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# Looking up



Apprentice technician Boril Dimov is thriving in the Fulwell RATP Dev London bus garage. But for the intervention of a youth worker, his life might well have taken an altogether different path

**N**ow entering his third year as a bus and coach engineering technician apprentice with RATP Dev London (the trading name of London United), Boril Dimov says that every day is different at the Fulwell bus garage. "As I'm going to work, the question I ask myself every morning is, what will I be assigned to do?"

As he has gained experience, Dimov has become more confident to work on his own, preparing vehicles for MOT, assisting with servicing, or carrying out other jobs such as fixing the blinds. Of course his work will still be overseen, and checked, by a qualified technician.

"It's been amazing. People have been such a great help, and I can look up to them. When they look after me, I look after them. I have no complaints, and my family is very happy too. All the lads in the garage do see that I'm trying, and they respect that."

Looking forward to the coming academic year, he has a particular interest in larger jobs, particularly clutches, gearboxes and transmissions. "Automatic gearboxes are a stretch and a challenge, and I always thought that if I do get to strip an automatic gearbox, or get to fiddle about with one, that would be quite interesting, and I'm sure I would learn a lot from it. It's all fun and games doing it on paper and in assignments, but if you don't understand how it works in real life, sometimes that's not enough."

The opportunity to get his hands on such equipment have been constrained



by the pandemic lockdowns. Last year, he was furloughed on 23 March. He returned three months later, coincidentally on his birthday ("it was a good birthday present", he quips), and has worked in the garage since then. A year on, he has only just returned to college, S&B Automotive Academy, for block release, with an accelerated training schedule to help him, and apprentices like him, catch up.

Dimov's immediate aim is of course to become a fully-qualified technician at the Fulwell garage. Beyond that, he aspires to attend university part-time while working shifts as a qualified technician, and hopes to remain in the bus industry. "I know that it would be a lot of hard work, but at the end, it would have been worth it."

Over the past three years, Dimov, just 18, has turned his life around. Six years ago, he immigrated with his family from



Bulgaria, speaking no English at all. He was bullied at school, and switched secondary schools three times, but the situation didn't improve. He eventually failed his GCSEs. It was a time in which, looking back, he felt worthless.

Things began to improve when a youth worker proposed London United's work experience scheme. And he got on so well during the trial that within a few weeks he had interviewed for, and been accepted, as an apprentice.

And, thanks to his commitment, it's been a great success. He has been settled enough to return to English and maths functional skills examinations; as the magazine went to press, he had passed maths but was still waiting to hear about English. (The equivalent of a GCSE pass is required for a Level 3 apprenticeship).

Dimov reflects: "It was very hard to start studying again. But the garage has made me feel at home. I have really enjoyed the last two years, and I'll keep going. I want to strive for better, and get to be the best of the best." 