



Department
for Transport

Transport Labour Market and Skills Call for Views and Ideas

Summary of Responses

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Introduction

The Transport Labour Market and Skills: Call for Views and Ideas was launched to ask questions about the key labour market and skills challenges across the transport sector, to identify key issues within the industry and inform how we can develop a transport workforce that is fit for the future.

This Call for Views and Ideas ran between 7 February and 9 May 2022. The questions in the Call for Views and Ideas focused on 5 key pillars outlined below:

- Preparing for future skills;
- Improving training and employment;
- Promoting careers in transport;
- Boosting diversity, inclusion and social mobility;
- Building evidence and evaluating progress.

The questions asked in the Call for Views and Ideas are set out below:

- In your view, what skills does the transport sector need in the future?
- How, in your view, can current qualification and training routes be made more accessible for those who want to pursue a career in the transport sector?
- What, in your view, are effective ways to attract young people and career changers into a career in the transport sector?
- What, in your view, are the barriers to further increasing diversity, inclusion and social mobility in the transport sector?
- How, in your view, can barriers to diversity, inclusion and social mobility in the transport sector be reduced?

Overview of respondents

104 responses were received: 25 responses from individuals and 79 from organisations from across the transport sector. A variety of organisations responded including:

- Local authorities, transport authorities, combined authorities and subnational transport bodies
- Transport operators (large operators and SMEs)
- Education providers

- Technology companies
- Trade associations, consumer bodies and transport interest groups
- Professional institutions
- User groups, campaign groups and NGOs
- Inclusivity groups
- Academia and research institutes
- Consultancies

Key findings in each area

Preparing for future skills

- Consensus that transport's skills needs are rapidly changing and, in the future, will heavily focus on decarbonisation and general 'green' skills (including electrification and alternative fuels).
- Agreement that other future skills requirements will be in the digital and science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM) fields, along with more transferable skills like communication and project management.

Improving training and employment

- Respondents felt that while qualifications must be flexible to have the widest appeal, they should also be streamlined, clearly communicated, and tailored to the local economy.
- Strong view that the Apprenticeship Levy would benefit from being reformed to make it more attractive to industry, including around how funding can be spent.

Promoting careers in transport

- Almost all respondents cited the poor image of the transport sector and how this needs to be improved to have broader appeal and make the most of the opportunity presented by the climate crisis.
- A widespread view was that there should be much greater outreach and marketing to highlight the diversity of transport careers, especially the types of roles that are not typically associated with the sector (e.g. digital).

Boosting diversity, inclusion, and social mobility

- Agreement that barriers to transport careers include 'traditional' views on the types of people who can do certain roles, poor recruitment practices that favour those who have been in the field a long time, and inflexible arrangements that do not sufficiently support underrepresented groups (such as poor parental leave policies and inconsistent working patterns).
- Respondents felt that these issues could be tackled by instigating fairer recruitment practices and a range of initiatives that target the areas of most need.

Pillar One: Future Skills

What skills does the transport sector need in the future?

Many respondents defined future skills in the transport sector through their own organisation or business needs. However, there was a consensus around developing workers' skills in electrification, fuel management and storage to reflect the challenge of moving away from traditional fossil-fuel intensive technologies. Most respondents were conscious that the transport sector is entering a period of rapid change as we move towards net zero. There was also an emphasis on developing skills in roles not often seen by the public, such as software programming and data analytics. Many different skill and role types were listed by respondents; the key themes from these are summarised below.

Electrification and fuel management

Most responses under the theme of 'electrification' covered either specific skills people will need or specific job roles that will need to be filled. It was widely acknowledged that the move to electric vehicles (EVs) would require technical roles centred around:

- energy storage
- Alternating Current (AC) & Direct Current (DC) charging
- electronics
- battery manufacture & repair
- electrical retrofitting
- EV technicians

Moreover, there will be a need for workers who have the skills to maintain and construct the infrastructure necessary to support the electrification of the transport sector. The specific job role of electrical engineer was often cited as being in high demand in responses.

