



Call for Views on the Transport Labour Market and Skills

A Response from CTA

May 2022

www.ctauk.org

Summary

The Community Transport Association (CTA) welcomes the opportunity to share with the Department for Transport and the Transport Employment and Skills Taskforce the views and ideas from the Community Transport Sector. As with the wider Transport sector Community Transport faces challenges in the recruitment and retention of its paid and volunteer workforce and this call provides us with an opportunity to share this and work with stakeholders and be part of the solution.

The key views and ideas from CTA are that Community Transport:

- Community Transport faces a driver shortage which is compounded by current labour market trends, including being able to offer competitive salaries and losing drivers to commercial operators and the current legislation which only allows those that hold the B category on their licence to drive a permit minibus if they meet specific criteria.
- Community Transport often finds itself having to cross over between transport and social care. The drivers and other team members need to have a combination of skills outside of the typical transport to ensure that they can meet the social care needs of their passengers. There are limited opportunities for staff to gain skills in this area.
- Community Transport employees often must have knowledge on a range of specialisms as they are unable to employ specialist staff. The impact of this is that CT operators have the potential to be left behind or miss out on the application of new technologies as they do not have the resources to invest in the specialist workforce.
- Community Transport is well positioned to support the desire to recruit more young people into transport. Young people are making more ethical and social decisions within their employment and wider lifestyle choices. Community Transport is a viable option for young people who are looking for a job that contributes to their communities.
- Community Transport are succeeding in employing women in leadership roles with a ratio of male to female heads of community transport operators is 3:2.
- Community Transport has reach into all the under-represented groups that DfT and TEST aims to focus on to improve the diversity of the sector. Through this CTA is able to support TEST and Community Transport operators to engage with communities and utilise the direct link into communities effectively.

Introduction to Community Transport and CTA

CTA champions, connects, supports and grows the UK's Community Transport sector with a mission of accessible, inclusive and sustainable transport for all. Over 1,000 Community Transport schemes are members of CTA and operate in urban, rural and island communities in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The sector is all about community-led solutions to local transport needs, playing a critical role in levelling up across the UK.

CTA members deliver a diverse range of adaptable, cost-effective and innovative services, which are always for a social purpose and never for a profit. Our members are practical and passionate problem solvers who deliver services which fight poverty and inequality; tackle isolation, exclusion and loneliness; and reduce carbon emissions, air pollution and congestion.

Community Transport facilitates modal shift away from private cars to more sustainable modes such as buses, minibuses, bicycles, e-bikes and car share. The sector delivers shared transport services – such as dial-a-ride, electric car clubs, patient transport, school transport, ‘wheels-to-work’, minibus hire and bicycle or e-bike hire – as well as scheduled community bus services on routes which are deemed socially necessary or may have been deemed commercially unviable.

Many older and disabled people, as well as those in deprived households or marginalised neighbourhoods, who are most likely to be underserved or excluded by public transport or least likely to be able to afford or own a private car, rely on Community Transport to access amenities, education, employment, family and friends, health & social care and other public services. Most Community Transport vehicles are wheelchair accessible. Drivers are professionally trained to assist with health or mobility issues and often deliver door-to-door or door-through-door support to passengers.

To operate a Community Transport service an organisation must operate their service as non-profit under either a Section 19 or Section 22 Permit (Section 10B in Northern Ireland). Based on data from The Office for the Traffic Commissioner there are around 6,082 organisations that hold either S19 or S22 Permits. While these organisations will utilise the support of volunteers to undertake driving and other roles within the organisation, they will also have a paid workforce delivering the service. Community Transport typically have a paid and volunteer workforce within the following areas:

- Drivers
- Administration/Scheduling/publicity/office
- Fundraisers
- Passenger Assistants
- Training
- Fleet management/vehicle servicing/maintenance.

CTA has formulated the response to these questions using existing data and intelligence gathered from members. As with the rest of the transport sector there is currently a mixed picture of the skills and labour market needs of the Community transport sector.

Pillar 1 - Preparing for Future Skills

Q. In your view, what skills does the transport sector need in the future?

In the consideration of the future skills needs we need to understand the different challenges and environments that Community Transport operators experience. Community Transport (CT) must

operate as not-for-profit and due to this the organisations often operate on a very tight budget and must fundraise to cover the full cost of operating the service. Due to this few operators are able to offer funded training as commercial operators are able to. This means that as a sector we are unable to invest as heavily in skills developed and where possible the workforce of Community Transport operators are required to have the skills and qualifications prior to joining the organisation.

Driver Shortage

Community Transport operators are reporting that they have a current driver shortage and that they expect this to increase over the coming years. The solution of seeking out younger volunteer drivers, one that many organisations would like to adopt, is severely inhibited by current legislation. While drivers who passed their test before 1 January 1997 have automatic D1 entitlement (entitlement to drive a minibus, not for hire or reward), those who passed after this date and only hold the B category on their licence can only drive a permit minibus so long as they meet all the conditions below:

- the driver is aged 21 or over, but under 70 (unless the driver has passed a PCV medical and has gained the restriction code 120 or 79 [NFHR])
- the driver has held a full B licence for an aggregate of at least two years
- the driver receives no payment or other consideration for driving the vehicle other than out-of-pocket expenses
- the vehicle weighs no more than 3500kg (this is its maximum authorised mass or maximum permitted weight when fully loaded; may also be described as the GVW – gross vehicle weight), excluding any part of that weight which is attributable to specialised equipment intended for the carriage of disabled passengers; or no more than 4250kg otherwise
- there is no trailer of any weight attached.

