

A new career for Michael

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After quarter of a century working in the pharmaceutical industry, Michael Connor, from Wallsend, found himself out of work for the first time ever. His future was bleak as he headed towards the six month unemployed mark.

But now, thanks to changing direction and taking up new learning opportunities, Michael, 53, is in full time work, in a fulfilling role at Sitel, one of the world's leading outsourced contact centre providers, in Longbenton.

While he was at the Jobcentre, he was advised to consider retraining and possibly consider looking for call centre work. At first he thought he was too old and just wouldn't fit in, but he eventually plucked up the courage to talk to training provider Contact Centre Professional, and was advised that people of all backgrounds and ages had found work there in customer service during and after taking up pre-employment training.

Michael said: "As the course went on some classmates were going to interviews and getting jobs using the skills we had been taught, and we had not even completed the course. After just four weeks, I was offered an interview at Sitel. As we had covered interview techniques on the course, I wasn't worried and although the tests and interviews were quite involved and technical, I knew all the answers and I got the job. I was over the moon".

Scott Lumsden, Site Director for Sitel, said: "Michael is proving himself to be a valuable member of staff. Working in a call centre requires specific, customer focused skills and the training that Michael received before he joined us ensured that he was able to hit the ground running. As an employer, we have benefited greatly from Michael's skills, experience and outgoing manner."

The project, which started in January, aims to provide individuals with qualifications and skills relating to specific employment sectors, endorsed by

Skills Funding Agency

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employers, which will provide them with the skills and behaviours they need for sustainable employment across a range of industries. Individuals taking part, work towards accredited vocational qualifications as well as key skills and basic skills where appropriate to individual needs.

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