There was concern among respondents about the skills associated with the following:

- manufacture and development of battery technology
- energy storage and the production
- storage and distribution of sustainable fuels

Respondents reflected that these are specialist skills that require high-level qualifications and could impact the entire transport industry.

Digital

Many answers in this section recognised that the growing electrification and automation in the transport sector would require people with advanced digital and IT skills. As they are not front-facing roles, respondents said skills were needed in roles that are not the traditional jobs the public associate with the transport sector:

- cybersecurity
- data analytics
- visualisation and modelling
- information management
- programming
- digital and software engineering
- software development

Science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM)

It was widely acknowledged that embedding STEM skills amongst the workforce is vital to UK competitiveness. Respondents said a labour shortage across many engineering disciplines undoubtedly affects the transport sector as it relies heavily on technical expertise to maintain transport infrastructure and public mobility. Responses highlighted the need to continue to recruit and retain traditional engineering disciplines such as civil, electrical, and mechanical engineering, but also branch out to newer disciplines that underpin new technology, such as software engineering.

Customer and meta-skills

A central objective for many organisations who responded is to provide a better experience for customers when they use their service. This narrative was reflected in many responses, which highlighted the need to improve:

- workforce communication skills
- stakeholder management
- networking
- marketing ability
- sales acumen
- general people skills

Meta-skills have previously been termed 'soft skills' and are widely applicable, often immeasurable traits that help people to achieve things. Many businesses and organisations that responded wanted to see a focus on the development of meta-skills.

Examples that respondents provided included:

- resilience
- problem-solving
- creativity
- attentiveness
- project management
- adaptability
- leadership
- influencing
- commercial acumen
- curiosity
- strategizing
- teamwork
- positivity
- ethics
- innovation

Green skills

Responses indicated that green jobs and skills may mean different things to different organisations and are still in the early stages of being defined. However, within the context of the responses, skills and specific roles associated with electrification, digital, and fuel management can be defined as 'green'. It was felt that the role of transport planners should change to reflect a move towards a greener transport architecture, sustainability, and active travel. Climate resilience and being cognisant of net zero challenges was mentioned by several respondents. Responses on this topic tended to focus on transferable skills that could potentially be acquired by working in other sectors. It was also acknowledged that there was a need for non-traditional roles in the transport sector: ecologists, geologists, environmental engineers, and environmental scientists.

Pillar Two: Improving Training and Employment

How can current qualification and training routes be made more accessible for those who want to pursue a career in the transport sector?

The responses to this question focused on improving training flexibility, raising awareness of types of qualifications and training, and requests for additional subsidies for individuals and organisations taking part in learning and development.

Qualifications, skills, and training

Some respondents felt that the prioritisation of full qualifications has affected the uptake of retraining and upskilling opportunities. Respondents felt that the qualification landscape that has developed around transport would benefit from a nationally recognised accreditation system for short training courses, and modules or units of learning. Respondents highlighted that this diversification of learning would help the industry attract employees from other sectors, who would otherwise be reluctant to commit to longer-term qualifications.

In addition, some respondents said that qualifications and accreditation were prioritised over vital on-the-job training, with a lack of focus on long-term development. It was said that some professional educational institutions focus on continuous professional development, but this is inconsistently applied in the transport industry.

This theme of qualification flexibility was echoed many times by other respondents, both at an individual and organisation level. Respondents emphasised the success of short courses, such as bootcamps, to address issues such as:

- labour market shortages
- barriers to entry
- workforce diversification
- adaptable course content that is relevant to the workplace

"Labour market linked information, advice and guidance is key for people looking to upskill, reskill or enter the transport sector. Tailoring bootcamp provision for the transport sector could go some way to encouraging new entrants but this should be supported by clear progression pathways." (Large public organisation, local government)

There was a desire from some training providers and local government for closer partnership working with employers to design and deliver training that reflected local skills and labour market needs. This echoes the 2021 [Skills for Jobs White Paper](#), which discussed the development of College Business Centres and piloting Local Skills Improvement Plans to strengthen relationships and partnerships with employers. These activities are being supported by the [Strategic Development Fund](#), focusing funding on the following:

