



James Young and Jak Watson

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## Go North East puts eight young people on the road to engineering careers

The region's biggest bus company, [Go North East](#) has welcomed four new engineering team members following completion of its award-winning apprenticeship, with the baton being passed to a further four new learners preparing to embark on their new careers.

Run in partnership with Gateshead College, Go North East's popular bus and coach mechanical engineering apprenticeship receives over 500 (545 in 2016) applications for the average intake of up to 10 new apprentices, each year.

After successfully completing the four-year programme, Ross Dryden, Andrew Wrightson, Richard Whittaker and Jonathon Dodds have now officially joined the ranks as fully-fledged engineering team members across three of the bus operator's eight depots in the region.

Almost 90% of Go North East's engineering workforce started their careers as apprentices. The 256-strong team currently has 31 apprentices studying at varying levels of training.

Amongst the four new starters beginning their roles in September are three new mechanical/electrical apprentices.

James Young, 19 and Jak Watson, 20, both joined Go North East's flagship Riverside depot, while 18-year-old Aaron Jones, is based at the bus operator's Stanley depot.

Jak, from Whickham said: "The apprenticeship is even better than I expected. I lived in Dubai for two years and worked as a mechanic for a go cart company but I've learned so much more already, it's very different to what I did before and a lot to take in but I'm really enjoying it and hope to work my way up at Go North East."

Ambitious Jak was inspired to apply for the apprenticeship by his mum, Natasha Tanner who also works at Go North East's Riverside depot in driver training.

And it's a real family affair, with Jak's stepdad, Stephen Tanner based out of the same depot as a driver.

The fourth new apprentice to join the team was also encouraged to apply by a family member already working for Go North East.

Luke Mitcheson, from Peterlee is one of just a handful of coachbuilder apprentices within Go North East's engineering team, based at the company's Saltmeadows depot in Gateshead.

The 17-year-old's mum, Tracy Milson is a bus driver at the company's Deptford depot.

Luke said: “I’m loving the apprenticeship so far. The team is so friendly and welcoming - I feel like I’ve been here for a lot longer than just a month and have already learned a lot. We started doing actual work quicker than I expected but I think this is the best way to learn.”

All of Go North East’s new apprentices will spend one day a week training using state-of-the-art equipment at Gateshead College’s £5.5 million Skills Academy for Automotive, Engineering, Manufacturing and Logistics based at Team Valley in Gateshead.

Luke added: “I would definitely recommend the Go North East apprenticeship to anyone looking to start a career in engineering and have already told two friends to apply for the next intake. There aren’t many coachbuilder apprentices and some of the more experienced coachbuilders are nearing retirement, so once I’ve finished the apprenticeship, I hope to stay at Go North East and progress my career.”

Colin Barnes, Head of Engineering at Go North East said: “Go North East recognises apprenticeships as an important recruitment tool which helps to address the skills gap in the bus and coach industry, and across our region, while providing young people with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed.

“We are delighted to strengthen our engineering workforce with eight new team members and look forward to supporting them further in their future careers.”

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[Go North East website](#)