



Understanding Industry Perceptions and Experiences of Seventeen of the Measures to Reduce the HGV Driver Shortage

Final Report

On behalf of the Department for Transport

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Contents

Executive summary	6
Purpose of the report	6
Context of the report and research strategy	6
Limitations of the study	7
Findings	8
Conclusions	11
1. Introduction	13
1.1. Background	13
1.2. Objectives and evaluation questions	14
2. Methodology	17
2.1. Methodological approach	17
2.2. Primary data collection strategy.....	18
2.3. Recruitment	18
3. Stakeholder interviews	20
3.1. Introduction.....	20
3.2. The sample.....	20
3.3. Key findings from stakeholder interviews	20
3.4. Themes from stakeholder interviews	22
3.4.1. Problem context: the driver shortage	22
3.4.2. Efficiency in existing supply chains	23
3.4.3. Increased support from foreign hauliers	25
3.4.4. Training.....	27
3.4.5. Testing capacity/licence processing	35
3.4.6. Implementation of measures.....	39
4. Survey of drivers and trainees	40
4.1. Key findings	40
4.2. Description of the sample	41
4.3. Findings from HGV driver respondents	42
4.4. Findings from Trainee respondents	45
5. Interviews with HGV drivers and trainees	50
5.1. Introduction.....	50
5.2. The sample.....	50
5.3. The interviews	51
5.4. Key findings	51
5.5. Reasons to become an HGV driver	51

5.6. Experience of Skills Bootcamps	52
5.7. Experiences of temporary relaxation of drivers' hours	57
6. Conclusions	57
6.1. Stakeholder views on the effectiveness of the measures	57
6.2. Unintended consequences and their mitigation	58
6.3. Lessons from the Process of Implementation.....	58
6.4. Limitations of the study	59
Annex 1: Driver and Trainee Survey Sociodemographic Data	60

Figures

Figure 1: Heavy Goods Vehicle Flows	9
Figure 2: Theory of Change	17
Figure 3: Training path of drivers qualified for less than 2 years	43
Figure 4: Responses about driving hours (M1)	44
Figure 5: Responses about late-night deliveries (M2)	44
Figure 6: Employment status of trainees (n=101).....	45
Figure 7: Use of Government funding for training (n=101)	46
Figure 8: Satisfaction with the location of the booked HGV test (n=102)	46
Figure 9: First test availability at the time of booking (n=87)	47
Figure 10: Did the test waiting time led to putting you off the training? (n=102).....	47
Figure 11: Skills Bootcamp attendance and completion (n=83)	48
Figure 12: Willingness to train without the Bootcamp opportunity (n=79).....	48
Figure 13: Impact of Bootcamp on fast tracking HGV training (n=39)	49
Figure 14: Gender categorisation (n=463)	60
Figure 15: Age distribution (n=463)	60
Figure 16: Ethnicity of respondents (n=463)	61
Figure 17: Came to the UK to work as an HGV driver (n=463)	61
Figure 18: Region of residence (n=463).....	62
Figure 19: Educational level (n=463).....	62
Figure 20: Employment status of respondents (n=462).....	63

Tables

Table 1: Objectives and evaluation questions	15
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Table 2. Measures by group and timescale of implementation.	16
Table 3: Stakeholder groups engaged for primary data collection.	18
Table 4. Numbers of stakeholder interviews by group and composition.....	20
Table 5. Geographical distribution of sample and UK HGV drivers	42
Table 6. Driver and trainee interview participant details	50

List of Abbreviations

DfT	UK Government Department for Transport
DWP	UK Government Department for Work and Pensions
DVLA	Driver and Vehicle Licencing Agency
DVSA	Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency
EU	European Union
HGV	Heavy Goods Vehicle
LA	Logistics Association (logistics sector representational body)
LBO	Logistics Business Operator (e.g. haulage firm)
MOD	UK Government Ministry of Defence
PIR	Post Implementation Review
ONS	Office for National Statistics
ToC	Theory of Change
UWE	University of the West of England, Bristol

Executive summary

Purpose of the report

In response to an acute shortage of Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) drivers, the UK Government introduced 33 measures to support the road haulage sector. The measures addressed supply chain efficiency, driver training, capacity of testing and licencing processes, driver working conditions and taxes. The first measures were introduced in March 2020. Some were introduced for specific periods, and some were permanent changes. Of the temporary measures, some had ended by April 2023, a few were continuing until the end of 2023.

The Department for Transport (DfT) commissioned the Centre for Transport & Society at the University of the West of England, Bristol (UWE) to evaluate 17 of the measures. The 17 were selected by DfT based on initial assessments it had undertaken. Measures are included if they: 1) were temporary and immediate as these measures were intended to have an impact in the short-term 2) could impact safety, as the UK Government has a duty of responsibility to consider any potential safety implications 3) increase the skills supply chain as this has been identified as a key priority by the sector.

The project was to conclude by the summer of 2023. The purpose of the evaluation was to:

- understand sector wide perspectives on the extent to which the measures had been effective in reducing the HGV driver shortage, and what policy interventions would be suitable for repeating at a future date, if necessary,
- explore stakeholder experiences of any unintended outcomes and how these might be mitigated, and
- examine whether any lessons could be learned about the process of implementation.

Context of the report and research strategy

The UWE team reviewed the initial internal evaluation work that had been undertaken by the DfT (in the summer of 2022) to identify knowledge gaps about the delivery of the measures and their success. An evaluation framework was then prepared which identified evaluation questions addressing those knowledge gaps. A Theory of Change approach developed by the DfT guided the design of the evaluation framework and the primary data collection instruments. The Theory of Change presented the logical connections which explained how groups of related interventions were expected to increase the supply of drivers.

The research strategy involved four activities:

- Review and updating of existing quantitative data trend series originally collated by the DfT in its initial evaluation work. (The review of existing quantitative data does not form an independent section in the report but is referred to throughout.)
- Interviews with stakeholders drawn from four stakeholder groups: HGV operators, organisations involved in recruitment, organisations which represent the road haulage sector, and organisations involved in HGV driver testing.
- A survey of HGV drivers and people training to become HGV drivers.
- Interviews with HGV drivers and trainees.

Limitations of the study

The evaluation had a dynamic context with potentially multiple interventions and external factors influencing the number and demand for HGV drivers. The causal pathways were also complex for similar reasons, involving multiple stakeholders and sectors and with both direct and indirect impacts, and a likelihood of unexpected impacts. Timescales for expected impacts also varied across the measures, with some having medium and long-term components.

For these reasons, the approach to evaluation that was adopted emphasised understanding the process of delivering the interventions and the role of context. The use of this approach means the evaluation is less able than more experimental, controlled approaches to identify specific or quantified outcomes on a before-and-after comparative basis. The impacts reported in the report then are most reliable in respect of the broad explanations they provide, and less so in terms of the specific findings being generalisable across the entire road freight sector in the UK.

There are also some more specific limitations to acknowledge:

- The qualitative research with stakeholders was diverse in terms of groups included but few small Logistics Business Operators (LBOs) took part. This was mainly due to their limited capacity to engage with the research. Nonetheless, the research captured a range of perspectives and provided some deeper insights from key groups.
- The quantitative survey had two purposes: to recruit a diverse group of drivers and trainee drivers for qualitative research and to examine their experiences of specific measures. Although it included drivers of all ages and genders and from all parts of the UK, for practical reasons it could not be constructed as a representative sample, for example, including factors such as driver experience and type of haulage normally driven. Findings from a fully representative sample might have been different. Not enough information was available about people engaging in training courses for that sample to be constructed on a representative basis.

- Some of the measures were targeted at specific types of haulage, and the quantitative sample size of drivers was not large enough to examine responses according to the types of haulage normally undertaken.
- From both the qualitative and quantitative research, not many participants in the study experienced the relaxation of drivers' hours and night-time deliveries measures, and there is therefore little evidence about the perceived effectiveness of these measures.

For further detail on the methodological approach and potential limitations of the study please refer to the Technical Annex.

Findings

Findings from the stakeholder interviews

The interviews included 20 stakeholders from the four stakeholder groups. Overall, stakeholders had mixed views on the implementation of measures. It is important to note some stakeholders did not have direct experience of all of the measures, therefore not all stakeholders could comment on every measure being evaluated.

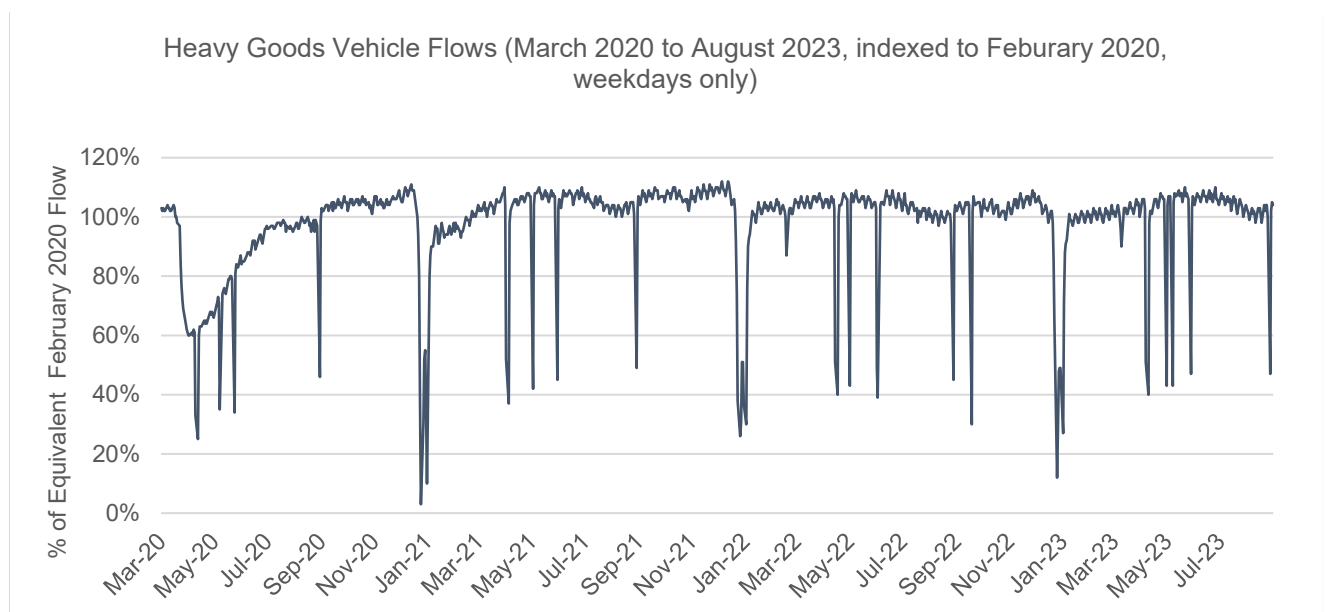
The key findings by measure were:

- Two regulatory measures brought temporary relaxations of driver hour limits and late-night delivery restrictions. These were perceived by participants to have had limited overall impact on LBOs, although there was some support for the view that they had met the aim of quickly plugging some short-term gaps. Stakeholders felt that the relaxation of driver hours was associated with negative perceptions about the risk of excessive working hours and driver safety concerns. Participants believed the objective of relaxing late-night delivery restrictions could be achieved through alternative operating practices and, in sensitive locations, the use of electric vehicles for the last mile to reduce noise.
- Two measures were aimed at foreign drivers and operators. The measure to increase employment of non-UK drivers through a temporary relaxation of work visa rules was perceived as having had minimal effect. The rationale provided for this point of view was that the costs involved to the sponsoring company and the administration required to engage in the scheme reduced sector interest in the measure. Driver shortages elsewhere in Europe and concerns about border disruption were also thought by participants to have reduced foreign drivers' interest in the opportunity. Information on the measure to extend cabotage was limited due to limited direct experience of the measure, but participants viewed its benefits as marginal.

- Government support for HGV Skills Bootcamps attracted support from most participants as a quick training route for drivers. The apprenticeship measures were seen as less attractive due to involving a longer training period, Level 2 English and Maths requirements and due to working elsewhere in the company during training. LBOs found it easier to run office-based apprenticeships than driver apprenticeships as drivers can be employed in ancillary jobs until the driver training is completed. However, some LBOs stated that they faced challenges in accessing apprenticeship levy funds for driver training. LBOs who run their own in-house training do so as they believe it suits their company's training and operational needs better than the Skills Bootcamps and apprenticeship schemes.
- The stakeholders had limited experience of other measures to support new and returning drivers, including former members of the armed forces, and ex-offenders which meant they were unable to comment on these measures.
- Efforts by the motoring agencies (Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency - DVLA and Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency - DVSA) to improve the testing and licensing pipeline after COVID were viewed as successful by the agencies themselves. External stakeholders (LBOs and Logistics Associations - LA) largely viewed the changes and investment positively. Improved access to testing slots was noted, although some concerns about medical certificate responses and perceived safety were raised.

Although recognising that the acute phase of the driver shortage had passed by the time of interviewing, participants identified the economic conditions as a contributory explanation, having reduced the demand for HGV drivers. They were concerned driver shortages could return with increased economic activity. HGV traffic volume data during the study period showed fairly stable volumes: above February 2019 levels and 2023 traffic is similar to 2022 levels, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Heavy Goods Vehicle Flows



Source: DfT: ([Daily domestic transport use by mode - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/daily-domestic-transport-use-by-mode))

Given that the existing HGV workforce has an ageing demographic profile and women are under-represented (according to Office for National Statistics - [ONS](#) - Census 2021 data, 2% of the GB HGV driver population), stakeholders emphasised the opportunity to prevent future shortages through attracting more diverse participation into the workforce. Practical measures they identified to increase the recruitment of women and younger drivers were improved roadside facilities for HGV drivers and a shift towards shorter-distance freight transport. Improved facilities are a longer-term measure and so not evaluated by this project.

Findings from the survey

The survey of HGV drivers and trainees ran for two months, resulting in 463 responses, with the majority (77%) from drivers.

Key findings from drivers:

- Of the drivers who had qualified in the last two years (19% of the sample), 86% had been on a Government-funded course, mainly Skills Bootcamps (76 out of 88 respondents). 40% of the ex-service people also noted assistance from Government schemes.
- In respect of the extension of drivers' hours measure, 8% said they had driven more hours, but 11% said they had driven fewer hours whereas 58% reported no change.
- A similar pattern was found for the relaxation of late-night deliveries. Most could not recall or reported no change. Only 4% said they made more night-time deliveries, and 14% said they had made fewer night-time deliveries.

Key findings from trainees:

- Most trainees were training through Skills Bootcamps (94%). 5% were on apprenticeship schemes.
- Around half reported they would have probably or definitely not have trained to become an HGV driver if a Skills Bootcamp had not been available.
- 39% were already employed in a role (or held a job offer) that required the HGV driver qualification they had been training for.
- One quarter of respondents who had been a qualified HGV driver for under 2 years or were still completing their training thought that delays in testing had encouraged them to look for jobs that did not require an HGV qualification.

Findings from the interviews with HGV drivers and trainees

The findings from the interviews present the views on the implementation and changes as a result of the measures according to the HGV drivers and trainees that participated. These views complement the stakeholder perspectives and enrich the findings from the survey. The insights predominantly relate to the Skills Bootcamps and raise three key points:

- the in-vehicle training was commended but participants would have liked more practice with reversing manoeuvres and training in the use of the tachograph (the in-vehicle driving and rest period monitoring device).

- They expected improvements to the administration of Skills Bootcamps would result in enhanced progression.
- Support for job-seeking was identified as needing improvement.

Conclusions

Perceived effectiveness of the measures

Most of the measures evaluated were not believed by participants to have made a significant contribution to increasing the number of HGV drivers, or their availability, for example enabling them to drive more or different patterns of hours. However, some were perceived to have made an important contribution:

- Skills Bootcamps were identified by professionals and trainees as a relatively quick and effective intervention,
- Testing and licencing measures were identified as effective and not identified as barriers by drivers and trainees.

Unintended consequences and their mitigation

No evidence of an actual reduction in the safety of HGV operations was reported by participants, but perceptions that risks might have been increased were raised relating to:

- the temporary relaxation in driver hours,
- removing the towing (B+E) test,
- the extension of medical certificates,
- the use of external assessors (for the off-road manoeuvre element of the driving test).

The success of the Skills Bootcamps may have had an unintended consequence of over saturating a contracting job market with newly qualified drivers. Newly qualified drivers discussed the challenges of job seeking, but the underlying cause was less apparent. Trainees did not have insights into why they were struggling to find jobs beyond identifying their lack of experience on the road. They felt unsupported by the Skills Bootcamps in job seeking. Stakeholders indicated that the normal cyclical reduction in business in the first quarter (Q1) of 2023 had been exacerbated by the economic downturn and raised the question as to whether Skills Bootcamps had created more supply than demand.

Locally specific situations may colour the reported experiences, but some participants contributing to these findings were employed in non-driving roles by a national business. Participants suggested that potential mitigations for the future could be balancing the number of training places with employment vacancies and providing more assistance to newly qualified drivers in finding work requiring their new qualifications.

The perception that the Skills Bootcamps created an excess supply of drivers could be influenced by the economic circumstances at the time which may have resulted in decreased demand for road freight as the supply of drivers increased. ONS data report that HGV driver numbers in the year April 2022 to March 2023 showed an average employment of 294,800, around 3% higher than the figure of 286,500 for the year January 2022 to December 2022. The increase on January 2021 to December 2021 amounts to 8%. The total has not yet reached the 303,900 recorded in the year ending December 2019.

