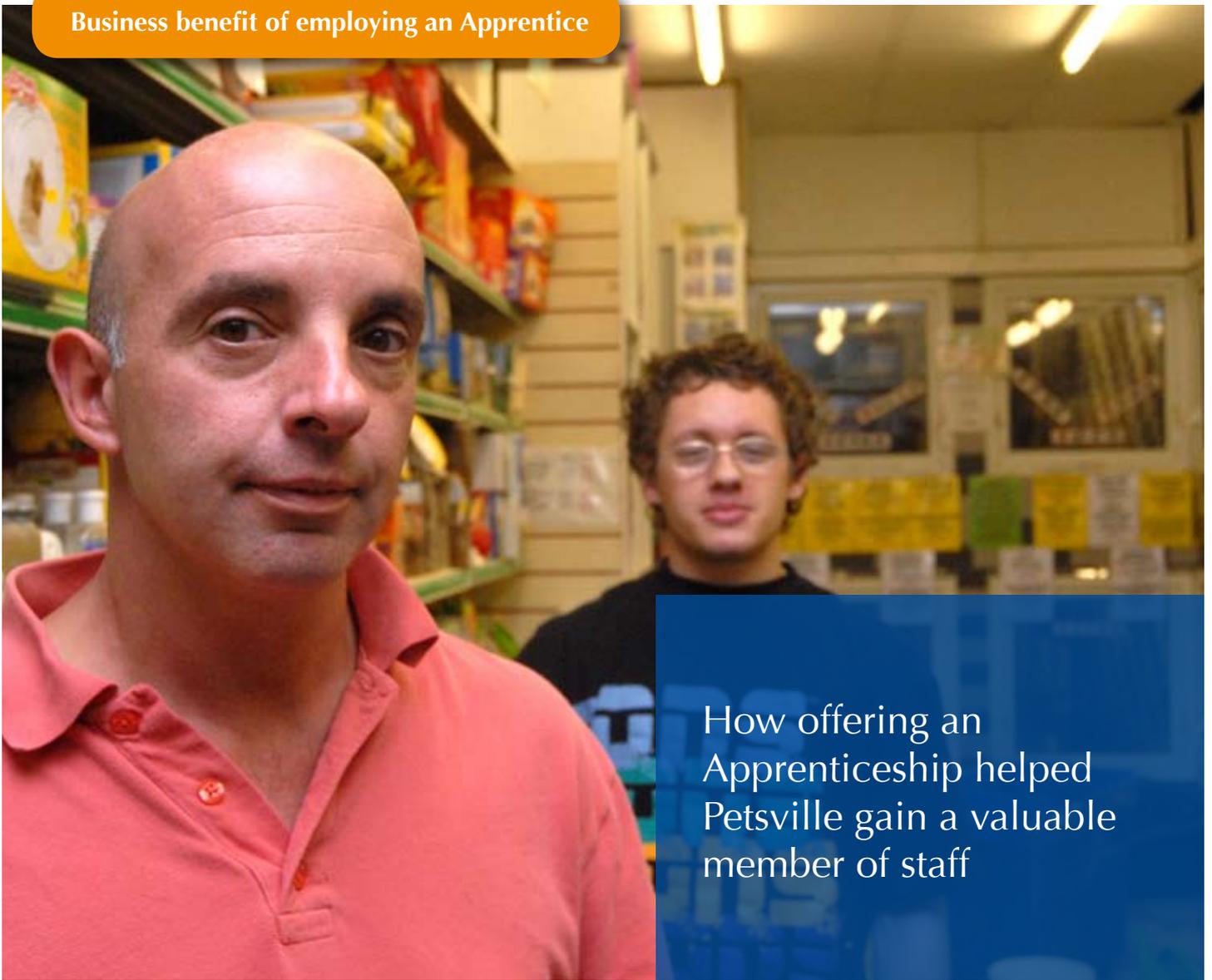


Business benefit of employing an Apprentice



How offering an Apprenticeship helped Petsville gain a valuable member of staff

“It’s great to bring young blood into the retail business, and the commitment to training that an Apprentice brings is a big advantage.” Sergio Foraboschi, Petsville International.

Petsville International is a 30-year old retail business with two stores in Kingston and Sutton in Surrey. The company employs around 10 people at both its stores and recently took on its first Apprentice.

Popular career choice

According to Sergio Foraboschi, a manager at Petsville: “We get a lot of young people coming into the shop asking for work and we’ll often offer them work experience. Working with animals is a popular choice for a career, but many young people can’t, or don’t want to do veterinary science at University, which is a long and expensive degree course.

“Working in a pet shop is a good solution for these young people, but they do need to have the right attitude and approach. It’s a specialist retail area for which they will need special skills.”

Part-timer achieved full time Apprenticeship

Petsville International decided to offer an Apprenticeship to Stephen LeFevre because he lived above the shop and had worked there part-time whilst at school.

“We knew Stephen, and his brother who also works here, and they knew us, how the business is run and what we expect from our staff,” explains Sergio.

Training provider

Petsville contacted local training provider Hawk Training who helped organise the Apprenticeship and supports Stephen’s training. An assessor comes into the shop and work with Stephen on a regular basis.

“He has a good manner with the animals and he gets on well with customers – the most important requirement for a Retail Apprenticeship”

Patience and empathy required

Most Retail Apprenticeships will involve a lot of customer service training, and of course that’s just as important in a pet shop as anywhere else, but Sergio points out that for this Apprenticeship a young person also needs patience, an empathy with the animals and being prepared to do a lot of cleaning out of cages and feeding the animals.

“Many of our work experience students are very good and understand these issues, and we consider it a good opportunity to help educate young people about animals, but Stephen was different - we could see that he really wanted a career with us,” says Sergio.

“He didn’t enjoy school and didn’t get through his GCSE exams, but that didn’t mean that he wasn’t going to be a success,” he continues. “A clutch of exams don’t mean much here when there are animals to care for and essential jobs to be done in the shop. He’s the type of person who learns much more by understanding the work that is required of him through practical experience rather than learning it from text books and lectures.”

A good approach

Now into his third year of his Apprenticeship, Stephen is now working towards NVQ Level 2 and is proving an asset to the business.

“He has a good manner with the animals and he gets on well with customers – the most important requirement for a Retail Apprenticeship,” says Sergio. “He’s capable and helpful and can be trusted to run the shop for a short while when other staff are at lunch or otherwise engaged.”

Stephen also takes the initiative when required, but checks with his manager to make sure he’s doing the right thing.

Demanding work

“Working in retail is demanding – and I can’t think of a more demanding specialist retail position that working in a pet shop,” says Sergio. “This is our first Apprentice and he’s working out well. If we had the right job available, we would certainly consider taking on another young person in a similar role.”

Stephen works full time and takes part in many aspects of the business, from sweeping the floors to stocking the shelves and manning the tills if required. Feeding and cleaning out the animals is a key role and one which he enjoys.

“It’s a great job and I hope I’ll be here for a long time,” he says



Identification code is SLB/APP

Want more information on how to benefit from the Apprenticeship programme in South London?

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

