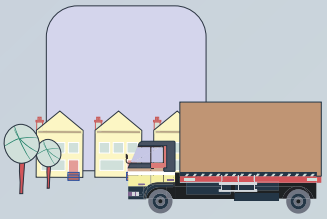
Policy Liaison Group
Housing Delivery & Growth

# Getting Britain Moving

## The role of the removals sector in the homebuying and selling process

A report by the Policy Liaison Group for Housing Delivery & Growth, with support from the British Association of Removers and Pickfords





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# Foreword

## David Simmonds MP, Shadow Minister (Levelling Up, Housing and Communities)

For most people, moving home is a significant moment in their lives. Whether you're a first time buyer, a family looking to grow, an older couple hoping to downsize, or even just a renter moving between places, the cost of moving is huge financially but also emotionally.

A vital part of this ecosystem is the removals sector, which looks after one of the most stressful moments in the process, and yet it is frequently overlooked in conversations about streamlining and reform. Without the capacity to move households and businesses efficiently, the wider system cannot operate as it should.

This report is, then, a timely contribution to the debate about how we improve this system.

The removals sector delivershundreds of thousands of moves every year, supporting businesses and families in every part of the country, and enables people to take up opportunities wherever they might find them. It supports labour mobility, regional growth and economic dynamism.

What is particularly striking in this report is the extent to which the challenges facing the removals sector mirror those across the wider housing system. Uncertainty in transaction times, rising costs, skills shortages and the presence of an unregulated informal market, are all key challenges facing removals just as it affects the broader housing development and delivery sectors. Addressing these challenges is only partly about improving consumer experience; it is also about strengthening the robustness of our economy.

In this report, we have four contributions. The first, from Laurie Wilcockson at the Policy Liaison Group for Housing Delivery & Growth, homes in on the current proposed reforms the government seeks to make to the homebuying and selling process. He accurately describes both what the reforms do well (modernising, standardising and professionalising the process to bring it into the twenty-first century), while highlighting where it falls short - and runs the risk of over-bureaucratising, duplicating information, and creating unenforceable standards. And of course, neglecting the removals sector entirely.

Andrew Large, Director General at the British Association of Removers, has correctly highlighted his own role in the context of the industry, and the vital work that the trade body, and its members do representing the sector. He spotlights the downstream consequences of broader economic impacts on the industry, and what that means for stifling economic growth. Particularly, I share his concern about the collapse of housing delivery, which not only means fewer first-time buyers, but importantly has knock-on consequences for the market liquidity necessary to support economic dynamism.

Sarah Cole, President at the British Association of Removers and Managing Director of Universal Commercial Relocation, uses her piece to emphasise the importance of commercial relocation to broader growth strategies. She highlights a range of reasons why commercial removals are so important, but for me, the key takeaway is the importance of skills in the removals economy. One of the reasons moving is so expensive is because removers are taking all your most valuable possessions, and transporting them across the country. For businesses, this might be incredibly expensive equipment. It is obviously vital therefore that we have our best and most capable removers doing this work.

Mark Taylor, Managing Director of Pickfords, concludes this report with an essay on domestic home removals. What is so important in his contribution is his highlighting that removals is such an entrepreneurial and SME-dependent industry. I was amazed to learn that 85% of companies operating in the industry have fewer than ten members of staff. Britain has always been a nation of small businesses, and it is their entrepreneurial spirit that built our country. And yet, SMEs bear the brunt more than larger companies of overregulation, increasing costs, and market unpredictability.

I welcome this report and the practical recommendations it sets out. It is a call to arms for policymakers to think holistically about housing reform, and seriously about the role of logistics and transport within the broader system. Fixing our housing permacrisis is not just about the supply of housing, but about liquidity in the market.

If we are serious about getting Britain moving, we must ensure that every part of the system is working together to make that possible.

# Homebuying and selling reform, and how it must be stewarded

**Laurie Wilcockson, Policy Manager, Policy Liaison Group for Housing Delivery & Growth**

The British dream of homeownership is, by the government's own admission, not working. While access to adequate housing has been considered a fundamental human right since 1948, the state of the market in the UK is overwhelmingly flawed, trapped in a state of permacrisis.

