



**RHA**

**20 years** WOMEN  
IN TRANSPORT

***Navigating Generational  
Change: Building a Future-  
Ready Transport Workforce***

## Foreword, RHA



The road transport industry is the backbone of the UK economy – moving people, goods, and services that keep our country running. But like every sector, it faces a changing world: evolving technologies, new expectations, and a workforce that spans generations.

This report on intergenerational workforce planning, commissioned by the RHA, shines a light on the opportunities and challenges that come with building a sustainable, skilled, and diverse workforce for the future. By understanding how different generations view work, skills, and career progression, we can create strategies that attract, retain, and develop talent across every age group.

The RHA is proud to lead this work along with Women in Transport – on behalf of its members and industry – HGV, coach, and van operators – and to champion a forward-thinking approach that ensures our industry remains resilient, inclusive, and ready for what's next.

**Richard Smith**

*Managing Director, RHA*

# Foreword, Women in Transport



For too long, diversity in the workplace has been defined too narrowly. While ethnicity and gender have rightly been at the forefront of the diversity conversation, age is still one of the most overlooked yet consequential parts of it. True diversity comes from recognising the value in every difference, and it is the intersection of these perspectives that gives organisations their greatest strength.

The practical importance of diversity is obvious. It's about ensuring different perspectives are recognised, respected, and applied in the workplace. Diversity of thought isn't a slogan, it's a proven driver of better decision-making.

In transport, this matters more than ever. Our industry is ageing rapidly, while at the same time working hard to welcome a new generation with a different set of skills, values, and expectations. If we fail to bridge these perspectives, we risk losing the talent that is vital to making our sector both innovative and resilient. The experience of those who have spent decades keeping our networks moving must be valued alongside the energy and ambition of those just starting out. Intergenerational inclusion isn't simply a social good, it's business-critical.

That's why I was pleased to chair a roundtable in Parliament on behalf of Women in Transport, kindly supported by the Road Haulage Association (RHA), to explore how to unlock the potential of intergenerational teams. With five or six generations now in the workplace, our discussion looked at both the opportunities and the challenges, and set out practical ways to empower talent of all ages. The outputs from that conversation have fed into this report, authored by Shireen Ali-Khan from Women in Transport and RHA's Sally Gilson.

As someone who has been privileged to work in the transport sector for almost 20 years, with people of all ages, it's clear to me that the organisations that succeed will be those that make the most of every generation's strengths. This paper highlights the urgency of that challenge and sets out steps we can take. By putting age at the heart of workforce planning, and by creating workplaces where collaboration across generations is standard, we can build a transport system that is fairer, smarter, and more resilient.

**Jo Field**

*Chair, Women in Transport*

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# Executive Summary

**The UK transport and logistics workforce faces a demographic challenge: an ageing workforce alongside a new generation entering with radically different expectations. The average age of workers is now 46, with over 40% nearing retirement in the next 10–15 years. At the same time, Gen Z and Millennials seek purposeful work, flexibility, and faster career progression. Unless addressed, the sector faces a twin risk of labour shortages and retention crises.**

This paper brings together evidence from two intergenerational roundtables, national workforce data, and case studies from across the transport sector. It highlights lived experiences from across generations, identifies strategic gaps, and sets out eleven actionable recommendations for employers.

Generational inclusion is not just a social goal – it is a business-critical strategy. Valuing experience, embracing innovation, and enabling collaboration across generations will be key to a resilient, future-ready workforce.

## Key Messages:

- The transport workforce is ageing rapidly, with retirements looming.
- Younger generations demand flexibility, purpose, and voice.
- Policy and practice often diverge, undermining trust.
- Eleven clear actions can drive change now and for the long term.

# Introduction: Why Intergenerational Workforce Planning Matters Now

**The UK transport sector is standing at a demographic crossroads. Age is not just a number in this industry – it is a structural challenge that affects safety, skills, service delivery, and long-term sustainability.**

ONS data shows that nearly half of the transport and logistics workforce is now aged over 45, and in key roles such as HGV driving and rail engineering, the figure is even higher. Many of these workers are within a decade of retirement, and without effective succession planning, organisations face a serious knowledge drain. The challenge is compounded by the reality that younger people are not entering the sector in sufficient numbers to replace them.

At the same time, the expectations of new entrants are shifting dramatically. Millennials and Gen Z are less likely to commit to long hours or a single employer for life. Instead, they seek purposeful work, progression opportunities, and flexibility to balance professional and personal responsibilities. This creates tension in industries like transport, where 50–60 hour weeks were once considered the norm and job loyalty was a badge of honour. As one roundtable participant put it: “What used to look like commitment now looks unsustainable.”

The macro-economic environment only sharpens these pressures. In 1980, the average UK house cost around three times the average annual salary. By 2025, the ratio is closer to six times. Younger generations must often rely on two incomes per household, reshaping family dynamics and working patterns. Flexible working is not a luxury but a necessity. Yet access to it in frontline transport roles remains limited, with only 14% reporting formal arrangements (CIPD, 2023).

Layered onto this are the disruptive forces of technology, automation, and AI. A global study in 2024 estimated that 35–40% of workplace skills will change within the next five years. Every generation will need to retrain and adapt, but learning preferences differ significantly: Baby Boomers tend to prefer structured, instructor-led training, while Gen Z demand on-demand, visual, tech-enabled learning. Employers must balance these differences to ensure no generation is left behind.

The UK is not alone in facing these challenges. In Japan, more than 28% of the population is over 65, creating severe labour shortages and accelerating investment in automation and robotics. Germany’s manufacturing and logistics sectors face similar pressures, with projections showing the country will lose almost five million workers to retirement by 2035. Southern Europe presents a different picture: high youth unemployment in countries such as Spain and Italy has left younger generations underutilised, creating frustration and lost potential. Meanwhile, in North America and Canada, phased retirement and intergenerational innovation programmes are gaining traction as employers seek to keep older workers engaged while attracting Gen Z talent.

