



Go North East apprentices Matthew (left) and James Barnes

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Easington twin apprentices choose a double life on the buses

Ambitious twin brothers, James and Matthew Barnes from Easington, are among a group of youngsters celebrating ahead of National Apprenticeship Week (6 - 10 March 2017), after securing places on Go North East's coveted bus and coach mechanical engineering apprenticeship.

The 19-year-olds have recently taken up full time apprenticeships with the region's largest bus operator.

Run in partnership with Gateshead College, the four-year employee-embedded scheme received over 500 applications for just 10 available roles.

Based at Go North East's Deptford depot, where he is currently completing level two of his apprenticeship, James, who loves being hands-on with engines, said: "The team at Go North East has been really welcoming - it's a nice company to work for. I was quite shy when I started but the role has helped to build my confidence.

"I feel there is real job security, plus there's the opportunity to progress my career with Go North East. I would recommend the apprenticeship programme to other school leavers, especially if they have an interest in mechanical engineering."

Like James, brother Matthew, who works at the company's Chester-Le-Street depot, chose a career following in the footsteps of their grandfather who has run a coach company in Easington for over 55 years.

Colin Barnes, head of engineering at Go North East, began his career with the company as an apprentice. He now drives the apprenticeship programme with his mechanical and engineering teams and Gateshead College, to ensure each recruit is effectively supported throughout training and completes with a full-time position.

He said: "We have a fleet of nearly 700 buses and appoint an average of 10 new apprentices each year, currently nearly 90% of our engineering team began their careers as apprentices.

"Not only do apprenticeships offer the opportunity to earn while they learn, but thanks to our value-added modules developed by Gateshead College, the training they get now will help future-proof their skills."

The twins will train alongside other apprentices at Gateshead College's £5.5 million Skills Academy for Automotive, Engineering, Manufacturing and Logistics based at Team Valley in Gateshead, which recently received an investment of more than £300,000 in brand new engineering workshops, providing state of the art lathes, milling machines and supporting tools.

Ivan Jepson, director of business development at Gateshead College, said:

“This apprenticeship is a shining example of how we are working with leading employers to equip their workforces with the skills they need now and in the future.

“Our apprenticeships are tailor made to meet specific needs, providing companies with a demonstrable return on investment and a competitive edge in today’s global marketplace.

“We continue to invest in state of the art facilities to train a new generation of young people who will be able to pursue successful careers and provide real added value in the workplace.”

Thanks to its innovative modules and team-centric programme, Go North East and Gateshead College’s bus and coach mechanical engineering apprenticeship, has recently been shortlisted for two prestigious awards.

[Go North East website](#)