

Unite Drivers' Manifesto

Driver Shortage – Unite measures to resolve the crisis



The reasons for a shortage of professional drivers in the logistics industry are wide and diverse and this document will not seek to identify these reasons but to suggest solutions to an industry problem. What is indisputable is that the problem has been discussed for years but very little action has been taken. Now there is no alternative but to take radical and decisive steps to transform the industry.

Soft touch initiatives will do nothing to address the skills shortage in this vital industry, we must collectively not just look to how we can recruit new drivers but to change the industry to retain the ones we have and keep the new drivers we seek to recruit.

Diversity

The road haulage industry is predominantly a white, male, middle aged industry. To change this we must not replicate trying to recruit from the same pool but seek to identify why the under-represented groups are not becoming drivers. Comprehensive work must be done to investigate why there are significantly more women and BAEM bus drivers than HGV drivers. With the skills broadly comparable there should be little impediment for employers to remove the barriers.

There has been very little done to change the way operators look to employ new drivers, in effect we keep fishing in the same pool expecting new fish to be caught.

If we are genuinely going to change the way the industry looks then the recruitment process must be tailored to the desired audience. But offering the same, traditional terms will not attract a more diverse workforce. Government must commission detailed research into what non-traditional groups think of the industry now and what would be an attractive offer to come into the industry.

Lowering the average age of the industry is also a key target but our research demonstrates that the very nature of the job; long hours, uncertain working hours, high levels of surveillance are key issues that can only be addressed through some of the measures outlined below.

Pay – National Council

Without doubt drivers in the sector have been underpaid for many years. The culture of driving down terms through benchmarking and outsourcing 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 do the job.

That is why 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 commonsense.

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

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.

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 OCSR score customers will also be able to use enforceable data to inform decisions when awarding contracts. This can only drive up standards.

Unite the Union 28th May 2021