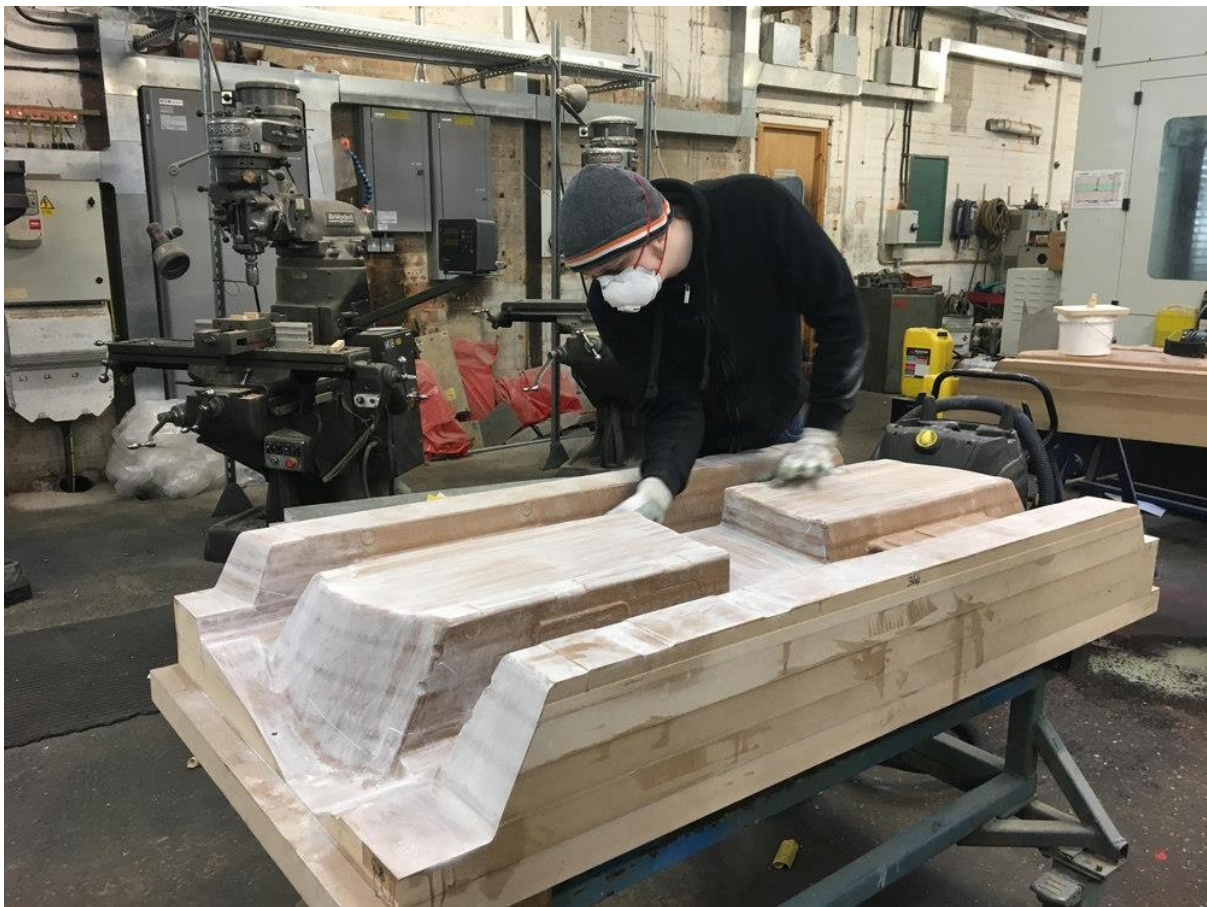




Elkington Brothers create the right pattern for plugging its skills gap by taking on a new apprentice.



The ECMS is a new employer-led training facility for the Black Country, designed to enhance productivity in the region's high value manufacturing sector by providing specialist training and helping to close skills gaps identified by employers.

Following a visit to The Skills Show in November, Christopher Ravenall, aged 20, from Castle Bromwich, was introduced to Elkington Brothers, a pattern and toolmaking firm based in Great Barr, Sandwell.

James Kelly, managing director at Elkington Brothers, said: "We have an ageing workforce and an ever-increasing skills gap but we've struggled historically to find a course suitable for new apprentices. We've worked closely with the ECMS in relation to developing relevant

course content and an apprenticeship which covers the depths needed for pattern and tool making.

“Since the recession, demand for our products is on the increase and we’re looking to diversify into the rail and aerospace industries so ensuring that the workforce has the skills needed is a priority for the business.”

Christopher said: “I didn’t have that much luck going through the traditional education system so thought that an apprenticeship would be a good alternative route to take. My father is a toolmaker and I’m really keen to learn as much about the industry and engineering as I can in order to have the brightest future.”

Trevor Codner, business development manager at the ECMS, said: “We work with a variety of employers to find the right apprentices for them, and we work with our partners to ensure that the courses are fit for purpose in relation to the skills that are needed in the industry.

“Christopher was desperately looking for an opportunity and we were able to match him, not only to an apprenticeship that he was interested in, but we also found a suitable employer where he’s now working full-time.”

Set to open in January 2018, the ECMS Hub will be based at the University of Wolverhampton’s £100 million Springfield Campus and will deliver skills training, through short courses and apprenticeships, at four Spokes across the Midlands.

ECMS is a collaboration between the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership, University of Wolverhampton, Dudley College, Cast Metals Federation, Confederation of British Metalforming and the Institute of Cast Metals Engineers.

Employers or potential apprentices should contact Trevor Codner at the ECMS on 0800 953 3222 or 01902 321663.