Lessons from the Process of Implementation

The strongest recommendations from stakeholders about processes related to:

- improving the administration of Skills Bootcamps,
- reducing the cost and administrative process of employing foreign drivers if that measure is re-introduced.

Participants also identified wider lessons from the driver shortage as being:

- an acute shortage could re-appear; earlier action is wanted if it does,
- factors limiting the appeal of the HGV driver role need to be addressed.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The UK has been identified as suffering a shortage of HGV drivers, which at some periods in recent years has impacted supply chains across the country. Estimating this shortage accurately is difficult. At the height of the HGV driver shortage the [ONS](#) reported that HGV driver numbers for the year January 2021 to December 2021 had an average employment of 271,800, compared to the twelve-month period ending December 2019 the shortage was estimated as 32,100. This is in comparison to April 2022 to March 2023, reporting an average employment of 294,800 with an estimated shortage of 9,400.

Explanatory factors at the time of that acute shortage included:

- HGV driving tests not taking place due to measures put in place to confront the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic,
- the economic bounce-back from COVID-19 which increased demand for freight transport,
- an ageing workforce and a lack of diversity in the industry, and
- a past reliance on overseas labour with a lack of long-term investment in the UK domestic workforce.

To address this shortage, the UK Government implemented 33 measures, grouped around the following objectives:

1. Increasing the efficiency in existing supply chains,
2. Providing support and training for new HGV drivers,
3. Expanding HGV driver testing capacity and improving licencing processes,
4. Attracting drivers back to the sector and improving conditions,
5. Ensuring the stability of the fuel supply chain,
6. Economic measures supporting the haulage industry.

The full list of these 33 measures can be found [here](#). Of these, a subset of 17 measures was prioritised by the DfT for evaluation using the following criteria:

- Temporary measures designed to achieve immediate, temporary, and short-term outcomes.
-

- Measures with the potential to affect safety outcomes and measures requiring a Post Implementation Review¹(PIR).
- Measures intended to increase skills supply.

A team at UWE Bristol was commissioned to undertake the review of the 17 prioritised measures in December 2022.

The purpose of the evaluation was to:

- understand stakeholder perceptions of the extent to which the measures have been effective in reducing the HGV driver shortage in the short and longer terms, and which policy interventions would be most suitable for repeating at a future date should an acute shortage occur again,
- explore any unintended outcomes and how these might be mitigated, and
- examine whether any lessons could be learned about the process of implementation, including what the barriers were, if any, to delivery, and whether the operation of the measures could be improved.

1.2. Objectives and evaluation questions

The project specification provided by the DfT set out four objectives for the evaluation. The objectives are presented in Table 1 (overleaf) accompanied with the overarching evaluation questions. Together they formed part of the Evaluation Framework for the project.

¹ A process implemented to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of a measure after it has been implemented and operational for a period of time. It addresses the extent to which a measure is achieving its intended effects, whether it has resulted in any unintended consequences, how well it is working and the reasons why.

[Magenta Book supplementary guide. Guidance for Conducting Regulatory Post Implementation Reviews.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Table 1: Objectives and evaluation questions

Objectives	Evaluation questions (EQ)
1. To understand to what extent the measures have been effective in meeting their objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Impact EQ: To what extent have the measures achieved their planned objectives?
2. To understand to what extent the measures have been effective in reducing the HGV driver shortage in the short, medium, and long term	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Impact EQ: To what extent have the measures created an improvement to the HGV driver shortages in the short, medium, and long term?• Impact EQ: Which measures have had the most impact in reducing the HGV driver shortage in the short, medium, and long term?
3. To explore any unintended outcomes and how these can be mitigated	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Impact EQ: Are there unintended outcomes associated with individual measures, or groups of measures?• Impact/Process EQ: How might these unintended outcomes be mitigated?
4. To understand whether the process has been successfully implemented	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Process EQ: Were the measures implemented as planned?• Process EQ: Were the measures implemented optimally?• Process EQ: What aspects of implementing the measures have worked well and which aspects less well and why?

List of measures in scope

Table 2, on the next page, numbers and defines the 17 measures, which are referred to later in the report with the notation M1-M26. The table also indicates the timescales of implementation for the 17 measures.

Table 2. Measures by group and timescale of implementation

Measure Group/Number	Specific Measures	Implementation Dates
		** No end
Increasing efficiency in the HGV's supply chain (M1 and M2)	Temporary relaxation of drivers' hours Relaxation of late-night delivery restrictions	July 2021 – February 2022 September 2021 – February 2022
Increased support from foreign hauliers (M3 and M4)	Added 4,700 HGV temporary driver visas to the existing visa scheme Extended cabotage for foreign hauliers in the UK	October 2021 – March 2022 November 2021 – April 2022
Providing support and training for new HGV drivers (M6-M12, and M20 and M26)	New HGV Skills Bootcamps New £7,000 incentive for LGVD apprenticeships Temporary incentive of £3,000 for taking on a new apprentice Additional Government funding for medical & HGV licences Accelerated development of new Urban Driver Apprenticeship Expansion of DWP driver training pilot £1m of grant funding to Road to Logistics New measures for former Forces personnel to qualify as lorry drivers Funding for Job seekers and on Universal Credit with HGV licence to get Driver Certificates of Professional Competence	December 2021** August 2021** September 2021 – January 2022 October 2021 – July 2022 July 2021 – December 2022 July 2021 – March 2022 July 2021 – December 2023 November 2021** December 2021**
Expanding HGV driver testing capacity and improving licencing processes (M15-M18)	Recruitment campaign for 40 new vocational examiners MOD examiners trained and deployed to conduct civilian tests with the DVSA. Streamlined testing Examiners at police, ambulance, fire and the MOD to conduct driving tests for one another	December 2021 – December 2023 November 2021 – January 2022 December 2021** December 2021**

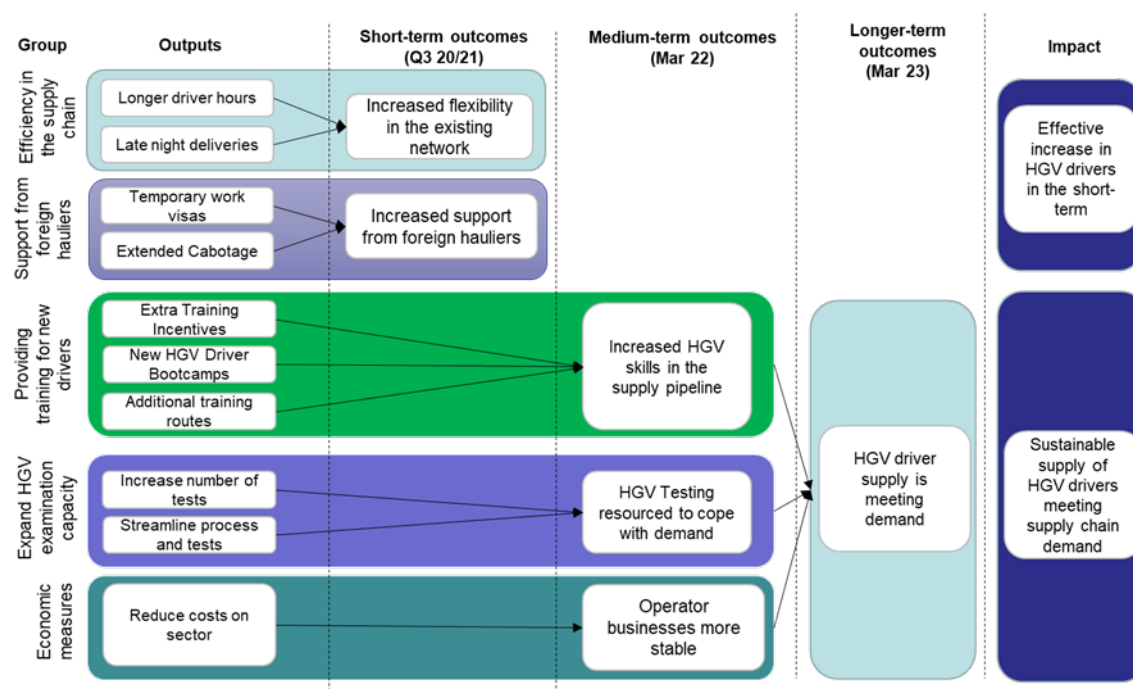
2. Methodology

2.1. Methodological approach

The evaluation built on early work by DfT which adopted a Contribution Analysis approach. This is an approach used to understand the likelihood an intervention has contributed to a specific observed outcome, or not. It applied a Theory of Change (ToC) for the programme of prioritised measures developed by the DfT. The ToC diagram (Figure 2) outlines how the package of measures implemented from the 20/21 financial year was expected to produce the desired outputs and outcomes, in the short, medium and longer terms. The desired aim ('impact' in the ToC diagram) was to achieve a sustainable supply of HGV drivers meeting supply chain demands in Great Britain.

Short-term outcomes were defined as arising by Quarter 3 of the 20/21 financial year (ending in December 2021).

Figure 2: Theory of Change



Note: in the ToC diagram it is assumed that the group of measures aimed at expanding HGV examination capacity will directly contribute to the outcome "Increased number of examinations", via two routes. One is increasing the number of available examiners, the other is streamlining examinations and processes. Therefore, the UWE evaluation team considered "Increased number of tests" as an outcome and not an output.

In practice, the partial availability of contextual data limited the applicability of the ToC approach in the UWE research as an approach to detailed design, data collection and analysis, although it was important in influencing the strategic design of the data collection. The impact and process evaluation relied on two important data collection/ generation and analysis tasks that are described below.

2.2. Primary data collection strategy

The evaluation included primary data collection to contribute to addressing the gaps identified in the DfT's initial evaluation and those provided by an initial gap analysis undertaken by the DfT commissioning team. The DfT commissioning team set the order of priority associated with these gaps. The UWE team collected primary data in two stages:

- Stage 1 (Dec 2022 – Mar 2023): we interviewed key stakeholder groups to explore their perspective towards the measures and whether they thought the measures had an impact on the HGV drivers' shortage, including unintended outcomes. In addition, we captured the views of HGV drivers and trainees through an online survey.
- Stage 2 (Apr 2023-June 2023): we completed the interviews to key stakeholder groups, and we interviewed a selected sample of HGV drivers and trainees who took part in the online survey.

Table 3 provides an overview of the stakeholders that we engaged for primary data collection and generation, and the methods that we used.

Table 3: Stakeholder groups engaged for primary data collection.

See Table 4 for more details of the sample.

Stakeholder group	Method	Stage
Logistics business operators (LBOs)	semi-structured interview with individual companies	1&2
Recruitment agencies, and professionals particularly involved in attracting drivers from abroad	semi-structured interview with individual agencies	1&2
Logistics associations and interested groups (LA)	semi-structured interviews or small group sessions with individual associations	1
HGV drivers and trainees	online survey	1
The motoring agencies responsible for the licensing and testing of HGV drivers (DVLA and DVSA)	semi-structured interviews or small group sessions with individual organisations	1
HGV drivers and trainees	semi-structured interview with a selected sample who took part in the online survey	2

2.3. Recruitment

Driver and trainee participation in the research was incentivised by a prize draw (for the survey) and a shopping voucher (for the interviews).

The following challenges were experienced with recruitment:

- Smaller Logistics Business Operators (LBO) were difficult to reach, as they were not interested or reported that they did not have enough time to take part in research activities. For this reason, only a few of the LBOs were small-to-medium-size operators, and the other three were large operators.
- Participants in the survey were offered the opportunity to indicate whether they wanted to take part in future research. 53% of the sample responded positively and 76 of them were invited by email to take part in an in-depth interview. Among HGV drivers, those who indicated they had experienced M1 and M2 were selected for follow-up. Among trainees a representative sample was selected. Conversion of these groups to further participation was limited despite re-approaching the selected people.

3. Stakeholder interviews

3.1. Introduction

Stakeholders from across the logistics sector, including representative associations, and Government agencies shared their experiences and views about the 17 measures through interviews. This section of the report summarises the interview method. It includes the process for selecting and recruiting the participants and provides key findings from the interviews covering each of the measures.

The interviews followed a process approved by a UWE ethics committee. A bespoke guide for each of the stakeholder groups was developed. The interviews were conducted by a sole researcher online using Microsoft Teams and lasted 45-60 minutes.

3.2. The sample

The research team conducted 14 interviews in total, with 20 participants (Table 4). In seven interviews one interviewee represented the organisation/company (1:1), and in the further 6 interviews there were two people from the same organisation/company (1:2). Two of the LBOs were small-to-medium-size operators, and the other three were large operators.

All stakeholder viewpoints reported below have been anonymised, and stakeholders have been given numerical references within the report where direct quotes have been made. (See Table 4 Column 1 for the interview codes).

Table 4. Numbers of stakeholder interviews by group and composition

Stakeholder sector (interview code)	Total interviews	With one participant (1:1)	With two participants (1:2)
Logistics Associations (LA1-4)	3	2	1
Logistics Business Operators (LBO-6)	6	5	1
Motoring Agencies DVSA / DVLA (MA1&2)	2	0	2
Recruitment Agencies (RA 1-3)	3	1	2

3.3. Key findings from stakeholder interviews

- In general stakeholders had mixed views on the implementation of measures, with some feeling unable to comment on some measures, as the measure was outside of their remit, or they had not used the measure. There was a consensus amongst participants that the driver shortage issue had been a long-standing concern, and earlier preventative action could have been taken.
- Stakeholders perceived the shortage of drivers experienced during 'the crisis' had passed. They had observed that demand for freight movements during the first quarter of 2023 was lower than expected and was attributed to the economic downturn. Hence, there had been less demand for drivers with fewer vacancies advertised. This is in line with the trends in vacancies seen in the Transportation and Storage sector, the latest [ONS data estimates vacancies](#) in the sector in the UK to be 2.4 vacancies per 100 employees between June-August 2023, a drop of 0.8 on the previous year (seasonally adjusted figures). Moreover, DfT data from the [Road Freight Haulage survey](#) shows that HGV businesses reporting HGV driver vacancies fell from 43% (888 out of 2,077 businesses) in quarter 4 2021 to 23% (495 out of 2,186) in quarter 3 2023. This improvement took place over the first twelve months of the survey, with vacancy rates relatively stable over the most recent twelve months. Interviewees believed that driver shortages could re-emerge with an economic upswing unless more people become drivers and/or stay in the industry long-term
- Concern remains amongst stakeholders that the workforce is predominately an older cohort, with the [ONS reporting](#) that between July 2022-June 2023, 65% of HGV drivers were over the age of 45, and subject to a higher rate of retirement and sickness. Recruitment of a more diverse workforce, including more women and younger drivers, was seen as an important way to reach a sustainable workforce level. To attract this more diverse workforce stakeholders highlighted the need for improved roadside facilities for HGV drivers and a shift towards shorter-distance freight transport for improved work-life balance.
- Stakeholders felt that M1 (driver hours) and M2 (night-time deliveries) addressed short-term gaps but had limited overall impact on LBO operations. Some believed M1 led to a negative perception of excessive working hours and raised driver safety concerns. There was a perception that M2 could be improved through different practices and using different technologies, notably last-mile electric vehicles to reduce noise impacts.
- There was a consensus that the attempt to employ European Union (EU) drivers through the temporary increase in the visa quota (M3) had minimal impact. Limited information was available on M4 (cabotage), but it was perceived to have had limited benefits due to external factors.
- Skills Bootcamps (M6) were mostly well-received as a quick training route for drivers. Some LBOs preferred to have direct control over recruitment by using in-house training to recruit from Skills Bootcamps. Skills Bootcamps were reported as being more attractive than apprenticeships (M7-9) due to their

quicker training time, and some LBOs found it challenging to access apprenticeship levy funds for driver training.

- Limited experience with training measures M10-12, M20, and M26 meant participants could not comment on their effectiveness. However, most stakeholders had positive views about hiring Armed Forces personnel but there were some negative views on recruiting ex-offenders. Many stakeholders said they had recruited ex-armed forces personnel, and a couple had through ex-offender partnerships but mainly in the warehousing rather than driving roles.
- The Motoring Agencies measures (M15-18) to improve the testing and licensing pipeline after COVID were viewed as successful internally and positively received externally. Improved access to testing slots was reported, although some concerns about medical certificate responses and safety were raised.

3.4. Themes from stakeholder interviews

3.4.1. Problem context: the driver shortage

The logistics industry had experienced a driver shortage for a long period of time prior to the driver shortage crisis. Most of the stakeholders referred to the longevity of the problem.

“when we talk about the driver shortage, there has been a driver shortage forever.”
LA3

“There were more people falling out of the industry than coming into the industry for at least 10 years prior to the pandemic. And I think we all were all guilty of sitting there waiting for someone else to solve the problem” LBO4

“ever since I’ve been doing this, there’s always been a shortage and that shortage has been touted to be between 25,000 and 40,000 [drivers].” Recruitment Agency 1

Respondents highlighted that a number of factors contributed to the acute shortage of drivers, including the effects of EU exit (e.g., loss of European drivers), and impact of COVID-19 (e.g., training courses and driver testing stopped due to the restrictions). Most stakeholders agreed the acute phase had passed, but some argued that there was still a need for new entrants and retaining existing staff.

“I’m not parking trucks up, which I was during the peak ’cause I didn’t have any drivers. Now I’ve got a driver for every truck. It doesn’t mean that we’re out of the woods and doesn’t mean there isn’t a problem.” LBO4

“we’re back to the ongoing shortage, aren’t we? So, it’s not like we’ve got plentiful drivers and we haven’t got any issues.” LA3

Many LBOs noted the need to diversify the industry's workforce. Specifically, it is an industry with an ageing workforce that needs younger people to join it and gain experience to fill jobs in the future.

