be studying Mathematics at Jesus College.

Connor Prescott: Connor has been offered a place to study Law at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge.

Finn Pearson: Finn has been offered a place on Oxford's PPE (Philosophy, Politics and Economics) course at Herford College.

Amelia Wigley: Amelia has been offered a place to study Classics at Cambridge.

George Phillips: George is the second of this year's applicants who will be studying Natural Sciences at Cambridge and he will be based at Pembroke College.

Adam Thomas: Adam has been offered a place to study Engineering at University College, Oxford's oldest college.

Travis Wood: Travis has secured an offer from St John's College, Oxford to study Medicine.

Shrewsbury Summer Shop Window Competition 2022

"A GREAT BRITISH OCCASION"

This summer is set to be an exciting time in Shrewsbury as we celebrate Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee. To celebrate this unprecedented anniversary, we hope Shrewsbury can bring out the "Red White and Blue" as we launch our Summer Shop Window Competition to co-incide with the Bank Holiday weekend in June. Entry is open to all of our fabulous retail establishments across the town. We are now seeking sponsors in the Shrewsbury area, to support this event and at the same time raise awareness of their own business and brand.

SPONSORS PACKAGES START FROM AS LITTLE AS £100 AND WILL INCLUDE:

- Your name on the Jubilee Winner's trophy in the category you sponsor. The trophy will remain with the winners for them to proudly display for many years
- Promotion of your business in our Members magazine and inclusion of your logo on marketing materials* and our websites (*subject to print deadlines and the provision of the correct quality of image etc.)
- Photo opportunities in the build up to the event
- An opportunity to join us at our Grand Summer BBQ networking event to present your trophy
- Display your company literature at the Summer networking event and the opportunity to address the audience to promote your business

CATEGORIES

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Choice



How Shrewsbury based SME's can use HR to drive success.

- **Several newspaper opinion pieces have criticised the role of HR in holding managers back or dogmatically advising continued working from home.**
- **As in any profession there are good and bad practitioners and different solutions will be right for different businesses.**
- **Good HR will align with overall business goals and offer businesses vital assistance in staying compliant with employment law.**

The role of HR has been in the firing line in the national press: "Personally, I have never met anyone in HR who is not a presumptuous dullard." and "It is a classic example of the HR doom loop that has taken root in the British workplace since the pandemic." are just two of the acerbic comments that have been published. Níamh Kelly – Director of The HR Dept Shropshire, puts forward the case for the role of good quality HR advice in modern British businesses.

I won't dwell on the sweeping negative generalisations that some newspaper opinion pieces have expressed. We'd rather put it positively: quite simply, good HR advice is good for business. As in any profession there will be different approaches and, just as in any profession, you need to find advisers who suit your vision. At The HR Dept Shropshire, we put your business first, and one of our mantras is 'We tell you what you can do, not what you can't'.

This avoids the constrictive approach that can give HR a 'bad name' or the impression that HR is 'risk averse'. It means we look for positive solutions to help you meet your goals whilst staying legally compliant.

This could be helping terminate the contract of a troublesome employee who thinks that employment law protects them when they take liberties. It could be helping you navigate difficult conversations during times of adversity, or leading you safely through any number of tricky situations.

These are reactive scenarios, but good HR looks ahead and helps you create the right conditions for your team to thrive in their roles as they work towards your business goals.

For instance: widening the talent pool from which you can recruit by coaching you in inclusion and diversity; introducing the latest management techniques and processes to raise productivity and maintain a happy workforce; and cutting costs by developing remuneration packages which do not rely on ever larger salaries, but instead tap into other things which staff value.

Then there is the lurking danger of tribunal courts. When an employer falls foul of employment law, they are at risk of having to make a substantial pay-out after a tribunal claim. In the year to 2020, for example, the average award for unfair dismissal was £10,812 and the highest was £118,842. For sex

discrimination the average was £17,420 and the highest £73,619. The risk is not only financial: reputational damage can hurt you just as much!

In that year there were more than 100,000 tribunal applications lodged – that's more than 275 a day. So the risk is very real. Good HR practices are the front line of defence against this risk. In fact, so confident are we in the advice we provide, that we are able to offer an insurance-backed guarantee to our Advice line customers who follow our advice from the outset. They are shielded from legal costs and awards, should a claim be made against them at tribunal. Now that's advice worth having in your business."

