



Transport Committee

Oral evidence: [Road freight supply chain](#), HC 828

Wednesday 8 December 2021

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Members present: Karl McCartney (Chair); Mr Ben Bradshaw; Ruth Cadbury; Simon Jupp; Robert Langan; Chris Loder; Grahame Morris; Gavin Newlands; Greg Smith.

Questions 163–207

Witnesses

I: Jim French MBE, Managing Director, Road to Logistics, and Co-chair, Trailblazer Group for Transport and Logistics; Jenny Tipping, HGV driver; and Kevin Richardson, Chief Executive, Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport.

Written evidence from witnesses:

- [Jim French MBE](#)
- [Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport](#)



Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Jim French MBE, Jenny Tipping and Kevin Richardson.

Q163 **Chair:** We have three guests with us at this morning's Transport Select Committee meeting. As you will probably have noticed, I am not our normal Chairman. Huw has tested positive for Covid, so he is not here today. You therefore have the pleasure of me, Karl McCartney, in the Chair, along with a number of my colleagues, some of whom are in the room now and some of whom are on their way.

I will ask the three witnesses on our first panel to introduce themselves very quickly and to give us the title of the organisation they work for and their role within it. I will start with Ms Tipping.

Jenny Tipping: I am Jenny Tipping. I am an HGV instructor for Wayside Transport. I also drive part time for Manpower Logistics on the Royal Mail contract.

Q164 **Chair:** Thank you. Mr French.

Jim French: Good morning. I am Jim French. I am the managing director of an organisation called Road to Logistics. I am also co-chair of the trailblazer group for apprenticeships in the logistics and transport sector.

Q165 **Chair:** Finally, but certainly not least, Mr Richardson.

Kevin Richardson: Good morning. My name is Kevin Richardson. I am the chief executive of the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport.

Q166 **Chair:** I thank all three of you for your time this morning. We look forward to the evidence that you are going to give.

I will kick off with the first question. We will go in the same order, if that is okay. What are the most serious challenges facing the road freight supply chain at this point in time?

Kevin Richardson: Perhaps I can answer that.

Q167 **Chair:** I will go in the same order, if that is okay. Ms Tipping will go first.

Jenny Tipping: I would rather Mr Richardson went first.

Chair: That is fine.

Kevin Richardson: We are seeing a number of things coming together at the moment. One is the continuing impact of Covid on the supply chain, with significant disruption to deep-sea shipping and supply lanes, the increased costs associated with that activity and the repositioning of empty containers in the routes. That is ongoing, and not helped by lockdown in ports and in certain countries.

We are also seeing the continuing effect of the exit from the EU, associated not only with the driver crisis, but also with withdrawal of



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capacity from some of the European hauliers and increases in brokerage and freight transport costs.

We are seeing a move by the sector to look at supply chain resilience, predominantly driven by the fact that, prior to Covid, we spent a lot of time creating lean supply chains, which we thought were resilient until Covid hit. We are now looking at how we can structure and create resilient supply chains that are responsive to future disruptions.

Alongside that, we have the change in working practices, with people moving into the new normal, and all of the implications associated with that. We have the imperative to move to net zero, with organisations considering how they decarbonise their operations. Last but not least, we have consumer behaviour: the increase in e-commerce activity, the move to a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week gig economy, and the expectations of consumers for more immediacy.

The final thing to mention is the emergence of ESG—environmental, social and governance—issues. Those are being driven predominantly by insurers and investors looking at not only their environmental footprint, but the societal implications of their supply chains and the way they structure their governance.

All of those things are coming together at the moment. It is moving us into what is known by the academics as the VUCA world—a world of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. There are a lot of challenges currently on the table.

Q168 Chair: Thank you for that tour de force as an answer to the first question. Mr French, do you have anything to add?

Jim French: Over the last four to five years, the biggest challenge that the sector has had is the skills shortage. That has come to a head this year with the driver shortage, but there has been a shortage of drivers for the last four or five years. The different occurrences that have taken place over the last year or so have exacerbated that situation.

I believe that an even greater shortage will come in the future, not just of drivers but of warehouse staff and management and supervisory staff in the sector. We have a major challenge to attract young people into the sector. Most people are like me—stale and pale. It is refreshing to see Jenny here, because we also have a shortage of females represented in the sector.

Chair: We will cover that later.

Jim French: In the total sector, it is about 15%, but in drivers it is only 1%.

Finally, we are also very lacking in diversity. Black and ethnic minorities are only a small percentage of our workforce. We need to do more to attract those other representative groups into the sector.



Q169 **Chair:** Thank you, Mr French. Ms Tipping.

Jenny Tipping: I do not have anything particular to add. It is not within my remit in either job to see the big picture of the supply chain. I am very much on the ground with both driver training and driving.

Q170 **Chair:** Thank you. Before we move to a question from my colleague Robert Largan, I want to come back with one supplementary to Mr Richardson. You talked about the lean supply chain and resilience within the supply chain. Is it productivity and profitability, or both considerations, that have hindered you or exacerbated the problems and issues you find yourselves dealing with in the industry?

