



**hct group**

# introducing Drive On ex-offenders into the bus industry



working with our partners

[www.hctgroup.org](http://www.hctgroup.org)

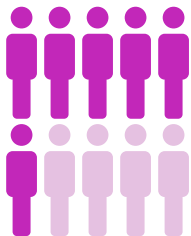
**Blue Sky**

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# Drive On

Within twelve months of release, 60% of offenders will have re-offended. This has an estimated cost to the UK each year of £13 billion – and an incalculable waste of human potential. Having a job is the single biggest factor in reducing re-offending, yet 75% of prisoners are released to unemployment.

At HCT Group, we want to be a part of the solution. Our new pilot project – Drive On – aims to create a path to sustainable employment for ex-offenders as London red bus drivers. The project is a partnership between HCT Group and Blue Sky, part of The Forward Trust, an award-winning social enterprise.



**60% of offenders re-offend within twelve months of release**



**£13bn is the estimated annual cost to the UK from re-offending**



**£18,600 is the estimated saving to the taxpayer for each ex-offender in work for six months through Blue Sky**

Blue Sky recruits and selects the participants, ensuring that they are appropriate for the programme. The HCT Group Learning Centre, with its extensive experience of working with some of the hardest-to-reach learners in education, provides the theory and practical elements of bus driver training, leading to the participants gaining their full licence.

After their training, participants then take part in the standard induction and review period of any other new driver recruit – albeit with ongoing management support and guidance from Blue Sky. At the end of their three month review period, they are confirmed in post as London red bus drivers.

# how it works

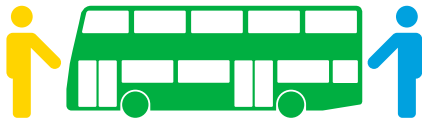


**recruitment and selection**  
Blue Sky recruits programme participants based on their suitability and offending record



**referral and assessment**  
Blue Sky refers potential participants. HCT Group conducts its normal recruitment process:

- interview
- driving assessment
- medical



**driver training**  
HCT Group Learning Centre trains participants as bus drivers – including soft-skill development – leading to a full PCV licence

Blue Sky manage and support participants, including:

- in-work support, including training grants and housing loans
- regular support calls
- site visits



**workplace induction**  
Participants are now in paid employment – with Blue Sky acting as their agency – and undertake the standard two-week HCT Group induction



**review period**  
Participants are now driving buses on the road, evaluated in the same way as all new agency drivers for a total of three months



**permanent employment**  
At the end of their review period, drivers are permanently employed at HCT Group as red bus drivers

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# the pilot

Drive On is a pilot-in-progress with a small group of ex-offenders. The idea is to assess the:

- cohort's suitability for driving roles
- effectiveness of our teaching and induction when working with the cohort
- practicality of scaling up the model.

## **learning from the pilot**

With most of the group now through the programme and on the road, we have been able to draw some conclusions.

### **tried and tested**

The ex-offender cohort faces significant barriers to learning. However, our Learning Centre has developed teaching, learning and wraparound support strategies over many years that effectively engage hard-to-reach learners – so these barriers have not proved to be a material issue for the Drive On programme.

### **trusted partners**

The expertise in and empathy for working with the ex-offender cohort provided by Blue Sky has been invaluable for the programme.

### **patience rewarded**

The training programme has been conducted over a longer period than normal industry benchmarks – a similar volume of training but at a lower intensity. We are evaluating how best to balance the learning needs of the cohort with the need to move learners through the programme at a faster pace.

### **the right stuff**

All the way through the programme – from initial training to active employment – the attitude and attendance of the cohort has been very good, indistinguishable from an intake of non-offender trainees.

### **on-road performance**

Those members of the cohort that are currently employed and driving have been providing a level of customer service and driving quality directly on a par with other drivers at this stage in their development.

### **next steps**

Drive On remains a pilot-in-progress, yet the evidence to date is compelling. We believe the programme represents a legitimate and effective pathway to stable, rewarding employment for ex-offenders.

As the Drive On programme develops, we will implement the learning from the pilot. However, it has shown no real barriers to scaling-up significantly, should funding permit.

# what it means



As a social enterprise, HCT Group is always seeking out innovative new ways to increase its social impact. By creating a pathway for ex-offenders with Drive On to build rewarding careers in the bus industry, we really can help people turn their lives around.

Dai Powell OBE  
Chief Executive  
HCT Group



The bus industry is crying out for new drivers, ex-offenders are crying out for opportunities. Drive On tackles both of these issues. It's a great match between good business sense and positive social change – and I'm delighted to be involved.

Jane Desmond  
Chief Operating Officer  
HCT Group



The Learning Centre has been breaking down the barriers to employment for those who face significant challenges in the labour market for over 20 years. I am delighted we are able to use our skills and experience to create genuine opportunities for ex-offenders.

Tutu Adebisi  
Director of Skills and Employment  
HCT Group



## about HCT Group

HCT Group is a social enterprise in the transport industry, safely providing over 23 million passenger trips on our buses every year. We deliver a range of transport services – from London red buses to social services transport, from school transport to whole bus networks, from community transport to education and training.

We reinvest the profits from our commercial work into high social impact transport services or projects in the communities we serve, and into providing training opportunities for people who are long-term unemployed – making a real difference to people's lives.

For more information, please see [www.hctgroup.org](http://www.hctgroup.org)

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## about Blue Sky

Blue Sky, part of The Forward Trust, has 11 years' experience of working with employers to help them access highly committed, local candidates who are all ex-offenders. Blue Sky's award-winning employment model reduces re-offending by up to 23% (source: Ministry of Justice Data Lab), one of the highest scores recorded. Working across a growing range of sectors, Blue Sky helps employers add social value into operational expenditure by offering work opportunities to ex-offenders. For every ex-offender employed through Blue Sky, £18,600 is saved for the public purse. To find out more please visit [www.blueskydevelopment.co.uk](http://www.blueskydevelopment.co.uk)