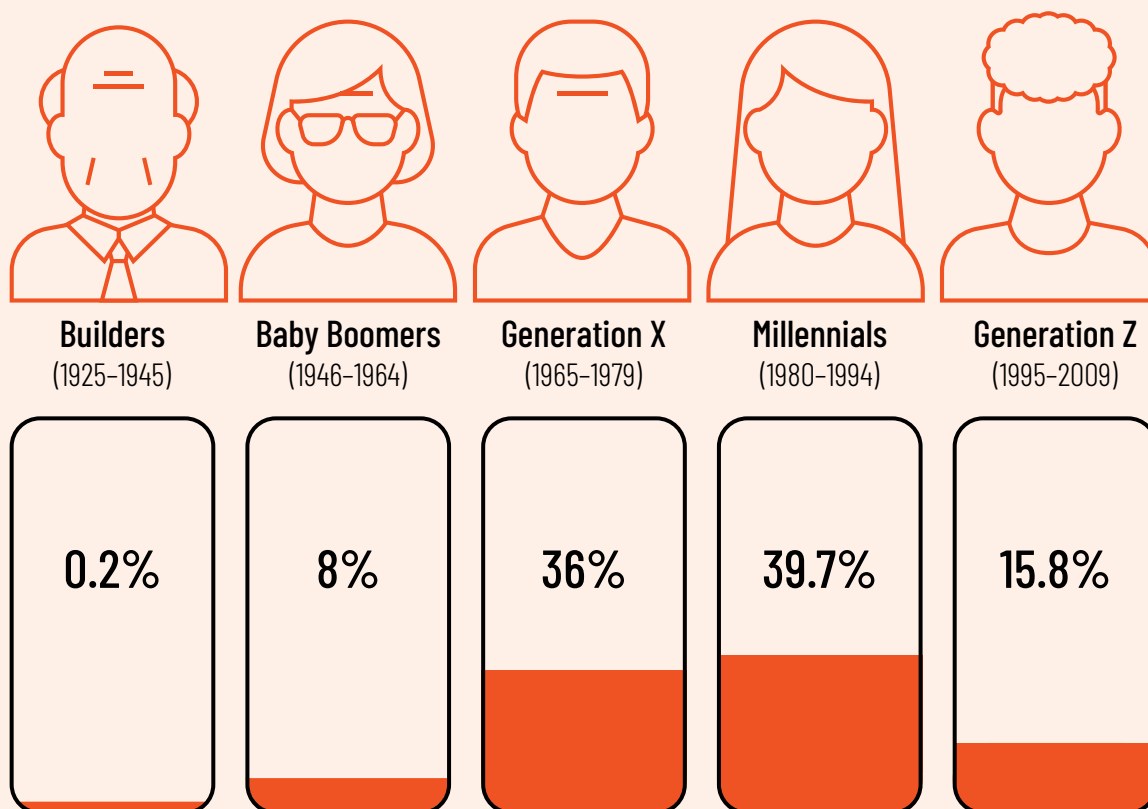
The transport sector, as a globally interconnected system, cannot ignore these trends. Freight, aviation, shipping, and logistics all operate across borders, and the success of one country’s workforce strategy has ripple effects on international supply chains. The lesson is clear: the challenge of intergenerational workforce planning is not unique to the UK, but the solutions will need to be shaped to our specific cultural, economic, and sectoral context.

This white paper argues that intergenerational workforce planning is no longer optional – it is central to resilience and competitiveness. A multi-generational workforce is not a liability but an asset, provided employers build the structures, cultures, and leadership capability to harness it. This requires:

- A shift from **ad hoc mentoring to structured knowledge transfer**.
- From **policy on paper to practice lived consistently**.
- From **short-term fixes to long-term workforce strategy**.
- From **tolerance of difference to celebration of it**.

The following pages draw on two national roundtables, survey evidence, and lived experience stories to highlight both the risks of inaction and the opportunities for transformation. They show that the question is not whether we can afford to prioritise intergenerational inclusion, but whether we can afford not to.

## Generational breakdown on UK transport



ONS Census 2021 – Transport and Communications Workforce

# Understanding the Generations

**Generational identity is more than a date of birth. It reflects the social, economic, and cultural environment people grew up in – shaping how they see work, authority, technology, and opportunity. While individuals will never fit neatly into categories, recognising broad generational patterns helps employers understand the dynamics at play in today's workforce.**

## **Builders (1925–1945)**

Also known as the Silent Generation, Builders grew up during the Blitz, and post-war rationing. They value hard work, resilience, and loyalty. In the workplace, they prioritise stability and respect for hierarchy. Although very few remain active in the transport sector today, their legacy continues: the traditional 9–5 pattern, long service awards, and loyalty to one employer all stem from this generation's model of work.

## **Baby Boomers (1946–1964)**

Boomers were born into post-war reconstruction and economic growth, witnessing the rise of the NHS, the welfare state, and the optimism of the 1960s. Many were the first in their families to buy homes, often on a single salary, a financial reality unimaginable today. They associate commitment with long hours and reliability. In transport and logistics, Boomers are often the senior drivers, engineers, and managers who “kept the wheels turning” during decades of change. They can sometimes perceive younger generations' demands for flexibility as a lack of commitment, though in reality they are responding to different economic conditions.

## **Generation X (1965–1979)**

Gen X entered the workforce during deindustrialisation, Thatcherism, and rising house prices. They experienced the first personal computers and were often described as independent, adaptable, and sceptical of authority. In the transport sector, Gen X is the backbone of today's management, pragmatic, balancing career with family responsibilities, and more willing than Boomers to change employers for progression. They were also the first generation to widely embrace concepts like work–life balance, even while working within industries that prized presenteeism.