- support for coordination and collaboration with employers and training providers
- curriculum design
- developing new skills provision
- delivery costs

"There needs to be a geographical focus, and the right mix of online training, to support flexibility." (Large private organisation, logistics sector)

The development of short and flexible (particularly part time, hybrid delivery and 'intensive') courses was important for many respondents as they felt more training and qualification options would enable underrepresented groups to engage with the opportunities the transport sector had to offer. It was made clear that such provision would benefit career changers and those with caring responsibilities, and several respondents were keen that apprenticeships should be designed with this flexibility in mind.

The question around candidates struggling to access level 3 courses was raised, particularly by larger employers who were struggling to recruit to their apprenticeships because of applicants' poor level 2 achievements. This issue was pertinent for those in the logistics sector where apprenticeships were not appropriate for those employees applying for driving roles, were only viable for larger organisations, and where many entry-level jobs only require level 1 or 2 qualifications.

Awareness

The tension between academic versus vocational or technical qualifications was cited by many respondents. For many, the lack of parity of esteem between the two routes into jobs underpins the lack of understanding and awareness of the training and qualifications required to access the industry. Whilst choosing an exact route can be difficult when following a technical pathway, the journey to an academic degree is well understood by learners and their parents, education institutions and ultimately employers.

"Recognising that social mobility is not limited to or guaranteed by earning a degree, having the opportunity to move into and progress in the industry without a degree can help to expand the inclusivity of the industry." (Large public organisation, local government)

There are many options for learners in the technical qualification landscape, including new T Levels, BTECs, apprenticeships, and traineeships. However, respondents pointed to a lack of awareness and understanding of which training pathway leads to a specific job or role. It was suggested by one respondent that a potential reason for this may be the focus on front-facing transport roles, and that training institutions and the wider public are simply unaware of the myriad of behind-the-scenes transport roles. These include:

- data analytics
- software engineering
- traffic modelling
- communications
- environmental protection

Many respondents cited the need for additional CIEAG (Careers Information, Education Advice and Guidance) training for schools and education providers. Suggestions included more outreach programmes for all compulsory school or college key stages and the general promotion of transport-specific qualifications and learning.

For some respondents, there are sufficient qualifications and training opportunities. However, some stated there is a lack of awareness of funding, appropriate courses, or job opportunities among all interested parties:

- learners
- parents
- employers
- teachers
- trainers

Many advocated simplifications to make the system more responsive, easy to navigate and flexible.

"A qualification, career and training platform... would provide the recognised standards, relevant certification and compliance... across boundaries." (Large private organisation, consulting sector)

Funding

Logistics and HGV companies stressed the need for additional resources to fund driver training as apprenticeships and other vocational or technical qualifications were not appropriate or too costly. Other respondents mentioned funding qualifications, or offering incentive payments to employers, where the need for a particular skill in the labour market was most acute.

Many respondents focused on the Apprenticeship Levy and the lack of flexibility in how this can be spent. Employers can only spend their Levy funds on apprenticeship training in England and have 24 months to use their funds once they enter their apprenticeship service account. Any unspent Levy funds are used to support existing apprentices to complete their training and to pay for apprenticeship training for smaller employers. Employers cannot use their Levy funds for promoting apprenticeship opportunities, which for some organisations is a reason the lack of familiarity around technical pathways to employment in the transport sector.

"High-level apprenticeship courses are currently heavily disadvantaged, as the Apprenticeship Levy does not cover the cost of training... This naturally has a major impact on the accessibility of the industry." (Large private organisation, manufacturing sector)

Some organisations also suggested using the Levy to fund internships, expanding the funding bands to take on more apprenticeships, or providing alternative training and development programmes. It was also proposed that the Levy could be used to fund or subsidise housing and travel costs for apprentices. The Levy does not fund capital costs to purchase specialised equipment that would, it was suggested, improve the training apprentices receive. One proposal involved repurposing the Levy to be skills-based, with several respondents suggesting it could be based on a quota system for specific skills.