“the newly qualified driver is now more valuable than ever. Because as I’ve said, we have an ageing population and we can’t allow foreign labour. But the reality is we’ve got a shortage. I think that shortage in the next three or four years is only going to get bigger because of the ageing population.” Recruitment Agency 1

At the point of interviewing (March-June 2023) many of the LBOs and Recruitment Agencies discussed how the slowdown of the economy reduced the demand for the movement of goods in the first months of 2023. These stakeholders expressed uncertainty about how further economic decline would impact the industry and the need for new drivers. LBOs and Recruitment Agencies recognised the effect of the economic downturn had increased the challenge for newly qualified drivers to gain employment.

“right now, there’s far less need for HGV drivers than there were, and therefore the newly qualified fall right down to the bottom of the pecking order again.” Recruitment Agency 1

The recruitment agencies indicated that since January 2023 there has been a large increase in speculative applicants, and more than 100 people applying for each job.

To summarise stakeholders' perceptions, they saw the immediate crisis as having passed, and the demand for HGV services appeared to them to be depressed due to the economic downturn. However, they thought it was likely that driver shortages would re-emerge in the future, unless younger people join and stay in the industry.

3.4.2. Efficiency in existing supply chains

Measures M1 and M2 were intended as short-term measures to increase flexibility in the workforce, rather than to increase availability of drivers. These were responses to the problem that could be rolled out quickly.

Key insights

The stakeholder perspective indicated M1 and M2 probably met the aim of quickly plugging some short-term gaps. However, they had little overall impact on the operations of most of the LBOs interviewed. Some stakeholders felt M1 contributed to a negative perception of the HGV driving role having excessive hours, and driver safety was also raised as a concern. Going forward, a suggested alternative to M2 could be facilitated through different working practices, and greater use of last-mile electric vehicles to reduce the impact of vehicle noise.

M1 Relaxation of hours

The LBOs indicated in the interviews that they had pre-existing structures for organising staff, vehicles, and deliveries. There would need to be a large benefit to be gained before it would be worth changing these organisational practices. The majority of the LBOs interviewed had not used the measure for the reason that they had not perceived that it would provide a sufficiently large benefit, but they still held views on its value.

The extension of drivers' hours was referred to as a "stopgap response". Most stakeholders recognised this measure had been brought in to cover a short-term problem for companies delivering food and consumer goods to retailers. Several LBOs believed it was a reactive intervention which they felt should have received greater consideration.

"... again that was only a short-term sticking plaster really in my opinion, although it was helpful ...to get more of the work done". LBO2

There was a lot of concern across the industry about the safety implications of relaxing maximum hours regulations. In the view of stakeholders, the rules about driving hours had been designed and implemented to prevent driver fatigue and therefore relaxation would tend to increase the level of risk.

"I think there was a lot of concern in the industry about the safety implications of it. So those rules are there for very clear purposes, and that's to prevent fatigue setting in on drivers, and relaxation increases the level of risk." LA3

"... and in terms of relaxing the drivers' hours rules, there is so many hours that a driver can work, really, and safely, and so it was never really going to greatly assist with the issue". LA2

Several LBOs and the LA stakeholders were concerned that extending hours could affect perceptions of the job. It might put off new recruits or people returning to the industry.

"That measure doesn't do much for the image of the sector where people already believe they work excessive hours. ... I'm highlighting extending drivers' hours rules...could even have a negative impact." LA2

In the longer term, LBO2 and LA1 both expressed the view that the industry needs to revisit working patterns to make the work-life balance of the driving job more attractive to younger people and those with caring responsibilities. These two stakeholders had different solutions, but both focused on shortening hours and distances travelled through different freight management solutions.

M2 Late night deliveries

LA3 thought that night-time deliveries could have potentially been a much more valuable measure, as it can improve the efficiency of supply chains. However, some LBO stakeholders reported no impact, as they did not deliver into the affected urban areas. For those that did, like with M1, fixed delivery slots are not always easy to change.

“And in terms of the late-night deliveries to supermarkets and food retailers, we didn’t change any of them because of the pre-planning of the routes and the timings for the schedules as well” Logistics Business Operator 6

Several LA stakeholders considered there was value for retaining extended delivery hours in urban areas. It was claimed that there is currently a:

“huge inflexibility and inefficiency built into supply chains because of hours restrictions” LA1

LA1 and some LBOs noted that vehicles are quieter than in the past, and careful management of driver working practices such as switching off engines and not having loud music emanating from the cab would minimise disturbance to nearby residents. Solutions proposed by LA1 included increased use of smaller electric vehicles in urban areas to reduce noise levels, but the stakeholder recognised it would not eliminate noise created by loading/unloading operations.

3.4.3. Increased support from foreign hauliers

M3 and M4 were intended as an immediate short-term response to the driver shortage problem, by offering EU nationals short term work visas, and for foreign hauliers to be permitted to move goods between two points within the UK (cabotage).

Key insights

M3 (short-term visas) was viewed as unsuccessful by the stakeholders interviewed. The logistics industry perceived the costs involved as high, with too much administration attached to the process. No-one interviewed had used the measure. There was limited information generated through the interviews regarding M4 (cabotage). There was some indication it may only have had a limited benefit for commercial customers due to external factors, but actual knowledge was limited.

M3 Temporary Visas

M3 encouraged drivers based in the EU to work in the UK for a couple of months. The temporary increase in the visa quota did not have any significant impact on increasing the availability of drivers during the crisis.

The consensus amongst stakeholders was that the opportunity to employ EU workers through the relaxation of these rules was ineffective at addressing the shortage. [Statistical evidence](#) indicates 135 drivers took up the visa offer. The quota was for 4700. The quota number was decided following engagement by the UK Government with the logistics sector.

LBOs and RA stakeholders indicated that they found the rules too complex to apply for recruitment within the given time period. The need to provide accommodation and subsistence to the workers on this visa scheme was viewed as problematic and costly in an industry that does not typically use such employment practices.

“that was a real policy muddle” LA1

*“Definitely a sticking plaster and one that definitely was never really going to help”
LA2*

LA3 and few of the LBOs explained how these emergency measures were designed for the agricultural sector where farms have on-site accommodation for temporary migrant labour. They felt HGV drivers are comparatively geographically dispersed, and it would be costly for LBOs to house them in hotels and monitor in the same way.

“we had to demonstrate that we could accommodate drivers fully in terms of accommodation, while they were over there. It was setting up schemes where drivers slept in cabs at fully equipped services, of which there aren’t many. And we had to put them up in hotels at weekends and pay for their subsistence as well as flights to bring them over here” LBO1

An LBO shared the view that, as many migrants had been stuck at UK borders over Christmas in 2020 due to COVID, returning to the UK would be seen as risky. Further restrictions might have stopped them from being reunited with family over the festive season once more.

LBOs with corporate insights into the European driver market noted that there was a simultaneous high demand for HGV drivers within the EU at the point of crisis in the UK. This effectively created an additional disincentive to take temporary work in the UK. These LBOs suggested that further Government market research to understand the availability or willingness of EU workers to come to work in the UK for a short-term period would have been useful.

The stakeholders believed that the (short) duration of the visa did not help in making the opportunity attractive. LBO stakeholders would welcome a longer-term solution such as revisions to the visa rules to enable lorry drivers to be on the shortage occupation list. However, LA3 noted that lorry driving is a Level 2 qualification job, whereas it was the belief that only Level 3 and above could be on the shortage occupation list.

One stakeholder noted that it is better to recruit from the EU than elsewhere in the world, because EU drivers would not need to take the UK driving examination, but drivers from the rest of the world would.

M4 Cabotage

Only the LAs had some insights into Cabotage. It was seen as a measure that could have been more effective. The number of foreign hauliers using cabotage rights in the UK post-EU exit was thought to be lower than pre-EU exit by LA1. This stakeholder thought that:

“the supermarkets, for example, were pretty reluctant to get foreign hauliers capitalising on their own trunk networks and delivery networks, it’s not what they want. Their network is very tightly controlled, very tightly managed” LA1

LBO stakeholders had limited specific knowledge about the impacts of cabotage, but they had heard from other UK hauliers that cheaper rates by foreign hauliers had taken work away from UK businesses. It was noted that this would have benefited some customers by offering cheaper haulage options than generally could be provided by UK companies. During the shortage, many hauliers had increased their driver wages to fill vacancies, with one LBO quoting a 27% increase in salaries. DfT data from the [Road Freight Haulage survey](#) shows nearly half of HGV businesses increased their driver wages in the preceding three months in Quarter 4 2021, this was reported by 46% (964). Stakeholders indicated that to cover the increase in labour costs, the delivery costs for their commercial customers also rose.

“the reality it’s not a level playing field. So, they don’t pay what we pay. They don’t do what we do. And therefore, they’re far more competitive when they come into the UK...It did help and I do genuinely get it. It did help goods to be delivered to the shelves, which was the important thing. It’s a legitimate thing for the Government to have done. But it didn’t help indigenous hauliers.” LBO4

Yet, as the quote demonstrates, many LBOs and the LAs recognised that the driver shortage would have made it difficult for businesses to offer increased capacity to meet the demand during the crisis. Like extending the working hours, it was felt permitting cabotage potentially met a short-term need.

3.4.4. Training

Key insights

Mostly M6 (Skills Bootcamps) was well received, as a quick route for training drivers. LBOs did though express some negative perceptions, and these companies preferred their in-house training routeway, even though it was at a cost to the business. Some expressed concerns over the retention of new drivers and the readiness of people to slot directly into a job without further inhouse training or mentoring. Stakeholders noted the challenge for Skills Bootcamp trainees in obtaining work now the driver shortage had reduced, but many felt it important to continue training new drivers to reduce the impact of potential future shortages as the ageing workforce retires. The insights from this section (and Section 5) suggest that the route into work from a Skills Bootcamp could benefit from enhanced support.

The Skills Bootcamps have become more attractive than apprenticeships (M7-9). Apprenticeships have a lot of benefits for wider training and mentoring, but the training takes longer than through Skills Bootcamps, and so was less suited to the urgent need of the acute shortage. To run HGV driver apprenticeships, LBOs need a broader spectrum of work to offer trainees, for example warehouse work. LBOs were finding it more difficult to access the apprenticeship levy funds for driver training compared to office jobs.

Few of the LBOs had experience of the measures M10-12, M20 & M26. Therefore, it was not possible to understand the effectiveness of these measures from the interviews. Employing former armed forces personnel received more favour than did ex-offenders in the discussions, but these views were mixed.

M6 Skills Bootcamps

The Department for Education brought in HGV Driver Skills Bootcamps in September 2021. The Skills Bootcamps were set up with consortium groups (e.g. HGV recruitment agencies and training providers) delivering the training. Skills Bootcamps were offered free to adults over the age of 19 with a full driving licence, irrespective of employment status:

- [Skills Bootcamps](#) were free, flexible courses that lasted up to 16 weeks. Participants that were looking for a new job, and successfully completed the course, were also guaranteed a job interview with a local employer.
- The free, short, intensive HGV courses were to train drivers to be road ready, including to gain the relevant licenses and certification.

There were 11,000 training places offered in the first round of funding. [Published data](#) show that in FY 21/22 there were 4,740 starts in HGV driving Skills Bootcamps.

Positive Responses to Skills Bootcamps

LA, LBOs, and RA stakeholders shared positive views about the large-scale investment in the HGV driver Skills Bootcamps, as a route to more qualified HGV drivers.

“the biggest challenge really was just the availability of the drivers and the Bootcamps been the biggest saviour for that” LBO3

“we have a huge amount of success. We’ve got a number of drivers that have come through the bootcamps and continue to go through the bootcamps” Logistics Business Operator 6

According to stakeholders the impact of COVID restrictions on face-to-face training and examinations inevitably reduced the pipeline of new drivers coming through the system. LA1 considered the Skills Bootcamps were an effective way of catching up on a backlog, which the interviewee thought to be equivalent to a year of workforce training.

The ‘catching up’ perspective was picked up by Recruitment Agency 1, who did question how many additional new drivers had been trained through the Skills Bootcamps over the number that would otherwise have been expected to train in another way. The interviewee saw M6 as a successful measure but wanted to know more about the detail behind the figures.

“It’s not as black and white as saying, right we’re still going to keep having all of these private individuals paying for courses and we’ve got the bootcamp, because a lot of these people that would have paid are now thinking, well, hold on, I don’t have to pay, I’ll just go to a bootcamp.” Recruitment Agency 1

Few of the LBOs gave negative reactions to the Skills Bootcamps, but LBO4 expressed challenges with working with a training provider who it felt had under-delivered and not communicated effectively, which resulted in them investing a significant amount of their own time for no benefit.

Logistic Business Operator 4 did acknowledge that it might have been the particular training company that was the problem, but the response illustrates that there are varied opinions across the industry.

LBO1 also raised the issue of becoming a formalised training partner, and the challenge of negotiating the administrative procedures to gain the funding.

Alternative Training Routes to Skills Bootcamps

Some LBOs run their own in-house training, because it is efficient and quick.

“We’re training drivers in a month or so and put them on the road.” LBO1

In-house training gives the Logistic business operators more control over the trainee selection process. However, in house training is an additional cost for the companies.

Connecting Logistics Business Operators with Skills Bootcamps

The primary limitation of the Skills Bootcamp identified by some LBOs and the Recruitment Agencies is that trainees are not guaranteed a job with an operator at the end of the training period, just a job interview.

LBO2 believed that connectivity between the LBOs and Skills Bootcamps should be improved, including interviewing candidates at the outset and linking into job offers at the end, which could alleviate problems of staff retention. However, another LBOs was directly involved in training people through a Bootcamp indicated that attrition is still high.

“we enrolled about 150 individuals in the bootcamp scheme and I would say it’s been successful for us in terms of take up. What we found is some people started it and then decided it wasn’t for them. I would say of the 150-odd places that we filled; we probably still have about 80-odd individuals in the business” LBO3

LBO2 had selected to pay a local private trainer to train new drivers for the company because of a perceived lack of proximate Skills Bootcamps in the area. However, on checking, the research team noted the nearest regional training centre was within 1 hours’ drive.

It was generally thought that the relationship between the Skills Bootcamps and employers related to the calibre and commitment of Skills Bootcamp candidates. There was a broad consensus that the process could be improved by LBOs interviewing trainees prior to the candidates being accepted on to the Skills Bootcamp training. They perceived that not all candidates had a good understanding of what the driving job would entails (beyond the actual driving) and were less likely to complete the training or take up work on completion because the training was free. Some LBOs and Recruitment Agencies held the view that people were using the Skills Bootcamps only to gain a skill for their CVs and had little intention of pursuing a career as an HGV driver. Some trainees were thought to be completely unsuitable for the career.

“crucially, there needs to be some investment in making sure that these people are the right fit. There is no point in trying to train someone who firstly is never going to pass their test because it is a technical thing to learn how to drive an HGV. Not everyone can do it.” (LA2)

The link between the Skills Bootcamps and employers also continues into ensuring trainees are ready for work, which is also discussed in Section 5.

Employability of Bootcamp Trainees

There was a feeling that the successful Skills Bootcamp trainees still needed support in transitioning from the training into being competent and safe employees. LBO3, for instance, indicated that newly qualified drivers would be started on easier routes to build their skills and confidence. Those companies offering in-house training also saw that training extended well beyond gaining the HGV licence.

One of the challenges for trainees, as explored from their perspectives in Section 5, is gaining work experience. The Recruitment Agencies suggested that employers prefer 6 months to 2 years’ driving experience, although during the peak shortage LBOs did recruit newly qualified drivers.

As demand for drivers has lessened during Q1 of 2023, Recruitment Agency 1 had experienced a lot of Skills Bootcamp recruiters contacting them as they were struggling to find enough jobs for their trainees.

Recruitment Agency 1 argued that LBOs often expect someone else to give newly qualified drivers experience, and do not want to take responsibility for this part of the learning process. Hence, very few newly qualified drivers get taken on in trunking operations (A to B delivery) and must take work in less attractive parts of the industry first (e.g., waste & skip collection). There is a question for Skills Bootcamps and employers to consider around how this transition can be more effectively facilitated should it be considered a barrier.

One barrier noted by the stakeholders that was felt had certainly limited trainees in obtaining a driving job, especially in the C+E category, was insurance costs. Newly qualified drivers were associated with a higher policy excess level applying (3-5 times higher).

“there’s been all this investment in the training and the funding but then the problem they’re coming across is they can’t then get a job because companies aren’t able to put them on their insurance policy or are not prepared to take them on their insurance policy because of the increased risk.” LBO2

LBO2 (a small company) also noted this challenge being worse for drivers under the age of 25, which disincentivises recruitment of younger people into the industry. Skills Bootcamps are available to those aged 19+.

From the interviews it appears that smaller operators can find negotiating insurance deals harder than large operators, as the larger operators did not see insuring newly qualified drivers as an issue. However, recruiters noted that larger companies nonetheless still wanted experienced drivers with minimum penalties on their licences. Some viewed this requirement as a justifiable position due to the value of the load and vehicles:

“... there’s roughly £300,000 worth of goods on board. And if you take that, then you got the vehicle itself, which is worth probably another £100-150,000, ... they just don’t want new people without the experience to be trusted with that kind of goods.”
Recruitment Agency 3

A solution suggested by one stakeholder is that the Government could offer a similar financial incentive to that offered by the Government to employers recruiting apprentices. Additional funds could help support workplace transition training and insurance costs. However, this stakeholder also understood that insurance premiums are negotiable, and that LBOs could do more to negotiate their insurance deals more effectively.