## **Millennials (1980–1994)**

Millennials grew up with the internet, globalisation, and, in many cases, multicultural classrooms. They entered the workforce around the 2008 financial crisis, which left many facing insecurity, student debt, and stalled progression. They are collaborative, tech-savvy, and values-driven. In transport, Millennials are driving conversations about sustainability, diversity, and inclusion. They thrive in collaborative cultures and expect development opportunities, but they can be labelled as “impatient” when progression structures remain tied to older, hierarchical models.

## **Generation Z (1995–2009)**

Gen Z are true digital natives, they have never known a world without the internet or smartphones. They have grown up amid Brexit, climate anxiety, and a heightened awareness of social justice. In the workplace, they expect flexibility, diversity, and voice. Many do not see careers as linear but as fluid, project-based journeys.

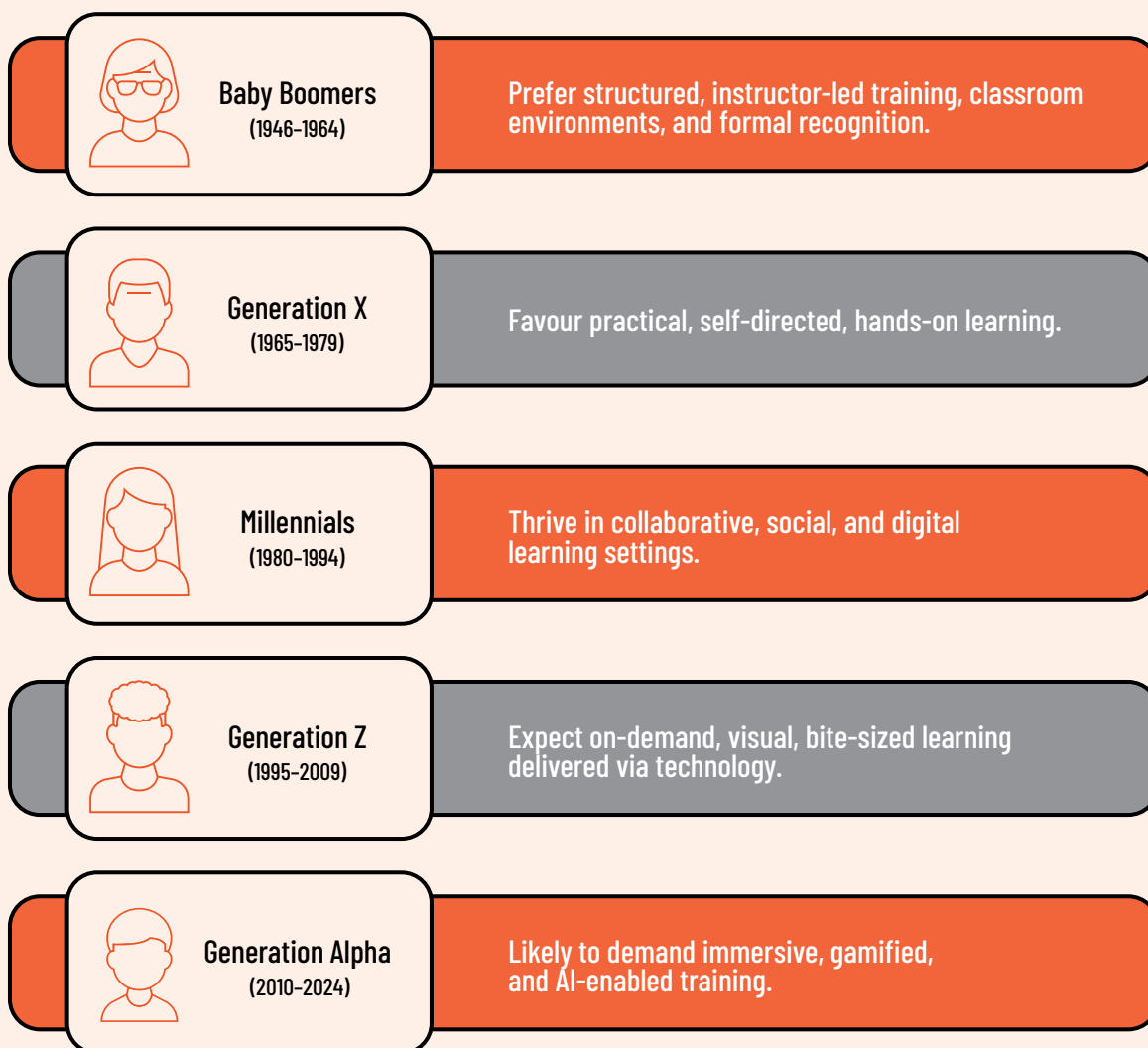


In logistics, Gen Z are strongly represented in warehouse roles (20%), reflecting both entry-level accessibility and the appeal of shift-based work that can be balanced with other commitments. However, they are under-represented in professional driving roles, with only 2% of HGV drivers under 25.

### Generation Alpha (2010–2024)

Still in education, Gen Alpha will be the first cohort entirely born in the 21st century. They are growing up immersed in AI, automation, and global connectivity. Early research suggests they will expect technology-enabled work, rapid skills development, and employers that prioritise climate action and social impact. For the transport sector, this means apprenticeship pipelines and workforce planning must anticipate skills that don't yet exist, from autonomous vehicle management to digital infrastructure design.

## Learning Styles Across Generations



Employers must design blended learning strategies that meet these diverse needs – ensuring older staff can adapt to new technologies while younger employees develop resilience, patience, and deep expertise.