Nowhere is this more true than in the process of buying and selling: a gauntlet of inefficiency which takes an average of 120 days to complete once an offer is accepted, and with a fall-through rate of one in every three purchases. This carries huge socioeconomic consequence for the entire population; not just young professionals and first time buyers, but growing families looking to upsize and older people looking to downsize as well. This lack of liquidity in the market only serves to further compound pressures, increasing house prices, and the cost and risk of moving home as well. The system is further plagued by a lack of transparency and a reliance on disconnected, anachronistic processes with digitisation still a pipe dream.

With one in three transactions failing, about £400 million per year is lost for buyers and sellers. This failure rate is often driven by critical information, like damp, structural defects or planning issues, only emerging after an offer is agreed.

To tackle this broken market, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has proposed a sweeping roadmap of reform aimed at restructuring the systems, such that it is driven by digital innovation, greater transparency and higher professional standards. Three of these in particular stand out.

## Adequate sharing of information

One of the more positive reforms in the now-closed consultation is the promise of better information at the point of purchase. The proposed reforms have sought to tackle this with a mandatory "standardised, easy-to-digest" set of data at the point of listing.

The government's vision is for a comprehensive, upfront information package, including tenure, council tax bands, EPC ratings and even building safety data. Importantly, the responsibility for collating this information lies with sellers and estate agents, not on the buyers themselves - which is the current norm in the system. This means sellers, not buyers, undertaking property condition assessments and searches prior to listing. Scotland, which has a far lower risk of transactions failing, already does this. Pilots in England, meanwhile, suggest that early searches could save as much as four weeks in the average transaction time.

The gap here though remains one of trust and liability. The government fears its new plan being an echo of Home Information Packs (HIPs), an old system which essentially was a good one, were it not for unreliability of data leading to buyers essentially needing to issue their own information gathering anyway - an unnecessary, and very costly, duplication of work and information.

To bridge this, the consultation suggested leveraging real-time data from the Land Registry and having stricter validity periods for searches. This is positive but does not go far enough. Reforms must go further in order to avoid the same duplication issue faced by HIPs, and there needs to be robust and professional frameworks with statutory weight to ensure a code of best practice is both kept up to date, and followed. Without that clear framework for professional liability, the risk is that we are increasing costs for sellers, while causing buyers to mistrust information and commission their own research at cost regardless. Once this is achieved, the government will be well-placed to mandate estate agents to accept information packs from sellers, as a means of preventing agents eagerly offering unnecessary upsells to the buyer to do further detailed research, under the guise of ensuring better accuracy of information.

## Avoiding duplication

Building on the issue discussed above, a significant proportion of the extra costs that make homebuying so arduous is through self-inflicted administrative redundancy. The Anti-Money Laundering legal framework, for example, often forces the buyer to prove they are not a high-level financier for an international cartel to first their estate agent, then their conveyancer, then their mortgage lender, each with the same identity checks in siloed, disconnected systems.

The consultation reforms tackle this through a “Smart Data” scheme, which will use trusted digital identity services to reduce such repetition. By establishing a framework with a single, verified digital identity that can be shared securely, we eliminate the long periods of waiting for approvals that consumers currently have to endure. The reform also suggests a digital property logbook, essentially a ‘digital V5C’ for homes, that could store historic and current information, meaning less difficulty for conveyancers to have to assemble information themselves from scratch every time a home goes to market.

The gap here is the ‘digital divide’ between professionals. While the government points to genuinely good models for innovation, and makes examples out of already extant platforms and software, the reality on the ground is that many transactions still lean on paperwork and legacy software. Streamlining checks and promoting modernised conveyancing is an excellent objective, but one that demands mandatory adoption, in such a way that is realistic and does not just put pressure on estate agents and conveyancers without the education necessary to successfully function.

# Better trading standards

While the government's current proposals focus heavily on professionalising property agents through a mandatory Code of Practice, there is a notable silence for downstream industries, like the removals sector. This is a significant oversight, with removals a major cost in the homebuying ecosystem and one ripe for improvement.

