



Department
for Transport

Baroness Vere of Norbiton
Minister for Roads, Buses and Places

Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
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Chris Heaton-Harris MP
House of Commons
London
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29 June 2021

Dear Chris

I recognise that the pandemic and the related shut down in driver testing has had an impact on the number of people qualifying as HGV drivers. It was key that Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) suspend testing in order to protect the health of both colleagues and test candidates. I am pleased to confirm that testing has restarted and the DVSA is conducting circa 3,000 vocational tests per week, this is double the number normally conducted each week before the pandemic.

The increase in the number of tests available is being facilitated through extended operating hours and making sure all staff who can conduct a driving test are doing so. DVSA and the Department continue to work with the driver training industry to understand demand, respond to geographical peaks and identify issues in booking tests. DVSA has recruited 300 new car examiners which will ease the demand on examiners who are able to conduct vocational tests. They are also looking at other options for increasing vocational resource.

We are aware of the historic labour shortages in the road freight sector and are working across Government and with the industry to address these issues and assist in the re-skilling of UK based workers.

This includes working with the Department for Education and the road freight industry to develop a suite of apprenticeship standards that can deliver the trained professionals they need. There is currently an apprenticeship standard available that includes the acquisition of a Category C licence and attracts £5,000 in apprenticeship levy funding.

This will be replaced in August with an apprenticeship for a Category C+E licence which will attract £7,000 in funding. The apprenticeships are available to people of any age who are seeking to retrain. Further information can be found [here](#).

We are also working with the Department for Work and Pensions and Jobcentre Plus to develop a pilot scheme which will train jobseekers and support them through their HGV driving test. The successful roll out of this pilot could see more areas offering this support to jobseekers. Mr should contact his local jobcentre to ensure he can benefit from this scheme.

Those who are currently unemployed or are in receipt of Universal Credit and hold a Category C or C+E licence but need to renew their Driver Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) are able to access the Flexible Support Fund to pay for the renewal.

The Department has also provided grant funding for the non-profit initiative Road to Logistics (RtL) to train military service leavers, ex-offenders and the long term unemployed to move into jobs in the logistics sector, including lorry driving. Should wish to learn more about the opportunities offered by RtL, he should contact Jennifer Swain, Head of Talent and Operations at: jennifer.swain@roadtologistics.org

[Think Logistics](#) has also received funding from the department and is working with Career Ready in changing the perceptions of the industry among young people and is promoting paid internships to give young people experience of the sector.

Further to this work, the Minister for Employment, Mims Davies MP, and I hosted a virtual Government roundtable for the haulage sector to discuss the driver shortage. This event follows on from recent meetings between Government and industry regarding driver shortages, its impact on supply chains, and the work each can do, both on its own and together, to address this issue.

This roundtable presented a good opportunity to consider the options for short and medium-term actions to improve the industry's image, driver welfare, including facilities, and retention. We continue to work with the industry on these issues.

The off-payroll working rules (IR35) are designed to ensure individuals working like employees but through their own limited company (often known as a 'personal service company' or 'PSC'), or other intermediary, pay broadly the same Income Tax and National Insurance contributions (NICs) as individuals who are directly employed. HMRC will be providing support to organisations to enable compliance with the changes to the off-payroll working rules.

With regard to the request to place HGV drivers on the UK Shortage Occupation List, the UK labour market has changed dramatically due to the economic impacts of the measures necessary to tackle Covid-19. Many UK-based workers now face an uncertain future and need to find new employment opportunities. I am sure you would agree about the importance of utilising our domestic workforce and that our migration policies need to be considered alongside our strategies for the UK labour market, not in isolation to them.

Yaws,
Charlotte

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