# *What We Heard: Insights from the Roundtables and survey*

**The roundtables and sector-wide survey revealed consistent, and at times sobering, insights into the lived experiences of workers across generations. While quotes brought these issues to life, the survey confirmed that they are not isolated incidents but systemic challenges that cut across the industry.**

## **Collaboration and Mentoring**

Cross-generational collaboration was often described as energising, but too dependent on chance. One participant remarked: “Mentoring happens by luck, not by design.” Survey data confirmed this: only 32% of respondents had access to formal mentoring, and just a fraction described it as intentionally cross-generational. Opportunities for structured knowledge transfer are being missed.

## **The Role of Line Managers**

Line managers emerged as pivotal. More than 60% of survey respondents said their line manager had the greatest influence on their workplace experience, yet only 28% felt managers were equipped to handle generational difference. A Millennial manager admitted: “No one ever trained me to lead people older than me, and I don’t always know how to get the best out of them.” Without proper training, managers risk becoming “accidental blockers,” undermining otherwise progressive policies.

## **Life-Stage and Health**

Life-stage issues were raised repeatedly. TfL shared its menopause and menstrual health hubs, demonstrating how visible senior leadership can drive culture change: “People do what you do, not what you say.” The RHA highlighted its diabetes campaign, showing how lived experience stories could break stigma and prompt change. Survey results reinforced this: 44% of women respondents said menopause or menstrual health had affected their work, yet fewer than 20% felt supported. Participants agreed that health and life-stage inclusion is central to retention and must be treated as a strategic priority.

## **Visibility, Voice, and Value**

Younger participants described feeling invisible. A Gen Z attendee said: “We have to prove ourselves over and over, no matter what qualifications we come in with.” Survey results showed over 50% of Gen Z felt their views “rarely” influenced decisions. Older staff reported feeling “phased out,” with 40% of Baby Boomers saying their knowledge was underused. Without structures to value both emerging and established talent, the sector risks alienating two ends of its workforce simultaneously.

Research highlights that Gen Z places empathy and values above hierarchy when assessing leaders. They want managers who listen, collaborate, and role-model inclusion, rather than those who simply hold authority. Flexibility is also seen not as a perk but a baseline expectation: hybrid or adaptable work is now a fundamental driver of retention and satisfaction. Employers that fail to meet these expectations risk disengagement and attrition.

## Progression and Development

Mid-career workers, particularly Millennials and Gen X, reported frustration at unclear or blocked pathways. Nearly half (47%) of survey respondents in this group said progression opportunities were “uncertain” or “invisible.” Roundtable participants described watching talent stagnate due to outdated promotion models, warning that without clearer structures, the sector risks losing its next generation of leaders.

## Recruitment and Retention

Younger workers also highlighted challenges in joining the sector. Apprenticeships and graduate schemes were often seen as too narrow, and transport lacked visibility compared with tech or finance. As one participant put it: “Transport isn’t seen as aspirational – we need to tell a better story.” Without stronger employer branding and broader entry routes, recruitment struggles will persist.

## Technology and Generational Stereotypes

Digital skills were another dividing line. While younger workers are assumed to be “tech experts,” some lack confidence outside of consumer tech. Older workers, often stereotyped as “technophobic,” are adept once given training. As one participant put it: “We stereotype – Boomers can be digital natives if you invest in them, and Gen Z can still feel out of their depth.” Both ends of the spectrum need support to adapt to AI and automation, which will redefine roles across the sector.

## Intersectionality

Generational experience does not exist in isolation. Women, racially minoritised staff, and neurodivergent employees described how age-related stereotypes intersected with other forms of bias. One woman shared: “When you’re younger, you’re dismissed as inexperienced. When you’re older, you’re seen as past it. There’s a very short window where you’re taken seriously.” For racially minoritised and neurodivergent staff, generational challenges compounded existing inequities.

## Policy vs Practice

A consistent frustration was the gap between policies on paper and practices in reality. While more than 70% of survey respondents were aware of flexible work or wellbeing policies, only 35% felt they could use them without risking career progression. As one Gen X respondent explained: “The policy exists, but you know using it will be held against you at promotion time.” This lack of trust prevents policies from achieving their intended impact.

## Innovation and New Models

Despite these challenges, participants shared examples of progress. A logistics leader described shifting from siloed apprenticeships to rotational models: “We’re giving young people exposure to every part of the business.” Others piloted phased retirement models using zero-hours contracts: “They can choose to work Tuesdays or Wednesdays, easing out gradually while saving the business in peak times.” These innovations showed that with creativity, generational challenges can be turned into solutions.

## Culture and Belonging

At the core of all themes was culture. Generational difference was not framed as conflict, but as opportunity. “There’s enough cake for everyone,” one participant concluded. Yet without systems and leadership behaviours to reinforce that mindset, collaboration remains inconsistent and belonging elusive. The message was clear: employers must build cultures that make intergenerational inclusion intentional, not accidental.

# What the Evidence Tells Us: Data and Trends

**The evidence from national datasets, surveys, and industry research confirms what participants described in the roundtables: the transport sector is at a demographic tipping point.**

## Ageing Workforce

The ONS Labour Force Survey (2023) shows the average age of transport workers is now 46 – higher than the UK economy-wide average of 42. In critical roles the imbalance is even starker:

- HGV drivers:** 40% are Gen X, with just 2% under 25.
- Rail engineering:** almost half of the workforce is within 10 years of retirement.
- Warehouse operatives:** more balanced, with 20% Gen Z and 40% Millennials, reflecting entry-level accessibility.

The retirement “cliff edge” is clear. If succession planning does not accelerate, organisations risk losing skills faster than they can replace them.

## Flexible Working and Policy Gaps

Access to flexible working remains one of the most uneven areas. CIPD’s Working Lives Survey (2023) reported that only 14% of frontline transport staff had formal access to flexible work, compared with 41% across the wider economy. This discrepancy fuels retention challenges for younger workers, especially those balancing study, caring responsibilities, or second jobs.