Kevin Richardson: We have driven to lean and centralised networks as a means of taking cost out of the supply chain in response to demand from customers and consumers. We have increasingly seen disruption over recent years, whether it be geopolitical, physical—for example, the Iceland volcano—or the Evergreen ship in the Suez canal. People are now questioning whether we should move towards more agile supply chains, rather than lean ones. That would give us greater ability to respond to future disruptions.

At the same time, in order to meet the environmental imperative, we will see supply chains adjust. People will look at nearshoring. Where possible, they will look at stockholding and where those locations are. In the future, potentially, we will see a move away from centralised distribution to more localised distribution, a reversal of the trends that we pursued in the '80s and '90s. It is really an adjustment. It is driven by the ability to meet consumer demand and to provide availability of product, rather than profitability and productivity.

Chair: I will pass over to my colleague Robert Largan.

Q171 **Robert Largan:** Good morning. I will put this question to Ms Tipping first. Why have so many HGV drivers been leaving the profession over the last few years?

Jenny Tipping: Partly, it is just age. There was a demographic that gradually grew up through the industry, and now it is time for them to retire.

Partly, the industry is not attractive enough for enough people as it stands, given the way people want to live their lives nowadays, regardless of whether you are male, female or other. It involves unpredictable hours and being away from home a lot. Sometimes, there is an issue about the way drivers are treated; "respect" is a word that comes up quite a lot. It just does not look attractive enough for enough people. It might simply be that we need so many because so much stuff is being moved around. We just need a lot of drivers.

I want to say one thing on the whole respect issue. My work as an instructor came to an end overnight when the pandemic hit because all



the driving tests were cancelled, so I started working full time again for Royal Mail, as I used to. The difference in respect for us at the height of the pandemic was so great. It was absolutely massive. It was actually quite moving to be recognised as a key worker and to see the posters across the top of motorway bridges saying, "Thank you to key workers. Thank you to the truckers," and the response that we got from other people on the roads—the few people who were on the roads. It was deeply moving to be part of that. It is a shame how quickly that has been forgotten.

Q172 **Robert Largan:** Thank you. Mr French, the same question to you. Do you have anything to add?

Jim French: I agree very much with some of Jenny's sentiments. You asked about the reasons why other people have left. Obviously, Brexit had an impact as regards EU drivers. The thing that tipped it this year was the IR35 legislation, which has not had so much publicity. Previously, a number of drivers were self-employed. That probably put the graph over the edge and brought the supply chain issue to a head. I also agree about the respect that drivers get.

Pay has been an issue. Since the financial crisis in 2008-09, drivers' wages have remained fairly static. In the previous question, when you went back to Kevin, you asked about profitability. The profit margin of the top 100 logistics operators in the UK is 2.2%, according to the *MotorTransport* publication. I admit that those are predominantly freight operators. All the operators are working to very tight margins. That is one of the reasons that has held drivers' wages down. The reason that they have increased over the last 12 months is purely a supply and demand issue.

Q173 **Robert Largan:** Mr Richardson, do you have anything to add on the point about why drivers are leaving the profession?

Kevin Richardson: There are two additional points that I would like to raise. One is about the facilities for drivers. That is a major issue, not only their ability to access facilities on site when they are doing deliveries but their ability to access facilities while they are out on the road, particularly overnight.

The other issue is that the job has become much more stressful. Delivery windows to distribution centres are much tighter, often within a plus or minus 15-minute slot. That puts a lot of pressure on drivers to ensure that they are there on time so that they do not miss the slot and, effectively, impact on deliveries across the day.

Q174 **Robert Largan:** Ms Tipping, in your answer you made the point that there may be a lifestyle issue as well. One of the things I have noted in conversations with hauliers in my constituency is that they are finding that a lot of their drivers choose to go and work for companies such as Amazon because they can sleep in their own bed every night, rather than



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be on the road. Would you say that the anecdotal evidence that I am picking up is accurate and reflects the wider sentiment in the industry?

Jenny Tipping: I think so. I drive nights, and have done so for many years, because it is the best paid, which means that I do not have to do it as often. I would never want a permanent job doing it, because then I would not have flexibility. The reason that I have gone into instructing is that it is 8 till 4, Monday to Friday. Even though it is paid less than working nights for the Royal Mail, I like that flexibility. I like having a life.

Something else has shifted. Yes, there is being able to sleep in your own bed, but one of the witnesses from a couple of weeks ago talked about the fact that nowadays, in order to have a family life, people want a dual income they can rely on. When one of them is out all the time, the person who is staying at home cannot necessarily have a convenient job.

There is also parenting. Both parents want to be involved nowadays. I have spoken to quite a lot of drivers of the older generation at Royal Mail, who are all gradually retiring. A number of them lost their first marriage because they were never there. People do not want that in their lives any more. It is not just women who want to watch their kids grow up. Yes, people are choosing to have a more predictable life.