The average removals cost for a family home is around £2000 according to British Association of Removers figures, which for many first time buyers, is a significant chunk of money to spend. Many, therefore, might be encouraged to find alternative routes than recognised companies, using casual traders who promise lower costs but at the risk of less recourse to refunds or insurance, or an approved code of practice. This wild west environment means the consumers most likely to not have the money to spend, are the most vulnerable to fraud or damage to an item that they are not insured for, meaning greater cost overall.

The government is proposing mandatory qualifications for property managers and exploring them for estate agents to drive up trust. A similar logic should be applied to the removals industry, with greater awareness for newly accredited practitioners (which might be as simple as greater recognition for the ombudsman scheme, which already exists). This would help buyers identify and use quality services, and prevent the frustration and uncertainty that currently deters many, particularly older people, from being prepared to enter the market. Without professionalising this key step of the homebuying journey, the reforms risk leaving a critical link in the chain unregulated, prone to low public trust, and putting people's belongings (and therefore assets) at greater risk.

# Conclusion

The government's proposed reforms are long overdue. They are a step in the right direction towards a property market that prioritises consumer experience over administrative tradition. By reducing fall-through rates, these changes could immediately save consumers huge amounts of money. The move towards mandatory upfront information will help this, just as it will hopefully reduce transaction times. Furthermore, the continued efforts to professionalise the sector, and the entire home-purchasing supply chain, is a vital step in building trust and ensuring better practice.

The success of this vision, however, demands the government enforce, as well as encourage. Guaranteeing good quality information packs, that must be received in good faith (and have cause to be), will be the only way these reforms work. If executed correctly, a streamlined homebuying and selling process will have benefits far beyond itself. It will mean that first time homeownership is made slightly more achievable, and supports broader ambitions of increasing housebuilding in this country, as well as unlocking national economic growth.

# The British Association of Removers, and the removals sector

**Andrew Large, Director General, British Association of Removers**

## Introduction

In August 2025, I joined the British Association of Removers. Very quickly, I came to see how important the removals and storage industry is to UK economic growth. Ease of moving encourages people to take career opportunities further afield and supports investment in the UK economy by ensuring that the right labour force is available. Conversely, a stagnant housing market, where moving is challenging and expensive, traps people where they are, stunts their careers and damages growth.

This report sets out the contribution of the UK removals and storage industry to economic growth, both from the industry itself and the businesses it supports. It also presents policy recommendations to maximise the potential of the removals and storage industry to drive UK growth.

## The UK housing market

The UK housing market is a driving force for economic growth.

According to TwentyCi, in 2025 there were approaching 1.2 million house moves in the UK. This is 10% up on 2024 and indeed slightly above pre-pandemic 2019. This is good news, but the market remains erratic, and consumer confidence is affected by a range of factors, from war to geopolitics and closer to home, planning and taxation policy.

Moreover, the housing market is slowing, with time to sale agreed at a nine year high of 77 days. On the rental side, available stock for rent in December 2025 declined a further 7.4% to 286,000 properties, while rents themselves increased to an average of £1495 per month, the highest since records began and making affordability an even greater issue than before.

The picture is very much one of a market on a knife edge, vulnerable to both external shocks and UK specific cost of living challenges.

# British Association of Removers

In this context, the British Association of Removers (BAR) plays a vital role as the principal UK representative of the professional removals and storage sector. BAR acts as a guarantor of quality within the industry, a provider of services to members and an advocate for improvements in the business environment. BAR is the largest UK association in the sector with a proud history dating back to 1900. Every year, BAR surveys its membership and the results of the 2025 survey, which have recently become available, demonstrate both the strength of the industry and its ability to support the wider economy.

BAR currently represents some 351 companies, with an additional 123 branches and 109 alternative trading names. Between them, these businesses employ nearly 8,400 people all across the UK. BAR members collectively use over 2150 large vehicles and nearly 1900 smaller vehicles to undertake removals for UK and overseas clients. Overall, the BAR membership carries out almost 380,000 moves every year. In 2025, industry turnover approached £1 billion.

The UK removal industry operates in every UK constituency, and supports people to relocate and start new lives all across the country.