## Generational Expectations

Deloitte’s Global Gen Z and Millennial Survey (2024) found:

- 72%** of Gen Z prioritise flexibility.
- 60%** seek alignment with employer values.
- Over half** said they would leave an employer if wellbeing needs were ignored.

These expectations clash with legacy workforce models built on presenteeism, long shifts, and seniority-based progression.

Research highlights that Gen Z places empathy and values above hierarchy when assessing leaders. They want managers who listen, collaborate, and role-model inclusion, rather than those who simply hold authority. Flexibility is also seen not as a perk but a baseline expectation: hybrid or adaptable work is now a fundamental driver of retention and satisfaction. Employers that fail to meet these expectations risk disengagement and attrition.

## Wellbeing and Mental Health

The HSE's Health and Safety Statistics (2022) reported that stress, depression, and anxiety account for 51% of all work-related ill health in the UK. The transport sector is particularly exposed: long and irregular hours, safety-critical roles, and physical strain create added risks. Younger workers are more willing to discuss mental health, while older cohorts often see it as taboo, making intergenerational conversations difficult without leadership support.

## Intersectionality and Hidden Barriers

Generational dynamics intersect with gender, race, disability, and neurodivergence. A Joseph Rowntree Foundation report (2023) warned that without collecting and analysing intersectional data, systemic inequities remain hidden. For example:

- Women are underrepresented in older cohorts due to historic barriers, creating gender imbalances in leadership succession.
- Racially minoritised workers often face additional barriers in progression, compounding generational frustrations.
- Neurodivergent workers report policies that fail to account for diverse cognitive needs, affecting retention.

## Attracting the younger generation to bus and coach operations

Unlike HGV driver roles, bus and coach operators face an added barrier to recruiting young drivers. Under current legislation, 18-19 year old drivers with a bus/ coach Cat D licence are restricted to operating regular services of no more than 50km per service. This is hugely restrictive for coach operators and makes it virtually impossible to take on young drivers.

Although there was a government consultation in 2024, there is still no outcome. Given that such restrictions don't apply to driving an HGV, it seems an unnecessary barrier in a sector that has just as many driver shortages as haulage operators experience. With the right training and examinations in place, there's no reason why this disparity between the 2 driving options should exist. RHA along with other trade associations have been calling on government to make the change as we don't want to lose the interest of such a core group of the workforce.

## Technology and the Future of Skills

Technological disruption is reshaping the workforce. Automation, AI, and digital platforms are already changing job design in logistics, rail, and aviation. One space sector leader described the pace starkly: "35-40% of skills will change within three to five years. Every generation will need to adapt."

Blended learning models will be critical. While Boomers and Gen X often prefer structured training, Millennials and Gen Z expect digital, on-demand formats. If employers cannot bridge this divide, skill development will lag behind industry change.

## Labour Market Pressures

Brexit, COVID-19, and global supply chain shocks have left lasting imprints. ONS vacancy data (2023) showed persistent shortages in HGV driving, warehousing, and aviation ground services. These shortages cannot be filled by recruitment alone – retention and workforce redesign will be equally important.

## A Systemic Risk and an Opportunity

Taken together, the evidence shows a sector under pressure but also poised for renewal. The demographic challenge is clear, but with intentional strategy, transport can lead the way in building inclusive, multigenerational workplaces that strengthen resilience and attract the next generation of talent.



# Case Studies from the Sector

## Transport for London: Menopause and Menstrual Health Hubs

TfL has taken a proactive stance on life-stage inclusion by creating digital hubs for menopause and menstrual health. These hubs provide resources, guidance, and 30-minute training modules designed to reach staff at every level. What made the difference was visible leadership: senior managers spoke openly about the training and took part themselves. As one manager noted, “People do what you do, not what you say.”

The hubs have not only normalised conversations but also influenced policy. Campaigning is underway to make menopause training mandatory across the organisation, reinforcing that health is not a private issue but a business and retention concern. Early feedback shows improved awareness among male colleagues and a greater willingness among women to seek adjustments, such as flexible start times or uniform adaptations.

## Road Haulage Association: Diabetes Awareness

The RHA partnered with Diabetes UK to raise awareness of Type 2 diabetes — a condition affecting a significant proportion of the haulage workforce due to sedentary work and irregular diets. Using podcasts, lived experience stories, and toolkits for employers, the campaign broke through a long-standing culture of silence around health.

As one driver said, “Hearing someone like me talk about it made me check my own health for the first time.” The initiative reframed health as a collective issue tied to safety and retention, rather than a private matter. Employers reported greater engagement with wellbeing programmes and more openness to health screening. The campaign demonstrates how trade associations can use their reach to shift culture across an entire sector.

## Women in Transport: Intersectionality, Lived Experience, and the Menopause Club

Women in Transport has pioneered work on intersectionality in the sector, creating spaces for underrepresented voices to be heard and understood. Through its intersectionality research and programmes, WiT has highlighted how factors such as gender, race, age, disability, and caring responsibilities overlap to shape lived experience at work. This work has been instrumental in showing that generational issues cannot be separated from other dimensions of identity.

WiT has also created forums where lived experiences are shared directly, breaking down stigma and sparking conversation. The Menopause Club, for example, provides a safe space for women across the industry to connect, share experiences, and exchange practical advice. These conversations are not just supportive but transformative: they help colleagues and employers alike understand the realities of life stage, and they push for changes in workplace policy and culture.

As one participant explained: “It was the first time I realised I wasn’t going through this alone — and it made me more confident to ask for support at work.” By combining research, advocacy, and lived experience, Women in Transport has become a catalyst for inclusive practice, proving the value of sector-wide collaboration.

## Logistics Apprenticeships: Redesigning Entry Routes

A national logistics employer recognised that siloed apprenticeships — such as driver-only routes — limited retention and career mobility. In response, it piloted a two-year rotational programme, where apprentices gain experience in driving, vehicle maintenance, warehouse operations, and office functions.

