

RHA

Attract, Train & Retain

A skills manifesto for the road transport industry



July 2023





Richard Smith
Managing Director

/ Foreword

Welcome to our skills manifesto setting out the actions required to build a workforce for the future. The road transport sector depends on access to a skilled workforce to keep the flow of people and goods moving.

The value of our industry to the economy and society was demonstrated like never before during the pandemic.

We have set out 24 key recommendations for Government and industry to take up to attract more workers, train the workforce required in key roles and improve retention.

It is vital that we address the immediate and future skills shortages across the logistics industry, including embracing future technology to improve the resilience of UK supply chains.

I hope our report will be an invaluable resource for key decision makers as well as our members and the wider industry.

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Left: UK Government Minister for Roads and Local Transport, Richard Holden MP speaks to trainee drivers.

Executive Summary

The road transport and logistics industry faces skills shortages across all aspects of the supply chain, from drivers to technicians, mechanics, and warehouse operatives. We welcome the range of measures governments have put in place to alleviate this, but further action is needed. Our manifesto sets out the actions that should be taken by both Government and industry to secure the industry's future.

Labour shortages have been exacerbated by the loss of EU workers and the impact of the pandemic. An ageing workforce means the sector is losing experience and knowledge. Without sustained investment into recruiting workers by industry and by governments, this will continue and risks undermining the resilience of UK supply chains.

HGV driver numbers have steadily returned to pre-pandemic levels, however, the estimated 50,000 shortage is still being felt in some parts of the country. Coach and bus driver shortages have increased as many have chosen to retrain to HGV driving due to higher salaries. The average age of an HGV driver is 51, meaning a high proportion of drivers are set to retire in the next few years.

The proposals in this paper were informed by extensive consultation with RHA members and regional roundtables bringing together industry, training providers, and local and national governments. We identified three areas required for a sector-specific skills strategy: attract, train, and retain.



Above: Olivia Kavanagh, apprentice HGV mechanic.

Attract

To attract people to the sector, the industry must work alongside schools and the Government to raise awareness of the range of jobs available within logistics and highlight the opportunities for future workers. This would start to address misconceptions about the industry and encourage greater recognition of technical qualifications as equal to academic. Good quality careers education and guidance is critical. The sector should also work to provide model work experience placements for young people, showcase representation of women and other underrepresented groups, and highlight more flexible working options.

Train

To build a domestic workforce, the Government must work with industry to ensure there are a diverse range of training options available for learners to access the sector. The UK Government should reform its restrictive Apprenticeship Levy and put in place a more flexible Skills Levy, allowing for shorter training schemes such as the skills bootcamps vocational courses to deliver the training and skills needed in the sector. Technological change will also play an increasingly important role in the training of the future including in driver simulation and virtual reality.

Retain

To boost retention rates, businesses should explore more flexible shift patterns granting workers a greater work-life balance and industry bodies should put in place a best-practice model for operators to support this. The UK Government and devolved administrations should also work with local authorities to address blockages to enable planning permission for new and improved roadside services. Lastly, national, devolved and local governments should put in place a clear communications campaign for schools, careers services and the public to reinforce the image of workers in road haulage and logistics as vital 'key workers' that keep Britain moving. This will boost both the attraction of the sector and improve retention rates within logistics if greater respect is shown for drivers and workers.

Key recommendations

Industry	Government
Attract	
Increase industry collaboration with schools and colleges at a local level to promote careers in logistics.	Fully implement Sir John Holman's recommendations to Government for the future of the careers guidance system to help boost awareness of careers in road haulage and the coach sector.
Develop a work experience guide for industry to aid greater take-up of work placements.	Promote apprenticeships as equal to university degrees in schools with a focus on job outcomes.
Partner with Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to help educate work coaches on the careers available, pathways and what skills and attributes best fit logistics.	Ensure DWP work coaches and job centres effectively represent and promote opportunities in the logistics industry.
Target parents and teachers as well as students, industry must work with the influencers to ensure they better understand the careers that the sector can offer.	Ensure the sector is represented in the new UK Government Returnerships programme and 50Plus Choices, aimed at encouraging 50+ jobseekers back to work.
	Review of the Migration Advisory Committee's Shortage Occupation List
Train	
Drive a collaborative approach between employers and educational providers to develop industry-specific training programmes such as T-Levels.	Reform the Apprenticeship Levy into a Skills Levy to provide greater training flexibility.
Ensure internal training schemes are available, utilising local and national funding.	HGV driving skills bootcamps to be made a permanent course and extended to Cat D licence.
Engage with Local Skills Improvement Plans so business, local government and colleges are linked up and providing what is required for local labour markets.	Reintroduce incentives for apprenticeships to increase their take-up by SMEs and make them more attractive to both employers and apprentices.
Invest time in apprenticeships, especially to bring young talent into the sector.	Maintain the focus on increased LGV vocational testing capacity to ensure consistency and introduce service level agreement with training providers for testing.
	Re-open delegated examiner training to increase testing capacity.
	Ensure local skills investment is linked to the needs of local economies and employers via Local Skills Improvement Plans.
	Increase apprenticeship funding bands to account for rising costs, particularly the heavy vehicle mechanic apprenticeship.
Retain	
Focus on enhanced retention methods such as flexible working and other company benefits to drive competitiveness.	Reform Driver CPC to increase flexibility and make renewal more accessible for drivers.
Support a new campaign to promote driver wellness through the Driving Better Health programme.	Ringfence funding for roadside facilities and strengthen National Planning Policy Framework to increase dedicated lorry parking spaces and rest stops.
	Introduce a driver facilities taskforce, led by DfT with a remit to address the corridors and regions in greatest need of parking and rest stops.

