

RWE npower announces launch of pioneering training scheme

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RWE npower has launched a pioneering training scheme to help jobseekers improve their numeracy skills and find work at npower's customer contact centres.

As well as offering high standards of customer service, npower's customer advisors must be competent with numbers to effectively deal with meter reads, customer bills and customer account queries. Applicants for roles at npower's customer contact centres - which employ approximately 5000 people in the North East alone - often fail to secure roles purely on their numerical ability, despite excelling in all other areas.

Recognising this, npower (<http://www.npower.com/home/index.htm>) has launched an initiative to offer any recent applicants to npower's Customer Service Advisor roles who have been unsuccessful due to their maths ability the chance to enroll in a series of numeracy awareness courses. After completing the courses, they can immediately re-sit the numerical exercise and, if successful, they will be offered a role.

Launched in Sunderland, where npower's contact centres are one of the city's largest employers, the initiative is being carried out in partnership with Sunderland City Council and the University of Sunderland. Training is provided by the University at npower's contact centre in Houghton-le-Spring, with support provided by the business investment team at the council.

If successful, npower will endeavour to forge similar partnerships with other councils, with the aim of helping more people to build their confidence and find gainful employment whilst bolstering the energy firm's workforce in this important customer-focused area.

Gillian Tarelli, Resource and Talent Manager at npower, said: "At npower we are passionate about helping people to reach their full potential, and so are delighted to be working with our partners in Sunderland on this project.

"We hope that this pioneering partnership can become the blueprint for similar training schemes across all of our sites in the North East, harnessing the expertise of local authorities and educational organisations along with that of our teams at npower to improve employment prospects for people around the country."

Dr Felicity Breet, associate dean in the Faculty of Education and Society at the University of Sunderland, said: "This project is about confidence building as well as competence building in working with numbers. In a contact centre role, there is the need to work at speed and under pressure, which are important factors in addition to getting the maths right.

"We have been very pleased to be involved in this initiative. At the university, it is part of our mission to offer a 'life changing experience', and what better way to help change people's lives than help them find employment."

Councillor Mel Speding, Cabinet Secretary of Sunderland City Council, said: "In Sunderland we have a contact centre industry we are very proud of, which offers opportunities to thousands of local people. Working alongside npower, we are committed to helping more people to improve their skills and confidence, so they are able to find positions and careers within the sector.

"This project is an excellent example of the City Council, university and business all coming together to help provide support and job opportunities for people in Sunderland and the North East."

About npower:

RWE npower is an integrated energy business, generating electricity (<http://www.npower.com/home/electricity-and-gas/products/index.htm>) and supplying gas, electricity and related services to customers across the UK. It operates and manages flexible, low-cost coal, oil and gas-fired power stations - generating over 11 GW of electricity. It serves around 6.5 million customer accounts and produces more than 10% of the electricity used in England and Wales. It is also on twitter - @npowerhq -, Facebook and YouTube.

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