Chair: Thank you. My colleague Ruth Cadbury has some questions for you. Greg will follow up with some supplementaries.

Q175 **Ruth Cadbury:** Ms Tipping, back in 2016 you told this Committee during a similar inquiry on HGV driving—I was not here then—that the quality of facilities left some drivers feeling like “scum”. Is that still the case?

Jenny Tipping: I have not spoken to enough drivers recently to know whether that is still the case, to be honest. Right from the word go, part of the reason that I chose Royal Mail was that it is not the case there. Even though I have to drive quite a long way to get to work in the first place, part of the reason that I choose to stay is that the facilities are so good and you are always looked after. I am afraid that I do not have any more information than that.

Q176 **Ruth Cadbury:** That’s fine. We know that a very small percentage of HGV drivers are women. As a woman driver, do you think that the lack of adequate, clean toilet facilities and safe places to stop at night is even more of an issue for women? Is that one of the factors that stop women staying or even entering the workforce?

Jenny Tipping: It is possibly more likely to stop them entering the workforce, because they are more aware of it and are thinking about it in advance. In fact, a lot of HGV jobs do not involve having to stop at the roadside. I have done 15 years of trucking, in general haulage and in builders’ merchants, and most of the time I have not had to stop at the roadside, either because I have been returning to base regularly or because I have always been able to stop at Royal Mail property. The safety issue may stop them. It is the same as with parenting. It is not



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just women who want to wash their hands after they have been to the loo, for example. We underestimate men if we think that men find that acceptable. They do not. It is not just for women.

Q177 Ruth Cadbury: That is fine. Mr French, you mentioned the small number of women in the workforce. What improvements do you think are needed to driver facilities? Is there anything specific around motorway service areas and distribution centres?

Jim French: I agree entirely with Jenny. Probably only about 10% of LGV drivers are required to have a night away from home, an overnight stop, but, as the previous questioner said, anecdotally it causes an issue for drivers.

I live just outside Oxford, near the A34, which runs off the M40 down to Southampton. That is obviously a route for container and port traffic. If you go down there every night of the week, you will see lorries parked up in lay-bys with the drivers with blankets across their windscreens because they are taking their overnight rest. That is because the driver parking facilities at the motorway services at Cherwell Valley, which is the nearest on the M40, are normally full. Some smaller operators would not necessarily want to pay the cost of having to park there. Every night, you will find vehicles parking in those lay-bys because there are not many facilities at all on the M40 all the way down to Southampton port.

Q178 Ruth Cadbury: Is there anything specific around distribution centres?

Jim French: I think that has changed a little. The facilities are obviously there. If you go to a Tesco distribution centre, the facilities for their drivers and warehouse people are probably some of the best in the country, but previously drivers were not allowed to use them. An incoming driver from a supplier to Tesco was not allowed to use its facilities. That attitude has now been relaxed. I would not say that it is relaxed at all distribution centres; the legislation from a health and safety perspective—the need for people to have access to toilets and the like—has certainly made an improvement, but there is still a long way to go.

Q179 Ruth Cadbury: Has that change in attitude been a self-controlled one, coming from the industry, or has it come from regulation?

Jim French: It was probably driven originally by regulation. The industry will have lobbied on that, but the logistics sector operators are probably a much smaller voice than the large retailers.

Q180 Ruth Cadbury: Thank you. Mr Richardson, do you have anything to add on the subject of driver facilities?

Kevin Richardson: We are still lagging behind some of our mainland Europe competitors. The French, with the Routiers network, treat drivers very well and provide secure, safe overnight parking, with free facilities. Jim spoke about on-site facilities. Certainly, employers are increasingly providing very good facilities for their own staff.



The issue with distribution centres is primarily for people who have to wait to get into those centres or who have to take breaks following a delivery and, therefore, are pushed out on to the access roads for those parks. That is where there are no facilities, in general. It relates to planning regulations. Parking on the sites is inadequate. I believe that when he spoke in 2016 my colleague Mr Drury talked about the way space for distribution centres is allocated, and relates to stock-turn of between six and eight times a year. We are now seeing 20 to 30 times in many facilities, so there is a significant increase in traffic coming through. For a long time, we have been pushing for facilities not just on the motorway network but on major routes for freight and within distribution parks. That is where it takes it into the planning domain.

Q181 Ruth Cadbury: If it is done by planning, that means you have to have a new development or a significant change that requires a planning application. What you are saying is that we need changes now around the existing facilities. Do you have any thoughts about how that might happen?

Kevin Richardson: Potentially, there is an opportunity to require the providers of some of the big logistics parks to set up parking facilities that are available for drivers. That should certainly be an ongoing requirement for the future. Otherwise, there is nothing immediate at the moment.

Ruth Cadbury: Thank you very much.

Chair: We go straight over to Greg Smith.