Attract

A range of barriers prevent people from entering the logistics industry. Lack of awareness and understanding among school leavers about the opportunities available in the industry is an obstacle, particularly for school-age students who have limited access to work experience in the haulage or coach sectors. The sector has therefore become reliant on individual schools and businesses to energise young people and provide accurate information about career paths. The industry must address the lack of awareness and negative perceptions of working in logistics and promote the availability of attractive, fulfilling jobs at all levels.

1. Understanding the industry

High-quality careers education and guidance is critical to building links between young people and the logistics industry and to improve understanding of the range of roles and opportunities available. The UK education system has to date prioritised and championed academic routes above vocational education. The university route is often promoted in schools and higher education colleges as a preferred pathway; apprenticeships and vocational qualifications do not enjoy equal promotion. This results in fewer people pursuing vocational qualifications leading to careers in logistics.

Despite its importance, careers guidance is often inconsistent. The eight Gatsby Benchmarks adopted as part of the UK Government's Careers Strategy are an important step in improving careers advice in schools and we support greater uptake of these measures. There remains an imbalance in careers information which means that in years 9 and 10 far fewer students are aware of technical choices in comparison to academic routes, and only 4% of young people start an apprenticeship after their GCSEs, according to Department for Education.¹

We have seen improvements in recent years and according to the Careers and Enterprise Company, in 2021 to 2022, schools and colleges achieved on average 4.9 benchmarks out of 8 of the Gatsby benchmarks, compared to 1.87 in 2016 to 2017.

The roll out of T Levels, to prepare students for entry into skilled employment or higher levels of technical study will provide an important route for young people looking to enter the logistics industry.

The industry must take full advantage of the Enterprise Adviser Network to strengthen employer links with schools, careers hubs and build links with careers leaders.



If you only focus on drivers, people will think that is only what the sector is. People don't know about the career progression.

Devon and Cornwall Training Provider



The eight Gatsby Benchmarks of Good Career Guidance

- 1.** A stable careers programme
- 2.** Learning from career and labour market information
- 3.** Addressing the needs of each pupil
- 4.** Linking curriculum learning to careers
- 5.** Encounters with employers and employees
- 6.** Experiences of workplaces
- 7.** Encounters with further and higher education
- 8.** Personal guidance

¹ <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/education-skills-and-training/after-education/destinations-of-school-pupils-after-key-stage-4-usually-aged-16-years/latest>

2. Age, diversity, and representation

While attracting young people into the sector is essential, increasing the potential pool of logistics employees is key to addressing the skills shortage longer term.

