Northern Ireland Department of Education - 16-18 Legislation

11 June 2025

Summary

- Logistics UK supports the legislation's aim to extend participation to age 18, given critical skills shortages in the sector.
- Young people lack awareness of logistics careers; schools need to promote diverse vocational options.
- Entry requirements for training can exclude those without Level 2/3 qualifications.
- Transport barriers make access to logistics sites difficult, especially in rural areas.
- Disaggregated data by gender, disability, and ethnicity is needed to address underrepresentation.
- Risks include reinforcing gender gaps, excluding disabled or rural youth, and disadvantaging carers.
- Use campaigns like **Generation Logistics** to improve visibility, role models, and curriculum relevance.
- Ensure flexible, inclusive training routes and impartial careers advice across all education settings.

About Logistics UK

Logistics UK is one of the country's largest business groups, representing the entire logistics industry and supporting, shaping and standing up for safe and efficient logistics. Our membership of more than 20,000 includes global, national and regional businesses and SMEs spanning road, rail, inland waterways, sea and air as well as the buyers of freight services, such as retailers and manufacturers. As an organisation, we deliver services, representation and thought leadership, helping members and policy makers to seize new opportunities for the sector and the economy as a whole, right across the country.

Response to consultation

25. Are there any other general comments you would like to make about this proposed legislation?

From the perspective of the logistics sector, Logistics UK welcomes the intention of this legislation to ensure all young people are engaged in education, training, or structured pathways that build skills and future employability. The sector is experiencing significant skills shortages – particularly in areas such as warehousing, transport, supply chain coordination and digital logistics – and there is untapped potential among young people that could be better realised with improved post-16 guidance and provision.

However, we would strongly encourage the Department to:

1. Prioritise awareness of vocational pathways in logistics: There is currently limited visibility of logistics careers in schools. Many young people are unaware of the broad range of roles – from driving and distribution to planning, data management, and sustainability. Career guidance must be sector-informed, practical, and reflect regional labour market needs.

2. Ensure entry-level training is realistic and inclusive: Entry requirements for training programmes, particularly apprenticeships, can be a barrier for those without Level 2 or Level 3 qualifications. If participation to 18 becomes a legal expectation, pathways must include low-threshold, high-quality entry points and support for those furthest from the labour market.
3. Address transport and accessibility issues: Many logistics hubs are located in industrial estates or rural areas that are poorly served by public transport. For the legislation to be effective and inclusive, there must be cross-departmental planning (including infrastructure and transport policy) to ensure that all young people – especially those in rural or disadvantaged areas – can access training and employment opportunities in the logistics sector.
4. Promote collaboration, not competition, between schools and FE colleges: Schools should not be financially incentivised to retain students when a vocational route may be more appropriate. The legislation should be accompanied by clear operational policy to ensure young people receive neutral, transparent advice and access to all appropriate routes, including those offered by FE colleges and private training providers.
5. Include employer voice in implementation: Logistics employers – both large organisations and SMEs – are often willing to engage in training, apprenticeships and mentoring but face administrative and funding barriers. The sector would benefit from direct employer engagement in shaping the implementation of this legislation, to align education with the real demands of the workforce.

Logistics UK supports the intent of the legislation, but its success will rely heavily on operational delivery, cross-sector collaboration, and an honest assessment of the barriers young people face in entering sectors like logistics.

26. Are there any data issues in relation to Section 75 categories that the Department needs to consider?

Within the logistics sector, there is a notable lack of disaggregated data on participation by gender, ethnicity, disability, and socioeconomic background in post-16 vocational pathways (e.g. apprenticeships, traineeships, or entry-level training). This limits the sector's ability to identify and address underrepresentation and inequality.

For example:

- Gender imbalance is particularly pronounced in logistics, which remains male-dominated in many roles. Better data could inform targeted outreach and pathway development for young women.
- Ethnic minority and newcomer communities may face language, cultural, or information access barriers, but current data does not always make these challenges visible in training uptake or outcomes.
- Young people with disabilities may face physical or cognitive barriers to participation in logistics roles, but this is rarely tracked or analysed at a sectoral level.