Q182 Greg Smith: Good morning, witnesses. Before we move on to the barriers to people becoming HGV drivers, can we be very clear about where you think responsibility lies for improving not so much the distribution centres but the roadside facilities—the motorway facilities? Is it something that the industry collectively should put on? Should some sort of umbrella organisation across the whole industry create a private sector solution or should it lie at the door of the Government to create better roadside facilities for the industry? Maybe we could start with Jim.

Jim French: The Government undoubtedly have a responsibility for facilities on motorways and the Highways England routes. I am aware of the new Ashford facility that opened last week, but the lack of potential profitability from setting up lorry parks, the possible investment that is required and the likely return have probably prevented private enterprise from investing in those sorts of facilities over the years. In addition, there would be planning issues and probably difficulty in getting planning permission for lorry parks and facilities.

Q183 Greg Smith: To be clear, you think that it has to be a state solution to provide not just the lorry parks but the toilet facilities and, potentially, accommodation and food outlets.



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Jim French: I don't think it would happen otherwise. To take up Kevin's point, there are some large logistics parks in locations such as Daventry, Wakefield, Doncaster and Warrington, where most of the logistics operators there rent warehousing. There is a property developer involved. The issue is whether that property developer should be required to provide facilities, if it is a major logistics park that has a number of different operators on it.

Q184 **Greg Smith:** Thank you. Jenny or Kevin, do either of you want to come in on this point?

Jenny Tipping: No. I have nothing to add.

Kevin Richardson: I don't think this is an either/or; it is an and/and. The facilities on the motorway networks are run by commercial operators. They are not the freight operators. There is a requirement for commercial investment. Some of it sits with Government, but the remainder sits with local authorities and the devolved Governments. One of the challenges in engaging with Government Departments on roads is, who owns the road network? Who do you actually talk to in order to get a harmonised perspective on how you can drive this forward? It is very difficult.

Greg Smith: Thank you. Chair, do you want me to roll straight into the next section?

Chair: No. I will go to our colleague Ben Bradshaw, if that is okay.

Q185 **Mr Bradshaw:** Kevin, you mentioned the excellent quality of the provision in France. I think Germany is another good example. Do you know who pays for it there?

Kevin Richardson: I would hazard a guess and say that it is Government or the departments in France.

Mr Bradshaw: Thank you.

Q186 **Greg Smith:** Can we move on to some of the barriers that exist to people becoming HGV drivers and taking that up as a career, either straight out of the box or by moving from other professions that involve driving large vehicles? I know from my own constituency that a lot of coach drivers have moved over to the HGV world in the last 12 months.

Jim, could you come in first? As a starter, do you think that the recruitment strategies are effective, both the strategies across the industry and some of the Government initiatives that have been brought in around apprenticeships and that sort of thing? Does there need to be a radically different approach to encourage more people, the numbers that we actually need, to train and to become HGV drivers?

Jim French: My first reaction to that question is that we probably recruit and train sufficient drivers each year both to replace those who are retiring and to solve the shortage. The difficulty that we have is retention. If Government are funding some of the training, there is an issue about



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the actual recruitment and making sure that the person you are going to train will be suitable for a lorry driver's job, and that they understand that role right from the start.

Part of the training programme that we have introduced includes a driving assessment. I am sure that Jenny would concur that there are, unfortunately, some people who would never have the ability to drive a 44-tonne vehicle. Similarly, it is necessary for the trainee to be aware of the sort of working environment they are going to be in.

On the one hand we talk the job down, from the point of view of its being 60 hours a week and nights out all the time, but on the other hand we talk the job up by saying there is flexibility and new working patterns, and you do not have to have nights away from home. It is important that drivers understand that the one thing they will probably have to do, no matter who they are working for, is to get used to starting early in the morning. If people do not like that, we should not be wasting Government money on training them.

From the point of view of people coming into the industry who pay for their own LGV licence, it has probably cost them £3,000 to gain the licence, so normally speaking, because they have put in that investment, they are going to stay. The issue is a lot more about retaining the drivers we train rather than trying to keep topping up the bucket when we have a big hole in the bottom.

Q187 Greg Smith: To be clear, so that I understand what you said, you believe that, rather than there being barriers to entry for people wanting to become HGV drivers, it is actually a problem of too many people trying to join a career, a profession, a trade that is never ever going to work out for them.

Jim French: I would not say there were too many. Obviously, because of the publicity that has been given about the driver shortage over the last six months, and the figures that are bandied about on what wages people can earn, there has been quite a proliferation of people wanting to get an LGV licence and train. Obviously, the measures that the Government have been taking with such things as the boot camps and DWP funding have helped.

At the same time, there are a lot of people who might fund their own driving licence, and a lot of operators who pay to train people to gain an LGV licence. You may have heard of a programme called Warehouse to Wheels, where a number of people take warehouse people, who already have some fundamental understanding of the logistics sector and the way it works, and train them to gain an LGV licence and then become a driver with them.