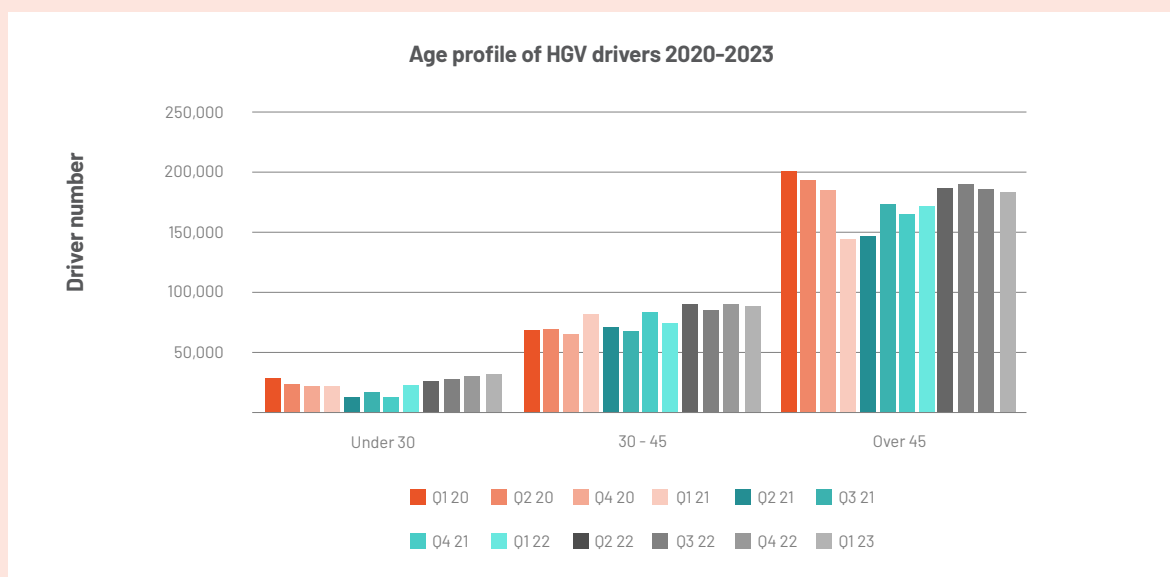
According to ONS figures, 89% of road logistics workers are classed as white male, with women making up only 1% of HGV drivers.² The pronounced gender split can be explained to an extent by a broad public perception of logistics, particularly HGV driving, as a “man’s job”. Recruitment agency Manpower noted they had received just 40 female applicants out of thousands for a recent HGV licence acquisition programme. These figures suggest that more work is needed to overcome gender-based perceptions of HGV driving and how attractive driving careers are for women.

Women continue to be underrepresented and the industry must be proactive in illustrating the huge variety of work undertaken by women and providing insight into recruitment, training, flexibility, career progression and the range of reasons women choose logistics.

Funding schemes in some parts of the country are aimed at school leavers, meaning it can be challenging for businesses to provide training for people looking to switch careers. Immediate shortages in HGV, bus, and coach drivers could start to be addressed with community outreach to military veterans or former offenders who may be interested in taking up driving roles. This would also help diversify the potential pool of new workers in the sector.

Industry led initiatives such as Generation Logistics aim to help find and engage the next generation of logistics talent. The aim is to highlight the range and scope of logistics careers, from entry level pathways through to graduate programmes. Bringing logistics businesses and trade associations together to shift perceptions, the campaign is fully supported by government through the Department for Transport.

In June 2023, Women in Transport launched their Equity Index survey to help track and guide inclusivity in the transport sector. Accurate data is vital if we are to achieve positive change where equality, diversity and inclusion are concerned.



Age profile of HGV drivers

HGV Drivers - Quarterly Evolution by Age Group

According to ONS Quarter Labour Force Survey Statistics, the number of drivers under the age of 30 declined during the pandemic and grew again as we came out of lockdown. The 30–45 age group remained very stable, increasing slightly in 2022.

The over 45s declined slightly in 2020, but there was a significant drop in Q1/Q2 2021 which triggered the driver shortage crisis. Consequently, increased wages for drivers in Q2 & Q3 2022 served to attract back a significant proportion of those who had left earlier in the year.

Credit: Driver Require

² Labour Force Survey ONS Q2 2021

Train

While the range of careers within logistics is diverse, 68% of jobs are at qualification Level 2 and below.³ With government post-school funding focused on Level 3 and above, long-term funding is scarce outside the apprenticeship route, and many businesses are unaware of funding mechanisms available, or how to access them.

1. Apprenticeships and Skills Bootcamps

It can cost between £2,000 and £4,000 to train for an HGV licence, with one of the few funded pathways via an apprenticeship which are funded by the Apprenticeship Levy. Although the transportation and storage sector have paid £965m into the levy since 2017, a relatively small proportion of new HGV licence acquisitions stem from apprenticeship training.

In addition, apprenticeship programmes can be prohibitive for small to medium sized businesses who struggle to provide the off-the-job training and meaningful work element of learning until apprentices have gained their HGV licence. With 96% of transport and storage businesses having fewer than 50 employees, and the need for drivers being a priority, this style of learning is particularly difficult for hauliers to implement.

The maths and English requirements for apprenticeships can also create a barrier to training for a significant proportion of learners, some of whom have learning disabilities or do not speak English as a first language. Learners should not be prevented from passing their apprenticeship if they fail the maths or English element. This does not happen when people are studying A Levels. If a learner fails English A Level but passes their other subjects, they still gain those A Levels.



We need to get into schools, colleges, women's prisons to change [perceptions]. If no one has a role model, they won't even consider the industry.