For enquiries on this topic, please contact Níamh from The HR Dept Shropshire, at niamh.kelly@hrdept.co.uk or on 01743 290 474.



Are you looking at your HR procedure and feeling a little lost?

The HR Dept can help teach you the essential HR skills you need to manage your staff correctly. Join our online training courses.

Excitement over ambitious regeneration plans for Shrewsbury



Businesses in Shrewsbury are “enthusiastic and excited” about ambitious plans to transform a significant area of the town centre. Shropshire Council has unveiled proposals to dramatically change the Riverside area of the town, involving the regeneration of the Riverside and Pride Hill shopping centres, along with Raven Meadows multi-storey car park.

Shrewsbury BID (Business Improvement District) which represents more than 500 businesses in the town centre, has welcomed the plans.

Seb Slater, executive director of Shrewsbury BID, said: “Speaking to a number of businesses since the plans were announced, it’s fair to say there is real enthusiasm and excitement for the plans which would transform this important part of town. “The Riverside area is not currently in good shape and this investment would be a huge boost for the local economy.

The Council relocating its offices into the town centre is something we’ve been supportive of for a long

time as this would bring several hundred people into the town centre every day, helping to kickstart a more vibrant office working environment.”

Darren Tomkins, owner of Gindifferent in Shrewsbury Market Hall and Shrewsbury BID board member, said: “These plans look really exciting and would undoubtedly help bring more people into the town centre, with a great mix of leisure, hospitality and residential. “I look forward to seeing and hearing more about how we can work together to bring these plans into fruition.”

Jonathan Soden, of The Soden Collection in Wyle Cop and Shrewsbury BID board member, said: “A major priority for the BID is to create an environment which encourages people to spend longer in the town centre, and these proposals would certainly add to that. “We all want to make more use of the river, and the idea of opening up the town to the river in this way is really interesting.”

Tina Boyle, of Acoustic Boutique in High Street and Shrewsbury BID board member, added: “It’s early days and I’m sure more detailed work will be done on the design of the buildings, but the overall proposal to regenerate the Riverside area of town is very much something we welcome.

“We already have a thriving town centre, which is performing above the national average in terms of footfall and vacancy rates, but exciting regeneration projects like this will only improve the local economy and town centre offer.” Read more about the plans here - <https://newsroom.shropshire.gov.uk/2022/02/shrewsbury-riverside-plans-unveiled/>



SHREWSBURY

BID

Launches grants scheme to support events and projects which benefit town centre

A new grants scheme has been launched in Shrewsbury aimed at supporting projects and events which promote and improve the experience of the town centre.

Original Shrewsbury grants will range between £500 and £5,000 and applications for the first round must be received by March 31 2022. There is a total of £10,000 available in this fund and if funding has been unallocated after the first round, a second round will be opened.

Seb Slater, executive director of Shrewsbury BID, which represents more than 500 businesses in the town centre, said the grants scheme was now open and urged people to submit their applications.

"Thankfully things are beginning to open up again after a challenging difficult couple of years and people are now planning and organising projects and events with renewed confidence," he said.



"As we return to a greater level of normality, we have decided to set up a new grant process for external projects and events that actively support and promote the town centre.

"Applications can be made for between £500 and £5,000 and organisers can complete an application form by visiting shrewsbury.typeform.com/grant.

"That form needs to provide us with information including a projected budget, expected outcomes such as anticipated footfall, promotion and the number of businesses involved. Applications are open and interviews will be held at the end of each month with grants awarded on a first-come first-served basis."

A panel of local businesses will assess each application, interview organisers and make the final decision on approving the grant. If approved, funding would be allocated prior to the event or project taking place and based on the details of the budget submitted. Event organisers will be asked to complete a grant evaluation form at the end of the activity which will provide valuable information on the best way of continuing the scheme in the future.

Mike Matthews, chairman of Shrewsbury BID and owner of the Prince Rupert Hotel in Butcher Row, said:

"Shrewsbury is a hive of innovation and creativity with many businesses and individuals involved in projects and events involving the community.

"We hope that by launching this grants scheme, Shrewsbury BID will be able to support some exciting ventures which will drive interest and benefit the whole town centre."

