

Why not make the change to become an HGV trainer?

Jackie Walton is an HGV driving tutor from Leigh in Greater Manchester who has been teaching people to drive for nearly two decades. Jackie has recently started training HGV apprentice drivers at TRS Training. Jackie spoke to **Pavlina Kiakides** and **Jenna Jensen**

After a career in the army driving trucks, Jackie took work as a courier, then trained as a driving instructor. For the past seven years, Jackie has been helping drivers gain their truck licences.

We caught up with Jackie at TRS Training Ltd's driving centre in Merseyside.

Jackie enrolled in the regular army aged 20, and most of her seven years' service was spent in logistics. "Time in the army was such an experience," she tells us. "I saw active service in Kuwait, and the army trained me to drive trucks. I spent most of my seven years shifting supplies between depots in a 7.5-tonne vehicle. I loved the job, the people and the responsibility."

When she left the service, Jackie's move back to civilian life included gaining her Class 1 HGV licence. After working as a courier, she trained as a driving instructor, but had always harboured a desire to help others gain their lorry licences.

Becoming a trainer

Jackie explained how difficult it was finding out how to become a trainer: "I was searching for information but kept finding myself at dead ends. Even today, there is a need for more guidance that is easily accessible. The career information out there lacks detail and can be hard to find. A focus on developing clear communications about the routes to becoming a tutor is a priority, especially as there is such a desperate need for instructors right now. Many qualified HGV drivers will be surprised how straightforward it is to take the step into teaching their skills."

In her new role with TRS Training, she is helping drivers achieve their Cat C, C1 and



Jackie Walton says information on becoming a tutor is hard to find

C+E licences. Jackie spends time instructing in the cab on virtually a daily basis.

At the moment most of her students are training via the HGV Apprenticeship. But not all firms need their drivers to drive an artic, so Jackie will also be delivering the driving element of the new Urban Driver Apprenticeship.

Students are typically with Jackie for five or 10 days, depending on which route or licence they are pursuing. Jackie is also gearing up to deliver the practical training on the new government-funded HGV Skills Bootcamps.

Jackie has only trained a handful of other female drivers during her career. But she has spotted several women on the enrolment list for TRS Training's first HGV Skills Bootcamp intake, and is looking forward to welcoming them.

Support for women

On being asked how easy it is for women to enter the sector, Jackie's view is plain. "There is no reason women can't do this job. Of course, a basic fitness level is a requirement for the role, as it would be for any physical profession. The other qualities needed to make a good HGV driver aren't dependent

on whether you're male or female.

"Over the years, I've seen the industry evolve. The image of greasy spoons is a thing of the past. We're in an era of truck drivers who keep fit in the gym and eat healthily. With stop and stay over facilities across the country and further afield being modernised, it's far more appealing to women these days.

"Awareness and equality are fast becoming priorities in the workplace, so I'd encourage any woman who

is interested in taking the first step. TRS Training is working hard to address the lack of female drivers in the sector. They provide trainees with a programme of personal support to help overcome any personal challenges that arise during their training."

Job satisfaction

As you would expect, patience and calmness are at the top of Jackie's list of qualities required to do her job. And she reveals how some days she feels like a counsellor. Being in the cab with a student for several hours a day, she experiences the highs and lows of their lives.

Jackie's job motivation is very clear. "Every time a driver passes their test, I get to share their joy. Screams, tears, jumping out of the cab, hyperventilation, I've seen it all. Gaining their HGV licence is a life-changing event for nearly everybody I teach. What's more satisfying than that?"