CMS Supatrak, logistics business



³ ONS Labour Force Survey Q2 2021

⁴ <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/skills-bootcamps-starts/2021-22>



Students couldn't access training if they have already reached a certain level of qualifications. It's a complex process with so many different funding streams.

Petroc College, higher education college



In July 2021, the UK Government announced 16-week, funded Skills Bootcamps as part of the National Skills Fund. Originally for only Level 3 qualifications and above, the bootcamps were expanded to HGV driver training in November 2021.

Data from the Department for Education shows 29% of Skills Bootcamps started in 2021-22 were in HGV driving.⁴ Early signs indicate Skills Bootcamps have had a positive impact, often being oversubscribed with a record number of 6,307 tests passed for HGV licences in March 2022.

Skills Bootcamps helped some employers to fill vacancies as they can get to know the trainee, and the participant can make an informed decision about whether the employer is right for them. Employers have stated that this can lead to more sustainable recruitment that results in loyal employees who stay for longer.

While initial funding was welcomed, HGV bootcamps require a long-term commitment from the UK Government and provision should be expanded to include the coach and bus sector, both of which have an increasing shortage of drivers.

Bootcamps have proved popular, with Manpower UK receiving more than 23,000 applications, many of which were not from learners the bootcamps were designed to target. The 'short-termism' of bootcamps places enormous pressure on training providers to get through a large volume of applicants, which can impact the quality of training received.

// Some argue that Skills Bootcamps in HGV Driving have displaced HGV Apprenticeships; however, we find they are plugging a gap by providing a training and qualification route for individuals who are not employed. In addition, the Skills Bootcamp provides employers with a shorter route to licence acquisition for drivers. Overall, the Skills Bootcamp is a very successful programme which meets market needs by providing qualified LGV drivers.

However, there are some challenges with delivery, including the fluctuating supply of post-course employment opportunities and employers not understanding that the programme consists

of more than licence acquisition. Furthermore, employers are unclear about when an apprenticeship is more appropriate than a Skills Bootcamp. A national communications campaign educating employers on the features and availability of Skills Bootcamps would help contextualise and maximise return on providers' promotional activity in the marketplace.

Bev Ellis

Operations Director - TRS Training, training provider



2. HGV testing availability

We welcome the improvements in HGV test availability. However, there are still instances of delays. This can be a source of frustration for learners, employers, and providers. As a result, Skills Bootcamps in HGV Driving often took much longer than the advertised 16 weeks with some providers reportedly losing money due to the delays, as they were unable to claim funding. Unemployed participants and those claiming financial benefits were the hardest hit by the delays in testing.

Testing delays have caused issues for businesses, with concern that learners may change career paths while waiting for tests and lose interest in obtaining their HGV licence. Bootcamps can only be effective in tackling driver shortages if the testing resource is in place. Resource could be increased by re-opening delegated examiner training to increase the number of operators who can test their own employees as well as those of other companies.



We've been pushing for English and Maths requirements to not be exclusively GCSE. There are other Level 3 qualifications that are more functional than mathematical equations.

Liverpool City Region Combined Authority



LGV Practical driving test pass rates Great Britain, from April 2010 to December 2022

Financial year	Conducted	Passed	Pass rate (%)
2010/11	43,894	22,664	51.6
2011/12	46,549	24,401	52.4
2012/13	46,246	24,498	53.0
2013/14	48,283	26,224	54.3
2014/15	55,161	30,574	55.4
2015/16	70,233	39,000	55.5
2016/17	78,237	44,346	56.7
2017/18	70,619	40,808	57.8
2018/19	73,895	43,065	58.3
2019/20	70,288	41,434	58.9
2020/21 ^{5,6}	27,630	16,022	58.0
2021/22	95,891	56,281	58.7
2022/23 (year-to-date)	87,625	52,130	59.5

^{5,6} <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/developing-faster-indicators-of-transport-activity#:~:text=To%20monitor%20transport%20activity%20on,topical%20issues%20relating%20to%20transport.>



Case study



Gregory Distribution

Since 2017 we have embraced the HGV driver apprenticeship and prior to the pandemic we had regular cohorts with support from our local Yeovil College.

Recently there have been changes with maths functional skills for the apprenticeship making it harder to pass. Instead of losing the apprentice for a week, we are now losing them for 2 weeks and the pass rate is very low, so this forces retakes.

We are not opposed to English and maths functional skills as it does add value to the apprentice and us but why has it become more difficult? Some of these problems have subsided in late 2022 and 2023 although we are now taking on less apprentice drivers due to there being enough qualified drivers on the market. The Urban driver apprenticeship standard has also given us our old route of Cat C if we want it and we now use this for 75% of the apprentice drivers.