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Construction firms warned about rise in thefts

Shropshire construction companies have been warned to be on their guard after an increase in the number of thefts of site equipment. Dave Williams, of Henshalls Insurance Group, which has offices in Newport and Shrewsbury, said there had been a growing trend since the start of the Coronavirus pandemic in thefts from building sites. And now, companies and insurers are concerned that the rise in the cost of building materials as the economic recovery continues, could lead to an even greater spike in opportunist thefts.

“As Covid hit, many construction projects had to be paused, and sites were abandoned as redevelopment was forced to stop – this was the perfect chance for thieves to make their move.

“Now, with the momentous world events happening right across Europe, the cost of these items is spiralling, so their worth to thieves is even greater. It’s vital that construction companies step up their security procedures, and that they ensure they have appropriate insurance cover in place.”

Dave said there were several methods of theft – including thieves taking advantage of an opportunity that was suddenly on offer, such as a vehicle left unattended with tools on show, but a lot of construction theft was planned in advance.

Some thieves have elaborate procedures in place where arrangements are made for stolen items to be quickly removed from the country and sold abroad either as it was, or split up into parts.

“Another approach is to hide the machinery until the attention and interest in the theft dies down and then move it overseas. But whatever method the thieves choose, figures show that as little as five per cent of unregistered plant equipment is ever recovered.”

Dave said in order for any insurance claim to be processed, insurers would need to be assured that construction site owners had taken careful and appropriate steps to try to keep their equipment secure.

“Keep your equipment and vehicles in a padlocked area, remove any ignition keys and install immobilising systems where possible. You should also employ security guards to monitor the site when it’s left unattended – particularly overnight – and ensure the site is properly lit.

“Theft of vital machinery could cause real issues for construction projects in terms of delays and the cost of replacing equipment, so taking extra care is an important and sensible approach.”



Our Vice Chair Jenny Osborne Celebrates 25 Years of Service with Henshalls



Join Us For Raaaaawsome Dino Fun

Saturday 16th April, 11am – 3pm

Come and meet Baxter the 3-metre tall T-Rex and his cute baby dinosaurs for free. Plus, we've also got a creative dino balloon modeller giving out free balloons for the kids.

It's sure to be a 'dino-mite' time here at The Darwin.

To find out more stomp on over to
www.shrewsbury-shopping.co.uk



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heart of Shrewsbury

SHREWSBURY COLLEGES GROUP

Marches LEP supports college's engineering students with equipment investment.

Shrewsbury Colleges Group is delighted to unveil a further significant investment in equipment to enable expansion in its Engineering department, in response to the increased demand for apprentices and full-time students training over recent years. The six-figure investment has solely focused on additional industry standard equipment installed into the Engineering facility at the London Road Campus.

Over £300,000 has been spent bringing in 10 new MACH VS-1 turret mills and 10 new MACH L 1340 manual lathes supplied by Bristol-based, MACH Machine Tools Ltd, part of the Vigilance Group, along with other equipment, including tooling packages and a MACH SB 30 geared head drill, to expand and complement the college's existing manual machining offer.

The project has also allowed a restructuring of the layout of the Engineering department at the college to replicate modern manufacturing 'Cell' systems that students and apprentices would commonly experience in the workplace.

Mandy Thorn, Chair of the LEP, said: "We're delighted to have been able to support this project in conjunction with Shrewsbury Colleges Group. The Marches has a proud history of engineering expertise, and this investment will help to protect that legacy for future generations."

Dave Andrew, Managing Director of the Vigilance Group, said: "The industry standard equipment means students will be able to acquire and, subsequently, apply those skills required by employers to help them compete, and win, in highly competitive markets. The acquisition of such skills will clearly help improve the career prospects of young people in this area."

Andy Lee, Director of Employer Engagement and Curriculum Leader for Engineering and Motor Vehicle, said: "This investment has made a significant difference to the teaching environment that our students and apprentices experience."

We have ensured that we have the capacity in the department to respond to the continued growth in applications we receive for full-time and apprentice students.

This year, we have been able to enrol two extra full-time groups of students and an extra group of apprentices that we wouldn't have been able to do without this funding, so we are exceptionally grateful. The new layout has meant that the students and apprentices get more time on the equipment, which aids their practical learning. The fact that this equipment is industry standard means that the students and apprentices will be employment ready when they finish their courses too."