Q188 Greg Smith: Far from an outlay of £3,000 or more by an individual being a barrier to entry, you actually see that as a positive thing for those people because they are a bit more locked in and know what they are



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getting into.

Jim French: Those people would be positive, but there are obviously a number of people who may well want to become a lorry driver but cannot afford to pay that amount of money up front.

Q189 **Greg Smith:** So that is a barrier.

Jim French: Yes.

Q190 **Greg Smith:** Kevin, do you have anything to add? What do you perceive the biggest barrier to be right now?

Kevin Richardson: I think the sector has a perception issue externally. I do not think it is seen by many as a career with development opportunities. It is one of the few sectors that will actually provide you with a career for life, which is quite unusual. I do not think we are very good at publicising that. I do not think people realise the breadth of opportunities that are available to us.

I also think that the way we advertise driving jobs at times is not particularly good. We put an advert out. It will be a male sitting in a cab with his arm on the window and a Yorkie bar in his left hand. "Come and be a driver. This is the pay rate. These are the hours." I do not think we are really talking about the opportunities for entering it as a career. There is a business legitimacy issue that we need to overcome.

The things Jim talks about, like Warehouse to Wheels, are working. I was talking to one of the big 3PLs the other day; they are using the apprenticeship incentives to run a fast-track programme. One of the barriers is the difference between the ability of the big companies to support drivers, to provide them with training, to fund the training and to provide development opportunities, as opposed to the SMEs who are not able to utilise the apprentice levy and perhaps cannot provide the career progression and development that some of the bigger organisations can. Of course, the majority of transport companies in the UK are SMEs.

Q191 **Greg Smith:** Do apprenticeships work in this sector?

Jim French: They could work a lot better.

Q192 **Greg Smith:** That is a good start. If you would be so kind as to pad out some detail on that, it would help our inquiry.

Jim French: Yes, by all means. Obviously, the paper that I put forward was in connection with this. Since the apprenticeship levy was introduced, by the end of this month the sector will have contributed £700 million in levy. It is estimated that in logistics apprenticeships it has recovered less than £150 million. Some of the barriers there are rules we need to work to that are put in place by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education and the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

When the levy came in, and the new type of apprenticeships that apply in England, with standards and EPAs, were introduced, it was just an LGV



driver category C apprenticeship. A category C driver is just for a rigid vehicle. Despite putting forward cases by employers that we wanted an apprenticeship for the cat C and E licence, which is for an articulated driver, it took until this year to get that apprenticeship approved, and a lot of lobbying as well to get the funding level correct. Once that had been introduced, the category C apprenticeship had to be withdrawn because the institute said that we can only have one driving apprenticeship. For two years we have been arguing, and we have successfully convinced the institute that we need a second LGV driving apprenticeship, which is called an Urban Driver. That has gained approval for standards and EPA, but we are now in a position where the funding level is only £4,500, which is lower than the original funding level for the category C apprenticeship. We have gone through a procedural review on this, and I have been told that we have been unsuccessful.

We are now in the position where we are again lobbying the DFT. An apprenticeship for an Urban Driver is £4,500, which is a 12-month apprenticeship, and the apprentice has to spend 20% of their time off the job in training. For that period, there are going to be training providers that will not bother to offer that apprenticeship training.

Prior to Covid the original apprenticeship that I talked about—the cat C apprenticeship—had around 1,700 or 1,800 apprentices a year, which made it the second most popular apprenticeship in the whole transport and logistics sector. In the total number of people taking an LGV test each year, that is probably under 5%, so that route to getting a licence is not extensively used. As Kevin said, it would tend to be mainly larger operators that used the apprenticeship method.

To my mind, the long-term solution needs to be to have apprenticeships that, first, are accessible and, secondly, give a far more rounded level of training to be a lorry driver rather than them just spending two weeks to take a test.

Q193 Greg Smith: That is a very helpful and comprehensive answer. Kevin or Jenny, do you have a view on the apprenticeship point? Jenny, we have not come to you yet on the wider question about what the biggest barrier is.

Jenny Tipping: I have taught a few people to drive trucks who used to be bus drivers. They went into bus driving exclusively because they could just get a job first, and they got the training on the job. They learnt the job and learnt to drive all at the same time. Jim's Road to Logistics is a great scheme. Any scheme that has that transition is going to be good for getting people into the industry and for making a nice, smooth transition.

When I entered the industry 15 years ago, the standard practice was that you paid for your licence, you'd get your licence, turn up on the first day at work, be given a set of keys and a run sheet and told, "Off you go." That is understandably terrifying, and it is a kind of sink or swim



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situation. Luckily, I swam, but it is not for everybody. It is also not very safe. That kind of attitude puts off a lot of people.

Jim is right that so much of the industry is small companies. It is small training providers as well. To access the Government schemes, they quite often do not tick enough of the boxes, or it would be too big an outlay. Ideally, there would be some other way of helping people into the industry that is accessible to small companies.