The aim was twofold: broaden skills and give young people a sense of the wider business. The results were striking. Apprentices reported stronger engagement, and completion rates rose significantly compared to traditional programmes. Employers also benefitted from a more versatile workforce. A leader explained: “We’re not just training drivers, we’re building future managers who understand the business end-to-end.”

## Phased Retirement: Zero-Hours Models

Several employers, particularly in road transport and warehousing, are experimenting with flexible contracts for older staff approaching retirement. Rather than an abrupt exit, workers can select shifts weekly – for example, choosing to work only on Tuesdays or Wednesdays.

This model has multiple benefits. It allows organisations to cover peak demand periods without over-recruiting. It gives older workers control over their schedules, supporting wellbeing and prolonging careers. And it facilitates knowledge transfer, as experienced staff remain available to mentor younger colleagues. One HR manager described it as a “triple win” – for workers, businesses, and customers.

## International Case Study: Canada – Phased Retirement Labs

In Canada’s rail and energy sectors, phased retirement has been formalised through “retirement labs.” These initiatives pair older workers with younger recruits in structured teams, allowing seniors to reduce hours while transferring knowledge through real projects. Employers report smoother succession, reduced training costs, and higher satisfaction among older staff who feel valued rather than discarded.

## International Case Study: Germany – Dual Education System

Germany’s dual education system, combining vocational training with academic study, has long been cited as a global model. In the transport and logistics sector, apprentices split time between classroom learning and on-the-job rotations. This structure ensures younger workers gain both technical skills and workplace culture early, while companies build loyalty and reduce dropout rates. German logistics firms report apprentice retention rates of over 80%, compared to UK averages closer to 60%.

## Lessons from These Case Studies

These case studies show that change is possible when employers combine practical action with cultural leadership. Five lessons stand out:

1. Visible leadership matters – culture shifts when senior figures model behaviour.
2. Lived experience stories are powerful – they break stigma and inspire participation.
3. Redesigning roles and pathways creates resilience – whether through rotational apprenticeships or phased retirement.
4. Intersectionality cannot be ignored – inclusive practice must reflect the overlapping realities of workers’ lives.
5. International examples prove that with the right investment, scalable solutions are possible.

**Together, these examples demonstrate that generational inclusion is not an abstract concept but a practical, evidence-based strategy that delivers measurable benefits for retention, wellbeing, and workforce resilience.**

# Critical Gaps in Current Practice

## Critical Gaps in Current Practice

### 1. Workforce Mapping and Forecasting by Generation is Rare

Few organisations systematically collect or analyse workforce data by generation. Without a clear view of age profiles, career stages, and retirement risks, leaders are effectively “flying blind.” As one roundtable participant put it: “We don’t know what’s coming until it hits us.” This lack of insight makes it difficult to design targeted attraction, retention, and succession strategies.

### 2. Policy–Practice Gaps Undermine Credibility

While many organisations have progressive policies – from flexible working to menopause support – the survey revealed that fewer than 35% of employees feel confident using them without fear of negative consequences. The gap between what’s written and what’s lived creates mistrust. Employees often view policies as “window dressing” unless managers actively encourage their use.

### 3. Succession Planning and Knowledge Transfer are Weak

As large cohorts of Baby Boomers and Gen X approach retirement, the risk of losing institutional knowledge grows. Yet succession planning often focuses narrowly on leadership roles, overlooking critical technical and operational expertise. Informal mentoring fills some gaps, but without structured transfer, much experience leaves with the individual. One HR director reflected: “We rely on goodwill – when they retire, so does the knowledge.”

### 4. Intersectional Data is Missing

Generational dynamics intersect with gender, race, disability, and neurodivergence, but most organisations lack the data to understand these overlaps. Without intersectional insights, interventions risk being too broad to tackle real inequities. For example, women in transport often face both ageism and sexism, while racially minoritised staff may experience compounded barriers at early career stages.

### 5. Line Managers Lack Skills for Multigenerational Teams

Line managers were described as “make-or-break” in shaping daily culture, yet few receive formal training on leading across generations. Survey data showed that while 60% of employees identified line managers as the biggest influence on their workplace experience, only 28% believed managers were equipped to handle generational differences. The result is inconsistency: a supportive manager can transform experience, while an unprepared one can drive attrition.

### 6. Short-Term Fixes Dominate; Long-Term Strategy is Absent

Recruitment campaigns and crisis responses often take priority over sustained workforce planning. Employers plug gaps reactively rather than building pipelines. As one participant noted: “We’re always chasing today’s shortage, not tomorrow’s.” This short-termism creates a cycle of repeated crises, where strategic solutions are constantly deferred.

### 7. Horizon Scanning for Gen Alpha is Not Taking Place

Generation Alpha – those still in education – will enter the workforce within the next decade. They are growing up fully immersed in AI, digital platforms, and climate anxiety. Yet few organisations are preparing for their arrival. Apprenticeships, training models, and workplace cultures remain anchored in older assumptions. Without horizon scanning, the sector risks repeating today’s mistakes when the next generation arrives.

# *So What? Why These Gaps Matter*

**Individually, each gap presents a challenge. Together, they create a systemic risk for the future of the sector.**

An ageing workforce, unclear progression routes, and a lack of trust in policies will not only hinder recruitment but also accelerate attrition. The absence of succession planning means knowledge may disappear overnight as older workers retire, while the failure to prepare for Gen Alpha risks another cycle of disconnect in less than a decade.

If left unaddressed, these gaps could undermine safety, service delivery, and competitiveness across transport and logistics. But if tackled with urgency, they represent a unique opportunity: to design a workforce strategy that is inclusive, resilient, and future-ready. The choice is clear — either wait for the crisis to arrive, or act now to build a multigenerational workforce that thrives.

