Social Mobility Policy Committee: Call for Evidence

24 April 2025

Summary

- The logistics sector offers accessible career opportunities that drive social mobility, with 35,000 workers promoted to managerial roles in 2021, 63% of those without university degrees
- 87% of logistics workers receive on-the-job training, creating clear pathways for career progression. Logistics UK advocates for reforms to the Apprenticeship Levy to increase flexibility and address skills shortages, further enhancing opportunities for social mobility
- The logistics sector can play a key role in reducing the NEET population if supported to raise awareness of career opportunities and financial and structural barriers to training are removed
- Schools, employers, and policymakers must collaborate to enhance career education and vocational routes, making logistics careers more visible and accessible to students from all socio-economic backgrounds
- The sector is committed to fostering social mobility through programmes like Wincanton's Cygnets, which offers flexible, paid work placements for 16-18-year-olds, and Generation Logistics, which has raised awareness and improved perceptions of logistics careers, aiming to integrate logistics into school curricula and broaden access to career opportunities for all students

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

Introduction

The logistics sector plays a pivotal role in promoting social mobility due to its accessibility, diverse range of roles, and opportunities for career progression without requiring advanced degrees. According to the UK government's 2022 report on the logistics industry, the sector employs over 2.6 million people[1] – approximately 8% of the UK workforce – with a significant proportion in roles that do not require university education. Entry-level positions such as warehouse operatives, drivers, and logistics coordinators often offer on-the-job training and clear career pathways, enabling individuals to move into supervisory or managerial roles over time.

A 2022 study by Frontier Economics[2], prepared for Amazon and supported by Logistics UK, found that around 35,000 logistics workers in 2021 were promoted to managerial roles, demonstrating strong upward mobility. Notably, nearly two thirds (63%) of these managers did not possess a university degree or equivalent

[1] Future of Freight: A long-term plan, Department for Transport, June 2022
[2] The Impact of Logistics Sites in the UK, Frontier Economics, June 2022

qualification, highlighting the sector's capacity to offer significant career advancement opportunities irrespective of formal higher education credentials. This underscores the logistics sector's role in facilitating social mobility by providing accessible pathways to career progression based on experience and performance, rather than solely on academic qualifications. Moreover, the sector's geographical spread across both urban and rural areas ensures job opportunities are accessible to a broad demographic, including those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. This combination of low barriers to entry, structured progression, and widespread availability makes logistics a powerful engine for social advancement.

Educational support – schools and FE colleges

6. What support is given by schools and FE colleges to 16- to 18-year-olds considering applying for an apprenticeship, to apply to universities or to enter the world of work?

7. What part does careers advice and work placement play in the support offered? What works well? What gaps are there?

Schools and FE colleges offer varying levels of support to 16- to 18-year-olds exploring post-education pathways, including apprenticeships, university, and direct entry into the workforce. Traditionally, there has been a stronger institutional focus on promoting university routes, sometimes at the expense of vocational and apprenticeship options[3]. However, this is gradually changing, especially with initiatives like Generation Logistics, a movement helping to rebalance the narrative and demonstrate that logistics can be a high-potential path for social mobility, particularly for those not pursuing traditional academic routes.

What works well?

Generation Logistics is a national careers awareness campaign designed to transform perceptions of the logistics sector and highlight the diverse range of opportunities it offers. Targeted at individuals aged 13-24, as well as the educators and careers leads supporting those aged 13-18, the campaign aims to address longstanding misconceptions and present logistics as a modern, inclusive, and rewarding career pathway. Now in its third year, between August 2022 and September 2024, Generation Logistics has achieved impressive results, including:

- Over 1.37 million website hits
- Over 6.9 million social engagements
- 1.673 billion opportunities to see created
- Raised awareness of the logistics sector by 37%
- Increased positive sentiment about careers in logistics by 212%

Through a wide variety of engaging resources, storytelling, and industry engagement, Generation Logistics introduces young people to the breadth of roles available within logistics – from operations and supply chain management to technology and innovation. For educators and careers professionals, the campaign provides structured support to embed logistics into existing careers guidance and subject learning, helping to ensure that students are aware of the sector's relevance to both academic and vocational routes.