Q194 **Greg Smith:** Thank you very much. Mindful of time, Kevin, do you have a brief comment on that?

Kevin Richardson: My brief comment is no, I do not think the apprenticeships have been particularly successful. The longer answer is that I think there has been an issue with the breadth of roles in logistics. For example, the apprenticeships are geared predominantly towards either general management and supervisory skills or very clear technical competencies. It is easy to discern what is, for example, a woodturning lathe operator. If you look at the apprenticeships that have been successful, as Jim mentioned, a driver with a certain category is a defined role, but if you look at something like a warehouse operative, a warehouse operative for what? Does it mean that you are working on a bulk tank farm? Does it mean you are working in an e-commerce operation or an FMCG environment? There has been a real difficulty around that.

To give you the example of a transport manager, there is a specified element. If you are a nominated transport manager and you require a CPC, that is very clear, but the definition of a transport manager across organisations can vary hugely. You might be managing two or three trucks or a thousand. You might be responsible for maintenance, or you might not be. You might be directly responsible for the drivers or the vehicles. We have struggled with that in the structure of the existing apprenticeship scheme, and it has been a difficulty for us.

Jim French: Transport law defines the person who has legal responsibility for operating vehicles under their operator's licence as a transport manager. The Institute for Apprenticeships, because it is a level 3 qualification, will not let us call that apprenticeship a manager level, so we have to call the person a transport and warehouse operations supervisor. Again, that is a way, to my mind, that the Department for Education discredits our sector and does not value that role, which obviously the DFT does in what it calls the person who has that legal responsibility.

Greg Smith: That is very helpful; thank you. Mindful of the time, I will pass back to the Chair.

Chair: Much appreciated, Greg; thank you. Gavin Newlands will ask the next question.

Q195 **Gavin Newlands:** Good morning, panel. I want to talk about specific



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groups of people, further to the questions that my colleague was just asking, and delve a bit deeper into a question that my colleague Ruth Cadbury touched on a little earlier.

I think it was Mr French who described the bulk of the profession as pale, male and stale. Looking around the Committee room, I think most of the Committee could certainly be described as two out of the three, and one or two would perhaps get a full house. I will allow the witnesses to judge.

Ruth Cadbury: It was pale and stale.

Gavin Newlands: At the moment, roughly 2% of the workforce are female drivers. We do not even have a reliable statistic to ascertain what percentage of the workforce are black and minority ethnic. Why have attempts to improve the diversity of the industry not proved to be successful thus far? Given that I have prayed you in aid already, Mr French, I will start with you.

Jim French: There has been a culture about the sector that has probably been a little bit difficult for a lot of people to break into. Certainly, as we have already touched on, driver facilities are not conducive to asking women to drive trucks at times. Again, leading on from something Kevin said, the perception of the sector from the outside is not good.

I have done quite a bit of talking to students at colleges and school sixth forms about the logistics sector, trying to attract people to come into it. Initially, they do not know what logistics is about. Unfortunately, careers teachers do not know too much about what logistics is about and what opportunities there are in it. We probably do not reach out enough to ethnic minorities or to females because of the way the industry has been for a number of years. We need to try to make it more attractive.

Jenny talked quite eloquently about it. You can tell from the way she talks that she thoroughly enjoys the job and the role. The people who come to work in it do, but a lot of people end up in logistics by accident. The industry, particularly the trade association, needs to do more to encourage different groups to join the sector. That is particularly relevant to young people.

Q196 **Gavin Newlands:** Thank you. Jenny, we touched on this earlier specifically with regard to facilities. You have had a successful career, which you have enjoyed. I think you said yourself that you have been perhaps a little insulated, working for Royal Mail, because of the facilities you have been able to use, compared to some other drivers in general haulage.

What can be done to attract more women into the sector? Is there a way of looking at shift patterns? We spoke earlier about drivers who are leaving the industry to go to Amazon, and the DPDs and the DHLs of the world, because they get to sleep in their own beds and have fairly regular shift patterns, which is not always the case. Can something more be done on that, or is that just the job?



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Jenny Tipping: To a certain extent, I think it is just the job. I always find it really interesting to look at. With bus drivers we have reached critical mass. There are probably now enough women driving buses for young women to think it is a viable career option, but we have not reached that point with trucks. What is the difference between buses and trucks? That is where the question lies.

Some of it is about predictability of hours. With buses, you normally know your shift pattern quite a long time in advance. It can be the same with trucks as well. I think the biggest thing is that it involves manual labour. Nearly all driving jobs involve you having to unload the vehicle as well. Buses unload themselves. I think we possibly do not say enough about it; you do not have to be that strong, but some women simply do not want to do it. Yes, you often have to lift stuff. You might get cold and dirty, but obviously you have PPE for that. Actually, if you ride horses or if you garden, you are going to get cold and dirty and lift heavy stuff. It is not that women cannot do those things. There is just something about women not necessarily wanting to do it as a job.

