

***“We learned from all of the technicians. Each one teaches us something different. There are lots of different styles. That made me find my own path”***

# Roadside st★r



**Daniel Johnson, a DAFAid technician at the Corby, Northamptonshire DAF dealer Ford & Slater, only got into heavy goods vehicles because of a chance conversation with a schoolmate, he tells Will Dalrymple**

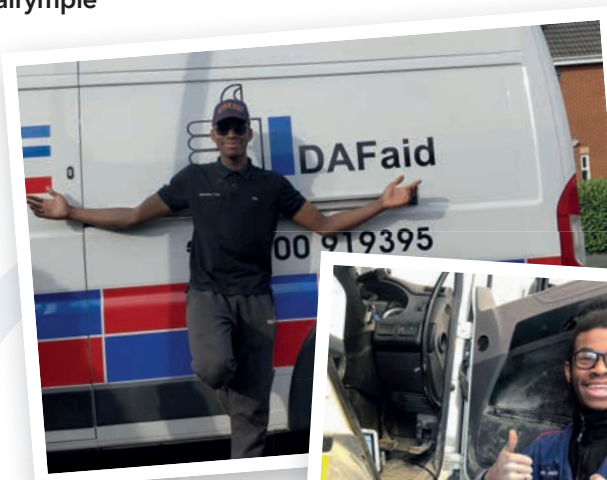
Having always been interested in cars, Daniel Johnson thought he would attend college to progress further in that field as he neared the end of his schooling. But then a schoolmate intrigued Johnson by mentioning apprenticeships. “I thought, ‘Oooh, I might try that,’ and I applied for it, and when I got told it was an HGV apprenticeship, I thought, ‘That’s even better; it’s bigger,’” Johnson laughs.

That interaction launched Johnson on an apprenticeship with DAF, which he chose because it was one of the two main truck brands in his area.

Having applied in the last months of his schooling, Johnson began his Level 3 heavy goods vehicle maintenance apprenticeship only a month or two later. Looking back, he reflects: “I was quite immature when I started. I came straight from school, and in three years I have matured massively.”

One defining moment sticks in his mind: “I was doing a clutch job, and I put the clutch friction plate in the wrong way round, and rebuilt it. Hours later, I noticed what I had done, and felt bad about it. I clocked off, then stripped down the clutch and put it back together, which meant that I finished at 4am rather than 10pm.” The work didn’t go unnoticed; for his efforts, Johnson was named employee of the month.

The apprentice didn’t just work with a single senior technician at Corby, but given the fast pace of work



there, moved around, which he contends helped him learn better than staying with just one. “We learned from all of the technicians. Each one teaches us something different. There are lots of different styles. That made me find my own path.”

While still a second-year apprentice – he was just 18 – Johnson volunteered to fill a roadside service technician vacancy that had come up. After taking an internal training course, he started mixing shopfloor shifts going out on call in a service van.

“That taught me to think on my feet a lot more; you’re by yourself, so sometimes you have to improvise a lot more while you are out there.”

Being so young, Johnson admits he has had some stick from drivers: “I’ve been asked, ‘Is the technician coming out?’ or ‘Did they send the apprentice out to have a look?’. But then when I’ve



finished and fixed it, I have gotten some good praise.”

Now, fully qualified for a year, Johnson supplements his working week shifts in the workshop by being on call every other weekend.

Away from work, Johnson says that his heavy vehicle qualification has taught him some skills that have proven useful in light vehicles – in particular when working on his family’s cars.

Johnson also gets out to attend the dealer’s recruitment events, promoting the apprenticeship: “I enjoy doing it because I feel like I am giving students hope, and a new opportunity to excel within a career,” he says. Back at the workshop, he also chairs the dealer’s apprentice panel, a role which involves listening to other apprentices and making improvements to the scheme. He also fronted a summer 2021 DAF video looking back on how the brand, and the country, coped with COVID-19: watch it via [www.is.gd/oposey](http://www.is.gd/oposey).

As to his work on the tools, his career highlights so far include a single-handed rebuild of a differential, as well as some of his work on the roadside. Johnson concludes: “Every time I finish a major job, I stand back a bit, and I always think to myself, ‘I put that back on the road.’” 