Crucially, Generation Logistics is backed by an active Ambassador Network – professionals from across the sector who engage directly with schools and colleges to share their career stories and inspire the next generation. This campaign is playing a vital role in broadening access to careers education and supporting social mobility by opening doors to a sector that offers clear progression routes and opportunities across all regions and educational backgrounds.

Generation Logistics is currently participating in a pilot initiative in collaboration with the Careers and Enterprise Company and the Leicester and Leicestershire Business and Skills Partnership, centred on the Unbox Your Future programme, a reimagined model of workplace experience. Logistics UK strongly supports the Government's commitment to ensuring every young person has access to two weeks of high-quality work experience. However, it also recognises that aspects of the logistics sector can make traditional placements more difficult to deliver. Factors such as on-site health and safety requirements, remote or inaccessible locations, and non-standard working patterns present barriers. The Careers and Enterprise Company's

[3] The Annual Report of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2021/22, Ofsted, December 2022

modern work experience approach[4], currently being trialled with Generation Logistics sponsors in Leicestershire, offers a more flexible and inclusive alternative. It blends classroom-based engagement with structured site visits, allowing students to gain meaningful, sustained exposure to the logistics sector in a way that is practical for employers and impactful for learners.

What gaps are there?

To address the gap in sector-specific knowledge among teachers and careers leads, it is essential that more initiatives like the one hosted by Asda be introduced. Asda, a key sponsor of Generation Logistics, organised a Careers Hub meeting at its Lutterworth facility, with over 60 educators in attendance. This event offered a valuable opportunity for educators to engage directly with the logistics sector, gaining firsthand insight into the variety of careers available and the skills required. These opportunities provide teachers and careers leaders with practical, up-to-date information, empowering them to better guide students and promote logistics as a viable and rewarding career path. By integrating industry expertise into the career guidance process, it is possible to create a more informed, proactive educational environment that highlights the full potential of the logistics sector as a path for social mobility.

Employer initiatives

14. What part does training play in supporting career development and promotion to existing employees?

Training is a cornerstone of career progression within the logistics sector, acting as the bridge between entry-level roles and long-term career advancement. Once in the sector, employees benefit from structured and ongoing development, often delivered directly in the workplace through practical, skills-based learning. This includes formal programmes such as apprenticeships, as well as informal coaching, mentoring, and cross-functional experience. According to the report by Frontier Economics, 87% of logistics workers have received training in their role, demonstrating that logistics is not only accessible, it is developmental, actively building on the capacity of its workforce and enabling people to grow into more senior or specialist roles.

The sector has embraced vocational routes as a means of progression, with apprenticeships at almost every level, from intermediate roles like transport planning to higher-level leadership and supply chain strategy. According to the Department for Education[5], there were 26,400 apprenticeship starts in the transport and logistics sector in England during the 2022/23 academic year – an increase from the previous year, and a clear indication of the sector's commitment to upskilling both new and existing workers.

While the logistics sector is performing strongly in terms of workforce development, there is a clear opportunity to make this investment even more impactful. Current constraints around the Apprenticeship Levy limit the flexibility employers have in addressing immediate and evolving skills needs. To unlock the full potential of the logistics workforce and address persistent skills shortages, Logistics UK is calling for a series of targeted reforms. First, clarity around the more flexible Growth and Skills Levy, enabling employers to use funds for a wider range of training opportunities, should be provided as soon as possible. Another critical reform, especially considering social mobility, is to increase apprenticeship funding bands and allow the Levy to cover essential certification costs, ensuring that financial barriers do not prevent access to key qualifications (see Q16). Logistics UK also believes that employers should be able to redirect unused Levy funds to support careers awareness campaigns like Generation Logistics, which has played a significant role in improving sector visibility among young people. Finally, it is vital that nationally consistent training access is maintained, even in the context of regional devolution, to avoid disadvantaging those in border regions and ensuring cohesive, effective workforce development across the country. These changes would not only support business growth and innovation but also foster sustained social mobility and resilience across the UK's supply chains.

