

ANIMAL CHARITY OFFERS FREE QUALIFICATIONS TO FIGHT VOLUNTEER CRISIS

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Chesterfield's RSPCA base is hoping to solve its volunteer crisis by making the Government's Skills Pledge and receiving funding from the Learning and Skills Council's (LSC's) Train to Gain service.

The Derbyshire animal charity, which doesn't receive funding from the national organisation, was the 1000th organisation in the East Midlands to enquire about the Government's Skills Pledge - a public commitment by an organisation to invest in the skills of its workforce. Now through access to the Train to Gain service, the RSPCA plans to offer free NVQ courses to its volunteers to encourage them to commit to helping out longer term.

At the moment, the branch is running on less than half the number of animal care volunteers it needs.

Chesterfield RSPCA branch manager Julie Ward said: "Lots of people contact us to volunteer, but fall away. Through the Skills Pledge, we've found a way to offer volunteers free NVQ training to encourage them to stick around. We just wouldn't have known we could do that without funding from the Train to Gain service.

“Our volunteers are usually interested in animal welfare and this means they can take it a stage further, maybe even turning a past-time into a career. That’s one of the reasons we’ve made the pledge.”

The Government’s Skills Pledge is a public commitment to support the skills development of all its employees to a minimum of NVQ level 2 (the equivalent of five good GCSEs), to ensure that all staff are skilled, competent and able to make a full contribution to the success of the company.

Sue Peake, Skills Development Director, LSC East Midlands said:

“Skills are of crucial importance for individuals, for their future employability and for the success of businesses, and making the Skills Pledge is a vital step in ensuring that business success continues. Chesterfield RSPCA are a great example of an employer who has made the commitment to their employees and volunteers.

“Every company which makes a Skills Pledge will have access to a skills broker - an independent expert that is part of the Train to Gain service who will work with the employer to help them understand their skills needs and to then identify available public funds.”

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. Photographs available. Visit <http://nds.coi.gov.uk> or call Helen Clarke at COI News and PR on 0115 9712787
2. The Leitch Review of Skills, published in December 2006, warned that the UK must ‘raise its game’ on skills at all levels if it is to sustain and improve its position in the global economy. The Skills Pledge fulfils a key recommendation made in the review, at the heart of a new ‘deal’ where

employers will be able to shape the skills system to meet their needs, in return for prioritising skills training at all levels.

3. The Skills Pledge is a voluntary commitment by employers to increasing the skills of their workforce for the benefit of the business.

4. For more information about the Skills Pledge visit

www.traintogain.gov.uk/skillspledge

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