

**BUSINESS SECTOR: TOURISM**  
**NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES: 600**  
**REGION: LONDON**

ZSL London Zoo in Regent's Park is one of the best known zoos in the world, welcoming hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. A new attraction, Gorilla Kingdom, opened in spring 2007.



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Karen Turnbull  
 Human Resources Manager  
 Zoological Society of London

### The challenge

ZSL London Zoo is run by the Zoological Society of London (ZSL), an international scientific, conservation and educational charity which was founded in 1826. The Zoo has a key role in the conservation of animals and in public education.

2007 is expected to be a busy year for London Zoo. The new Gorilla Kingdom attraction, which opened at Easter, is putting staff under the spotlight as thousands of visitors come to get close to the gorillas.

Human Resources Manager Karen Turnbull was keen to raise the general standard of qualifications and skills among staff so visitors get a consistently high standard of customer service when they visit the Zoo.

“This is particularly important this year, as we are expecting an increase of 100,000 visitors as a result of our new exhibits,” she said.

“Staff working in customer-facing roles such as catering or retail are the public face of the Zoo in areas such as the shop, admissions, car park and restaurant. It’s really important they have the best possible training so they can do these jobs to a high standard and add value to the business. It’s also important to us that staff have the opportunity to develop themselves in their roles.”

### The solution

Karen approached Train to Gain to develop a training programme for ZSL. A Train to Gain skills broker carried out a free skills assessment for the charity and, with Karen, drew up a training plan based on the organisation’s goals for the coming year.

Eight staff working in retail and admissions, catering and the Zoo’s security departments signed up to do Customer Service NVQs. The course is helping them brush up key skills such as communication, time management and personal organisation so they can deliver a consistently high standard of customer service for all visitors. Six other staff are studying team leading, business administration and retail.

“Although the impetus to take up the Train to Gain programme came from identified business needs, the great thing about Train to Gain is that it is learner focused,” said Karen. “This means that everyone on the programme can benefit, no matter what their starting level of skills or knowledge. The programme is also very flexible, so the learner can progress at a speed that suits them.”

### FURTHER INFORMATION:

Visit: [www.traintogain.gov.uk](http://www.traintogain.gov.uk)  
 or call: 0800 634 0262

### The results

The vocational training means that staff at ZSL London Zoo are better equipped to provide a professional and efficient welcome to the public.

Staff are also gaining skills and training relevant to their jobs, which has given them the opportunity to develop their roles and boosted staff morale.

“Although it’s early days yet, I can see already that the training programme is highlighting key areas for us where we need to improve, and giving us a structure to help make those improvements. Feedback from staff has been very positive,” said Karen.

### WHAT DOES TRAIN TO GAIN OFFER EMPLOYERS?

These days, making sure your business is more productive and competitive is a real challenge. Train to Gain can help you get the right skills to do the best job. It’s a service that does three things:

- **It provides a free and independent look at what skills your business needs – now and in the future.** An unbiased skills broker who knows your region and industry works with you to find out what training could make a real difference to your business.
- **It helps you pick the right people to do the training.** Once you and the skills broker find out what your business needs are, they then work with you to find the right training provider. It’s important that the training is done in a way that meets your business’s needs.
- **It helps you get the most from your training investment.** The skills broker can also help find out the best ways to pay for the training, since they know what financial support might be available to you.

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