

MEET THE MEMBER

Today's youth, tomorrow's pest techs!

Complete Pest Control Services is a family-run business based on the border between North Wales and Cheshire. With a commitment to high standards and professionalism, Complete Pest Control was one of the first organisations in the UK to get a CEPA Certification.



Complete Pest Control's 21-year-old boss, Oliver Fitzgerald grasped the challenge of starting a business immediately after A Levels

Firmly in the driving seat is Oliver Fitzgerald, the 21-year-old company owner. He is probably the youngest company owner in BPCA membership today. We asked him to talk to us about young people in pest management and the challenges the future might hold.

GETTING STARTED IN PEST CONTROL

Finishing my school A Levels at 18, I was left, like many teenagers, wondering what career path to take. My school only seemed concerned about the amount of students going to top universities and all anyone else was offered was a booklet on apprenticeships.

No universities or apprenticeship schemes appealed to me so I started my own company instead. In 2014 I was a sole trader approaching local businesses trying to gather a portfolio.

I'd have loved to go to university, but for all the wrong reasons. I wanted to do something worthwhile and not do what so many others had done and return home to work in the local shop after taking an obscure degree.

My parents had been in pest control for as long as I can remember, so I'd grown up in the industry, attending odd jobs after school or on weekends and in the holidays. I suppose those visits sparked my interest in the industry.

Not being 100% certain about what I wanted to do, I decided to pursue something I had an interest in and was sure I'd enjoy – pest control. This led me to research what starting my own business might be like.

Living at home meant starting the business was a relatively low risk. Savings from a part-time job enabled me to get things in motion. I wanted to do things right so the first things on the list were training, joining the BPCA Probationary Scheme and insurance.

Earning some money while learning the trade was a big advantage too. My hobby is all things motorised and

restoring classic Minis can be costly!

As soon as I'd decided I was going to start a business I found information on training from BPCA, and threw myself in at the deep end by booking onto the intense residential course for the RSPH Level 2 Award in Pest Management (General Pest Control course).

After taking the course and passing the exams with high marks, I went head first into pest control and I've never looked back.

Since then I have also completed the SPA food safety and health and safety courses along with an IPAF powered access course and many online toolbox talks. Now I have the relevant field experience, I'm studying for my Advanced Technician in Pest Management qualification.

In 2016 we were incorporated as a limited company and have continued to grow the business to where it is today. We've expanded our client base by adding new national contracts and smaller local businesses and domestic premises. With an expanding portfolio I hope to be able to take on an apprentice myself in the not too distant future!

There's not much information out there about getting started in pest control and I struggled finding everything I needed. That's one of the reasons I'm pleased that BPCA is championing an Apprenticeship Scheme. People like me, who are looking for an interesting career choice, can get the support and guidance they need, right from the beginning.

WHERE ARE ALL THE YOUNG PEOPLE?

There's still a stigma attached to pest control. If you tell someone you're a pest controller then their response is often, "Eww, like rats and mice?"

It's this mentality that we have to change as an industry. We're much more than rats and mice! It's an ever changing profession, meaning you have to constantly be on your toes and stay informed.

What other job gives you the diversity that pest control does? I can be completing a routine inspection in a bakery and the phone will ring with someone worried about a rat in their garden, a noise in their loft or, even more exciting, a hotel with bed bugs.

To encourage young people into the industry we need to educate them about what the work involves. I had a rough idea of what pest control was from prior experience with family members. If I'd known more about the ins-and-outs of day-to-day pest control, there'd have been no doubt about what my career choice would be.

Without young people coming into the industry there'd be no evolution in pest control. The industry is forever changing and I believe we need fresh, new ideas from a new generation that can evolve with those changes.

There are a lot of good pest controllers in the industry with vast amounts of knowledge. Combine this with a younger generation's skillset and you have an award winning combination. For example, my Dad Eddie Fitzgerald is a qualified field biologist with over 30 years' experience in the trade. After a few years' retirement he missed the industry and now works for me helping to build Complete Pest Control Services.

Oliver's tips for young people wanting to get ahead in pest management

- Use news and information sources such as PPC magazine and BPCA's website
- Attend trade shows and talk to other companies
- Keep up-to-date with products and see what's new
- Stay on track with your CPD.

These all offer a great insight into what's happening in the industry so you don't often get caught out by changes.

CHOOSE TO MAKE THE MOST OF IT

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