An issue that we have seen is the drivers that took the revised LGV route because of the lack of urban for quite some time are having difficulties at EPA (End Point Assessment). The main issue is that drivers that drive Cat C and only took the CE toward the end because they had to have it, found it difficult to drive the CE on EPA to the required standard and in some cases have either not passed or we have had some refusals to take the EPA because they are not confident enough.

We don't push this too hard and do offer extra time which some take up but ultimately, we have a qualified driver for what we need. The EPA has also changed and for the first time ever we are getting failures, largely due to the professional interview. We are trying to understand why but this is strange as they pass the theory and even got a distinction for driving.

Overall we would always like to use an apprenticeship where we can as there is extra value for the apprentice, but we do have some tough choices to make. We are unlikely to use this route for anyone that requires functional skills because of the up to 3 weeks away from work and the difficulties in passing the maths functional skills. We will offer a direct trainee entry to these people and train them outside of the apprenticeship although we do follow the same syllabus and reviews.

We will also only choose the LGV apprenticeship route for someone that is going to be driving CE regularly. I am not too concerned with the length of the apprenticeship as it does give us at least 3 opportunities to observe the driver on route during this time and they are ready for EPA (withstanding the interview). But this is based on us providing the licence by week 12, we would likely still carry out the observations even if it were shorter.

Steve Rose

Training Manager, Gregory

Below: Gregory apprentice.

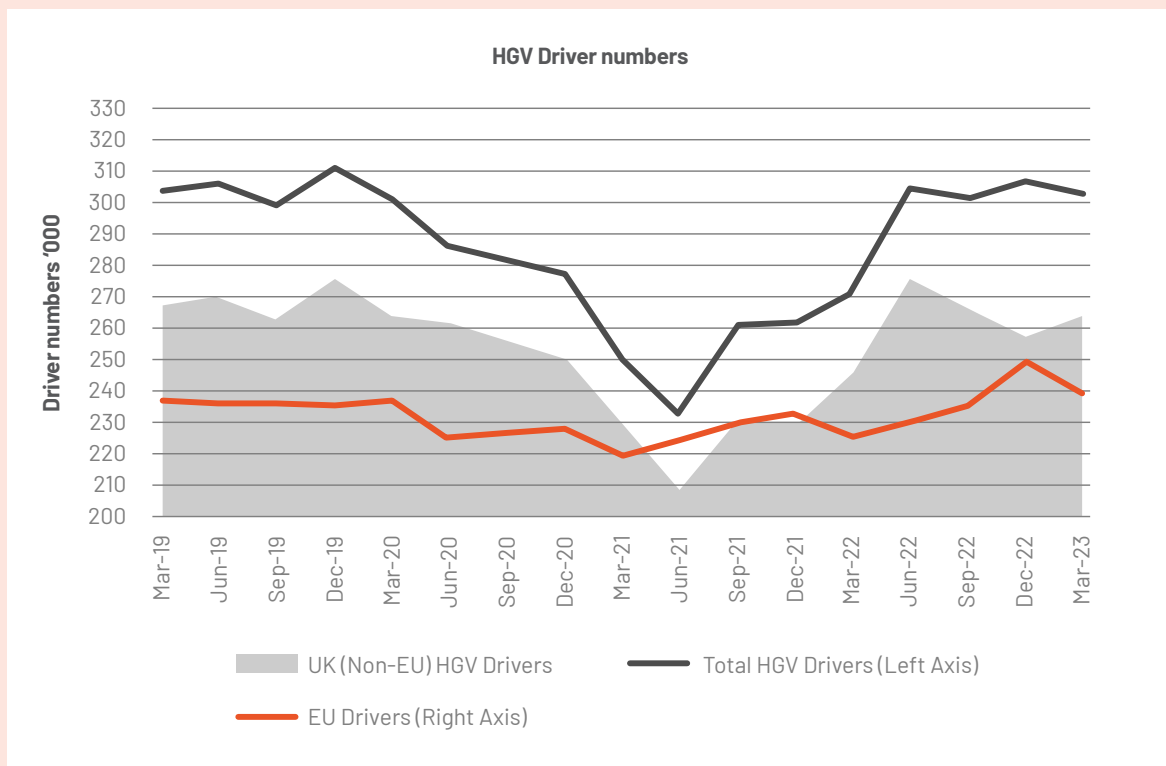


3. Job roles

HGV Driver Shortage – analysis

According to ONS Quarter Labour Force Survey Statistics, the overall pool of HGV drivers has remained stable at approximately 300,000 since Q2 2022, after it stabilised following the 2021 driver shortage crisis. This is equivalent to the level pre-covid.⁷

Economic and seasonal demand impacts the requirement for drivers and an upturn in the economy would place pressure on the existing pool of HGV drivers.



