

The benefits of being an Apprentice



How Stephen turned a part-time Saturday job into the full-time career he'd always wanted thanks to an Apprenticeship.

"I love my job and hope that I'll be here for a long time. I really appreciate the opportunity Petsville gave me to do an Apprenticeship." Stephen LeFevre, Customer Service Apprentice.

Stephen LeFevre is aged 19 and lives in Sutton. He left school at 16 with few qualifications but a determination to find work.

Having worked at Petsville International, a retail pet shop, since he was aged 14, Stephen asked the company if they would consider taking him on full-time once he had left school.

Committed and determined

"I didn't enjoy school one bit, and was bullied too," says Stephen. "I left school with no GCSEs but I had done some tests in Maths and English. I started college, but after just three days I knew that I didn't want to be there, so I asked Petsville if they would take me on full time."

Petsville didn't need much persuading. They recognised that Stephen was committed and determined, and knew that he was hardworking having employed him part time for years.

Training provider

Petsville contacted local training provider Hawk Training, who took Stephen on and now an assessor comes into the shop regularly to work with Stephen on his Apprenticeship portfolio. Currently, he is working towards his NVQ level 2 in Customer Service.

"You have to understand that working in a pet shop is going to be very different from working in other shops," explains Stephen. "It's very demanding and some of the jobs are not particularly pleasant. For instance, I have to clean out the animals and feed them in the morning. Sweeping the floor properly is essential because it can get very untidy and customers don't want to have to wade through mess when they come in."

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Everyone does their share

Although Stephen understands that some of the work is very basic, he points out that everyone in the shop does their share as maintaining a clean environment is essential to the business.

Enjoys work

He also adds that he loves his work and wouldn't want to be anywhere else.

"I really enjoy coming into work, I get to talk to lots of people throughout the day about things we all enjoy – animals. The staff here are very friendly and helpful and my training assessor is brilliant. I seem to learn much better here at work than I ever did at school. He's patient and will go over the work more than once if I don't understand anything."

Photographic evidence!

Currently his assessor has asked Stephen to take photographs of the animals in the shop so he can put them in his portfolio and describe how they need to be looked after.

Stephen enjoys earning money too. "It's great to have a bit of money but mostly I enjoy the fact that I've moved on from school, which I didn't enjoy, and into a job where I'm taken seriously and I know I contribute to the business."

An asset to the business

Stephen's manager is Sergio Foraboschi. He says: "Stephen has a good approach with the animals and he gets on well with customers – the most important requirement for a Retail Apprenticeship.

"He's also capable and helpful and can be trusted to run the shop when other staff are at lunch or otherwise engaged."



If you would like further information about Apprenticeships in South London call the Apprenticeship Hotline on 0800 169 4824 or visit www.apprenticeships.org.uk

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