James Staniforth, Principal at Shrewsbury Colleges Group, said: "We are very grateful for the Marches LEP and the Vigilance Group in supporting us financially and technically with this much-needed project. The re-development of the facility will improve the employability of the students and apprentices as they complete their courses. It has also meant that we've been able to expand other engineering facilities in the same building, too, which has helped other courses such as welding and fabrication."

Divorce change welcomed by law firm

wace
morgan

SOLICITORS



A Shropshire law firm has welcomed dramatic changes to divorce proceedings which are set to come into force this spring. Wace Morgan Solicitors, who specialise in family issues from the firm's head office in St Mary's Street, Shrewsbury, has said that the new system will be a major improvement.

"Divorce law in England and Wales has remained unchanged for almost 50 years but it is about to alter radically with the introduction of 'no-fault' divorces," said Sue Leach, an associate with Wace Morgan.

"At present, couples unwilling to wait two years for the consent of the other spouse or five years if the other spouse does not consent must 'blame' the other for the relationship breakdown," explained Sue, who has extensive expertise in divorce and separation matters. Under the new law, a spouse or a couple may apply jointly for a divorce by making a statement of irretrievable breakdown.

Allegations of behaviour and the need to blame the other will no longer be required. The aim is to reduce hostility and encourage separating couples and their children to move forwards in a more conciliatory way. Where a couple has drifted apart, they will no longer need to wait two or five years. "This will make the process more straightforward and in some cases more cost-effective," said Sue, who added that terminology will become more user-friendly, with decree nisi becoming a 'conditional divorce order' and a decree absolute a 'final divorce order'.

However, resolving financial matters will remain a separate process and an agreement will need to be set out in a consent order and sealed by the court to provide certainty for the future.

Sue stressed the importance of seeking advice early on to agree a strategy to resolve both divorce and financial aspects in a timely and cost-proportionate way. "We can accommodate meetings by telephone and by Zoom as alternatives to face-to-face meetings," she said.

For further information please contact Sue Leach on 01743 284218.



Should I use a probationary period for new employees?

Are you currently hiring for your business? The Great Resignation has resulted in an all time high for job vacancies, putting recruitment firmly on the agenda for many employers in 2022.

There are many important steps to the recruitment process to help you find and recruit the right people for your business.

As such, it can take time and be a costly process to find the ideal candidate. Even more so if a new hire doesn't work out as you had hoped. However good the interview and tests were there is always a question as to whether the candidate will demonstrate the same level of knowledge, skill and attitude on the job. This is why a probationary period is a good idea.

What is a probation period for employees?

A probation period is much like a trial. It is a set amount of time at the start of employment for a new employee to really show that they are the right person for the job.

When a probationary period is over, performance reviews should have taken place and a decision made to either confirm employment, terminate, or extend the probationary period for further review.

How long should a probation period be?

This is really up to you and will depend on your business needs. However, a reasonable length is expected. As a guide, a probation

period is usually between three and six months. When deciding the length of probationary periods for your new hires, have a think about what the employee will need to learn and what it is that you will need to review, allowing enough time for this to take place. As probationary periods are not covered by any specific employment law the length, as well as the terms, of employee probationary periods will need to be detailed in your employment contracts.

Notice during probation periods

The statutory minimum notice period after one month's employment is one week unless otherwise specified in the employee's contract.

A short notice period during probation can speed up the process of dismissing someone who has turned out to be not right for the role. Keep in mind that the employee can also decide that the job isn't for them and give you the same amount of notice.

If dismissing the employee as unsuitable, check to see if your disciplinary process is contractual. If it is you must follow it properly or risk a wrongful dismissal claim.

Hopefully though it has been a resounding success, in which case remember to congratulate them in writing.

Managing an employee on probation

Inductions and probation periods go hand in hand. A thorough induction

will allocate time for introductions, training, document review, workstation set up and so on. It should also specify how and when performance reviews will take place. Making time for feedback is important in these early stages as it can help you to tell the difference between minor communication hiccups or bigger issues that suggest things aren't going to plan.

These review sessions will help you to judge the success of the probation period or whether an extension would be necessary.