# Eleven Actions for a Future-Ready Intergenerational Workforce

## Eleven Actions for a Future-Ready Intergenerational Workforce

### 1. Map Your Workforce by Generation and Career Stage

**Why it matters:** Without data on age distribution, career stage, and retirement risk, employers cannot design effective succession strategies. The ONS shows nearly half the workforce is over 45, yet most organisations do not forecast retirements.

**Example:** National Express has mapped generational demographics to redesign its apprenticeship offer.

**Implication:** HR teams should routinely analyse workforce composition, identifying critical roles at risk and opportunities to diversify entry routes.

### 2. Audit and Update Policies for Relevance

**Why it matters:** Policies lose credibility if they don't reflect lived experience. Our survey found only 35% of staff felt confident using wellbeing or flexibility policies without career risk.

**Example:** Employers who co-design policies with cross-generational staff groups report higher uptake.

**Implication:** Policies on parental leave, menopause, elder care, and flexibility should be audited every two years and tested for practical usability.

### 3. Train Line Managers in Generational Leadership

**Why it matters:** Over 60% of survey respondents said line managers were the biggest influence on workplace culture, but only 28% thought they were well-prepared.

**Example:** TfL introduced line manager training on menopause awareness, with strong cultural impact.

**Implication:** Line manager training must include communication preferences, feedback styles, flexibility, and inclusion — not just compliance. Training must go beyond process and compliance to develop empathy, listening skills, and value driven leadership. Gen Z in particular expects managers who can connect authentically, support wellbeing, and demonstrate inclusion in action. Investing in emotional intelligence as a management skill will not only improve retention among younger workers but also build stronger connections across all generations.



#### 4. Build Structured Intergenerational Programmes

- Why it matters:** Informal mentoring is uneven and exclusionary. Structured programmes ensure knowledge flows across age groups.
- Example:** Reverse mentoring at TfL helped senior leaders see the workplace from younger employees' perspectives, shifting decisions on flexibility and inclusion.
- Implication:** Employers should embed mentoring, reverse mentoring, and cross-age project teams into workforce planning, making them part of KPIs.

#### 5. Elevate Early-Career and Underrepresented Voices

- Why it matters:** 50% of Gen Z survey respondents said they "rarely" influenced workplace decisions. Without voice, retention drops.
- Example:** Youth councils in other sectors (e.g., NHS Trusts) provide direct input to boards.
- Implication:** Employers should create youth councils or feedback forums with a mandate to shape real decisions, ensuring early-career and underrepresented voices are heard.

#### 6. Modernise Learning and Development

- Why it matters:** 35–40% of workplace skills will change in the next five years due to AI and automation. Generations learn differently.
- Example:** A logistics employer introduced microlearning modules alongside traditional workshops, appealing to both Boomers and Gen Z.
- Implication:** HR must design blended Learning and Development strategies – microlearning, peer workshops, experiential learning – tailored to generational learning styles.

#### 7. Make Health and Life-Stage Inclusion Standard

- Why it matters:** Health issues are a leading cause of attrition. 44% of women surveyed reported menopause or menstrual health affecting their work.
- Example:** The RHA's diabetes initiative showed that normalising conversations drives retention and improves safety.
- Implication:** Employers should create life-stage frameworks covering menopause, chronic illness, neurodivergence, fertility, and elder care, backed by line manager training.

#### 8. Build Belonging Across Generations

- Why it matters:** Belonging drives retention and performance. Our survey showed younger staff feel invisible, while older staff feel phased out.
- Example:** Storytelling initiatives, such as intergenerational podcasts or awards, create shared recognition.
- Implication:** Organisations should embed cross-generational events, awards, and recognition programmes into their engagement strategies.

## 9. Embed Intergenerational Culture in Workforce Strategy

**Why it matters:** Generational inclusion often sits outside formal HR strategy. Without leadership accountability, efforts remain piecemeal.

**Example:** Organisations aligning intergenerational goals with Environmental, Social and Governance frameworks report stronger leadership buy-in.

**Implication:** Generational inclusion should be embedded into workforce strategies, Environmental, Social and Governance reports, and leadership KPIs.

## 10. Collect and Share Generational Data Sector-Wide

**Why it matters:** Without benchmarking, organisations can't measure progress or learn from peers.

**Example:** Cross-sector initiatives in healthcare have driven systemic change through shared data.

**Implication:** The transport sector should create sector-wide surveys and benchmarking on generational inclusion, coordinated by associations such as RHA and WiT.

## 11. Prepare for Gen Alpha

**Why it matters:** Gen Alpha will enter the workforce within 10 years, bringing expectations of AI, automation, and climate-conscious employment. Most organisations are not preparing.

**Example:** Canada's phased retirement labs show how proactive workforce planning can support both outgoing and incoming generations.

**Implication:** Apprenticeship design, skills forecasting, and workforce cultures must anticipate Gen Alpha's expectations now, avoiding a repeat of today's disconnect with Gen Z.

# *Cross-Sector and International Comparisons*

**The challenges of intergenerational workforce management are not unique to transport. Other sectors and countries have faced similar pressures and developed innovative responses. These examples provide valuable lessons for the UK transport and logistics sector.**

## **Healthcare: Structured Reverse Mentoring**

NHS trusts have introduced structured reverse mentoring schemes, pairing junior doctors with senior consultants to challenge hierarchy and promote inclusive leadership. Evaluations show that senior leaders gained new insights into digital adoption and wellbeing pressures, while juniors felt more valued and confident to raise issues. Attrition rates among early-career doctors fell by up to 15% in trusts with active programmes. Transport employers can adopt similar schemes, ensuring younger staff influence organisational learning rather than waiting decades for authority.

