

Next stop, new career - bus drivers encourage others to get on board

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Driving a bus is a rewarding career offering fast progression, competitive salaries, good benefits, travel concessions and a sense of purpose.

- bus drivers across the country come together to promote the benefits of their career, whether entering the world of work or looking at a career change
- the sector offers new opportunities, strong career progression and the responsibility of connecting people to their communities
- calls to join come amid the government's ongoing bus reform, following the Bus Services Act and £3 billion investment for buses across the country

Bus drivers across the UK have teamed up with the government as part of a push to get more people into the career, where no 2 days are ever the same.

Drivers all the way from London to Cumbria have shared their pride in a career that offers fast progression, competitive salaries and a sense of purpose, all while enjoying views of some of the UK's best landscapes.

Driving a bus is a rewarding career with drivers working on a shift basis, enabling a good work-life balance, with good benefits, travel concessions and strong prospects. Once behind the wheel, many stay in the industry for decades.

It is never too late or too early to become a bus driver, with pathways open to those entering the world of work for the first time or thinking about a change of career.

While recent industry figures show there is a shortfall in the bus and coach driver sector, and although operators have made strong strides in closing the gap, drivers are now putting forward their stories to get more people on board.

For Leea Carnegie, a 25-year-old driver working for Stagecoach Yorkshire, the job is more than just one with fast development.

Leea Carnegie said:

I love being a bus driver as it's not only a way to give back to the community, but you get to join a team that are more like family. I started out as an apprentice and in a year and six months have been given the brilliant opportunity of becoming a lead driver.

I would highly encourage people to join our industry as the support and growth is endless, even if it's just to make someone smile.

Meanwhile, Jamie Jackson, 24, joined Stagecoach when he was just 18. He said he has received 'so many opportunities' in the 6 years of being a bus driver.

Jamie Jackson said:

I also really enjoy driving around many different areas, meeting new people and seeing regular faces who also recognise you too. Being a bus driver at such a young age really makes me feel like I've achieved a great profession.

Within the bus industry, there are so many opportunities to progress. I'd highly recommend bus driving to anyone who loves to drive and has great people skills.

For Sophie Ord, a 24-year-old driver for Go North East who has supported major events like the Great North Run, there has never been a better time to get involved in bus driving.

Sophie Ord, Go North East bus driver

Sophie Ord said:

I love being a bus driver because every day is different and I get to make a real difference in people's lives. As a young female driver, I'm proud to be part of an industry that's evolving and becoming more diverse. I've gained fantastic road experience and confidence, and I genuinely enjoy helping passengers get to where they need to be safely.

I'd highly recommend bus driving to other young people. It's a career that offers independence, responsibility and the chance to travel around different places, meet new people and experience something new every day, far from being stuck in a typical office job.

Simon Lightwood, Minister for Roads and Buses, said:

These testimonies from our brilliant bus and coach drivers show just how rewarding a career this is. It truly offers something for everyone, from those weighing up what's next after summer exams to people looking for a radical change.

With our £3 billion investment in services for the next 3 years and our Bus Services Act now law, there has never been a better time to get involved in this wonderful industry and I hope to see more talented drivers over the coming years.

The push from bus drivers comes at a time when buses are being overhauled by the government, with the Bus Services Act giving local leaders unprecedented power over their services.

A further £3 billion is being invested in bus services over the next 3 years, with local authorities able to use their allocation in any way they see fit, including cheaper fares, more electric buses or upgraded stations. Operators will also receive a portion of this investment to help maintain and improve their services.

This can only mean good news for bus drivers, with the act also increasing protections for socially necessary routes, meaning more routes need to be provided for, and mandating training so drivers can properly tackle anti-social behaviour on board.

Meanwhile, the fast rollout of electric buses across the UK is not just offering smoother journeys for passengers, but also for drivers, with these quieter and greener vehicles often more enjoyable to drive than diesel counterparts.

There is regular engagement across government and with industry to understand and monitor the pressures operators are facing.

Daejanelle Hayden, Go-Ahead London bus driver

Daejanelle Hayden, a 20-year-old from Go-Ahead London, said:

I love being a bus driver because I'm often the first or last person someone sees at the start or end of their day. That small moment of connection really matters. Every shift I'm taking people to work, school, interviews, and home. Real milestones in their lives. I genuinely enjoy helping people and this job lets me do that every single day.

I'm proud that buses are accessible to everyone, including women, children, and people with disabilities. It is transport that truly includes all. Working with Go-Ahead Group makes that even more meaningful because inclusivity is not just talked about, it is lived.

Rhys Stirling, Stagecoach south-west bus driver

Rhys Stirling, a 21-year-old driver for Stagecoach in the south-west, said:

Ever since I could walk, I've had a passion for buses and the industry, and growing up, when everyone dreamt of being footballers I always simply wanted to be a Bus Driver. Passing my test was a dream come true, finally getting behind the wheel of a bus on my own and leaving that depot for the first time meant I'd made it.

Not many people can actually say they accomplished their dream in life, but I can. Being in this industry is fantastic and it's flexible enough to allow you to put as many hours in as you want. There aren't many jobs that gives you the opportunity to travel the length of the country.

Tia Stalham, 21, from the Kendal depot at Stagecoach Cumbria, said:

I enjoy being a bus driver because it is always different. No matter where you drive, it is always different people and a different scenery - especially in the lakes. I enjoy being able to have a laugh with the tourists and having a good catch-up with the locals.

Bus driving offers so much: helping your community, making friends with your colleagues and opportunities to meet people from all over. If you like driving and working independently while still interacting with the public, it is great. There is a sense of purpose and pride when you're driving, providing a service to lots of people and a different kind of responsibility as there's a trust with passengers' safety and wellbeing.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/next-stop-new-career-bus-drivers-encourage-others-to-get-on-board>