I do not know what the answer is. I have been asked this question for at least 10 years. I see gradual, very incremental, change. No one bats an eyelid any more when I turn up. If I see another woman at a distribution centre, it is completely normal nowadays. It is gradually changing. It is the same with other manual trades; the number of female plumbers and female electricians is only gradually increasing. I do not really know what the answer is.

Q197 **Gavin Newlands:** Thank you. I should probably say that in a previous job I used to deal with deliveries on a fairly regular basis. I can certainly pay testament to just how manual some of the work is that drivers do. In all the years that I carried out some of those tasks, I only met one female driver. The rest were good guys, but pale, male and stale if you want to coin a phrase. Kevin, can you shed any light on this? What can we do?

Kevin Richardson: There is the awareness issue. What Jim and Jenny talked about—you have just mentioned the physical nature of it—is a constraint, as are the shift patterns, but more particularly the uncertainty of shifts. Interestingly enough, I received a delivery this morning at about 10 past seven from a driver who started work at 5.30. He currently works Monday to Friday, but because that organisation is now going 24/7 and offering seven-day-a-week deliveries, his contract is just about to be changed and at that point he is thinking of leaving because he does not know which two days out of seven he will get off as a break. For people with families, both male and female, that is an extreme difficulty.

I think there is a need to look fundamentally at shift patterns and the whole nature of how they operate. You have to then set that against the fact that you have an asset in terms of the vehicle that you need to sweat and operate as many out of the 24 hours as you can. There is a bit of a constraint.



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Q198 Gavin Newlands: Could you give very brief answers, if you can, because of the time? Who is responsible for addressing that problem? Is it a combination of industry and Government, or is it looking at perhaps education and careers advisers? Is it one over the other? Kevin, we will start with you and go back round.

Kevin Richardson: As has been said, knowledge of the profession—as we call it—as a career of choice and its opportunities is lacking. That is something that both the profession and the Government, through DFT, DWP and the Department for Education, need to address. Interestingly enough, at the recent options week in schools, logistics, transport and the supply chain were not included as one of the professions. There are 2.7 million people employed across the sector.

Engaging with Government is very difficult. They understand a lot about the passenger sector but not about this profession, which they tend to lump into the category of freight, being anything that is not passenger. Last Friday, I was on a call speaking to civil service departments, who were looking to create within the civil service a logistics, transport and supply chain profession, which I think would be a real start. I was on a Freight Council call yesterday with Trudy Harrison when we were talking about running a year of logistics next year to raise the profile of the profession.

This is something that needs to be tackled jointly. There is a big onus on the employers, but I think there is an awareness issue and support is needed from within Government and the Departments.

Q199 Gavin Newlands: Thanks. Jim or Jenny, do you have anything to add or has Kevin answered it comprehensively?

Jim French: Things like shift patterns and changing them is down to the employers. They have moved to do that, to a certain extent, in order to help attract drivers.

On awareness and education, you might like to know this statistic. There are 17 universities in the UK offering a degree in logistics. There are 119 that offer a degree in law.

Gavin Newlands: I think we can all agree on lawyers. Back to the Chair.

Chair: A little bit later than advertised, straight over to you, Grahame Morris.

Q200 Grahame Morris: Thanks, Chair, and good morning to the witnesses. I think you have given some really good evidence for our inquiry and our report. Thank you very much for that. You identified very effectively a number of the issues and problems facing the sector. Could I try to get your views on what the role should be for Government in resolving some of those problems.

You have certainly given us quite a list. I made some notes, and I fully appreciate some of the issues. I think Kevin identified changes in



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consumer behaviour and the issues about very tight windows for delivery that perhaps Government cannot do anything about, but there are some issues the Government have a key role in addressing.

For the record, could we get your views? I am thinking about some of the measures that have been introduced and how effective they have been: for example, the temporary relaxation of the requirements on drivers' hours; issues like licensing and testing; and the increase in the cabotage rights for EU drivers. Jenny, could I start with you?

Jenny Tipping: First, I know nothing about cabotage, so I am not going to talk on that. In relation to drivers' hours, they are not generous. If you are working up to your legal maximum every day, that is a really long day. To relax those is dangerous, frankly. It is a whole structural issue and it has been dumped on drivers. That is completely unfair. I think it is going to end up in a much greater driver shortage. To be honest, it is shameful.

In terms of driver testing and the changes that are now coming in, going straight from a car to an artic for example, they only came in at the end of November and we have a 10-week lag; we are so booked up that we are into the new year before we have any of those in. I am frankly scared to get into an artic with someone who has never driven anything bigger than a car before. I suspect that the industry will work itself out on that, and how much time you actually spend in a rigid before you put someone in an artic. Personally, I think someone should be second nature in a rigid before they even think about getting into an artic. Some people come to us already second nature in a rigid because they can drive a bus, because they are a farmer or something like that. That has yet to work itself out, but I think it is not necessarily the panacea that it could be.