Thoughts on Future Bootcamp Funding

For the future, some stakeholders suggested that the Skills Bootcamp model may benefit from a review of its aims and who it targets to attract into the industry. One of the key context arguments raised by the research is that the logistics industry needs to attract a younger, more diverse workforce (e.g. more women) to the driving role. Recruitment Agency 3 proposed that Skills Bootcamps appear to be popular with older (40+) workers moving from van driving or other industries into HGV driving, but few other stakeholders made any comment on the types of people attracted to the training.

There is a view that younger people are less attracted to the job because of the hours impacting on social and/or family life. Hence, comments made earlier in relation to extending driving hours are important to reframe the image of the profession.

“I don’t think that it’s seen as an attractive career proposition for young people leaving school or college and so I don’t think really that we’re tackling the ageing driver profile. I think that’s one of the biggest concerns for me”. LBO3

More generally, if new trainees are finding it difficult to secure jobs, Recruitment Agency 1 queried the rationale for a second tranche of funding being released. Similarly, the LAs wanted the funding structure reviewed.

“I think that [Skills Bootcamp funding] is something that needs to be looked at in the future. It needs to be in smaller packages. Amounts of money where they can really concentrate on what the training providers are doing with them.” LA2

M7-M9 Apprenticeships

The Skills Bootcamps had shifted attention away from apprenticeships, and the shortage demanded other quick training routes, whether through the Skills Bootcamps, external private, or in-house training. LBO4, for instance, had dropped the apprenticeship in favour of private training because of the time factor, but were keen to be in a position to offer apprenticeships in the future.

LBOs who previously offered apprenticeships generally used a ‘warehouse to wheels’ route, where selected employees working in the warehouse train to become an HGV driver alongside their warehouse duties.

However, LBO4 undertook internal ‘warehouse to wheels’ training of their own warehouse workers, at a cost to the organisation because of reservations around the quality of other training routes (Skills Bootcamp and Apprenticeships). LBO4 described that they could select employees with an established work record within the company, who they considered worth the investment (e.g., skills, work attitude, commitment). Trainees would continue to work in the warehouse earning money while completing the driver training within 4 weeks. Earning while training makes the training more accessible for those who need to keep earning.

However, the 'warehouse to wheels' apprenticeship model could only be applied by those LBOs that have warehouses, or where other non-driving jobs could be offered alongside training over a period of at least 12 months. LBO4 explained the training included unloading and loading lorries too.

"the apprenticeship levy approaches to becoming a driver isn't as useful. It's not like hairdressing, right, where you can train to be a hairdresser at the same time as actually cutting people's hair and washing people's hair and doing the job. So yeah, being a[n apprentice] driver, you spend four days a week working in a warehouse or as a planner or whatever that might be." Logistics Business Operator 6

A number of the LBOs noted that in general the apprenticeship levy could only be reasonably accessed for office or technical roles, not for HGV driving, because the trainee could not undertake the driving test until the end of the training period. Companies without these ancillary roles (e.g. warehousing) found it difficult to offer employment alongside the driver training. LA3 questioned why incentives for taking on HGV apprenticeships were necessary, although others said this financial support did make it more feasible.

While these are practical barriers for LBOs offering driving apprenticeships, there are also barriers to attracting apprentices for HGV driving roles. First, stakeholders perceive there is an emphasis on classroom-based education, which they consider a barrier. Second, stakeholders noted that people (not recent school leavers) moving from other jobs may not want to re-engage with English and Maths skills if they did not already hold the relevant qualification.

While apprenticeships have 'slower' impact than the Skills Bootcamps, LBO3 argued there is a distinct advantage to the apprenticeship route.

"One of the advantages of the apprenticeship scheme is that whilst the individuals going through that 13 months of training, we'll make sure that they have lots of visibility of the role of a driver they might, they might buddy up with a driver and go out as a passenger on a number of runs to just to get an understanding of what the job entails as they're learning to pass their licence." LBO3

In contrast, LBO3 was concerned that many people signing up for Skills Bootcamps had little opportunity to experience the broader role during the training; not only the driving element, but all the other aspects of the job from checking the vehicle to unloading. This point was noted earlier and is also discussed by the trainees in Section 5.

M10-12, M20 & M26 Other routes to HGV employment

The final five measures related to specific target groups of potential employees. As a reminder these were announced by Government as follows:

- M10 - We are providing extra funding for both medical and HGV licences for any adult who completes a vocational qualification in HGV driving accessed through the adult education budget in the 2021 to 2022 academic year.

- M11 - We are expanding the Department for Work and Pension's driver training pilot delivered through Jobcentre Plus to bring jobseekers into the industry.
- M12 - We have provided £1m grant funding to Road to Logistics (a national, not for profit, logistics training organisation) which is working with the Welsh Government and HM Prison and Probation Service to train ex-offenders to drive lorries as well as supporting the Jobcentre Plus pilot.
- M20 - We have announced measures to make it easier for former armed forces personnel to qualify as HGV drivers.
- M26 - We are providing flexible support funding for jobseekers and those on Universal Credit who have an HGV licence towards the costs of getting their Driver Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) qualification, which is needed to drive an HGV for a living.

Overall, these other measures were in general considered potentially helpful, but not to the extent of the training programmes themselves.

None of the stakeholders knew anything about M10, bar one. That stakeholder had heard about the measure, but had no idea how it operated, who operated it, and how to engage with it.

Few stakeholders commented on schemes involving the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) because they knew little about the specific measures (M11). However, there appeared to be some negative perceptions of Jobcentre Plus (JCP) and assumptions about the unemployed that could be a barrier to engagement with any future measures through JCP.

Measures such as Roads to Logistics (M12) and recruiting from the Armed Forces (M20) were welcomed by some LBOs. Several stakeholders were actively involved with Roads to Logistics but not through this specific measure. One Recruitment Agency noted that when newly qualified drivers are struggling to find employment in the sector, having the additional issue of being an ex-offender could compound the challenges of gaining employment, particularly in relation to security at delivery sites, and security of the load.

Many LBOs considered experience in the Armed Forces to be a good basis for entering the industry as a driver. However, Recruitment Agency 2 reported that fewer armed forces personnel are receiving HGV driver training while in the forces than in the past. Recruitment Agency 3 thought that even Armed Forces personnel with qualifications would not have the experience of backing into bays and managing large loads without additional training. It was argued that Armed Forces personnel would also face the same barriers as newly qualified drivers in obtaining a job unless they could demonstrate relevant experience.

No-one had experience of drivers having their Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) training funded by the DWP (M26), though it is more likely that DWP funding would be directed towards those who are out of work rather than those who have an employer, and employers would not necessarily know what support had been accessed by jobseekers before they work for that employer. A general view was that this would be funded by the employer.

“Again, the sort of Universal Credit stuff, you know, it’s sort of a bit of a help there that’s all helpful at the margin...they’re all useful positive measures, but they’re not deal breakers.” LA1

3.4.5. Testing capacity/licence processing

Key insights

The agencies explained the efforts they had undertaken to enable more movement through the testing and licencing pipeline after the impact of COVID. Internally they viewed these as successful. [Published statistics](#) on the number of Large Goods Vehicle vocational tests taken also suggests the measures were successful in moving more people through the testing and licensing pipeline. In the 12 months from January 2022 to December 2022 there were 114,017 tests conducted, compared to 73,554 in the 12 months from January 2019 to December 2019. This reflects an increase of 40,463 tests.

Externally the LBOs, Recruitment Agencies and the LAs expressed a range of opinions, but many had noted that access to testing slots had improved. There was some indication that responses to medical certificates were still seen as slow, and a concern about the safety of extending medical certificates. There were also some concerns about those drivers who no longer had to take the trailer test not having their skills confirmed, and with ensuring standards are maintained through the delegated examiner testing process.

Problem context

The COVID pandemic brought constraints on the driver examination system because people were not allowed to meet face-to-face outside specific social circles, and all driving examinations were stopped. This temporary cessation of all driving tests with the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) caused a backlog, with provisional licence holders and professional drivers seeking to extend their licences waiting many months to take a test.

A second problem arose with the pandemic in the processing of professional driver licenses with the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA). Stakeholders reported that these operational issues in the main had been resolved, with only a few delays in the system occurring in the first part of 2023.

Recruitment Agency 1 noted that increasing the numbers of people training as HGV drivers through Skills Bootcamps would have increased the demands on the organisations. In terms of in-house training LBO1 had experienced the impact of the problem

“we had people waiting 11 weeks to get the driving test. And even longer to get a medical.” LBO1

“It massively slowed our testing of drivers that have been through both the bootcamp and apprenticeships and anything else. So, we really did struggle to the point of, you know, instead of it taking 12 weeks, it was taking over six months to get people through testing and we recruited an examiner now as well.” Logistics Business Operator 6

In terms of processing licences, the professional driver is required to submit multiple documents in paper form, which are entered into the IT system manually by a clerk. Once the driving test has been taken and passed, the system automatically generates the licence.

However, LBOs and the Recruitment Agencies involved in the Skills Bootcamps noted that the pressure has eased:

“definitely this year I’ve noticed an impact in terms of testing availability and that’s definitely improved significantly as it was before” LBO2

The two motoring agencies (DVSA and DVLA) also believed the measures had been effective in increasing capacity.

M15 Changes to the licence/testing

This measure required a change in law before it could be implemented.

The elements of M15 which removed the need for a test to tow a trailer and enabling HGV drivers to take the C+E test without the prerequisite of passing the C test required technical system changes to the DVLA computer system. The manual paper application processes and IT systems had to be amended for the automated licences to be generated once the DVSA informed the DVLA of a candidate passing a test.

*“So there had to be system changes to allow clerks to process applications in a different way and to give people extra provisional entitlements. [IT] system changes had to take place to allow a licence to be issued for a trailer where the person hasn’t taken it, because our system would have blocked that previously.”
Motoring Agency 1*

The interviewee indicated that the IT system changes were delivered in stages. At the end of March 2023, the system update was reported to be very near to completion, if not already completed.

While M15 was intended to increase testing capacity for other categories and enable C+E jobs to be filled quickly, some LBOs and Recruitment Agencies expressed concern over the safety implications of new C+E drivers. However, one LBO welcomed the change, precisely because they only run C+E vehicles.

“I don’t see a major problem with going straight to class one” LBO5

Yet the same LBO commented on the safety of towing a caravan:

“There is one thing on here that I think was a mistake and I think should be reversed. The removal of the Category B licence for towing a caravan. We train drivers to pull a trailer. Look at the number of caravans that flip over on the road. Because as part of their Category B they get told about balancing the load in the caravan. Allowing for the angle of turn.” LBO5

While not directly related to HGV operations, the broader road safety issues are important and were this risk regarding caravan towing to be realised it would represent an unintended consequence.

DfT casualty statistics for 2022 show that the overall number of collisions involving cars or vans towing in 2022 was above 2019 levels, but very broadly in line with pre-pandemic trends. The number of fatal collisions also appears to have increased compared to 2019, but the numbers involved are small and subject to year-on-year fluctuations which means care should be taken in the interpretation of this data.

DfT and DVSA have also worked with the training industry to introduce an industry-led accredited trailer training scheme, aimed at drivers who are new to towing (i.e. have benefited from the change in the law) and those that have been towing for a long time.

M15-M18 Opening up testing capacity

Most stakeholders across the sector welcomed the opening up of capacity in the examination process. The measures increased and reallocated capacity for conducting and processing HGV tests, which had enabled the backlog to be tackled and waiting periods reduced.

M15 removed the requirement to sit a driving test to tow certain types of vehicle and trailer combinations (i.e. the B+E test). Before the removal of the test, there were *“around about 35,000 driving tests a year for people who wanted to tow a trailer”*. Removing this towing test requirement enabled examiners to deliver many more HGV tests. The agency therefore saw this as an effective measure.

M16 was about employing more examiners. MA2 indicated that there was ongoing recruitment. They noted that examiners working for private companies are often paid more than in the public sector and this can affect the retention of highly qualified and internally trained staff within official agencies. An LA interview also described the situation:

“...DVSA were losing people. Their front door is wide open, but their back door was open as well. So, they needed to sort of recruit and retain their staff.” LA3

Hence M17, bringing in temporary staff from the Ministry of Defence (MOD) was considered effective in enabling the backlog of tests to be tackled.

*“we trained 23-24 MOD personnel to deliver driving tests on behalf of DVSA.”
Motoring Agency 2*

These MOD examiners were deployed to hotspots around the country with the highest demand between 1 November 2021 and 4 December 2022.

The motoring agency did not believe there were any unintended consequences on the pass rate as a result of bringing in MOD examiners, with pass rates being in line with the in-house examiners.

M18 enabled ‘delegated examiners’ to move between different emergency service sectors. In this way it increased testing capacity and also reduced reliance on DVSA test centres.

The combination of these measures enabled waiting periods for the tests to decrease from 16 weeks to 2 to 3 weeks. This decrease suggests that the combination of measures had been successful.

The delays to testing had an impact on HGV driver trainees. The industry had seen some trainees deciding not to wait for the test, and in some cases, the second test, if failing the first one, preferring to seek employment in other roles.

“The really big thing was to get more examiners in, get the MOD examiners to do civilian testing, and the delegated examiners: the emergency services. They were useful because, however you do your training, ultimately it has to come together on the test, right? And the nozzle through which everyone has to go was very small. The nozzle is now a bit wider so that you can get more people through. So yeah clearly in testing examiner capacity is a critical thing.” LA1

MA2 explained how splitting off the manoeuvres test again opened up capacity, in that case by 20%. This part of the test could be taken in the driving training school. As demonstrated in Section 5, most of the trainees took their tests in two parts. This split had an impact on DVSA as they had to design and deliver training packages to the ‘manoeuvres’ examiners. MA2 indicated the success of how this split was to operate in the long term is unknown.

“That’s a very, very big change and effectively what it means is that we’re now in a position where we’ve got over 1000 external trainers who we know very little about because it’s an unregulated industry that are delivering tests on behalf of the Secretary of State because it’s effectively that there are examiners, in a loose term, delivering a test on behalf of the agency.” Motoring Agency 2.

Monitoring compliance is tricky as it can only be evaluated from desktop evidence. At the point of interview, MA2 was reviewing this element, to ensure that standards are met going forward. Should it be found that they are not being met, this would be a weakness of process and an unintended consequence.

3.4.6. Implementation of measures

Not all stakeholders felt they were able to comment on the implementation of the measures.

However, some took the view that measures could have been implemented sooner, given the perceived lack of complexity. It was suggested that this might have been due to a lack of Government capacity to address the issues, and/or knowledge within Government about the freight industry (e.g., how things work, can be changed, and improved). It was felt engagement with the industry would be essential in shaping future measures.

4. Survey of drivers and trainees

The survey was conducted in order to gain some broader evidence about the perspectives of HGV drivers and those training to become HGV drivers on some of the measures to reduce the driver shortage. A key intention was to consider the survey responses of those willing to take part in further qualitative work in order to recruit a diverse group of participants for that later stage.

The survey ran from 23 March 2023 until 23 May 2023. The drivers and trainees were routed through the survey differently, to ensure they encountered questions relevant to their roles. Further details are provided in the Technical Annex.

HGV drivers were asked about the following measures, as they could have experienced them, whereas people training at the time of the survey would not have:

- M1 – relaxation of driving hours, to allow short-term extra flexibility for the industry,
- M2 – late-night deliveries to supermarkets, food retailers, and distribution centres in England, providing greater operational flexibility,
- M20 - measures to make it easier for former armed forces personnel to qualify as HGV drivers.

Trainees were asked specifically about the experiences of different training schemes and passing through the examining process:

- M6 – HGV Skills Boot Camps in England,
- M7, M8, M9 – Apprenticeship schemes,
- M16, M17, M18 – increased testing capacity.
-

4.1. Key findings

- Most survey respondents were qualified HGV drivers (77%), 52% of which had been qualified for more than 10 years. 25% of the sample was working full-time as an HGV driver, and 4% part-time.
 - Of those respondents who had been qualified for less than 2 years (19% of the overall sample), most had trained to become an HGV driver through Government-funded courses. Of these, 76 out of 86 had trained through Skills Bootcamps and 7 through apprenticeships.
 - 50 respondents were former members of the armed forces, and 27 of them obtained their HGV driving licence while serving in the armed forces.
-

- Only a small proportion of the HGV drivers who responded to the survey reported changes in the pattern of driving due to the specific measures evaluated by the survey. Considering M2 (late-night deliveries), 41% of respondents reported that they had made about the same number of night-time deliveries as prior to the measure. In the case of M1 (longer hours), 58% reported driving about the same number of hours. In both cases, where changes were reported they included both increases and reductions.
- 94% of the trainees who took part in the survey were undertaking training through Skills Bootcamps, whilst 5% were enrolled in apprenticeship schemes.
- Over half of the trainees who took part in a Skills Bootcamp indicated they had completed or were close to completing the program.
- 39% of trainees had already begun a role that would use their qualifications once they received them or were holding a job offer that required it.
- 25% of trainees felt that delays in testing was encouraging them to seek jobs that did not require HGV qualifications, with 19% stating that it was discouraging them from pursuing the training.

4.2. Description of the sample

Of the 463 respondents, 90% identified as male, 8% as female, and 2% did not specify. This is in comparison to ONS APS² [figures](#) reporting that 2% of HGV drivers are female.

