

Former soldier Jay Whittaker targets a new career at HLA

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A new starter at South-Tyneside-based [HLA Services](#) has saluted the company for its commitment to offer career opportunities to those coming out of the armed forces.

Former armed reconnaissance specialist, Jay Whittaker, has joined HLA as a trainee engineer. Also joining are Allan McCawley as an air conditioning and refrigeration engineer, Zoe Vacher as help desk operative and Mitchell Trueman-Howe as an electrical supervisor.

Where possible, HLA Services looks to employ ex-military services personnel and 26-year-old Jay forms 5% of the workforce previously in the British Army, Royal Navy or the Royal Airforce.

Having served six years within the British Army armed reconnaissance, Jay left the forces in February and started looking for employment.

Jay said: "Like all those in the armed forces, when you leave you have to find a new role very quickly and adapt to a totally different way of life.

"Prior to leaving the forces, I reached out to numerous companies and HLA got back to me. I met with Director, Neil Henry and he offered me an apprenticeship. As of January, I will spend one day at Ashington College studying an NVQ Level 3 in air conditioning and refrigeration.

"I am really enjoying the team aspect to life at the company and learning from the senior engineers.

"In the months ahead I want to be able to work independently on projects and continue to build on my

skill-set. It's great that companies like HLA Services look to recruit ex-forces, it has given me a huge boost and a new focus as I build a long-lasting career."

HLA Services is one of the North East's leading full-mechanical, air conditioning, climate change and temperature control specialists. Employing more than 100 people, it has satellite offices in Cumbria and North Yorkshire and has recently established a new office in Teesside to meet growing demand for its services.

Paul Smith, director at HLA Services, said: "A warm welcome to all of our new starters who we know will settle in well to our growing team.

"We continue to have a rigorous but fair recruitment process. As we grow our team and expand our services, quality, a strong work ethic and simply ensuring employees are the best fit for the business is our number one priority.

"A number of our team are ex-service personnel and when receiving CVs we look to see if we can offer them employment. Jay is passionate, enthusiastic and willing to work hard, which is why he stood out to us.

"We wish all our new starters the best of luck in their respective career paths."