Logistics UK encourages the Department to work with the Department for the Economy and training providers to improve collection and use of Section 75 data for all post-16 destinations, including employment-based pathways. This will be crucial to identifying systemic barriers and ensuring that legislation delivers equity as well as participation.

27. Are there any adverse impacts in relation to Section 75 equality groups that the Department needs to consider?

Without targeted support, the proposed legislation could unintentionally create or widen barriers for certain Section 75 groups within the logistics sector:

1. Gender (particularly young women):
   Logistics remains a male-dominated field. If post-16 pathways disproportionately channel young women into traditional or limited sectors, there is a risk of entrenching occupational segregation. Equal access to and promotion of logistics-related opportunities must be ensured through careers education, mentoring, and role models.

2. Young people with disabilities:
   Many roles in logistics involve physical or sensory demands. Without investment in adapted roles, inclusive training, or accessible infrastructure (e.g. transport to worksites), this group could face exclusion from meaningful participation. Clear pathways with reasonable adjustments are needed to prevent discrimination.

3. Ethnic minorities, Traveller and Roma communities, and Newcomers:
   These groups may face language, cultural, or systemic barriers in accessing post-16 logistics training or apprenticeships. Without proactive outreach, culturally competent support, and employer engagement, this legislation could widen the gap in outcomes.

4. Young people in rural areas:
   The logistics sector often offers jobs in industrial zones or transport hubs not well served by public transport. Without addressing transport inequality, rural youth, many of whom are already economically disadvantaged, may be disproportionately affected.

5. Young carers or parents (persons with dependants):
   The flexibility of logistics jobs can be a strength, but training pathways often lack the same flexibility. If programme design doesn't accommodate caring responsibilities, this group may struggle to comply with the participation requirement.

28. Please state what action you think could be taken to reduce or eliminate any adverse impacts.

To reduce or eliminate adverse impacts on Section 75 groups within the logistics sector, several targeted actions should be considered as part of the implementation of this legislation.

First, the Department should work to embed logistics within mainstream careers education. Young people often have little understanding of the wide range of roles available in the logistics industry, which extends far beyond warehousing and driving to include areas like supply chain planning, data analytics, automation, sustainability and customer service. Embedding logistics-themed content into curriculum subjects such as maths, computing, geography and business would make these careers more visible and relatable. A successful model of this approach can be seen in the Generation Logistics campaign in England, which provides free curriculum-aligned teaching resources and showcases diverse role models from the sector. By using real people to challenge stereotypes and showcase modern, tech-driven logistics careers, Generation Logistics has helped change perceptions and increase interest among underrepresented groups. A Northern Ireland-specific version of this initiative could have a similarly transformative effect.

Second, training and apprenticeship routes into the logistics sector must be designed to be inclusive and flexible. Many young people, particularly those with disabilities, caring responsibilities or who are parents, require part-time or adapted learning models to participate effectively. Providers and employers should be supported to offer accessible learning environments, including online or blended delivery where appropriate. In rural areas, where transport remains a major barrier, solutions such as subsidised travel, digital access, or mobile training units could help ensure participation is genuinely equitable.

Third, the Department should invest in targeted outreach and support for underrepresented and disadvantaged groups. This includes young women, ethnic minorities, Traveller and Roma communities, newcomer children, and those known to social services. Engagement should be proactive and culturally competent, offering practical guidance, mentoring and confidence-building opportunities. The logistics sector is well-placed to contribute to social mobility, but only if these young people can see a path in and receive support to take it.

In addition, it is vital that all education and training providers – including employers delivering apprenticeships – are required to collect and report participation, attainment and progression data by Section 75 characteristics. This will allow the Department to identify disparities and direct support where it is needed most. Without a clear understanding of who is accessing which routes, adverse impacts may go unnoticed and unaddressed.

Finally, the Department should act to ensure that young people receive impartial and comprehensive careers advice, particularly where schools and FE colleges are competing to retain learners. The success of this legislation will depend on learners making informed decisions based on their skills and interests, not on institutional interests. This means clear, transparent information about all available routes must be provided at the right time, with equal weighting.

Taken together, these actions would help ensure the legislation not only increases participation to age 18, but does so in a way that is fair, inclusive and responsive to the real-world challenges faced by young people entering the logistics sector.

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