

Connaught Academy

www.connaughtacademy.co.uk

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CAREER CHANGE

Connaught Academy is the training arm of Connaught Plc, which employs more than 8000 staff within the UK. To find out more about Connaught visit www.connaught.plc.uk.

Connaught provide a range of housing maintenance and estate management services to public and private sector organisations throughout the UK. With more than 24 years experience, Connaught is a leading provider of planned and response maintenance, gas appliance maintenance and installation, recycling, waste management, cleaning and void management services.

Due to their experience working with career change candidates, the Connaught Academy tutors have a proven track record in preparing candidates for working in the plumbing, heating and gas industries.

What makes Connaught Academy different?

- Our clients – Serving SMEs, public sector & private clients
- Our students – Amongst the best in the UK
- Our perspective – employer, not funding led.

What do we offer?

- Work placements - with employment potential
- Experience with career change and MoD resettlement
- A unique blend of trade and work skills courses
- Course delivery by highly experience industry professionals
- Accredited training qualifications that are industry recognised



Connaught Academy was set up in Sept 2001 to address the national shortfall of engineers and skill levels within the plumbing and heating industry. It is now one of the UK's largest independent accredited training centres delivering a wide range of plumbing, gas, electrical, water, renewable energy and oil related courses to approximately 2000 student places a year.

Connaught Academy's highly motivated training and assessment staff constantly strive to ensure they deliver top quality training programmes, so that industry needs are quickly identified and bespoke solutions implemented.

As the centre has grown, course provision has expanded to enable us to support professional development and enhance the skills company employees and people who are retraining into the new areas. This ensures that we can deliver quality courses to train individuals and companies large or small.

Retraining delivers a fresh start but don't hang about, get going

WITH uncertainty in the jobs market, now may be as good a time as any for a career change – even after decades in a job.

But how easy is it to take the plunge and pursue that dream job when you've got bills and a mortgage to pay? In a poll of 2,000 people by Sector Skills Council Lifelong Learning, 65% of respondents said they predicted a change of career direction in their 30s. More than half of those who had changed careers completely retrained for their new positions.

One person who took the step into the unknown was Mike Shepherd of Llanelli. Mr Shepherd, 46, spent 28 years in the forces and travelled around the world before realising he wanted a career change of scenery and greater challenges.

He said: "I joined the Navy at 16 and after reaching my resettlement age I found myself working in an office and carrying out tasks that didn't offer any mental stimulation. When considering the possibilities open to me after leaving the forces I decided that a trade could offer financial security and a challenge too."

Western Mail reporter

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Mr Shepherd explored his options and enrolled on a part-time plumbing NVQ over seven years alongside his Navy role before embarking on a gas engineering course at BST, now the Connaught Academy, in Caerphilly.

After completing the three-year course he was offered a permanent position with Connaught and started his new career just two days after leaving the Navy.

As a qualified plumber and gas engineer Mr Shepherd's role includes installing and maintaining boilers in social housing properties throughout Pembrokeshire.

He is the first to admit the training has been a struggle at times, especially juggling a full-time job with evening classes, but Mr Shepherd doesn't regret deciding to retrain later in life.

"I love every aspect of my job and the fact that it is so hands-on and practical," he said. "Because of the different training courses I've undertaken I am equipped to carry out a number of different

tasks and enjoy the variety and no two days being the same. My colleagues at Connaught are fantastic and there has never been any discrimination because of my age or previous experience."

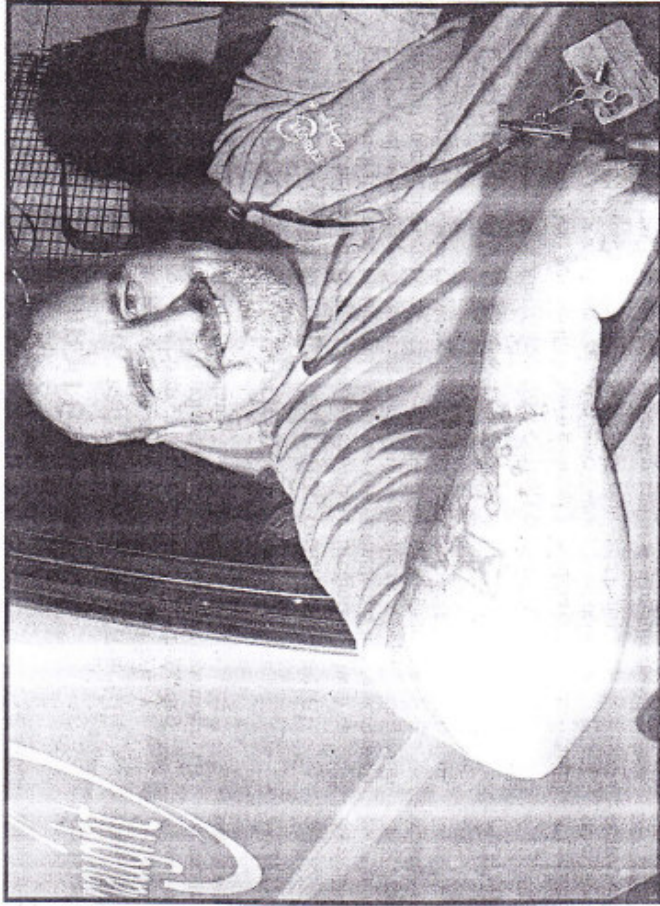
Mr Shepherd advises anyone in a similar position to research the options they have as soon as possible and plan ahead if considering taking a trade route themselves.

"Decide what you want to do and then pursue it as early as possible as it can take several years to retrain. If left too late you may not be able to study the course that you want and then struggle to break into the industry without investing a lot of time and money."

Taking a chance has paid off for Mike in other ways too.

He said: "I've been to many places in the world but especially enjoy travelling around the different areas in Wales and working in Pembrokeshire in particular."

"Not only is it a stunning place to visit but the people I see each day are some of the friendliest I've met. Being able to improve their homes and make them happy is an added bonus for me."



DRIVING ON: Mike Shepherd doesn't regret taking the step to retrain later in life