

AHPD Newsletter October 2021

AHPD Network: Comments on the HGV crisis

Dear Age, Health and Professional Drivers' (AHPD) Network member,

Like many organisations we've been 'distracted' over the past year, with changes to the way we work and different priorities competing for our time and resources. Although it's been a year since our last newsletter, we've been busy with our research and network, and have been keeping a close eye on what is happening within the transport and logistics industry. Take a look at our updated AHPD Network webpage for more information about what we've been doing: <https://sites.manchester.ac.uk/ahpd/current-transport-issues/ahpd-external-commentary-and-newsletter-archives/>

The driver shortage for HGVs is now at crisis level in the UK. The Road Haulage Association and the Driver Require Group Ltd have called for action to mitigate the situation. They described the perfect storm resulting from many factors, such as: an ageing and retiring workforce; the effects of the Covid pandemic (foreign drivers returning home; increased demand across supply chains and loss of driver training and qualification opportunities); Brexit (fewer EU drivers available); government policies (changes to IR35 and ineffective apprenticeships); increasing cost pressures (higher freight rates; costs of Driver CPCs and medicals); low salaries; and the general lack of support from authorities and the government towards the road haulage industry. (Read more about this on the website: <https://sites.manchester.ac.uk/ahpd/current-transport-issues/>)

As fuel pumps on forecourts dry up, supermarket shelves and restaurants are experiencing shortages, the supply of Christmas produce is threatened, and many organisations and sectors experience supply chain issues, the government and industries in general have recognised how crucial lorry drivers are to the economy. As well as the industry response of increasing salaries to attract HGV drivers (some drivers are moving organisations to the highest bidders), the government is putting in plans to shorten the HGV testing process; release more HGV testing slots; and offer temporary visas for HGV drivers from Europe.

The core purpose of the AHPD Network is to protect the health and wellbeing of professional drivers. One of the main challenges facing the transport and logistics sector is to attract new drivers, as well as "non-driving" drivers to return to the industry. We believe that improving the health and wellbeing of drivers is crucial to fixing the shortage. Maybe it's time for everyone to go back and look again at our 'Best Practice Guidelines' that focus on ten areas of health and wellbeing our research identified as significant in relation to older drivers. Especially as the recommendations and links to external sources are applicable to drivers of all ages. Also, we have updated information and links on the website to reflect the current situation. You can access the website and download the Best Practice Guidelines here: <https://sites.manchester.ac.uk/ahpd/>

A few thoughts from us of actions to consider from the guidelines include:

- Rethink working patterns e.g., consider flexible working to attract a more diverse workforce (see page 20 of the guidelines)

- Change the organisational culture e.g., focus less on telematics for micromanagement and be more realistic about scheduling to retain drivers (see page 25 of the guidelines)
- Improve the mental health of drivers e.g., reduce stressors resulting from long hours and poor work-life balance (see page 9 of the guidelines)
- Improve the physical health of drivers e.g., encourage and support exercise to increase the longevity of working life (find out more on page 12 of the guidelines)
- Encourage healthy eating e.g., provide more opportunities for access to, and availability of, healthy food (see page 15 of the guidelines).

Despite the current challenges, we believe that the transport and logistics sector now has an ideal opportunity to improve the working conditions and life style of HGV drivers and, as a result improve the health and wellbeing of the drivers.

We are working on a couple of research projects, detailed below, that may be of interest to our members. If you would like to find out more about these please get in touch:

- Some jobs and working patterns (e.g., shift work) negatively influence the amount of daylight people are exposed to. How does this impact on sleep and health?
- Work related fatigue: Developing awareness and understanding of fatigue risk management.

We'll be in touch again soon, and are always interested in hearing from you and your thoughts on what is happening in the industry at the moment.

Thank you very much for your support,

Sheena and Lynn

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