



# Introduction to Truck

**F**unding for the training of apprentice truck, bus and coach technicians in England has fallen sharply, thanks to a review of funding bands carried out by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education and approved by the Department for Education.

On 30 September 2019 the funding band for standard reference ST0068 – heavy vehicle service and maintenance technician – fell from £18,000 to £15,000. The same date saw band ST0067 – bus and coach engineering technician – fall by a more modest amount, from £18,000 to £16,000.

The ST0068 cut has had an impact on DAF's apprentice college, says DAF business services manager, Adam Russell. "It means we've lost a big chunk of funding and we've had to respond accordingly," he says. "So one of the things we've done to save money is move our functional skills training out of the classroom and on to an online platform." Such training is intended to help apprentices improve their English and mathematics. The change should ensure that standards at the college are maintained despite the funding loss.

Based in modern premises in Stoke Gifford, just outside Bristol, and with

## Steve Banner profiles DAF Trucks' apprenticeship provision operated with City of Bristol College

three workshops and 15 trucks at its disposal, the apprentice college is operated in conjunction with City of Bristol College. It welcomed 130 new apprentices in the 2019-20 intake. "That's the most we've ever taken," says Russell. "We're now getting close to saturation point, with a total of 340 apprentices following our three-year programme." Relatively few drop out during that time.

DAF has been running the Level 3 programme for 24 years and has worked with City of Bristol College for 20 of them, Russell explains.

"The apprentices spend 28 weeks annually at Stoke Gifford on block release," he says; typically in two-week increments. For the rest of the year they work at the dealership that employs them – DAF has 136 dealers in the UK – and are visited every eight weeks by skills coaches from apprentice recruitment and training firm Skillnet.

Finding 16-year-olds who want to become apprentice truck technicians is a challenge, Russell admits. "It's still regarded as an oily rag industry. Over the last 18 months, however, we've

had more luck when it comes to going into schools and getting our message across," he adds. Something that is proving particularly effective he says is getting current apprentices to talk to pupils about the programme and what it could do for them.

One of the challenges dealers face once apprentices gain their qualification is retaining them, and ensuring that they do not disappear off to another workshop for another £2 an hour. To reduce the risk of this happening, DAF stresses the ongoing training that is available to them to improve their skills – and their earning power – if they remain within the network.

To bolster its argument, it calls on the support of former apprentices who have stuck with DAF dealers, and are progressing through the ranks. Joe Tooker of Bristol DAF dealership Motus Commercials, for example, started his apprenticeship in 2011, completed it successfully, and has subsequently become a service team leader and a DAF master technician. "I'm aiming to become a service manager," he adds. **TE**

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