// The number of HGV drivers in the UK has remained stable at pre-pandemic levels for the fourth quarter in a row – for a full year since Q2 2022. This is important because it demonstrates that the HGV driver shortage has stabilised.

We analysed the dynamics by age group and observed that the over-45 age group, which dropped significantly in Q1 and Q2 2021, triggering the driver shortage crisis, recovered in late 2021 and has remained stable at pre-pandemic levels throughout 2022 and into 2023. The 30-45 age group remained stable throughout the pandemic.

Meanwhile the under-30 age group, which declined during the pandemic, has also now recovered. This is encouraging for the future of the UK haulage sector, which is relying on the younger driver group to replenish the driver pool as the older contingent retires and leaves the sector.

While it is positive that the number of younger drivers has recovered post-pandemic, there aren't yet enough in the workforce and we still need many more to join the sector to maintain a robust HGV driver pool over the coming decades.

Kieran Smith, Chief Executive, Driver Require



⁷ NS Quarter Labour Force Survey ("QLFS") statistics

Local labour market data shows a high degree of regional variation in the number of HGV driver vacancies with acute shortages in the South West, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Despite the significant focus and skills investment in HGV driver training by governments, there remains a skills shortage in some regions.

Breakdown of job postings for HGV drivers

Gov't Office Region Name	Feb 2020 Unique Postings (pre-pandemic level)	Mar 2023 Unique Postings	% Change Feb 20 to Mar 23	Median Annual Wages
South West	837	1,203	65.9%	£29,706
Scotland	480	635	53.5%	£27,430
Northern Ireland	119	142	33.6%	£25,232
North East	224	257	28.6%	£29,547
South East	1,438	1,667	25.2%	£30,752
Wales	315	360	20.6%	£31,822
London	641	616	0.6%	£33,816
East of England	1,257	1,036	-8.4%	£32,086
North West	955	809	-12.9%	£31,580
Yorkshire and The Humber	1,107	771	-24.3%	£30,363
West Midlands	1,772	975	-40.9%	£30,107
East Midlands	2,291	853	-58.5%	£31,285

Recruitment and Employment Confederation Labour Market Tracker 2023

Technician shortage

There is currently a severe shortage of technicians in the road transport sector.

The shortage of light vehicle technicians has been widely reported with major businesses such as Halfords announcing a profit warning due to labour shortages. Job postings for light vehicle technicians were up by 51% in 2022 and HGV mechanic postings up by 46%.⁸ Job postings for vehicle technicians, mechanics and electricians have increased by over 90% since February 2020, as illustrated in the table below.

Technicians have traditionally been trained via apprenticeships, but the availability of training courses offered by colleges has been significantly reduced over the past decade as the funding allocated to heavy vehicle technician apprenticeships is inadequate and leading to providers leaving the market due to the unviability of offering the course.

It takes three years for an apprentice to qualify as a technician and so there is no fast-track route for training new people. Salaries have been steadily increasing but given the other costs hauliers and bus and coach companies are experiencing, there is a limit to this. However, if the specialist workers are not available, no salary increase will help.

The safety implications of a shortage in technicians is concerning. There have already been incidents reported to the Traffic Commissioners of operators using inexperienced and inappropriately trained workers to maintain vehicles.

The funding band for the heavy vehicle mechanic apprenticeship should be increased to make the delivery of it financially viable for training providers. The recent increase to £20,000 in June 2023 is a real terms reduction and falls short of the £23,000 needed to make running the courses viable.

Breakdown of job postings for vehicle technicians, mechanics and electricians

Gov't Office Region Name	Feb 2020 Unique Postings (pre-pandemic level)	Mar 2023 Unique Postings	% Change Feb 20 to Mar 23	Median Annual Wages
North East	147	416	198.0%	£25,391
Scotland	391	1,059	197.4%	£28,155
Northern Ireland	68	139	129.4%	£22,736
Wales	214	385	104.2%	£25,935
Yorkshire and The Humber	591	1,178	94.2%	£25,246
West Midlands	796	1,468	88.4%	£30,100
North West	781	1,374	86.6%	£27,280
East of England	1,017	1,565	77.8%	£28,931
East Midlands	705	1,187	77.2%	£28,539
South East	1,610	2,684	75.6%	£28,846
South West	901	1,379	65.9%	£26,673
London	561	778	42.2%	£29,209

Recruitment and Employment Confederation Labour Market Tracker 2023

⁸ IMI Job posting analysis Jan to Mar 2022

Coach driver shortage

The shortage of bus and coach drivers has deepened due to the pandemic. There is a 29% vacancy rate⁹ for bus and coach drivers, and this is the biggest barrier to growth of bus and coach networks, restricting expansion of services. Bus and coach companies are turning away contracts as they know they do not have the driver supply to maintain them.

