



A case study: **Kieren Cheung**

Meet one of the next generation of paint sprayers working in the vehicle repair industry. 22-year old Kieren Cheung is a talented, newly qualified apprentice with a bright future ahead of him. He's recently completed his Level 3 apprenticeship with Thatcham Research and was one of three individuals to be crowned its 'Apprentice of the Year' for 2018.

➤ Apprentice of the Year 2018

Nurturing new talent

Solus
Accident Repair
Centres

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Automotive apprentices are an essential part of any thriving body shop.

They future proof the business with skilled, motivated young people who represent the managers and industry leaders of tomorrow. Kieren's employer, Solus Accident Repair Centre in Ipswich, runs its apprenticeship programme to ensure it continues to have access to the skill sets that make it one of today's leading body shop groups. "Giving young apprentices the chance to learn from experienced technicians and from organisations like Thatcham Research, sets them up for a great career," explains Craig Rookyard, Production Lead, at Solus.

Solus, Aviva's own group of garages, has 18 locations across England and Scotland and repairs 32,000+ vehicles per year. Over 50 apprentices have graduated through its award-winning programme during the last four years and it continues to grow each year.

Commenting on Kieren's success, Craig adds, "Kieren started as a quiet young apprentice and took a great interest in the role he has now come to fill. His colleagues accepted him well as part of the team and have been very impressed by his progress. As the Site Production Lead for Solus Ipswich, I was very proud when he was announced as one of the award winners, especially as I know just how much time and effort was put in by the team at Thatcham and by Kieren himself – it was good to see his apprenticeship journey end on such a high."





One-to-one

Dean Lander, Head of Repair Sector Services, at Thatcham Research caught up with Kieren to ask him about his apprenticeship experience and what it meant to him to win the 'Apprentice of the Year' award.

What was it about an apprenticeship that appealed to you?

I wanted to gain the best experience, knowledge and qualifications to work in the motor industry and an apprenticeship is the best way to combine all three. There is no better way to start your career; you gain so much knowledge from working with people that have been in the industry for years.

Why did you want to work in the vehicle repair industry?

As a child I always loved cars and since getting my license and my own car I enjoy tinkering around with it. So, for me, it was an easy decision to join the industry. Being in a practical environment really appeals to me to, I don't think I can ever get bored doing what I do.

What did you learn during your apprenticeship?

I've learned so much over the last three years. As well on-the-job experience, I was able to feel what it was like to work under pressure, learn how to avoid making mistakes, and gain an understanding of the importance of working in a team.

What have been the highlights for you?

During my apprenticeship my employer sent me on a Mercedes-approved paint course. It was interesting to see how from a quality perspective a major car manufacturer expects a car to be repaired. Sending me on the course showed me how important I was to my company and how they are willing to invest in me even as an apprentice.

Briefly describe your experience at Thatcham Research.

Thatcham Research has been a great experience – the tutors really know what they are doing, and the facilities are top notch. I really enjoyed my time there and made some really good friends along the way. The staff at Thatcham Research not only helped me through my qualifications but also helped me with my personal needs as well, they really do look after you like you are one of their own.

Would you recommend the apprenticeship route to others?

I would recommend the apprenticeship route to students who like to get their hands dirty. It's enjoyable and you also get qualifications out of it. And by the end, you have a more of a chance to secure a job than if you were to go to down the university route.

How did you feel when you won the 'Apprentice of the Year award'?

It meant so much to me because at the start of my apprenticeship I promised myself I would work hard to try and win the award. I got my head down and stayed focused. At the end, the hard work payed off and winning was such a great feeling.

It was great to have my family and employers there to witness the event. They cheered for me when I went up to collect it and that's when I knew I had done them proud! I think the awards inspire the future apprentices to do well and work hard. Young people want to be recognised and noticed for their hard work, and we love all the attention when it happens.

Is there anything else you'd like to share?

I want to thank all the people at Thatcham Research for their support throughout my apprenticeship and especially my tutor for sharing all his knowledge about the industry. I enjoyed every minute of my apprenticeship and would do it all over again if I had the chance!



Thatcham Research



Start your journey

An apprenticeship is a great way to start a career and earn a real wage at the same time. Working with an employer and a training provider, apprentices receive both on and off-the-job training to gain the qualifications and experience necessary to work in their chosen field.

Apprentice vacancies are advertised through the Find an Apprenticeship Service. More information is also available from Gov.uk. website. To become a Thatcham Research apprentice, call **01635 293174** or visit www.thatcham.org