## **Construction: Rotational Apprenticeship Models**

The construction industry has long faced skills shortages and an ageing workforce. To address this, employers and industry bodies have redesigned apprenticeships to include rotations across multiple sites and disciplines – from engineering to project management. These models expose young people to varied career paths early, broadening skills and raising retention. Transport employers experimenting with rotational logistics apprenticeships are already mirroring this approach, showing the value of cross-sector learning.

## **Policing: Life-Stage Inclusion Policies**

UK police forces have introduced menopause and parental leave policies as part of broader wellbeing strategies. By embedding life-stage considerations into HR frameworks, forces have reduced attrition among women officers, particularly at mid-career points where drop-out rates were highest. As one officer explained, “It’s not just about policy on paper, it’s knowing my line manager has the training to back me when I need it.” The lesson for transport is that life-stage inclusion improves retention and progression, especially in roles where women remain underrepresented.

## **Canada: Phased Retirement and Innovation Labs**

Canada’s rail sector has piloted phased retirement contracts, allowing older staff to reduce hours while mentoring younger workers. These initiatives are complemented by intergenerational “innovation labs,” where cross-age teams co-design solutions to safety and service challenges. The result has been smoother succession, higher staff engagement, and lower training costs.

## **Germany: Dual Education and Skills Transfer**

Germany’s dual education system combines vocational training with classroom study. Apprentices split time between learning and hands-on experience, creating a pipeline of skilled workers who are both technically capable and culturally embedded. Retention rates in logistics apprenticeships exceed 80%, compared to UK averages closer to 60%. The model demonstrates how early investment and clear pathways create loyalty and resilience.

## Scandinavia: Wellbeing and Flexible Work Cultures

Nordic countries consistently score highest in global workforce satisfaction rankings. Employers embed flexibility, wellbeing, and lifelong learning as norms rather than exceptions. For example, in Sweden, phased parental leave applies to both men and women across careers, normalising flexibility and reducing stigma. Transport employers in the UK can draw on this example to normalise flexible work for all roles, not just office-based ones.

### Lessons for Transport

These examples highlight five transferable lessons for the UK transport sector:

1. **Formalise reverse mentoring** to challenge hierarchy and accelerate inclusion.
2. **Adopt rotational training models** to broaden career pathways and improve retention.
3. **Embed life-stage inclusion policies** to reduce attrition and build loyalty.
4. **Pilot phased retirement and innovation labs** to capture knowledge before it's lost.
5. **Normalise flexibility and wellbeing support** as cultural expectations, not optional extras.

**Transport can learn directly from these sectors and nations, adapting proven approaches to the specific operational, cultural, and safety-critical needs of logistics, road, rail, aviation, and maritime.**

# Conclusion: Don't Wait for the Crisis

**Generational inclusion is not a side project. It is the foundation of a resilient, future-ready transport sector. As one roundtable participant challenged us: "Are we fit for the future, or waiting for the cliff to hit?"**

## The warning signs are flashing:

- An ageing workforce with retirements looming.
- Younger generations who feel unseen, unheard, and undervalued.
- Mid-career talent stuck in the middle with unclear progression.
- Older colleagues watching decades of knowledge risk being lost overnight.
- Policies that look good on paper but collapse in practice.

But this is not just a story of risk. It is also a story of possibility. Across the UK, we have seen sparks of innovation: TfL's menopause hubs, the RHA's diabetes awareness campaign, Women in Transport's Menopause Club and intersectionality work, rotational apprenticeships that keep young people engaged, phased retirement models that retain expertise. Internationally, Canada's phased retirement labs, Germany's dual education system, and Scandinavia's wellbeing cultures show us what is possible when bold choices are made.

The transport sector is on the brink of a major skills shortage. Without immediate action, we risk a shortfall of up to 618,000 workers by 2030, threatening our industry and the wider economy. Yet transport has everything young people say they want from a career: purpose, progression, and the chance to make a real impact on society and the planet. We just need to help them make that connection.

## This white paper is not a report to file away. It is a call to action.

The Eleven Actions Framework set out here is your roadmap — practical, evidence-based, and achievable. It demands that employers, HR leaders, and policymakers move from:

- Good intentions to measurable change.
- Short-term firefighting to long-term design.
- Silence and stigma to open conversation.
- Tolerance of difference to celebration of diversity.

The transport sector can lead the way — not just filling vacancies, but building workplaces that attract, retain, and empower talent across every generation. The choice is stark: wait for the crisis, or act now to design a future-ready workforce.

## *The time to act is now.*

**We have the evidence. We have the tools.  
What we need is leadership.**



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**Authors: Shireen Ali-Khan & Sally Gilson.**

## About the Road Haulage Association (RHA)

The Road Haulage Association (RHA) is the largest dedicated trade association in the UK for HGV, van, and coach operators. We represent 8,500 members, giving them a strong voice with government, policymakers, and local authorities on the issues that matter most - from legislation and rising fuel costs to better roadside facilities and the transition to a Net Zero transport system. Since 1945 we've proudly supported hauliers, and today our membership also includes coach and van operators. We provide a voice, technical and professional services to help businesses stay compliant and run efficiently, alongside a wide range of accredited training programmes to develop people and operations. We champion the highest standards across our industry and work hard to be the trusted organisation driving business on Britain's roads.



[rha.uk.net](https://rha.uk.net)

## About Women in Transport (WiT)

Women in Transport is a not-for-profit, professional network that empowers women in the transport sector through mentoring, networking, advocacy, and research. With members spanning every mode of transport, WiT campaigns for inclusive workplaces and stronger representation at every level.



[womenintransport.com](https://womenintransport.com)

### ■ Next Steps

The future of work is multi-generational and building it requires collaboration across the transport and logistics sector.

- Share this white paper with your leadership and HR teams
- Partner with WiT and the RHA to pilot intergenerational initiatives

**Contact us: [policy@rha.uk](mailto:policy@rha.uk) / [info@womenintransport.com](mailto:info@womenintransport.com)**