Pillar Three: Promoting Careers

What are effective ways to attract young people and career changers into a career in the transport sector?

Responses to this question largely focused on the image of the sector and how to market it to new entrants, particularly young people. The subject of careers engagement and STEM outreach was also frequently raised.

Image of the sector

Many respondents felt that transport jobs are not well understood and that the industry suffers from an 'image problem', with a need to showcase the variety of roles more effectively. Respondents said the net zero and agenda to decarbonise transport offers a golden opportunity to demonstrate how transport industry jobs can help to solve the climate challenge. It was added that this is likely to resonate with young people, who are increasingly driven by the desire to have a positive impact in the world. By showcasing the new technologies associated with low carbon transport, respondents said it will be possible to attract a new generation of highly skilled people into the industry. It was felt that the sector needs to be better at highlighting the exciting, varied and highly skilled roles available that will also be making a difference to the future of the planet.

"The transport industry recognises that the transformation of transport and the way we travel is a critical element of the UK's decarbonisation agenda. So much so that many careers in transport are green careers. Helping transport transition to net zero not only reduces our global carbon emissions, and in turn the effects of global warming, but can work to reduce air and noise pollution and improve public health." (Transport not-for-profit group)

Respondents also said there is a need to 'myth bust' some common misconceptions about jobs in the industry, often thought of as based in a specific location with a fixed schedule. They gave examples of roles that offer flexible working from a range of locations with flexible hours. It was noted that this needs to be accompanied by a genuine move towards flexible working across the industry. Some said that more could be done to highlight that the sector is as much about people and connecting them to opportunities as it is about vehicles and infrastructure.

It was acknowledged that there are specific challenges for some industries like logistics, which are perceived as being low skilled and having poor working conditions. Respondents said driving is a skilled occupation which could be better explained, for example by using case studies.

Respondents highlighted the interaction between promoting careers and improving diversity in the sector, including having diverse role models. It was felt that without visible role models, underrepresented groups may perceive the industry as unwelcoming and that audiences need to see people they identify with to create a sense that they belong.

Digital and social media

Some respondents highlighted the use of social media and gamification as a way of engaging young people about some of the innovative roles in the industry. They said that given many young people no longer consume traditional media, the emphasis should be on platforms such as TikTok and YouTube. A centrally funded, co-ordinated approach was suggested, to educate influencers and increase representation in children's books and media. Some respondents reflected on the role of parents and influencers on young peoples' decision-making processes, and suggested communications need to effectively target this group. Some suggested a sustained, targeted marketing campaign like the previous 2018 Year of Engineering or 'We are the NHS' could underpin efforts to target these groups.

"We must pivot away from traditional marketing and communication media to social media platforms, promoting and focusing on the electronic and digital elements of the industry to dispel its image as solely mechanical... Making people aware of the ever-changing innovative aspects of the sector and the pace of technology will also help support the supply of applicants for future training initiatives that are focused on retraining individuals already within the sector to fulfil new roles that previously did not exist." (Large private organisation, manufacturing sector)

Careers outreach and provision

The concept of careers engagement and outreach activity was frequently raised, with some diverging views. There was agreement that perceptions of the sector need to change, especially those of young people, careers advisors, parents, and teachers. It was noted that when the concept of careers is first introduced, transport often doesn't feature as an industry to consider. As a result, it was said that transport careers lack profile and visibility compared to others, which can be reinforced further down the line at key touchpoints like graduate job fairs.