The largest age groups were 50-59 years old (35%), followed by 40-49 years old (27%) and 30-39 years (18%). Age groups with fewer respondents were 60-69 years (12%), 18-29 years (8%) and 70 or above (1%).

In terms of ethnicity, 80% were White-British, 10% were White (any other background), 5% were Asian/Asian British, 3% were Black/Black British/Caribbean or African, and the remaining 2% represented other ethnicities.

Among the overall sample, 88% was full-time employed, 6% was working part-time, 5% was unemployed (or had never worked), and 1% was working in roles other than HGV driving. 3% of the respondents reported that they had come to live in the UK specifically to work as an HGV driver.

²The Annual Population Survey (APS) is a sample-based survey asking respondents their current employment. The statistics provided about HGV drivers are those identifying as being a Large Goods Vehicle Driver in employment in the time period referenced. The sample for the survey in this report includes qualified drivers (not all currently working as a driver) and trainees, therefore the sample is not directly comparable to the APS.

Considering regional distribution, Table 5 overleaf shows the subsamples by region and [APS reported](#) regional populations for the year to March 2023. We over-recruited in the South-West region, due to the study team having a stronger network there. For the other regions and UK nations the differences were 0-5 percentage points.

Table 5. Geographical distribution of sample and UK HGV drivers

UK Nation/Region of Driver Residence	% of survey sample	% of UK driver population	Difference (% points)
South West	19	10	+9
West Midlands	14	11	+3
South East	12	11	+1
East Midlands	10	14	-4
North West	9	10	-1
East of England	8	10	-2
Greater London	8	4	+4
Yorkshire & the Humber	7	12	-5
North East	3	5	-2
Wales	6	5	+1
Scotland	5	5	0
Northern Ireland	1	3	-2

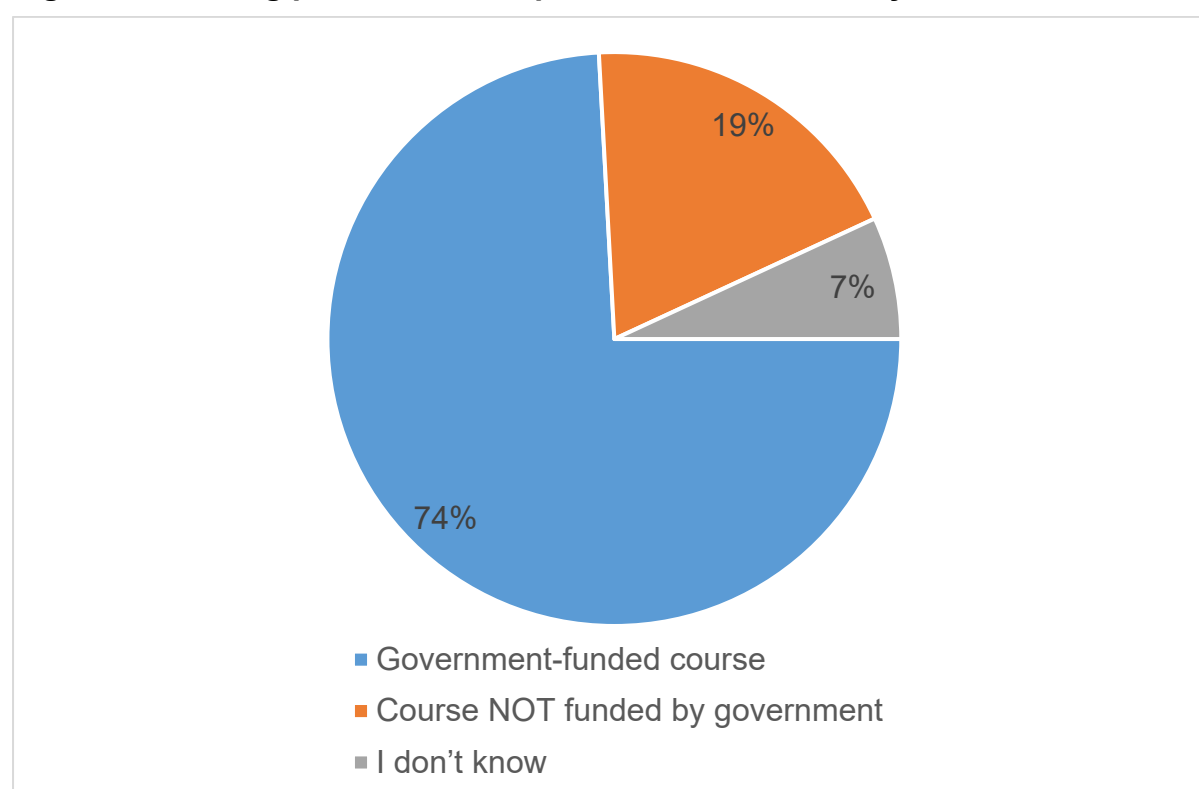
In terms of educational qualifications, 33% had a college or university degree, 30% had a secondary school (up to 16 years) qualification, 27% had higher secondary or further education (A-levels, BTEC, etc.), 4% had a postgraduate degree and 1% had a primary school qualification. The remaining 4% did not indicate their qualifications.

4.3. Findings from HGV driver respondents

Most respondents were HGV drivers (77%), 52% of which had been qualified for more than 10 years, 14% between 2 to 10 years, and 34% for less than 2 years. 88% of the sample was working full-time as an HGV driver (almost entirely having worked long-term for a single company), 6% part-time, 5% was unemployed, and 1% was in full-time education or training.

Those respondents who had been qualified for less than 2 years (116), trained to become an HGV driver mainly through Government-funded courses (74%), including Skills Bootcamps and apprenticeships (76 and 7 out of 86 respondents, respectively, Figure 3).

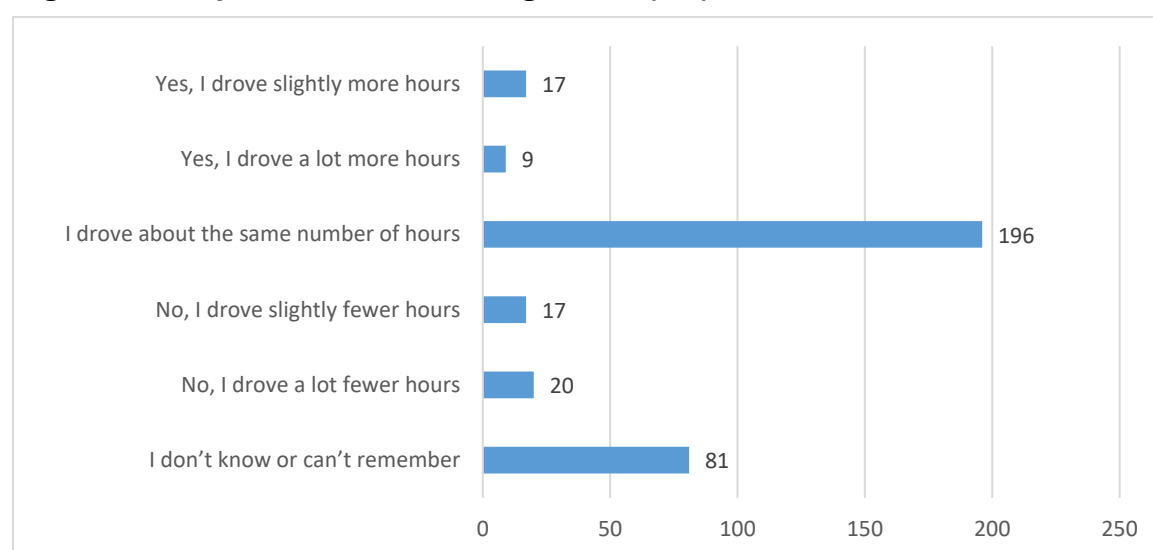
Figure 3: Training path of drivers qualified for less than 2 years



50 respondents were former members of the armed forces, of which 27 obtained their HGV driving licences while serving in the armed forces. 14 indicated they had been assisted by specific training opportunities to support transition from military to civilian life, including three with Driver Certificate of Professional Competence (DCPC), three with a Category C licence, three with an ADR (dangerous goods) permit, and five for a Category C&E licence.

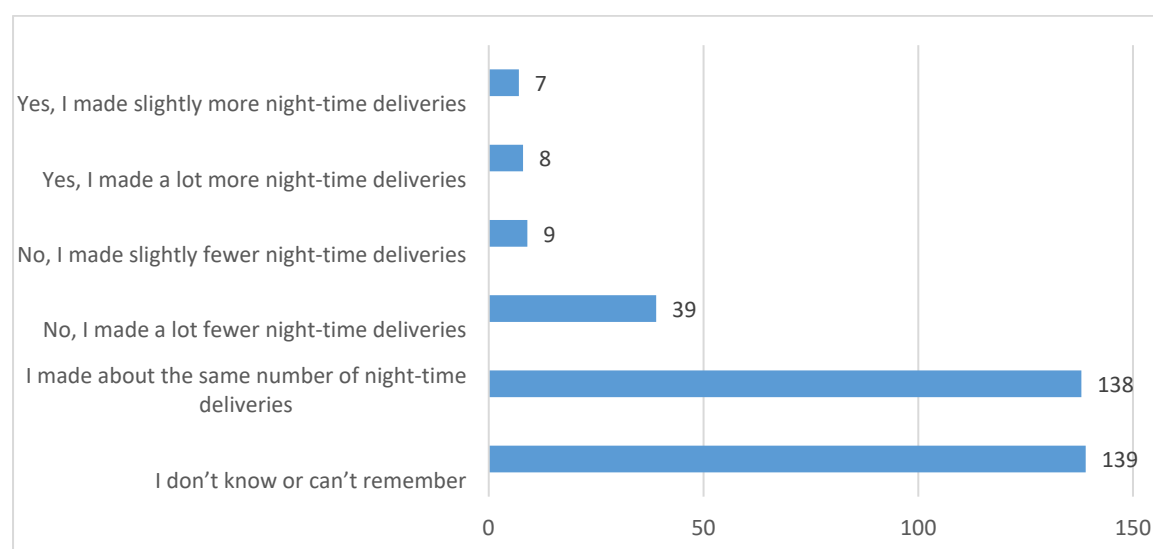
Only a small proportion of the HGV drivers who responded to the survey reported changes in their driving patterns due to the specific measures evaluated through the survey (Figure 4). For example, for M1, 58% of the sample declared to have driven about the same number of hours, and only 26 respondents (out of 340, i.e., 8%) declared to have driven more hours. Of these, some agreed that the relaxation of driving hours rules enabled them to make more journeys (13), to spread their work over more hours (13), and that they felt safe while driving longer hours (12).

Figure 4: Responses about driving hours (M1)



Regarding M2, the relaxation of late-night delivery regulations, 41% of respondents declared that they made about the same number of night-time deliveries as before, and only 15 out of 340 respondents indicated they made more night-time deliveries (Figure 5). Of these, 12 said that they felt safe driving during late night deliveries, and 11 that the changes to late night delivery restrictions gave them more flexibility. Furthermore, 13 said that they were able to complete more deliveries due to driving during the night and that they enjoyed having the option of shift patterns which included late night deliveries.

Figure 5: Responses about late-night deliveries (M2)

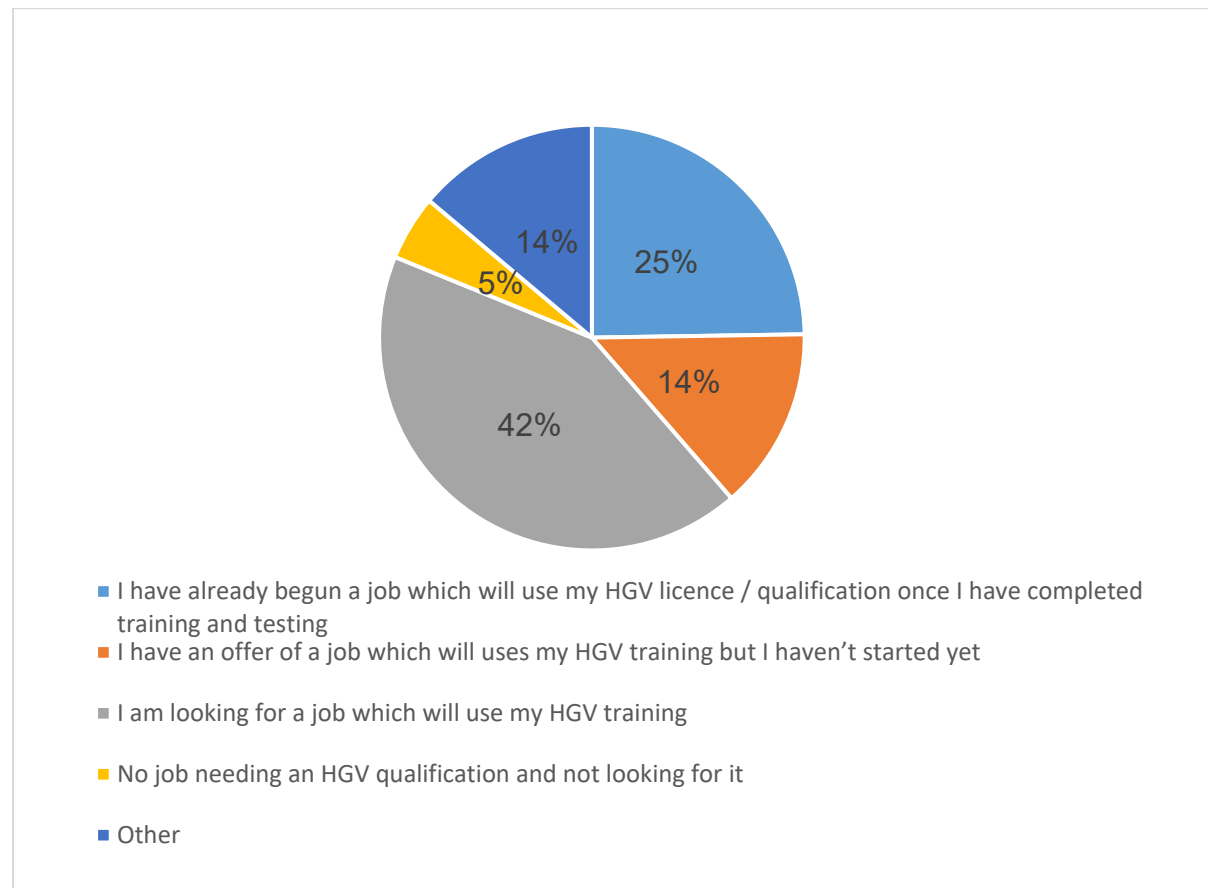


4.4. Findings from Trainee respondents

101 trainees took part in the survey. Of these, 75% were working full-time, 9% part-time, and 13% reported being unemployed.

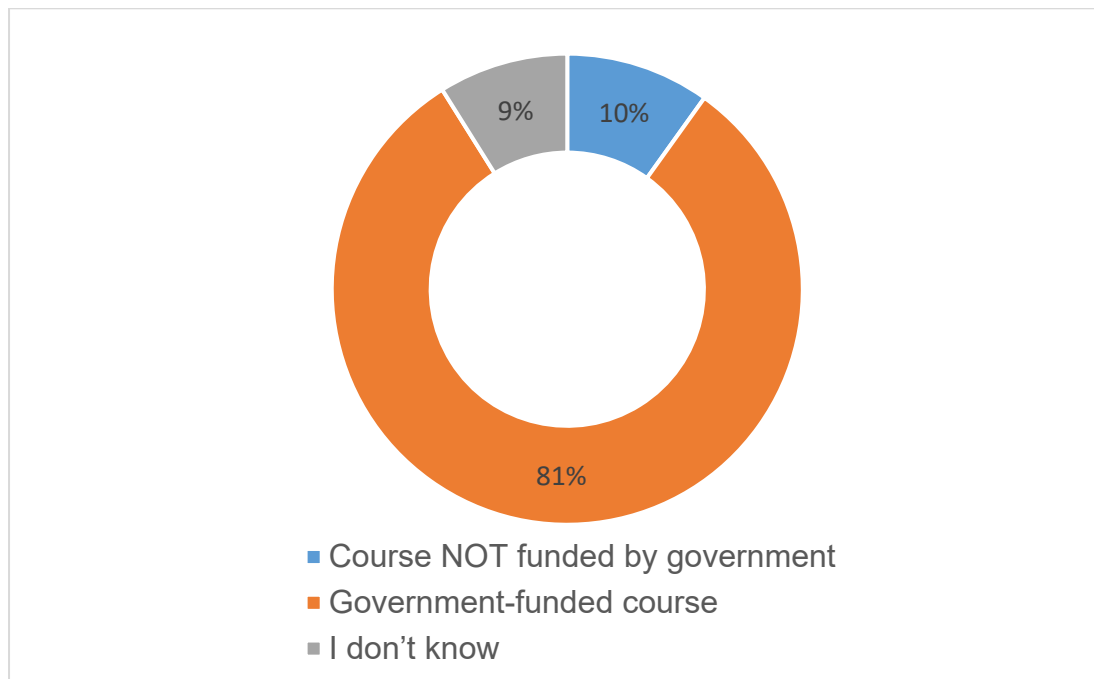
Of all trainees, 25% had already begun a job that required HGV qualification once they had completed training and testing, 14% had received a job offer which required an HGV qualification (but they hadn't started working yet), and 42% were looking for a job requiring HGV qualification (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Employment status of trainees (n=101)