Q201 **Grahame Morris:** Jenny, I appreciate your personal experience. It is very valuable because a lot of people take an overview without the benefit of practical experience. I have noted very carefully what you said, particularly about the dangers in relaxing drivers' hours, or extending drivers' hours. Is there something specific? My question is about what Government can do. Obviously, you do not want Government to relax drivers' hours, but is there something else that you would like to take this opportunity to highlight that the Government could do to improve the situation?

Jenny Tipping: The last thing I want to say on driver testing is that the reverse part has now been taken out of the standard part of the driving test. Training schools can be trained up to assess each other's pupils on the reversing exercise. That only works for big companies. There are very strict rules on what the reversing area can look like. That is going to exclude large numbers of the training industry. I actually think that taking out that reversing exercise is going to reduce the capacity of testing.



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Certainly on the south coast, where I am, between Bournemouth and Portsmouth—that is the whole of Bournemouth, Southampton and Portsmouth—only one school has a reversing area that can be used. It is going to massively reduce it. Land down here is at such a premium, and that is a complete waste of space. That is one thing. There definitely has to be a relaxation of what constitutes an acceptable reversing area.

Q202 Grahame Morris: Thanks, Jenny. Jim, I will come to you next with the same question about the role of Government. In your earlier reply to one of my colleagues you mentioned the category C apprenticeships and the Urban Driver licence. Do you want to say something more about that? What is the one thing the Government could do from your perspective to address the situation? What would that be?

Jim French: That would be to revise the ESFA rules. The Education and Skills Funding Agency has rules by which certain costs can be included within the costs of the apprenticeship. They define them as eligible and ineligible. Believe it or not, in the apprenticeship to train a driver the ineligible costs are all the test fees—prior to going to C plus E, if you went to cat C and then C plus E they were in excess of £300; the depreciation of the vehicle, which has to be in the region of £200 to £300 a week; the maintenance of the vehicle; and the insurance of the vehicle.

You cannot train somebody to get an LGV licence without having a vehicle for them to learn to drive. It is illogical as to why those costs are not included in the cost of the apprenticeship. Those are the rules that we are up against all the time really in terms of trying to—

Q203 Grahame Morris: I appreciate that. It is a valuable insight. I am conscious of the time. I want to go to Kevin to give him the same opportunity.

Kevin Richardson: I will be brief, but there are a number of things. The first thing is to understand what supply chains are, which I do not think the Government do. Then support modal shift, which has been effective over the last few weeks. Work collectively across the Departments and with the businesses within the sector. Update the planning regulations. Get building the facilities. Revise the apprenticeship scheme. Be aware of the implications of active travel schemes and their impact on productivity for the logistics sector. Thank you.

Q204 Grahame Morris: That is a very concise response and a comprehensive list. Thank you, Kevin.

Just before I hand back to the Chair, there is one question I have not asked, and it is in relation to the performance of the DVLA and the DVSA in terms of the driver workforce. Can you give me a very quick answer? Is there any evidence that their performance has improved or is improving?

Jenny Tipping: I know that for new licence acquisition people are getting their licences back really quickly. I also know that, when I had to



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reapply this year because of my age and having to renew my medical, it took two months. I think it has tidied up since the summer.

Q205 **Grahame Morris:** Jim, very quickly?

Jim French: I would say that improvement has taken place, yes, but it is not what the DVSA says. There are still pockets of difficulty in getting provisional licences or test bookings.

Q206 **Grahame Morris:** I appreciate that. Kevin?

Kevin Richardson: I would support that, in the sense that we have seen improvement. The other factor to bring into account is access for medicals.

Grahame Morris: Thank you.

Q207 **Mr Bradshaw:** I have a very quick question. I am sorry because you are not ready for this question. With all of this stuff we have spoken about today, have there not always been sectors in our history that have suffered from labour shortages and that have relied on migrant labour? We can do all of these things. None of them might work. Might it not just be possible that the big problem, and the elephant in the room, is the lack of access to migrant labour, on which historically you, as well as many other sectors in this economy, depended? Kevin, you are nodding.

Kevin Richardson: The answer to that is yes. It is interesting that the driver crisis is not unique to the UK. In countries like Germany and Poland, they have significant shortages as well for similar reasons to us, but of course, because they have freedom of movement at the moment, where are the eastern Europeans going? They are going to Germany and to Poland, so they are not seeing the problems that we have. It is the same in the warehousing situation.

Jenny Tipping: It would be a purely political comment, but yes, I think that free movement of people is a good thing. Migration is a good thing and the opportunities that that presents all round.

Mr Bradshaw: Thanks.

Chair: Panel, thank you very much. Before I do my formal thanks, I apologise, as I now realise that Huw Merriman has a job and a half as Chair to keep everybody to time. We have run over. I apologise to the next panel.

The reason we ran over was that your information today has been very informative. Thank you very much indeed. It has been very realistic and, at times, refreshing as well. Thank you all very much for your time this morning. We will take a very quick one-minute recess while we rearrange the room.