The importance of early intervention was also emphasised. Respondents said the concept of technical education and apprenticeships should be introduced in primary schools to get children thinking more widely about their options as they move to secondary school. Mechanisms such as deploying more STEM ambassadors in schools were suggested as a way of extending the programme of outreach, which should be done in an engaging and practical way. It was agreed outreach programmes need to be representative and that the demographic of STEM ambassadors should reflect the communities they visit. It was felt

that one-off interventions are not sufficient, and that the following interventions should be explored:

- mentoring programmes
- work insights
- school challenges and competitions
- interactive exercises
- interventions before decisions on options

"Research shows that pupils that receive four or more meaningful engagements with employers between the ages of 11-16 years are 86% less likely to be unemployed or not in education, employment and training and on average earn 22% more." (Large public organisation, local government)

Respondents also said that transport career pathways should be clearer, linking to qualifications and demonstrating what roles different apprenticeships, degrees and other qualifications like T Levels can lead to within the sector. It was suggested this should begin with robust careers provision in schools, leading to work experience placements and internships which can act as a springboard to a pathway into the industry. More support and investment for brokering between referral partners, employers and schemes which support young people into transport was said to be beneficial, starting in schools and continuing through college and university into the labour market.

It was felt that there are many good industry-led engagement initiatives, but a consistent, Government-led and Government-funded approach backed by a clearly defined STEM strategy is needed to bolster industry efforts and ensure all young people are reached during their school career. Respondents said that this will also require collaborative efforts between Government departments, with a clear approach to involving local authorities.

Finally, the Transport for London youth panel model was raised as a recognised example of best practice in youth engagement by a public transport authority and could be adopted as an approach to engaging and collaborating with young people in defining how we market transport careers to them.

Career changers

Organisations commented on the need to reach mid-career individuals, who may be looking to change jobs and could move into the transport industry. Respondents said that even those already working in the industry will need to enhance or change their skillsets as we work towards the transport systems of the future. Ways of attracting people to the industry included highlighting the impact they could have on working towards net zero. In addition to this, it was suggested the benefits of better work-life balance and family friendly work policies could draw in career changers.

Pillar Four: Diversity, Inclusion and Social Mobility

What are the barriers to further increasing diversity, inclusion and social mobility in the transport sector? How can barriers to increasing diversity, inclusion and social mobility be reduced?

The range of responses to these questions demonstrated that diversity and inclusion is a complex area, and while many positive initiatives and interventions have been tried across the transport industry, there are no straightforward answers to addressing the challenges faced. Respondents suggested that we need to ask whether these interventions are truly addressing the issues or just showing that something is being done. For real, long-term change to happen, interventions need to be meaningful, measurable and have sustained impact.

Barriers to increasing diversity, inclusion, and social mobility

Attitudes and perceptions

Respondents felt that deeply rooted barriers still exist in the industry for underrepresented groups. A combination of 'old fashioned' attitudes and a lack of awareness of inclusive practices make a career in transport unappealing to some. Respondents agreed that there are perceptions of the sector that are hard to change, including:

- roles in transport are a 'man's job'
- roles involve physical, manual or 'dirty' work
- certain groups are not welcome due to background, appearance, gender, etc

Much has been done to try and address this, but responders said pace of change is insufficient.

“Within the transport industry, women and minority ethnic groups are poorly represented. This can have a hugely negative effect on how our transport systems are designed, built and operated as they may not cater to the needs of all, often creating an excluding atmosphere for those less likely to undertake transport roles.” (Large public organisation, local government)

Recruitment Practices

Respondents highlighted that poor recruitment practices are still in place and there is inconsistency across the industry. Examples include prioritising internal recruitment and mandating specific experience or qualifications, which resulted in a very narrow labour pool often within the existing transport industry. Respondents reported use of discriminatory practices such as some people are not selected for interviews due to ethnic sounding names, or neurodivergent people not being given sufficient time for assessments; practices which do not give people a fair chance to be assessed on their own merits.

Respondents said the following perceptions of the industry can put certain groups off transport careers or drive them out entirely:

- poor pay
- a high cost of training
- inflexible hours
- poor maternity or parental leave policies
- unsociable hours
- short-term contracts
- inconsistent working patterns
- poor work life balance
- lack of secure changing areas
- inadequate toilet and roadside facilities
- lack of prayer rooms

It was felt that some ethnic minority groups still report a fear of bullying and harassment in the workplace, and report issues such as struggling to request prayer space or women wearing headscarves facing bias and discrimination.