These conditions make it problematic for younger people to work in Community Transport as it is not always possible for both the driver and the operator to meet all of the conditions. A recurring difficulty among Community Transport operators is the weight restriction on vehicles, our data estimates that 71% of the vehicles used to deliver community transport are wheelchair accessible minibuses, many of these are over the permitted weight. The number of volunteers with automatic D1 entitlement is dwindling, but the cost of obtaining a D1 licence for those without it is between £1,000 and £1,200, including training and test fees. This is simply impossible for most community transport operators to afford.

Transport and Social Care skills

Operators of Community Transport services are often providing transportation for the most vulnerable within our communities, including, older people (98% of passengers) People with disabilities or restricted mobility (85% of passengers and those who are socially or geographically excluded (55% of passengers). They are also transporting those passengers on journeys to health appointments, day centres, to access education and work or trips involving food and shopping. Due to this Community Transport often finds itself having to cross over between transport and social care. The drivers and other team members need to have a combination of skills outside of the typical transport to ensure

that they can meet the social care needs of their passengers. One Community Transport operator recently shared about the transport they provided to a member with sight loss to enable them to access social activities. Following this support, the member was motivated to try activities independently and more often. Many Community Transport operators deliver 'door-to-door' or 'door-through-door' services a hands-on approach to transporting people with mobility limitations. It is these types of journeys which highlight the role that Community Transport has in improving the lives and wellbeing of their passengers.

Case Study: Interloch Transport, Argyll

With some community transport passengers at high-risk, many providers pivoted during COVID-19 to delivering groceries, medicines and other supplies directly to passengers' homes to help them stay safe.

Interloch Transport in Argyll, for example, scaled up their existing shopping and prescription delivery services, to an additional 200 people, which has been crucial in helping many locals maintain their independence and continue to live happily and safely in their own homes, rather than having to go into supported accommodation or a care setting.

Rena (83): "Without Interloch, I'd be in a care home right now. I've no doubt about that at all."

There are limited specific training programmes which give staff or volunteers the social care skills which are required for Community Transport operators.

Backoffice and specialist skills

As previously referenced Community Transport operators often must deliver services within restricted budgets and so often back-office staff need to have a range of skills and knowledge as they don't have the resources to invest in specialisms. For example, one Community Transport provider was sharing how they were responsible for all back-office functions including marketing/promotions and IT and Cybersecurity. The impact of this is that Community Transport operators have the potential to be left behind or miss out on the application of new technologies as they do not have the resources to invest in the specialist workforce. It is vital that Community Transport is given the opportunity to access individuals with specialist skills there is the potential for this to be achieved through effective partnerships with commercial operators. Sharing skills between the operators will provide benefits to both non-profit and commercial operators.

Pillar 2 - Improving Training and Employment

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

Community Transport has not historically been directly engaged in accessing apprenticeships for their staff. There could be many reasons for this, and we would need to work with Community Transport operators to understand the main barriers in place. The initial challenges that Community Transport operators face which would be impacting this is the restricted budgets that they have which means they often have to prioritise having staff in with the required skills as referenced in Pillar 1. Community Transport also has challenges with the perception of it as a viable career choice (explored further in Pillar 3) and so there isn't currently the demand from young people to develop the tailored training programmes.

CTA would be supportive of TESTs aim to understand the content and value of the range of qualifications and review the potential to ensure that there is inclusion of the values needed to deliver Community Transport services. By doing this Community Transport would be better linked to the wider Transport sector and ensure Community Transport operators and CTA are well placed to promote qualification and training routes to their communities and members.

To improve the accessibility of qualification and training routes to Community Transport employees CTA would like TEST and other stakeholders to consider the potential to grant fund not for profit operators to increase the uptake in those fields, this would also provide additional staff into the Transport market.

Having to undergo a lengthy qualification can be off putting to some individuals, CTA oversees MiDAS (Minibus Driver Awareness scheme), which is a nationally recognised standard for the assessment and training of minibus drivers. It is a membership-based scheme that is designed to enhance safe minibus driving standards and promote the safer operation of minibuses, currently there are over 5,000 member organisations throughout the UK. CTA are currently working with partners to transform MiDAS and there is the potential to build on this as an entry level qualification across the wider transport sector which would be a gateway in for some individuals experiencing barriers.

Pillar 3 - Promoting Careers in Transport

Q. What, in your view, are effective ways to attract young people and career changers into a career in the transport sector?