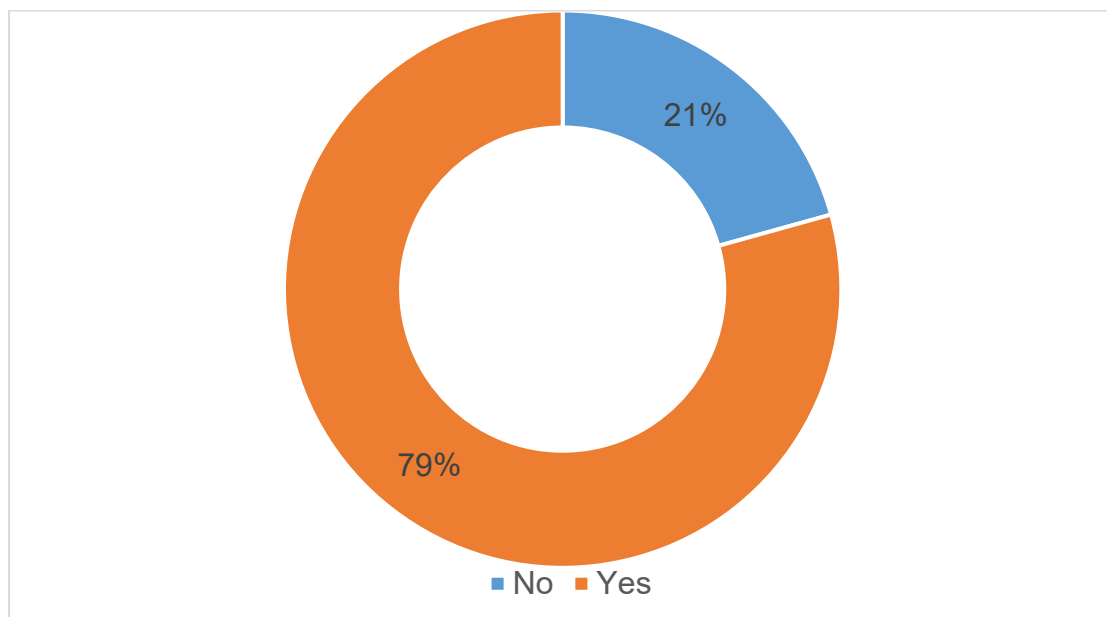
81% trainees reported studying on Government funded courses, most of which (94%) were studying through Skills Bootcamps and 5% via an apprenticeship (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Use of Government funding for training (n=101)



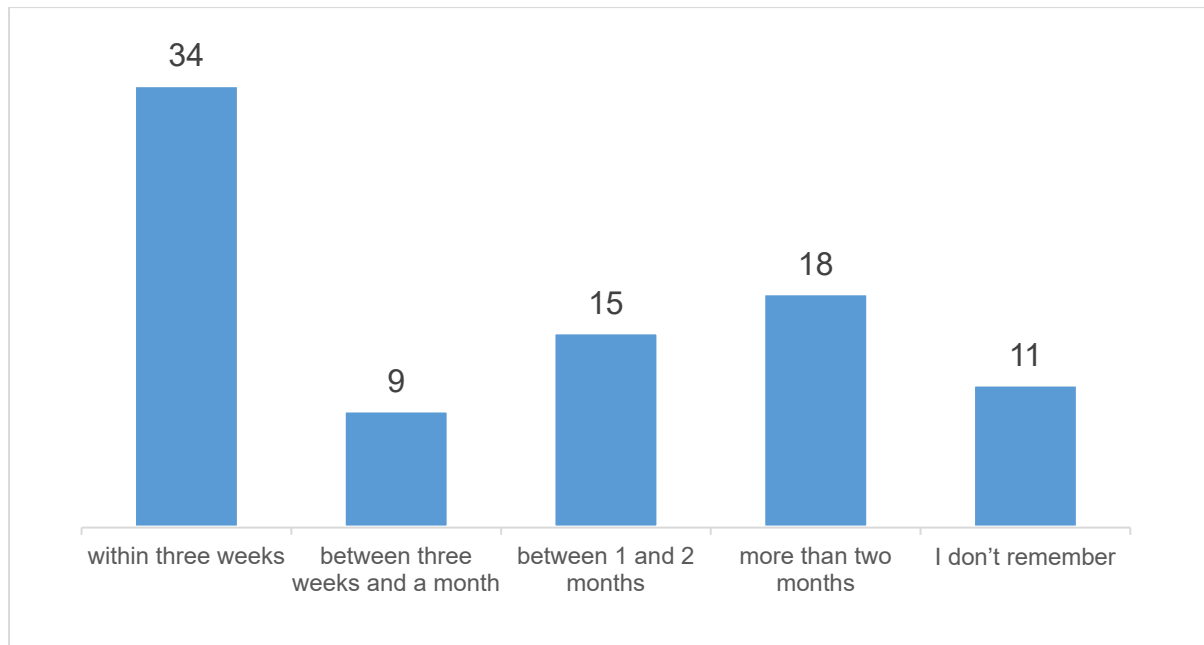
82% of all trainees had already booked their HGV test, and 79% of them were satisfied with their test location (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Satisfaction with the location of the booked HGV test (n=102)



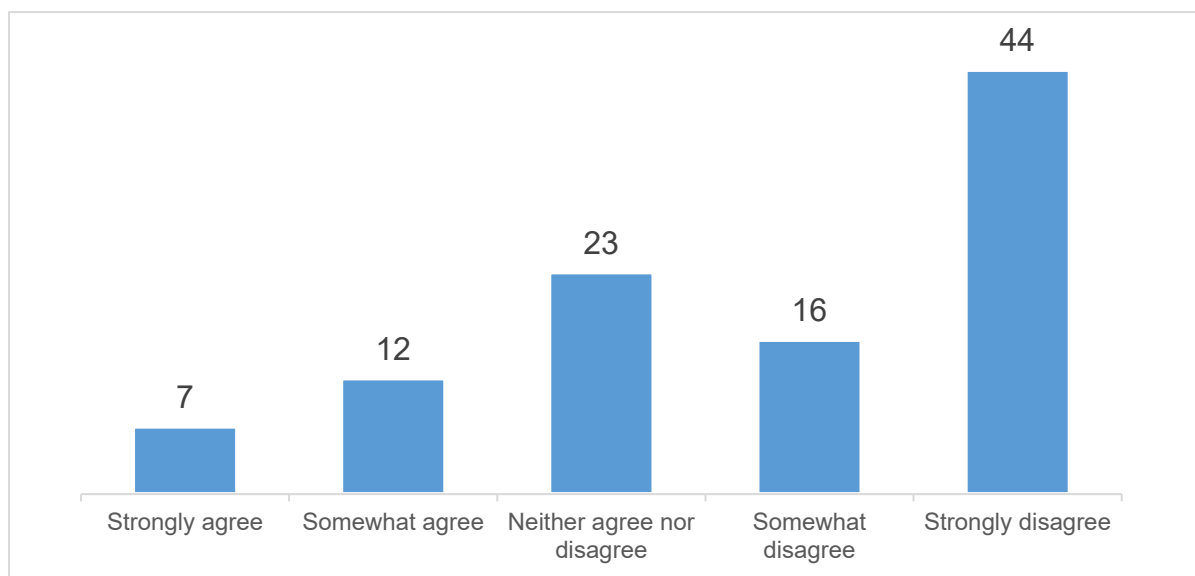
Among those who had booked the test, 43 respondents reported that the first test was available to them within a month (of which 34 respondents reported availability within three weeks), 15 respondents were able to book it within 1 to 2 months, 18 respondents booked it more than 2 months away (Figure 9).

Figure 9: First test availability at the time of booking (n=87)



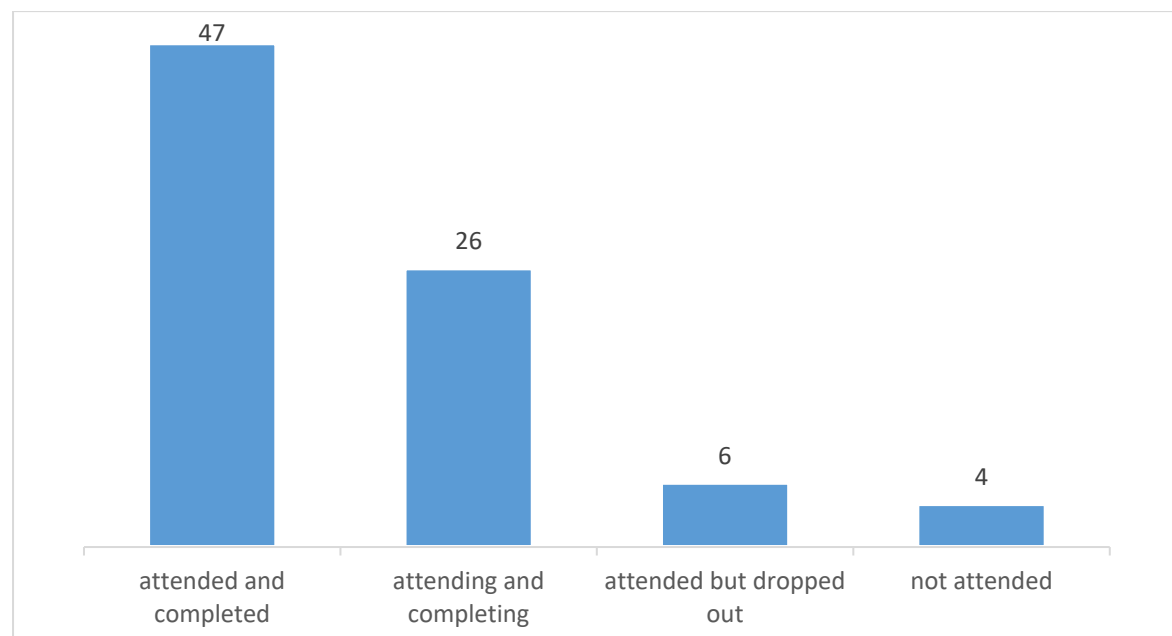
26% of trainees thought that the delays in testing led to looking for jobs that did not need HGV qualification. 19 respondents agreed (with 7 strongly agreeing) that test wait times led to putting off their training (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Did the test waiting time lead to putting you off the training? (n=102)



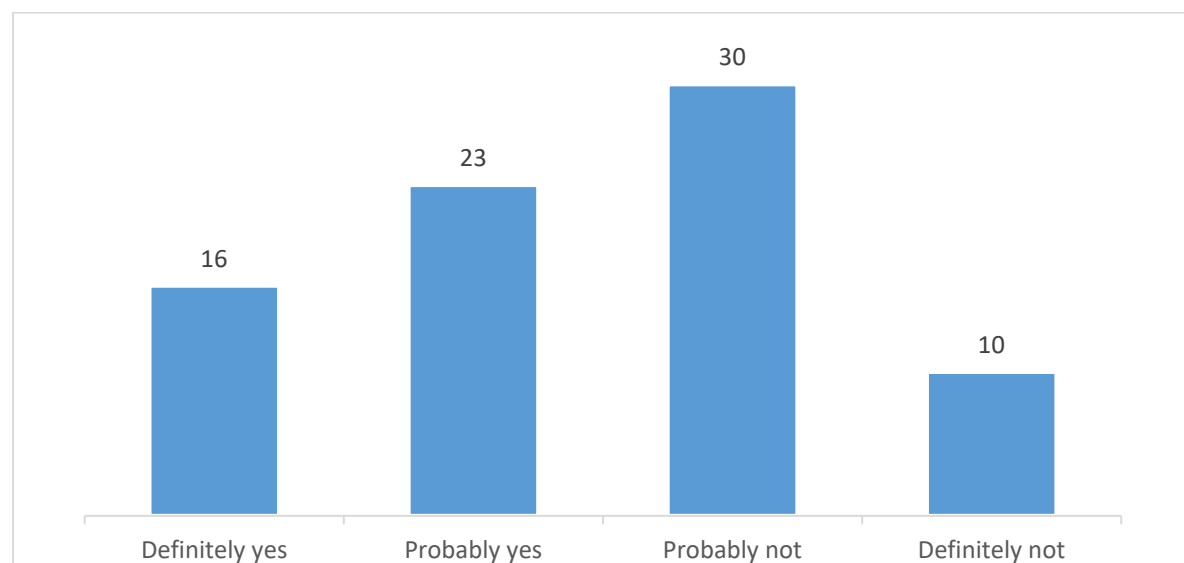
47 respondents completed a Skills Bootcamp training course, 26 respondents said they were attending it at the time of interview, 6 reported having attended but dropped out, and only 4 respondents reported that they did not take part in a Skills Bootcamp (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Skills Bootcamp attendance and completion (n=83)



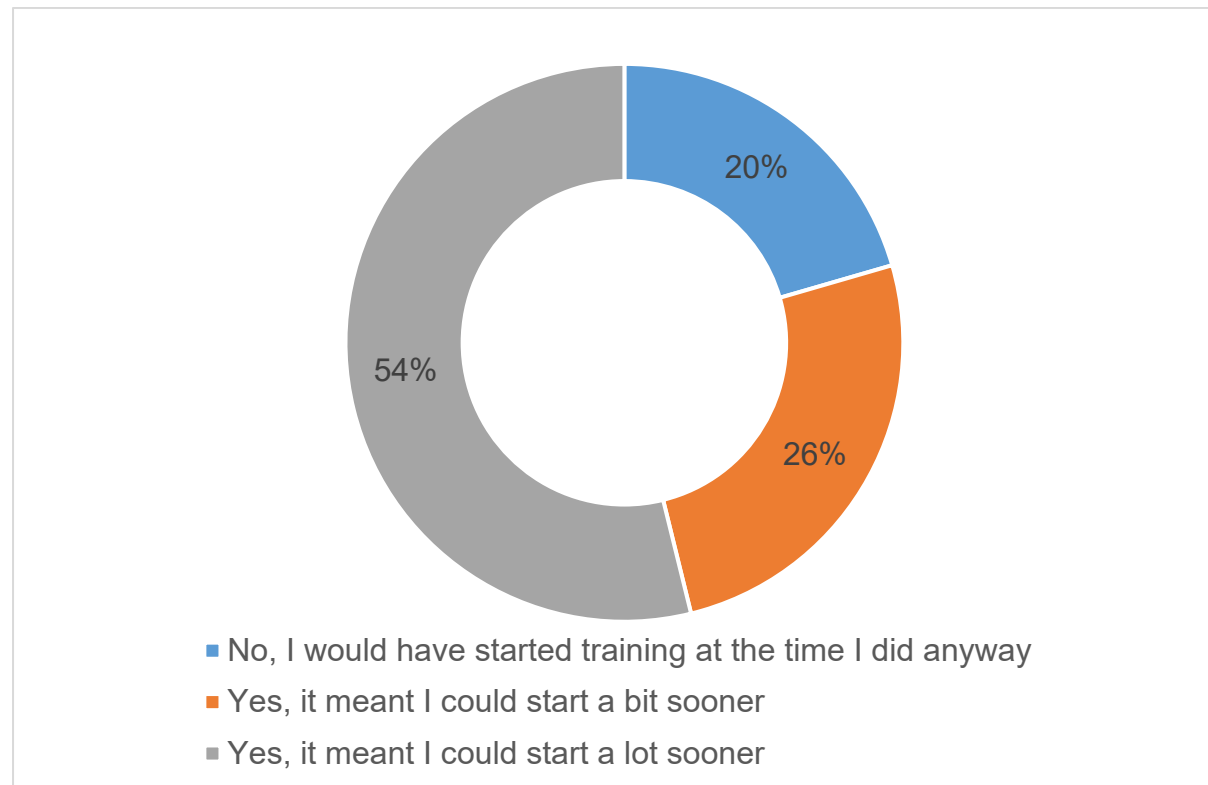
Trainees were almost equally split about importance of Skills Bootcamps to decide to train to become an HGV driver. Indeed, half of the sample reported that they would have not trained to become an HGV driver without a Skills Bootcamp, but the other half would have trained anyways. However, 80% said the Skills Bootcamp fast-tracked their training (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Willingness to train without the Bootcamp opportunity (n=79)



On asking whether Skills Bootcamp participation fast tracked their HGV training (among those respondents who said they would have trained anyway), 54% replied it had enabled them to start a lot sooner, 26% said they had started 'a bit sooner' thanks to the measure, 20% would have started training anyway at the time they did (Figure 13).

Figure 13: Impact of Bootcamp on fast tracking HGV training (n=39)



5. Interviews with HGV drivers and trainees

5.1. Introduction

The interviews with drivers provided limited insights into the measures associated with extended hours, as they had not experienced the measures in practice. Few of the experienced drivers had previously attended an HGV Skills Bootcamp. However, they did provide a wider commentary about HGV driving which adds to understanding of the context of the evaluation.

The interviews with those who had undertaken driver training through the Skills Bootcamps provided deep insights into the HGV training experience. Most participants were positive about the experience, particularly the in-vehicle training. Most of the interviewed trainees were now job seeking, rather than being in training, and reported difficulties in finding a job as an HGV driver. For this reason information from all the interviews with relevant experience has been grouped together when discussing the training and job seeking.

5.2. The sample

The interview sample were recruited by contacting the survey participants who had indicated a willingness to participate in future research. Interview participants were offered a £10 shopping voucher as an incentive.

Initial follow-up to the offer to participate was made by email, with a further reminder sent if necessary. As these actions resulted in few interviews being secured, in order to increase the sample size, the survey participants who had provided phone numbers but not yet signed up for an interview were telephoned. Most people did not answer the phone call or respond to the messages left, but a few more participants were secured this way.

