



# WOMEN BEHIND THE WHEEL

## RECRUITING WOMEN INTO THE BUS INDUSTRY

### Background

London Buses have been seeking to increase the number of women bus drivers in the industry. Bus operators across the capital have been working individually to achieve this, running marketing campaigns to attract women applicants. These efforts form part of the drive to meet the Transport for London (TfL) goal of doubling the number of women in the bus industry by 2012.

### Key themes

Following discussion of the barriers facing women in the bus industry, a series of awareness-raising and recruitment open days were organised. The short-term aims of the effort were to attract a minimum of 90 women to attend and for best practice to be shared with regard to scoping and managing recruitment open days aimed at specific target groups. The longer-term goal was to provide job opportunities for women with bus operators.

A pilot session in August 2009, organised by a partnership involving TfL, HCT Group, Abellio London and Go Ahead London, resulted in agreement to hold pan-London recruitment open days with two principal aims:

- To increase applications for bus driving job vacancies from women across London.
- To enhance the attraction of these posts to women by increasing awareness of the opportunities and removing current barriers to employment.

### Outcomes

A total of three open days were held: at Job Centre Plus locations in Peckham and Denmark Street in central London, and at the HCT Group in Hackney. Following the pilot, the number of bus operators >>



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Senior Manager  
HCT Group



involved was extended to include Arriva North and South, East London Bus Group, First, and Metrobus. A total of 124 women attended. The events succeeding in attracting women from a wide range of ethnic groups, and from 24 London boroughs. 93% of those who attended stated they were considering applying for a job as a bus driver as a result of what they had learned.

Job opportunities have been created, with 17 women invited by bus operators for interviews and tests. Those who are successful typically receive around four weeks of initial classroom based training, followed by on-the-job experience for one to two weeks to get a hands-on feel for the role. Ultimately, drivers will receive a PCV qualification – enabling them to drive ‘Passenger carrying vehicles’.

According to Nezahat Cihan, of the social entrepreneurship charity, HCT Group: “This has been a very effective partnership. It has brought together all the different players, each with their own role – from awareness raising and promotion, to skills development, to formal job training. It is not only building skill levels, but giving women real and exciting job opportunities”.

Kieran McDonnell from First London commented on the success of the initiative: “First London consistently works toward a diverse and valued workforce, which also reflects the communities we serve so we were very pleased to be invited to take part in the open day. The success was measured for us by Lesley Baker, one of the women who attended the open day, going on to be offered employment with us. Lesley passed her PCV driving test at the first attempt and is now working towards a BTEC qualification to help her provide a quality service to the public as a bus driver in west London.”

According to Lesley: “I enjoyed the TfL open day. It was fun and welcoming! I was given the encouragement that anyone can be a bus driver and not to be put off because I’m a woman. The training was a shock to the system, being put on a 40ft coach. I really enjoyed it though it was hard work. I have a real sense of achievement. I can’t believe I did it.” Lesley Baker, Bus Driver, First Willesden Junction Depot.

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Driver Recruitment and  
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**Lesley Baker**  
Bus Driver, First Willesden  
Junction Depot

For any additional information on this case study or other TfL related work in this area, please contact the supplier skills team at [supplierskills@TfL.gov.uk](mailto:supplierskills@TfL.gov.uk).