During the pandemic, coach companies were unable to operate, and restrictions remained in place well into 2021, especially for those operating tours across Europe. As a result, drivers were furloughed or made redundant and many subsequently moved out of the sector.

Coupled with the HGV driver shortage causing a surge in salaries, bus or coach drivers who also had an HGV licence were switching roles and the bus and coach operators could not compete with the salaries offered by freight operators.

Coach operators have been doubly hit by the end of freedom of movement and require additional drivers to cover international routes. With the restrictions allowing UK nationals to visit the EU for a maximum of 90 days in 180 days, those regularly running tours or making deliveries within the EU are finding it problematic. Coach operators running tours in Europe during the seasonal peak from Easter to autumn are easily hitting the 90-day maximum. For driver also holidaying in Europe, this restricts their availability for continental work.

Given that the international journeys require a specialist knowledge, with many drivers also acting as tour guides, it not only increases costs but jeopardises the viability of the tours. The ability to recruit EU drivers would negate this restriction.

We are also urging Government to extend Skills Bootcamps to cover licence acquisition for Category D license holders.

Below: RHA driving simulator.

⁹ according to the Confederation of Passenger Transport member survey, December 2022

Spotlight on future technology

The logistics sector has changed considerably over the last 20 years. Training needs to undergo the same transition.

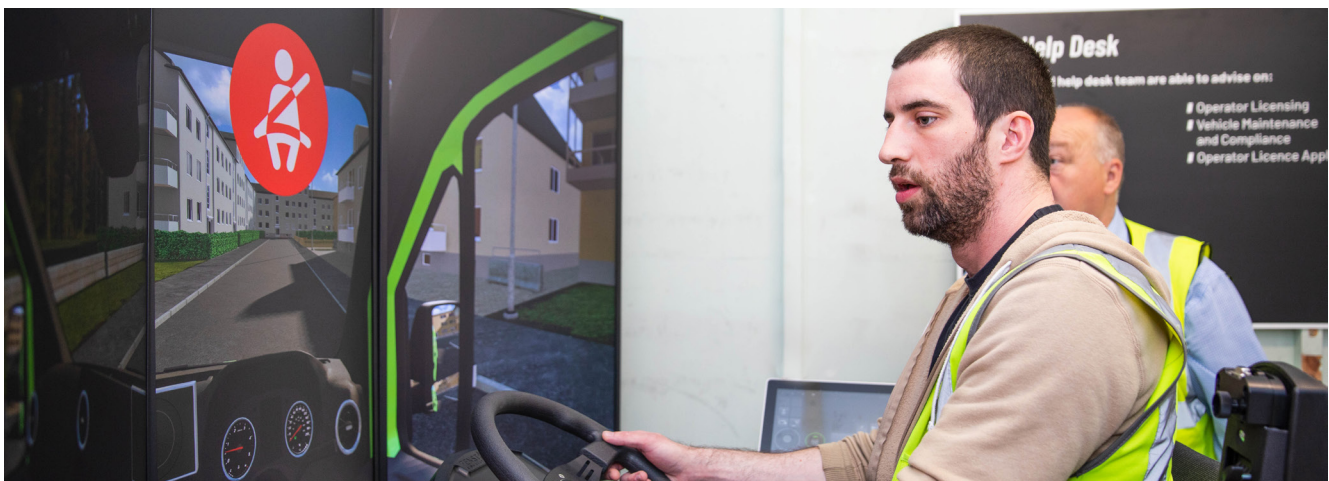
The development of technology provides many opportunities to develop the driver training of the future. The emphasis on technology, as autonomous and semi-autonomous vehicles become more widespread, means that training will focus on mastering the operation and monitoring of advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS) and self-driving technologies.

Driving simulators, designed to replicate the HGV driving experience can support drivers with risk profiling and remedial training. Simulation allows drivers to experience realistic scenarios without the risks associated with real-world practice including varying road conditions, weather and traffic situations. Companies and training providers can improve their fleet training programmes, especially in driver awareness and hazard avoidance. Systems can be connected to telematics, enabling operators to help their drivers learn to operate vehicles more fuel efficiently.

Devising improved training methods results in better drivers who are safer, more productive and more efficient. If simulators can help accomplish this then they should be welcomed by the industry.

In the future, driver trainers will need to possess a combination of traditional and emerging skills to effectively train aspiring drivers.

RHA has recently acquired a driving simulator for its training centre in Bathgate, West Lothian and is running a year-long evaluation project to scope the viability and prospects of the equipment.