Table 6 sets out the details of the interviews conducted. In two cases the interviews were conducted with two participants together.

Table 6. Driver and trainee interview participant details

Group	Total participants	Individual interviews	Paired interviews	Participant code
Experienced drivers	5	3	1	ED
Trained, not employed	5	3	1	TNE
Trainees	5	5	0	T
All	15	11	2	

5.3. The interviews

Most of the interviews were conducted using Microsoft Teams. We used the 'record and transcribe' function and took notes during the interviews. Three interviews were conducted on the phone – the first for technical reasons; the second did not want to provide an email and preferred speaking on the phone; the third called to cancel the meeting due to changes in hours but was available at that moment to take part over the phone. The first two were audio recorded, and for the third, the researcher took notes. The one-to-one interviews took around 30-45 minutes. The paired interviews took 45-60 minutes.

5.4. Key findings

- In relation to the measures being evaluated, the small sample of experienced drivers, who had little or no experience of having used the measures, has resulted in not providing enough evidence for the research team to make conclusions regarding the impact of temporary relaxation of drivers' hours on the existing workforce's experiences of driving.
- The evidence relating to the Skills Bootcamps is much richer. We can argue there are five key points.
 1. Skills Bootcamps are enabling people who want to become HGV drivers to receive training.
 2. The in-vehicle training is good, but there are other elements that could be included such as more attention on reversing manoeuvres and use of the tachograph (the in-vehicle driving and rest period monitoring device).
 3. Improved administration of the Skills Bootcamps would be expected to speed up training and ensure effective communication with trainees.
 4. The support for job seeking should be enhanced or be linked directly to available jobs to ensure individual trainees' expectations of work are met.
 5. There may be a need to limit the numbers of Skills Bootcamps if the market has become over saturated.

5.5. Reasons to become an HGV driver

At the start of the interview, we asked the participants what prompted them to become an HGV driver. Some had always wanted to be HGV drivers, whereas others had seen it as an opportunity for a career switch that offered particular benefits at this time in their life. For example, one person was looking for part time work in the period between redundancy and retirement, another was a health service professional looking for a change of career.

"I've always had an interest. ... And then I saw that there was a free funding for a training course. I thought 'oh let me go for it' and the rest is history." TNE1 (F, C+E)

All the participants who had recently trained imagined their future work as driving large vehicles between two main points, and they were attracted to solo work.

Some participants had been driving smaller vehicles prior to training as an HGV driver and saw the Bootcamp as a career progression opportunity.

The four experienced drivers had worked either as a van driver, or a Class2/ C driver, before training to be a C+E driver. ED1 and ED5 were working as C drivers and aspired to be 'blue chip' C+E drivers (both had interviews lined up). After a couple jobs taken to get experience, ED2 was working with his preferred company, driving longer distances overnight. ED2 had been working as a driver for 7 years. ED4 had started out as a van driver delivering parcels and saved up for C driver training in the early 2000s. After working for agencies for several years, ED4 became an owner driver and at the time of interview had two lorries and one employee. ED4 wants to grow his logistics company and develop a recruitment agency.

5.6. Experience of Skills Bootcamps

In total, 12 interview participants had trained with a Government funded HGV Skills Bootcamp. ED5 had used the Bootcamp to move from the C to C+E licence categories. In contrast, ED2 had trained as a C HGV driver through the Bootcamp and then paid for private training to complete the C+E test.

At the time of interview, four out of the five trainees had completed their training and passed their test. One participant had failed the on-road test and was waiting for a second test.

Cost of training

All the participants had taken the training because it was free, and they would not have easily afforded it otherwise.

"I don't think I would have got my licence if it wasn't for the Bootcamps, 'cause I think, you know, the money involved probably would have put me off." T4 (M, C+E)

One interviewee had been saving up, but had not reached the full cost and was very pleased to have had the training provided for free.

None of the interviewed participants indicated they had been directed to the Skills Bootcamps via the Jobcentre Plus. They had all seen it advertised elsewhere. One interviewee had been made redundant and independently applied to a Skills Bootcamp. The interviewee indicated that the training provider had advised that he should register with the Jobcentre Plus to qualify for a free place.

Applying and progressing through the training

Nobody had researched the different training providers. They applied to the one they saw advertised or went down the list on the gov.uk website.

“I didn’t really choose if I’m honest. ... They were just offering. And I went with them.”
TNE1 (F, C+E)

Some interviewees found that they had not been accepted after their initial application and had questioned why they had been rejected. They were then offered a place without further explanation.

Some participants had applied for C+ E training, but had only been offered C. Those who had been offered C had accepted the offer, but some were disappointed not to have the C+E opportunity.

“I got offered another one. And this would have been working in [town], but it would be a Class 2. So, I said ‘Yep, more than happy’.” TNE2 (F, C+E)

Interview participants told the researcher that the time between applying for the training and completing was taking between 6 to 18 months. Several factors affected this timespan: the closure of one training provider; availability to attend the in-vehicle training; failing the driving test first time and waiting for second test. However, most participants had to wait for a training start date. They also experienced delays between different parts of the training; for example, between completing the theory test and the in-vehicle training.

While most participants were positive about the training, they particularly noted that the administration was often poor and sometimes confusing. T1 described it as “chaotic”.

While TNE2 thought the trainers were excellent, one participant noted there were issues with some of the information in the online course materials not being up to date.

Working and training

Those participants taking part in a Bootcamp whilst still employed found it flexible; it could be fitted around their existing jobs. The online elements only required a few hours contact time (group seminars), with the majority of the work being self-study which they could complete in their own time. They used holiday for the theory and hazard test, and the in-vehicle training.

In-vehicle training

The HGV driver training schools were arranged by the training provider. Generally, the HGV driver training schools were within one hour’s driving distance from the participants’ homes. Some trainees had to travel much further, which impacted on personal travel costs and time.

All the participants were very positive about the in-vehicle training. They liked their trainers, who they felt were knowledgeable and helpful.

“The first day was quite overwhelming, I would say. Yeah, I felt like a little Lego human, you know, sitting at a big, massive thing, but I had really good instructors. I can’t say bad word about them.” TNE 3 (M, C+E)

“Oh yeah, I was nervous, but it was absolutely brilliant. You trained alongside somebody else for five days solid and then you do your test on the 5th day.” T7 (F, C+E)

Participants had different in-vehicle training sessions in terms of the time period and who they trained alongside.

Manoeuvres

With the exception of TNE1, most participants noted that the bulk of the in-vehicle training time was used learning how to reverse and uncouple the trailer (the manoeuvres) and to inspect the vehicle’s roadworthiness.

Nobody was offered an alternative assessment location. All participants noted that reversing and uncoupling the vehicle is challenging, and they thought they would need more on-the-job practice.

“it was good and I passed but, you know that if you were to just go out, you would need a lot more practice with that.” T7 (F, C+E)

“I do feel I have been trained sufficiently to operate a C+E, I just really would like to get some practice reversing and backing on to bays because unfortunately the first practice I’m going to get is when someone is assessing me for a job in the future.” ED4 (M, C/C+E)

The HGV driving school generally carried out the manoeuvres test with an in-house (delegate) assessor on the third day.

Driving test on the road

The training providers booked the HGV tests and delivered the on-road training week(s) leading up to the test date. All participants had taken their on-road test through a DVSA test centre. The driving test was arranged by the training provider as part of the package. Participants did not know about how easy or difficult it was to arrange the test.

Ready for Work

“I’m quite nervous about turning up on the first day. I don’t doubt my ability to drive the vehicle, but there’s a lot more to it than that.” T1 (F, C)

As noted by the stakeholders in Section 3, there is more to the HGV driver’s job than driving a vehicle from A to B. The trainee drivers felt confident with driving a vehicle, but less confident about other parts of the job. They were aware that the wider role can be complex.

The earlier quotes indicate the desire for increased practice time spent on reversing a vehicle, whether it be into bays or along narrow roads. Other trainees felt they would benefit from experience of loading and unloading a vehicle. Some interviewees mentioned the use of the tachograph and concerns over infringements (e.g., being 1 minute over time). There is also an added complexity with driving and non-driving hours being accounted for.

“No one shows you how to actually use the tachograph, ... I’ll be responsible. I’ll get fined. It’s my licence on the line and no one actually told me anything about the tachograph, not even one bit.” TNE3(M, C+E)

Finding work

Few had insights about the number or types of vacancies available, or the effect of the economic downturn on the job market, mentioned by the stakeholders in Section 3. Most interviewees had assumed that there would be work readily available upon qualification because the Skills Bootcamps were advertised to fill shortages, especially those linked to specific public sector employers. However, by the time of interview, some had begun to question their earlier assumptions about finding work easily.

Specific expectations about the ‘ideal’ HGV driving job emerged:

“not multi-drop because I’ve heard it’s really hard work.” TNE1

“being home every night” TNE3

“My ideal is to just drive to Europe because I’m [nationality]. I’m used to driving on the other side of the road. I got my licence in [country], so if I go there I can drive and see my family and just go back, and you do the job and at the same time you’re just travelling really” TNE3

“tramping a four-day-on, four-day-off” T4 (M, C+E)

“long distance A to B” T7 (F, C+E)

Some were not willing to compromise on their ideal role, but others were. For example, some interviewees had been offered work on car transporters, but only one of them was willing to take that type of driving work.

The biggest challenge for newly qualified drivers is getting work before having driving experience, particularly for C+E jobs. The feeling was that this was a specific example of a long-established practice, as LBOs have always prioritised candidates with driving experience.

Like most of those having completed a Bootcamp, T4 had found it difficult to get an HGV driving job due to the lack of HGV experience, even though he had been a van driver. He had formed the view that LBOs wanted applicants to have between six months and 2 years’ experience.

“Obviously you hear about these sorts of good wages and you see these jobs posted about, even [current employer], they pay really well for Class 1. But then, once you actually go into it and try applying and you know, experience-wise they don’t even reply to you.” T4 (M, C+E)

Most of the interviewees were unable to re-locate or take jobs further away because of domestic considerations.

Having experienced challenges in getting work, ED2 suggested that companies should be paid an incentive to take on newly qualified drivers completing Skills Bootcamps.

The issue of insurance was cited several times as a barrier for new entrants, which underpins the need for experience.

“Yeah, I think the main impression I got, well the impression I got, you know, quite a few of them said that for insurance purposes that they couldn’t hire people, you know, without a certain amount of experience. T4 (M, C+E)

Participants own suggestions for improvements were to integrate the acquisition of further experience with employers or to link the training as a whole to an employer. This last option had also been suggested in the stakeholder interviews.

As part of the Skills Bootcamp application, T7 was interviewed by a LBO who she thought was going to offer her a job at the end of the training, but it didn’t happen.

“So they [Training/Recruitment company] sent an e-mail to him [logistics operator] when I passed and just got an e-mail back saying “really sorry, but there’s no vacancies in your area” and that was that.” T7 (F, C+E)

The majority of those that had completed a Bootcamp found that the training provider had provided limited support at the job search stage, or that no support had been provided.

“I was waiting because they said at the end of it, ‘I’ll help you get a job’. That was what they said: ‘I’ll help you find a job at the end of it’. So, I’ve passed and I’m hearing nothing. And I’m waiting and waiting. Are they gonna call me? I’ve called them. I’ve emailed them. ‘I will get someone to call you back.’ Nothing ever happened.” TNE4 (M, C+E)

The training agency told TNE4 they do not have any jobs now and that he is not the only one in this position.

Some trainees felt pressured by the training company to apply for jobs, because they were under the impression that they might have needed to repay the fees if they did not. Yet at the same time, they had not been offered suitable jobs by the training companies to apply for within their locality.

There was a widespread emotional response from those participants who were job seeking but had not yet managed to secure employment, as illustrated in the quotes below.

“I feel a bit frustrated that there’s not quite the amount of work available that I had hoped for.” TNE1 (F, C+E)

“I’ve had a couple of interviews which I thought have gone well, then someone else is better experienced, which is fair enough and a lot of them just don’t get back to you. It’s been quite disheartening, it really is.” TNE4 (M, C+E)

5.7. Experiences of temporary relaxation of drivers’ hours

Direct evidence about Measure 1

From the interviews there was insufficient evidence to draw conclusions on drivers’ views about the effectiveness of this measure, as they had insufficient personal experience, but some information did indicate why they had little experience.

ED2 was not working in a sector affected by the extended hours (waste).

ED1 and ED5 did not have the opportunity to do extended hours. Their respective companies set their delivery schedules.

ED4 was delivering food during the pandemic for a local company within the local region. At that point ED4 did not have to work extended hours and was not affected by extended delivery hours within the urban area.

6. Conclusions

The evaluation addressed three objectives, which are considered here in turn, followed by some caveats about interpretation of the findings.

6.1. Stakeholder views on the effectiveness of the measures

By the time of finalising this project, quantitative data trends indicated that the driver shortage had reduced. Participants in the research thought that economic factors were playing a role in reducing the demand for drivers. However, some of the measures amongst the 33 implemented were also perceived to have contributed to aligning supply and demand:

- Amongst the training measures Skills Bootcamps received support from the professional stakeholders and trainees as having been a relatively quick and effective intervention.
- Measures to increase the availability and efficiency of testing and licencing as a group were also identified as effective by the motoring agencies and were not identified as barriers by drivers and trainees.

The other measures were not perceived to have made significant contributions to the reduction. Reasons for this included:

- the scale of the measures in several cases meaning any contribution was hard to detect,
- cost, practical, and administrative barriers limiting take-up of the measures.

6.2. Unintended consequences and their mitigation

The unintended consequences that the research was most vigilant to detect related to safety. Stakeholder concerns did emerge around measures which weakened driving regulations put in place for safety reasons, or that changed or accelerated processes designed to ensure drivers are well trained and correctly examined and licensed. The research did not detect any reported examples of actual safety failures; the views were based on the concern that long-established safety standards were being reduced. Some of the concern was directed at the relaxation in driver hours, which was temporary. Other concerns related to removing the towing test, the extension of medical certificates, and the use of delegated examiners.

Participants suggested the identification of mitigations would be supported by greater engagement with the professions to understand their concerns and explore whether a consensus for change can be achieved. This view applied both to the permanent changes, plus any future temporary measures.

A further unintended consequence that emerged resulted from the success of Skills Bootcamps combined with the economic conditions, which was associated by some trainee participants with their difficulty in finding work requiring HGV qualifications.

Participants suggested that mitigations for the future would be to balance the number of training places with employment vacancies and provide greater assistance to newly qualified drivers in finding work requiring their new qualifications.

6.3. Lessons from the Process of Implementation

A few specific process lessons have been identified above relating to the administration of Skills Bootcamps and the cost and perceived complexity of employing foreign drivers on work visas.

Participants emphasised some points about the emergence and reduction of the driver shortage more generally:

- a view that earlier action should be taken if an acute shortage re-emerges,
- that the fact a shortage arose underlines the need for ongoing attention to address the underlying factors limiting the broadness of the appeal of the HGV driver role as a career.

6.4. Limitations of the study

The evaluation had a dynamic context with potentially multiple interventions and external factors influencing the number and demand for HGV drivers. The causal pathways were also complex for similar reasons, involving multiple stakeholders and sectors and with both direct and indirect impacts, and a likelihood of unexpected impacts. Further, timescales for expected impacts varied across the measures, with some having medium and long-term components.

For these reasons, the approach to evaluation that was adopted emphasised understanding the process of delivering the interventions and the role of context. The use of this approach means the evaluation is less able than more experimental, controlled approaches to identify specific or quantified outcomes on a before-and-after comparative basis. The impacts reported in the report then are most reliable in respect of the broad explanations they provide, and less so in terms of the specific findings being generalisable across the entire road freight sector in the UK.

There are also some more specific limitations to acknowledge:

- The qualitative research with stakeholders was diverse in terms of groups included but few small Logistics Business Operators (LBOs) took part. This was mainly due to their limited capacity to engage with the research. Nonetheless, the research captured a range of perspectives and provided some deeper insights from key groups.
- The quantitative survey had two purposes: to recruit a diverse group of drivers and trainee drivers for qualitative research and to examine their experiences of specific measures. Although it included drivers of all ages and genders and from all parts of the UK, for practical reasons it could not be constructed as a representative sample, for example, including factors such as driver experience and type of haulage normally driven. Findings from a fully representative sample might have been different. Not enough information was available about people engaging in training courses for that sample to be constructed on a representative basis.
- Some of the measures were targeted at specific types of haulage, and the quantitative sample size of drivers was not large enough to examine responses according to the types of haulage normally undertaken.
- From both the qualitative and quantitative research, not many participants in the study experienced the relaxation of drivers' hours and night-time deliveries measures, and there is therefore little evidence about the perceived effectiveness of these measures.

For further detail on the methodological approach and potential limitations of the study please refer to the Technical Annex.

