



Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee

The HGV Driver Shortage and Supply Chain Issues.

Unite the Union

Unite is the largest trade union in the UK and Ireland with members in a range of industries including transport, construction, financial services, manufacturing, print and media, energy, the voluntary and non-profit sectors, education, creative industries, local government and the NHS.

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It is widely acknowledged that there is a shortage of professional drivers within the logistics industry. The reasons for this is wide and varied and this response does not seek to identify those reasons, but to put forward solutions to the problem.

Diversity

Those employed in the road haulage industry are predominantly white, male and middle aged. Underrepresented groups are not becoming drivers. There are more women and BAEM bus drivers than HGV drivers. A preliminary investigation into the reasons behind this must be considered.

For change to occur, it is reasonable to change the way in which the industry recruits. It will be necessary to understand what underrepresented groups think of the sector as it currently operates and what would be an attractive offer to enter the industry.

Pay

HGV drivers have been underpaid for years. Driving down terms through benchmarking and outsourcing has led to this, as well as the misuse of agency drivers and bogusly self-employed drivers has resulted in pay that does not reflect the skills, knowledge and qualifications needed to the job.

Unite believes that a national council to determine industry standards is a necessity.

Setting industry standards will vastly reduce the ability of rogue employers to undercut rates at the cost of drivers' safety, pay and conditions.

Driving v working time

Without exception, when we have asked drivers, the number one issue is the clash between driving and working time rules. Specifically the six hour working rule. The level of regulation drivers must follow is almost unprecedented. We need to simplify the rules for UK drivers in order to maintain safety whilst applying common sense. Any derogation to rules is nothing more than a loophole. Currently the 10 hour night rule and reduced daily and weekly rest are seen as a target for employers rather than a legal maximum. These derogations need to be at the drivers' explicit agreement not simply implemented by the operator. We are proposing changes to the way the enforcement of driving and working time rules applies to drivers so that there is one standard rather than two for drivers to fall foul of. This would include the removal of Periods of Availability (POA).

Parking

In order to comply with driving and rest rules drivers need somewhere to park. When applying for planning permission developers of all industrial sites must include provision for lorry parking. This must not just be by the side of a road but proper off road parking with basic facilities that would be funded through Section 106 agreements. Local councils should also ensure that any new park and ride facilities are suitable to be used for HGV parking when not used for public parking.

Access to Toilets and Showers

Unite welcomes the strengthening of the regulations pertaining to workers access to toilets. However, we still receive significant numbers of complaints from drivers who are refused access to the most basic facilities. Current enforcement simply isn't working. We seek a much firmer position from health and Safety Executive (HSE) or local councils in applying sanctions to companies that are shown to refuse drivers access to proper facilities.

Also, many Local Authorities have closed public toilets as a means to save money given the financial constraints that they are now faced with. Public Toilets are now few and far between and although they are kept clean to a standard, they only offer the most basic facilities and only hand washing at best. Also, drivers don't have access to showers on a regular basis, many drivers sleep in their cabs, sometimes from Monday to Friday and then going home on a weekend, surely the right to keep clean and to have a shower should be a basic human right in a civilized society.

CPC – Accreditation

Many drivers do not see the value of the current Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC). We know that in practice drivers will sit through the same module repeatedly that may have no real link to their jobs. Whilst we would not support a move to an examination as part of the CPC it is clear that the participation model is not adding value for drivers. Unite believes that each CPC module should include an assessment to confirm the participant has fully understood the module. CPC modules should also be industry and job specific so that drivers can see that the subject matter is relevant to them. The cost of CPC is erroneously placed on the driver. This is vocational training that is legally required to do the job. CPC training must be paid for by employers, through government subsidy if necessary, and carried out in work time.

Transparency of OCRS

The current Operator Compliance Risk Score (OCRS) is not public. A system that rates operators' roadworthiness and traffic violations should be available for drivers. There is no legitimate reason why drivers should not know the conduct and repute of their employer or potential employer. With transparency of the OCRS score customers will also be able to use enforceable data to inform decisions when awarding contracts. This can only drive up standards