Case study



West Suffolk College's XR Lab provides a glimpse into the possibilities of how we can both attract young people into the sector and train them in a safe environment.

The XR Lab is already working with the construction sector using Virtual Reality to provide a realistic experience of being on a construction site, brick laying in all weathers through a fully immersive VR which can even replicate cold and windy conditions so you actually feel the wind and cold.

Using this within driver training, you could show safely what it feels like to drive an HGV with incorrect loading, different braking for fully and unloaded HGVs on steep gradients, and extreme driving conditions. Although simulators which are being used more regularly within training can help, the XR Lab takes the training to another level. This kind of training would be impactful for young people.

Below: XR Labs.





Students can work in the space on 3D models, so instead of having an actual car, they can work on a virtual car and assemble it or dismantle it. And they could do the same for a wind turbine or a jet engine.

Giovanni Patania, Director, Windsor Patania





Retain

Improving retention rates in the logistics and coach sectors is vital to addressing the skills shortage and building a stable future domestic workforce.

Opportunity exists for the sector to explore greater flexible working patterns to accommodate the need and desire for work-life balance. The sector has an entrenched full-time culture but should consider roles that don't require split shifts or can work around childcare and other responsibilities.

The format and inflexibility of mandatory training such as Driver CPC also impacts retention and we await the reforms to the Driver CPC following the recent call for evidence.

1. Working hours and competition

Long working hours are viewed in the industry as a significant challenge in the recruitment and retention of drivers.

The expectations of young workers often fail to match the reality of the job, and this disparity has widened with the advent of work-from-home and the growing emphasis on work-life balance among younger generations.

Unlike other roles, HGV drivers are often not able to rely on regular set hours or predict how long a job will take. This makes it difficult to plan around family and social commitments, and often means drivers will take a pay cut and leave driving for a job with regular hours.

At the same time, the growing demand for skills across the sector has created higher levels of competition across logistics. Training providers have experienced learners obtaining HGV licenses only to leave before completing their apprenticeship, resulting in cost and resource implications. There are also issues with bus and coach drivers switching to HGV driving due to the wage differential, exacerbating the shortage of drivers in the coach sector.



This is something we as an industry haven't addressed yet: companies expect 60 hours a week and workers want a work-life balance.

Manpower UK, recruitment agency



How can you inspire young girls to work in a sector with no security and nowhere to shower?

Natasha Asghar MS, Member of the Senedd for South Wales East



2. Facilities

The quality and quantity of roadside facilities available to drivers on long journeys continues to be an issue. Alongside a shortage of parking spaces, broken, dirty, and unusable hygiene facilities are a common concern and a barrier to increased diversity.

We welcome that the UK Government has committed a total of £52.5 million to improve existing roadside facilities. However, guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework should be strengthened to make it easier to secure planning permission for lorry parking facilities, including ring-fencing funding for local authorities. We also call upon the Government to convene a Lorry Parking Taskforce, drawn from Whitehall, local authorities and industry, to help identify opportunities for new facilities in high demand areas and as part of new developments.

3. Culture change

Promoting road transport and logistics and the vital role they play in the UK economy would help change perception of the industry. Operators regularly experience poor treatment from clients and members of the public, and this lack of respect contributes to low retention rates in the sector.

There is also a lack of understanding of the skills required to drive an HGV compared to smaller vehicles like vans, as well as the regulations and driver requirements.

High consumer expectations set by the speed of the parcel industry have resulted in poor treatment of hauliers, with operators describing how drivers have been spat and shouted at during their work, contributing to low job satisfaction rates and undue feelings of shame and embarrassment.

The attraction and retention rates of working in logistics are mutually reinforcing, with both tarnished by low public perceptions of road haulage as a sector. While the industry can and should do more to champion its work among potential recruits, the support shown for drivers throughout the Covid-19 pandemic demonstrates that an effective communications campaign by public authorities can and does make a difference to how workers are treated by the public.



One of the key issues is working conditions; HGV driving is not an attractive job. Services and facilities for drivers are horrible and this is off-putting. This isn't selling the industry in the right light and with respect.

Volvo, manufacturer



Below: Danielle Wilson and her Father Rob Wilson.



About the *RHA*

The Road Haulage Association (RHA) is the largest trade association dedicated to representing commercial vehicle operators with a membership of 8,500 HGV, coach and van operators across the UK, 85% of whom are small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Our members operate around 250,000 HGVs (half of the UK fleet) out of 10,000 operating centres and range from a single-truck company to those with thousands of vehicles.

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- Massey Wilcox
- C&D South West
- CMS Supertrak



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