# Key issues

A major part of BAR's work is to be an advocate for the industry to Parliamentarians, making sensible policy suggestions to Government to improve the working of the removals and storage industry. BAR's policy proposals cluster around six distinct areas.

# Housebuilding

BAR was encouraged by the Government's commitment to build 1.5 million new homes during the current Parliament. Increases to the supply of UK housing are necessary, and we would encourage the Government, and indeed all parties, to focus on increasing housing supply as a means of both alleviating housing stress and kick-starting the growth in transactions in the housing market.

# Housing market reform

Alongside an increase in housing supply, BAR supports reform of the way in which the housing market operates.

For many people, moving house is something that they would prefer not to do, with a lack of clarity in the process and needless delays and uncertainty right up to the time of key release.

This affects their ability to accept opportunities across the country, boost their careers and in turn grow the economy. Fewer housing transactions also undermines the wider economy in areas such as construction, retail and professional services.

Removal companies often endure the worst of these uncertainties, and BAR was pleased that the Government consulted on Housing Market Reform at the end of 2025. We look forward to working with the Government to firm up their proposals, with a focus on two areas:

- Mandating a minimum period between exchange and completion to enable both households and removal companies to plan and make necessary bookings in an orderly fashion.
- Mandating the release of keys by 1pm on moving day, so that a client's goods can be moving into their new property safely and in good time. This would prevent delays and enable customers to support children and elderly people in their move.

## Combating the informal economy

One of the impacts of the growth of social media has been the opportunity it provides for informal economy operators to promote their goods and services directly to large number of people at low cost. It is unfortunate true that "man and van" operators have exploded in numbers in recent years, which has disturbed the orderly functioning of the UK removals and storage market.

In contrast, BAR membership supports good consumer practice. BAR inspects members for compliance, provides clear terms and conditions for contracts and access to industry leading insurance and training support.

BAR urges the Government to challenge informal economy operators in two distinct ways:

- By providing advice and guidance for consumers, similar to that provided to clients of the construction industry, to support consumers in making a wise choice of remover.
- By increasing enforcement activity against rogue traders on issues such as, VAT, PAYE and health and safety compliance, insurance cover and vehicle regulations.

## Decarbonisation

BAR supports the decarbonisation of the UK's vehicle fleet. However, this has to proceed at a pace that the underlying technologies and the costs of implementing them can support. Forcing industry to scrap perfectly usable diesel vehicles is itself a waste of resources, and again adds cost to the industry that threatens the economic viability of businesses. Removal vehicles are unique, in terms of their lifecycle, range and payload, and decarbonisation must recognise those parameters.

## Supporting skills development

The removals and storage industry has an aging workforce, and in common with many industries in the UK, needs to recruit significant numbers of new workers with the right skills. The challenge is that the current apprenticeship levy is failing to support the needs of the industry, with the levy effectively behaving as a tax as removers cannot access funding for the courses that they need.

BAR urges the Government to open levy funding to shorter form training and lifelong learning opportunities as well as the classical long form apprenticeships that are currently funded. This would enable removers to secure funding for the training necessary to upskill their workforces within the context of the industry and its requirements for flexible labour. BAR also urges a level playing field for skills funding access across the UK, included in the Devolved Nations, rather than the current postcode lottery that creates pockets of disadvantage.

## Reducing the costs of doing business

In recent months, the Government has sought to improve the public finances by increasing a range of taxes and other costs on businesses, including NMW increases, Employers National Insurance and Business Rates. BAR understands the need for fiscal sustainability, but the cumulative effect of all of these measures is to increase the cost of doing business and restrict the opportunity for removal and storage firms (as all UK businesses) to grow. We urge the Government to rebalance its public finance policies so that companies pay more tax only as they grow, rather than increasing the rates and types of taxation that place a lid on opportunity.

# The contribution of commercial relocation to UK economic growth

**Sarah Cole, President, British Association of Removers; Managing Director, Universal Commercial Relocation**

## Introduction

Commercial relocation is an essential but frequently overlooked contributor to the strength and adaptability of the United Kingdom's economy.