As with the wider transport sector there is an aging workforce within Community Transport with staff and volunteers typically being well over 40, particularly drivers. The sector faces challenges in recruiting younger employees partly due to the issue of being able to fund D1 licences for them. The largest challenge that Community Transport faces in attracting young people or career changers is that it is not perceived to be a sector which a) has paid employees or b) can provide a meaningful career. Working within the Community Transport sector is a highly rewarding career where every journey that is made makes a difference in people's lives. It is a caring employer and can give staff a full experience

of working within a transport organisation. Like the wider Transport sector there is the opportunity to be involved in a range of diverse career opportunities, but they are not widely known.

Community Transport is however well positioned to support the desire to recruit more young people into transport. Young people are making more ethical and social decisions within their employment and wider lifestyle choices. Community Transport is a viable option for young people who are looking for a job that contributes to their communities. By linking Community Transport into the career path for the wider Transport sector more effectively, it would be a steppingstone for young people starting their careers and for career changers who again are looking for a chance to work in an organisation which contributes to the wellbeing of the wider community. There are current examples of career changes with people joining the Community Transport sector from other industries due to the crossover of skills and the desire to be part of a community movement. We would be able to collaborate with the wider Transport sector to share how and why they moved roles and link this into a wider promotion of transport as a career.

There is the potential for Community Transport to partner up with commercial operators to offer young people a rounded work experience. For example, either through a social value programme or a scheme similar to Kickstart, young people could be offered initial roles within Community Transport operators and given a good overall grounding with the potential to either stay employed there or move into a position within a commercial operator. Community Transport operators that we spoke to were keen to encourage young people into their organisations and through this look to address the current and future driver shortages they face.

Pillar 4 - Boosting Diversity, Inclusion, and Social Mobility

Q. What, in your view, are the barriers to further increasing diversity, inclusion and social mobility in the transport sector?

Q. How, in your view, can barriers to diversity, inclusion and social mobility in the transport sector be reduced?

Gender imbalance in Community Transport

Community Transport has similar gender imbalance challenges as the wider Transport sector. CTA data suggests that the ratio of volunteers of male to female volunteers is 7:3. This does not reflect the general trend of volunteers in the UK, which shows that male volunteers exceed women by only 1%. While this overall is a more positive proportion than the wider sector this data does not show the proportion of drivers and we would expect that many of the women volunteering are undertaking admin roles with the percentage driving being similar to the annual bus statistics of 93% male drivers.

The ratio of male to female heads of community transport operators is 3:2. This compares favourably with the gender balance for managerial positions across the passenger transport sector, in which only 24% of managers are women, a ratio of 3:12.

Like the wider Transport sector, we have a gap in understanding representation across the other key groups referenced in the call, while anecdotally we understand that Community Transport has a challenge in improving diversity, further research would be needed to gather that information.

Reducing the barriers

Community Transport operators that operate with a S19 permit have a membership model, this means that they have the contact information for the person using the service and will often develop a long-term trusted relationship with them. This relationship is used to support the social care as well as transport needs and this could also play a part in planned initiatives with TEST to identify the barriers and what additional support, they may need to reach their potential. Community Transport has reach into all the under-represented groups that TEST aims to focus on to improve the diversity of the sector and can use this to support addressing the barriers. CTA can support TEST and Community Transport operators to engage with communities and utilise the direct link into communities effectively.

As referenced in Pillar 2 CTA's training programme could be used to support those individuals who find accessing apprenticeships and other qualifications a barrier and could utilise this as an entry into the transport sector.

With the additional role that Community Transport plays in social care this could be utilised to increase diversity in gender and other under-represented groups. Community Transport providers could be encouraged and supported to provide additional 'door-through-door' services with training from CTA's MiDAS and Passenger Assistance Training Scheme (PATs), this would create a different perspective on the driver and passenger assistant role and increase its appeal as an employment choice.

Pillar 5 - Building Evidence and Evaluating Progress

CTA champions Community Transport, we want to see greater attention given to community transport and the everyday experiences of its users in policy-making and the commissioning of transport services. This involves showing how community transport is relevant and responsive to key areas of public policy and how our members improve quality of life for people and families in their local communities. It is important to monitor the health of the Community Transport sector and its workforce as they are vital in operating services in parts of the community where it is not commercially viable. Therefore, without these services there would be parts of the community who do not have access to any transport.

CTA is committed to ensuring that we have a strong evidence base showing the state of the sector which includes, current and future skill and workforce challenges. This work is underway in Scotland with our Mapping Scotland project and is due to start in England within the next few months. CTA would be a strong stakeholder with DfT and TEST as we would be able to bring the specialist data on Community Transport. Community Transport is a flexible and responsive service which, while operates on restrictive budgets, contains highly a highly passionate and engaged workforce. CTA would be able

to bring those ideas and that engagement to design and support innovation to tackle the challenges faced by the wider Transport sector.

Further information

Response submitted by:

Caroline Whitney, Director for England, Community Transport Association:

Contact information:

caroline.whitney@ctauk.org

07887 750209

www.ctauk.org

The Community Transport Association (CTA) is the UK charity that represents and supports providers of Community Transport. Our 1200 members across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are local charities and community groups which provide transport services always for a social purpose and never for profit. We believe in accessible, inclusive and sustainable transport for all.