



CASE STUDY

Neil- Trainee Compliance Engineer



WE ASKED NEIL, OUR TRAINEE COMPLIANCE ENGINEER, TO TELL US ABOUT HIS EXPERIENCE.

Neil was part of Cohort 1 of OpenView's Trainee Compliance Engineer programme. Before making the move, he had spent 27 years in the landscaping and grounds maintenance industry. Starting as an apprentice attending horticultural college on day release, he worked his way up to become a Contract Manager.

"I'd been in the industry for 27 years and worked my way up," he explains. "In the early days it was very creative – designing new landscape schemes for housing estates and schools. I loved working outside in the spring and summer... not so much in the autumn and winter!"

Over time, the business shifted away from landscaping into general grounds maintenance, and the role became less

fulfilling. Combined with an on-site incident where he felt unsupported, Neil began thinking seriously about change. "After 27 years, I felt the time had come for a new challenge – new skills, opportunities to progress and better work-life balance."

Although compliance engineering had never been on his radar, the advertised role caught his attention. "When I saw what was involved, I thought it would be interesting and challenging, with a lot of new skills to learn." Aside from managing maintenance contracts, he had no direct experience in fire compliance. "I was a complete novice."

Being offered a place on the programme was both



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Trainee Compliance Engineer

exciting and daunting. “I was very excited and grateful for the opportunity. It was nerve-racking taking the leap after being in my last role for so long, but I’m very glad I did.”

Neil thoroughly enjoyed the induction and training week. “The structure was very conducive to learning – theory followed by practical work on the rigs.” One session in particular left a lasting impact. “There was

a presentation about a care home in Scotland where things had gone badly wrong with a fire alarm system. That really hit home how important our job is. When regulations aren’t followed, the consequences are serious.”



The mentoring period reinforced everything he had learned. “I felt supported and not thrown in at the deep end.” After an initial week shadowing, his mentor gradually increased his responsibility. “By the last few weeks, I was conducting the work myself, with my mentor just observing and giving pointers. It was a brilliant way to learn.”



Since completing the programme, Neil has continued to develop. OpenView funded his Level 3 Fire Alarm qualification, further strengthening his technical knowledge and competence. He has also been offered the opportunity to move into reactive roles. However, for now, he has chosen to remain within compliance. “I really enjoy the role and the hours. The work-life balance suits me, and I take pride in what we do.”

Today, Neil carries out monthly and periodic fire alarm and emergency lighting testing across residential, retirement and independent living developments across the Midlands. He is also continuing to develop his knowledge of warden call systems. “I feel confident on fire alarm systems now, and if I come across something new, there’s always someone at the end of the phone to help.”

One recent experience reinforced the importance of the work. A resident at an independent living development explained how a linked smoke detector had activated after he fell unconscious during a kitchen fire, ultimately saving his life. “Hearing that story really brings home why we do what we do. These systems genuinely save lives.”

Reflecting on his journey Neil is clear about the impact. “I’ve developed a lot of new skills and my work-life balance has really improved. Moving into this role is something I’m very happy I did.”