Employment law still applies

Although the employee will not have the requisite two years to claim unfair dismissal, they could make a claim for unlawful deduction from wages, discrimination, or wrongful dismissal. Do remember that statutory employment rights still apply to employees working their probation. This includes the national minimum wage, statutory sick pay and holiday pay which accrues from day one. Many benefits are detailed in a contract as starting after the successful completion of a probationary period. So, companies will use the three-month period before enrolling the person into the pension scheme.

Help from your HR Dept

If you're reviewing your recruitment process and are thinking about introducing probation for new employees, or you'd like some advice on how to have successful probationary periods in your business, we can help.

Shrewsbury Colleges Group celebrates women in construction for International Women's Day 2022

This International Women's Day, an all-female team of SCG's construction staff are encouraging women to look beyond gender stereotypes and get involved in the industry.

The highly skilled and knowledgeable women within the college's construction team have made a significant difference in helping young women become aware of the different vocations open to them. The staff (from left to right) are:

- Ffion Hobbs, a Bench Joinery Technician who was previously an apprentice with SCG
- Holly Edwards, an Electrician Installation Assessor
- Josephine Jarrett, a Painting and Decorating Teacher
- Danielle Davies, a Plumbing and Gas Teacher
- Amanda Crane, a Progression Specialist who coordinates all industry placements within construction
- Teresa Cross, a Painting and Decorating Assessor

Amanda emphasised that right now is an especially exciting time to be working in construction trades. "I love working alongside these professionals in construction as this area of employment is currently booming," she said. "Employers are keen to give young people an opportunity to prove themselves, leading to many success stories."

Women only make up 14% of the construction industry, but educational providers are helping this figure to rise, with 37% of people who enter the industry through higher education courses now being women (source: goconstruct.org).

The construction staff at Shrewsbury Colleges Group are eager to contribute towards this rise as much as possible by encouraging young women to enrol onto their construction courses. Stuart Raine, Curriculum Leader for Construction and Trades said: "We need more women in construction. Women make up 50% of the population and the industry is missing out on their skills and knowledge." "The stereotypical outlook on construction should be left behind in the past," he continued. "We need to embrace the fact that construction is a 21st century industry."

SCG's female construction staff all have different backgrounds in the industry and decided to pursue their trades for different reasons.

Danielle, who teaches Plumbing and Gas, discovered her interest in the trade at a young age. "I first became interested in a career in plumbing at the age of 13 when I took part in work experience with a local plumbing company and loved it!" she explained.

After Danielle left school, she studied a four-year Plumbing & Heating apprentice programme at SCG and became a Gas Safe Engineer for a company in Telford.

She returned to the college to pass on her knowledge and experience to the next generation of plumbing and heating engineers. For Ffion, working in construction was a family tradition. "I came into construction by following in the footsteps of my grandfather who was a bench joiner and my mother who did building studies," she said. "I always enjoyed practical subjects and working with my hands, as well as designing and making products, all of which a bench joinery course and an apprenticeship allowed me to do."

Not only are these women all incredibly skilled in their trades but pursuing construction (despite the obstacle of being such a minority in the workforce) has allowed them to find work they are passionate about. Danielle was drawn to plumbing because she loves problem-solving. She said: "The thing I enjoy most about plumbing and working within the construction industry is the challenges you face and the satisfaction you get when you overcome and solve them. No two days are the same!"

Continued....

Meanwhile, Josephine and Teresa (who are twin sisters) spoke about the unforgettable experiences they have had during their careers in painting and decorating: "As painters and decorators, we have had the opportunity to work across the country, creating high end stencil work in churches, hanging wide width wallpaper in banks, and working in people's homes to creating inviting spaces."

Stuart had incredibly high praise for the team of female construction staff, saying that: "All these talented women have had significant industry experience and have used their skills and knowledge to enthuse young women to venture into construction. They are all outstanding in their fields and prove that the industry has opportunities for more women to access the vast array of jobs present within it. As a college, SCG is proud to promote equal opportunities in construction."



SHREWSBURY COLLEGES GROUP

SHREWSBURY COLLEGES GROUP



Despite Covid 19 making it harder to hold events in person, there are still plenty of courses and networking opportunities available using zoom, many of which are free. Visit our website for a selection of training opportunities from providers such as Marches Growth Hub

[Click Here!](#)

The Victorian Arcade, Shrewsbury, SY1 £2.1M

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