Careers/Training/Development

Issues reported included a lack of career progression and pathways, particularly for those who may require flexible working or have been out of the sector for some time. Routes to management are not always supported inclusively and tend to favour internal candidates. Respondents said high technical requirements for roles can exclude or disadvantage certain groups, as well as workplace cultures that do not offer the same opportunities for all to progress and fulfil their potential. In many cases, it was stated that there are limited support networks for minority groups, and as a result they do not feel they have a voice or seat at the table.

“Technical barriers can limit the attractiveness of the transport sector to those from diverse backgrounds. For example, chartership and other high levels of technical requirements for roles may limit who can apply for a role, where people might be able to train on the job for a specific role if they have transferable skills. Also, the lack of inclusive culture for people entering the transport workforce may impact on both recruitment and retainment in the transport sector.” (Local transport body)

It was suggested that social mobility initiatives may currently be too narrow, only focusing on high academic achievers from deprived backgrounds and potentially missing out a swathe of the population. Some said there is also a geographical divide in terms of availability of training and opportunities and that they are not evenly spread around the country.

Solutions to increase diversity, inclusion, and social mobility

Training, awareness, and recruitment

Many respondents felt that a review and overhaul of recruitment processes is necessary, proposing interventions such as:

- guaranteed interviews
- mandatory feedback
- externally advertising roles
- putting recruitment targets in place
- accounting for neurodiversity
- 'blind' recruitment
- unconscious bias training
- removing gender bias in job wording
- involving local groups and communities
- giving equal weight to potential compared to experience

Proposed Initiatives

Respondents emphasised the need for a co-ordinated approach, proposing joined up programmes of activity and outreach that focus on the areas with most need. It was agreed that role models need to reflect the communities that are being targeted, particularly in disadvantaged communities and those with high ethnic minority populations. Some said mentoring schemes, including reverse mentoring, can play a vital role and can form partnerships that connect people from disadvantaged groups to jobs.

“Without visible role models, underrepresented groups have a perception that the industry is not one that would welcome them, in as much as audiences need to see people like them or people they identify with to create that sense that they belong. There is a need to increase the visibility of the diversity that does exist in the sector.” (Large private organisation, construction sector)

Pay gap reporting was put forward by several respondents as an effective way of measuring disparities and ensuring transparency, then working out what action can be taken to close gaps. Mandatory public targets for gender and race diversity, including targets for contractors, were also suggested as ways of encouraging employers in the industry to be accountable in this area. It was also suggested that the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education could take on responsibility for monitoring diversity in apprenticeships.

Respondents felt that a genuinely inclusive culture needs to be embedded within organisations at all levels, from the senior level down, so that everyone understands it is their responsibility to ensure best practice is followed, with clear objectives to achieve. It was felt that this cannot be seen as a remote function of HR or a 'tick box exercise' and is especially important for those in leadership roles or involved in recruitment. Respondents said equality, diversity and inclusion training needs to be an ongoing, core facet of professional development with knowledge in this area continuously being updated.

Other suggestions included:

- more flexibility around contracts
- job sharing
- family friendly policies to support working parents
- better sick leave policies
- practices that foster work life balance
- mandatory training on bullying and harassment and zero tolerance when it occurs

Respondents highlighted the need to foster and nurture diverse talent through structures such as inclusion networks, safe lines of communication where people feel empowered to speak up and campaigns to call out bad behaviour and harassment. Also highlighted was the fact that informal cultures and networks such as pub culture can unintentionally exclude some groups and should also be examined. Several respondents raised the idea that some of the above recommendations could be set out in a charter to outline and promote best practice.

Next steps

The Department for Transport is hugely grateful to all those who took time to respond to the Call for Views and Ideas. We have noted the range of responses received from stakeholders across the industry, which give a clear sense of the issues and themes to explore with the newly established Transport Employment and Skills Taskforce (TEST). Informed by the responses, the Department will work with TEST to identify and prioritise workstreams which will be focused on the interventions that are likely to have the most impact.

We will continue to engage with stakeholders as our plans develop and establish working groups or 'task and finish' style groups to take forward recommendations, with the aim of publishing an action plan.