15. What examples are there of employers offering work placements and taster sessions to local students and potential employees?

In addition to the Generation Logistics, Careers and Enterprise Company and Leicester and Leicestershire Business and Skills Partnership initiative outlined in the response to questions 6 and 7, one of the most notable

[4] Modern Work Experience, The Careers and Enterprise Company, 2025

[5] Academic Year 2022/23: Apprenticeships and Traineeships, Department for Education, November 2024

opportunities in the logistics sector is Wincanton's Cygnet programme[6]. Cygnets offers part-time work for students aged 16-18, with a guaranteed minimum of 8 hours of work per week on a schedule that suits the student. This flexibility allows young people to balance their studies with paid work, providing them with the invaluable experience of entering the workforce while still pursuing their education. Additionally, the possibility of taking on extra hours during school holidays or after college further enhances their earning potential and work experience. Such opportunities are particularly transformative for young people from lower-income backgrounds or those at risk of becoming NEET. By offering flexible, paid work, provide students with a pathway to financial independence and career development that helps avoid the risk of NEET status and also sets the stage for long-term upward mobility in the logistics sector.

In collaboration with Speakers for Schools, Wincanton are also offering virtual work experience[7] in Generation Logistics Week 2025 (23rd – 27th June). Students will have the opportunity to take part in live, interactive activities, network with colleagues across Wincanton and learn about opportunities and how to apply for them. Generation Logistics, in conjunction with STEM Learning, is also providing a range of virtual activities across the week, working with Asda, DHL, Maersk, and more to bust myths, highlight sustainable initiatives and share innovations in AI and technology across the sector[8] - all with a focus on accessible, future-proof careers.

At undergraduate level, the Novus programme works with leading universities to provide students with summer placements, internships and graduate opportunities as well as site tours, guest lectures, and professional and peer mentoring. With many sponsors of Novus also supporting Generation Logistics, such as CEVA, GXO, Kuehne + Nagel and Martin Brower, these initiatives collectively reflect the logistics sector's deep commitment to fostering social mobility by providing young people from all backgrounds with tangible opportunities to enter the workforce and build successful careers.

By offering flexible work opportunities, virtual experiences, and pathways into higher education and professional roles, the sector is actively breaking down barriers to entry and ensuring that young people, regardless of their socio-economic circumstances, can access the skills, training, and networks they need to succeed.

NEETs

16. There are now around 1 million people not in education, employment or training (NEETs), and over 16% of this number are 16-24 years, the highest level since 2007. What in your view are the reasons for this increase?

The increase in NEETs, particularly within the 16-24 age group, can be attributed to several factors, including a lack of awareness about career opportunities, the mismatch between the skills needed by employers and available training, and broader economic and social challenges. Addressing these issues requires a concerted effort to promote vocational training, ensure that education aligns with industry needs, and create more accessible and supportive pathways for young people to enter the workforce, particularly in high-demand fields like HGV technicians.

The logistics sector is facing an ongoing shortage of vehicle technicians, with 51.8%[9] of companies of businesses reporting severe recruitment issues. A key cause of this shortage is the lack of Level 3 Heavy Vehicle Technician Apprenticeship courses available; there were over 100 colleges and training providers offering the qualification in 2010[10], yet in April 2025, there were only 37 providers[11], as the apprenticeship faces significant funding constraints. The lack of targeted, hands-on training programmes can make it difficult for NEETs to gain the practical experience required to enter technical fields, such as HGV mechanics.