Annex 1: Driver and Trainee Survey Sociodemographic Data

Figure 14: Gender categorisation (n=463)

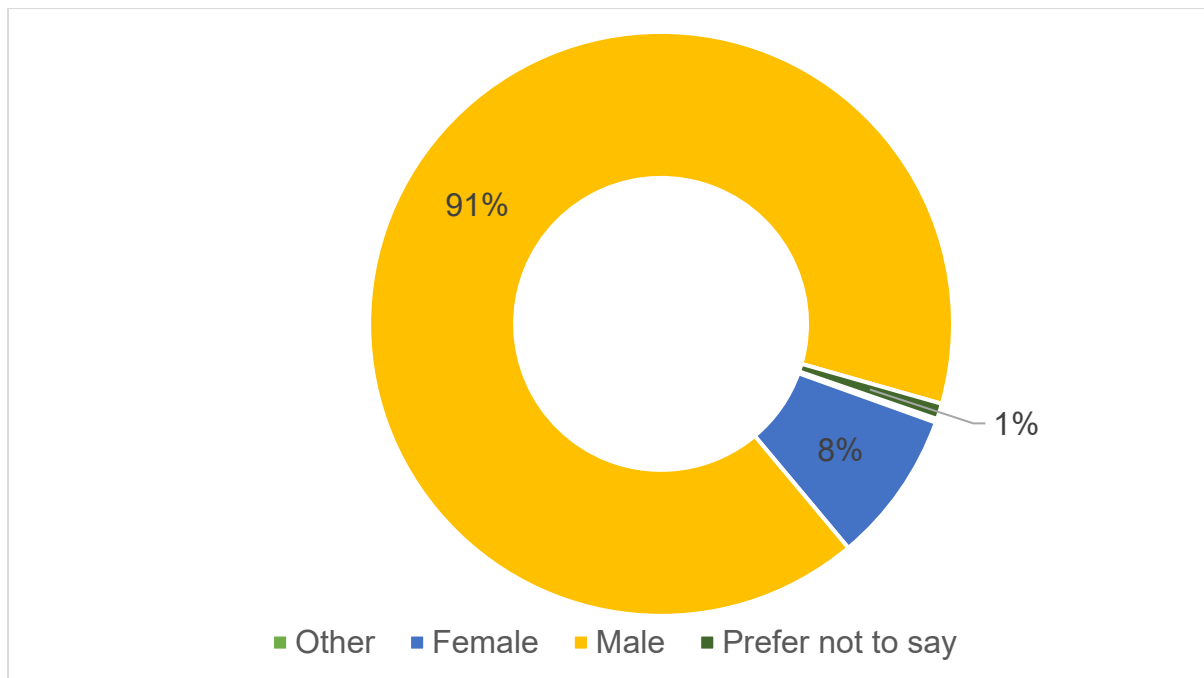


Figure 15: Age distribution (n=463)

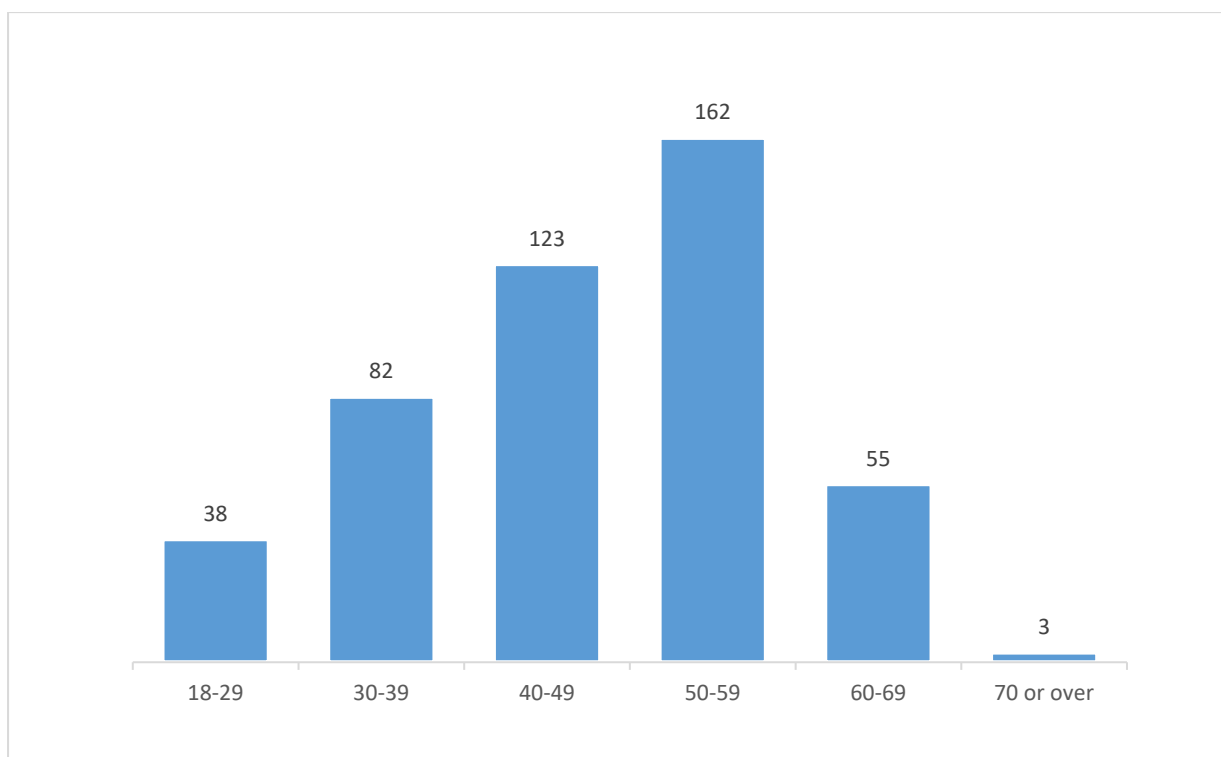


Figure 16: Ethnicity of respondents (n=463)

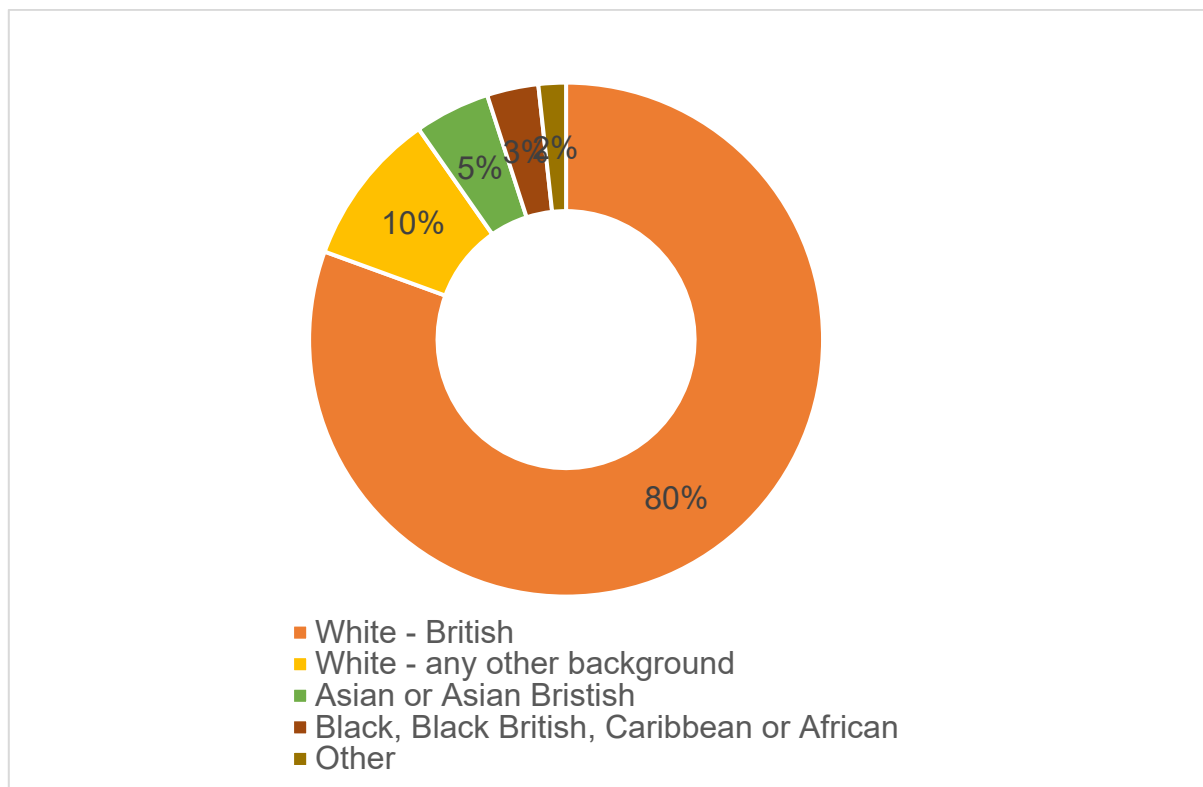


Figure 17: Came to the UK to work as an HGV driver (n=463)

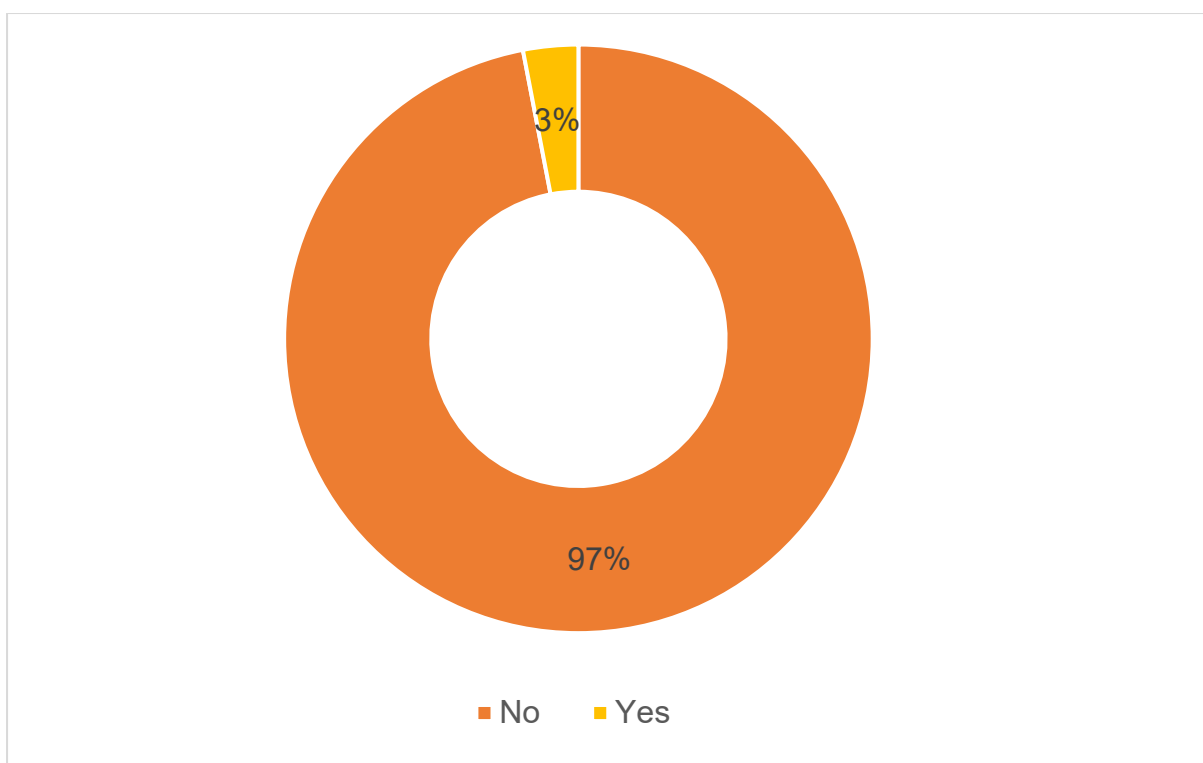


Figure 18: Region of residence (n=463)

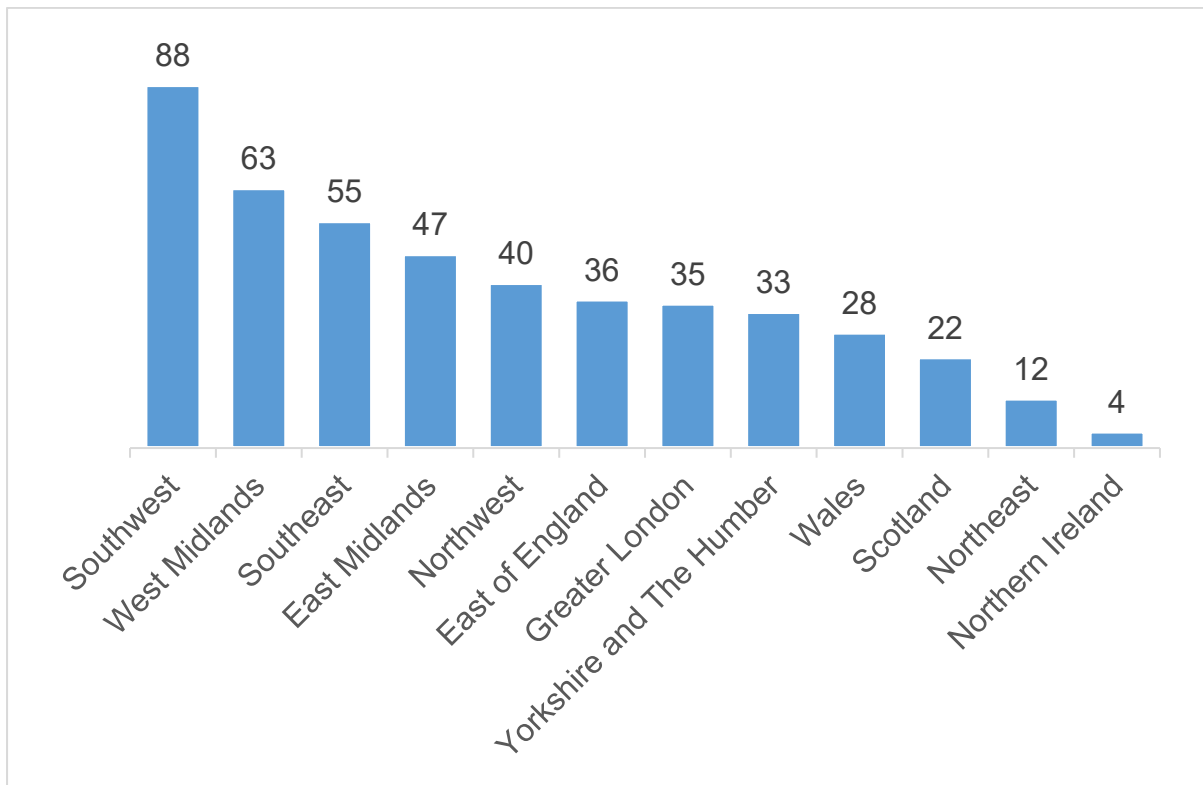


Figure 19: Educational level (n=463)

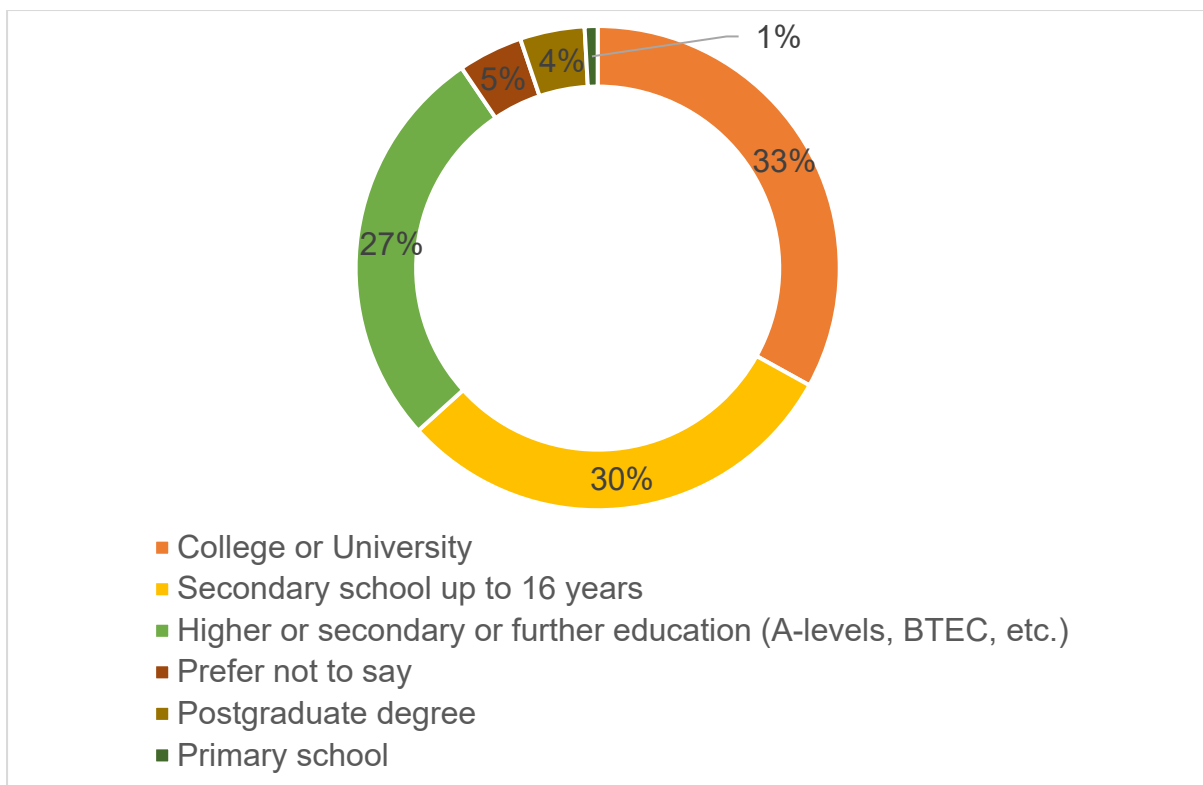


Figure 20: Employment status of respondents (n=462)