[6] Early Career Opportunities, Wincanton, 2025
[7] Wincanton: Are you Generation Logistics? Speakers for Schools, 2025
[8] Generation Logistics Week Collection, STEM Learning, 2025
[9] Q3 2024 Skills and Employment Update, Logistics UK, December 2024
[10] HGV Driver Apprenticeship Funding Welcomed – But More Needed for Heavy Vehicle Technicians, RHA, 2023
[11] Training Providers for Heavy Vehicle Service and Maintenance Technician (Level 3), Gov.uk, April 2025

It is also of paramount importance to continue to promote the sector, as 26% of young adults surveyed by RDSi for Generation Logistics in 2022 were unable to explain what a career in logistics might provide[12]. Despite the growing demand for skilled workers in logistics, many NEETs may not know that these opportunities exist or do not see them as viable career paths. This lack of awareness often and understandably leads to a disconnect between the skills needed and the impetus to join the sector from young people.

The challenge of apprenticeship funding bands, mentioned in Q14, is particularly pertinent for the NEET population, as some apprenticeships in logistics require additional costs for industry-recognised certifications, which are not currently covered by the Apprenticeship Levy. This creates a financial barrier for apprentices, especially those from lower-income backgrounds who may struggle to afford these additional expenses. For example, apprentices pursuing the Level 3 Health, Safety, and Environment Technician standard are required to pay nearly £300 out-of-pocket for the NEBOSH General Certificate, covering registration and related materials, if their employers do not. This added financial burden may deter potential apprentices from pursuing these vital qualifications, which can limit their career prospects and restrict access to essential skills.

To ensure that the logistics sector remains a powerful tool for social mobility, we recommend that the Growth and Skills Levy be reformed to cover essential certifications. This change would remove the financial barriers preventing NEETs and other disadvantaged groups from obtaining critical qualifications, ultimately opening up opportunities for career advancement. Over time, such reforms will not only provide immediate access to better-paying jobs but also foster long-term economic mobility, breaking cycles of disadvantage and offering a foundation for future generations.

17. What is the role of (1) schools and (2) employers in encouraging NEETs back into education, training or employment?

Collaboration between schools and employers is key to supporting the NEET population. The apprenticeship and vocational training systems sometimes struggle to keep pace with technological advancements and emerging industry demands, leaving young people without the specific skills employers are seeking. Employers can actively address those skills gaps by partnering with educational institutions to ensure that the training programmes available are aligned with industry needs. By providing input on curriculum development and offering hands-on training opportunities, employers can bridge the gap between the skills students learn and the skills that employers require. This collaboration can help more young people transition from education to meaningful employment, reducing the number of NEETs in the long term.

Generation Logistics has aimed to support the school-employer partnership by creating over 50 curriculum-mapped resources in conjunction with STEM Learning, an educational charity that focuses on improving lives through STEM. By integrating logistics knowledge into existing school subjects, Generation Logistics ensures that students, regardless of their background, are exposed to career opportunities they may not have previously considered without adding extra workload to educators.

Schools play a vital role in exposing students to a wide range of career paths, including those in the logistics sector. Many young people may not be aware of the opportunities available within logistics, such as HGV technicians, as discussed. By integrating career awareness programmes and industry partnerships into the curriculum, schools can broaden students' horizons and demonstrate the potential of vocational routes, breaking down stereotypes and highlighting their social mobility potential.

However, it is essential that investment is increased in careers support to enable and expedite change. A 2019 report from the Careers and Enterprise Company found that 63% of careers leaders in secondary schools believed that time was a barrier to delivering their role effectively[13]. Given that careers leaders are time-poor, lack specific sector-based knowledge in many cases, and the growing complexity of the labour market means that there is a growing demand for support, schools must have additional funding for staff, for training, and for digital tools that can support students in finding their pathway.

[12] Generation Logistics Benchmarking Research: Preliminary Research Findings, RDSi, July 2022

[13] Careers Leaders in Secondary Schools: The first year, Careers and Enterprise Company, 2019

Conclusion

The logistics sector is uniquely positioned to promote social mobility, but achieving its full potential requires enhanced collaboration between schools, employers, and policymakers. Key to this will be ensuring that career education is further integrated into the curriculum, making vocational routes more visible and accessible, and addressing financial and structural barriers to training and qualifications. By investing in these initiatives and reforms, a more inclusive workforce that empowers individuals from all backgrounds to access meaningful career opportunities in logistics and that contributes to the UK's long-term social and economic mobility is possible.

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