After practising as a commercial property solicitor in Central London for nine years, I joined my SME family business Universal Commercial Relocation in 2002 as the in house Legal & Quality Manager before my appointment as Managing Director in 2014. Universal is an award winning London office mover established in 1978. As MD and President of the British Association of Removers, I have seen first-hand how the ability of organisations to move, adapt, and reconfigure their workplaces underpins economic growth, business productivity, and regional development.

When businesses expand, consolidate operations, relocate headquarters, or invest in new facilities, professional relocation specialists make those transitions happen. Our industry ensures that offices, laboratories, archives, data centres, and specialist equipment can move securely and efficiently, often within extremely tight timeframes, so that organisations can continue operating with minimal disruption.

In this way, the commercial relocation sector forms a crucial piece of the United Kingdom's economic infrastructure. It supports business mobility, enables investment in modern workplaces, and provides skilled employment across the country.

## Enabling economic agility

One of the defining characteristics of a resilient economy is its ability to adapt. Businesses must be able to respond to changing market conditions, technological developments, and evolving workforce expectations. Commercial relocation plays a central role in enabling that agility.

In practice, this means supporting organisations as they move to new premises that better reflect their strategic needs. Companies relocate to access new talent pools, move closer to clients, reduce operational costs, or take advantage of new investment opportunities. Each of these decisions requires the management of logistical challenges to avoid disruption to operations.

Professional relocation companies plan and deliver these moves with precision. Complex corporate relocations can involve thousands of workstations, sensitive IT infrastructure, specialist equipment, and confidential records. These projects are often executed overnight or over weekends to ensure that organisations can resume work immediately.

From my perspective as an industry leader, the key point is that relocation services remove the friction from change. By managing the complexity of physical transitions, our sector allows organisations to focus on growth, innovation, and productivity.

## Supporting business investment

Relocation frequently accompanies investment in new facilities and modern workplaces. When companies move into new offices, laboratories, or logistics hubs, they are often upgrading their infrastructure and creating environments designed for future growth.

The relocation sector helps unlock the value of these investments by ensuring that assets are moved safely and installed efficiently. This includes the relocation of IT systems, specialist machinery, secure archives, and large-scale office environments.

At Universal Commercial Relocation, we regularly manage complex projects involving phased relocations, secure document handling, and coordinated technology transitions. These moves require detailed planning, risk management, and collaboration with clients' internal teams.

The result is that businesses can transition seamlessly into new environments that support productivity and innovation.

## Creating skilled employment

The removals and relocation industry contributes directly to employment and skills development across the United Kingdom. The sector employs a wide range of professionals, including logistics specialists, project managers, warehouse teams, drivers, IT relocation technicians, and customer service experts.

Commercial relocation in particular requires highly specialised skills. Moving critical infrastructure (such as data servers, medical equipment, or research laboratories) demands precision, technical knowledge, and rigorous safety standards.

One of the priorities I have championed through the British Association of Removers is the continued professionalisation of our industry. Training, accreditation, and best-practice standards are essential to ensuring that customers can trust relocation providers to deliver complex projects safely and efficiently.

By investing in training and apprenticeships, our industry not only strengthens its own workforce but also contributes to the wider logistics and transport sector by developing transferable skills in planning, project management, and operational delivery.

## Supporting small- and medium-sized businesses

Small and medium-sized enterprises form the backbone of the UK economy, and the relocation sector plays an important role in supporting their growth.

For many SMEs, moving premises is a significant milestone. It often reflects expansion, increased staffing, or entry into new markets. However, the practical challenges of organising a move, while continuing to run the business, can be daunting.

Professional relocation companies provide the expertise required to plan and execute these moves efficiently. From space planning to packing, transport, and installation, the industry ensures that SMEs can relocate with confidence and minimal disruption.

Importantly, the removals industry itself reflects the entrepreneurial character of the UK economy. Many removal companies are small or family-owned businesses that operate within local communities while delivering services nationally and internationally.

## Enabling regional growth

Commercial relocation also plays a vital role in regional economic development. When organisations relocate operations to new areas, they bring employment, investment, and economic activity with them.

Across the UK, we are seeing businesses establish regional hubs, move operations to business parks, or relocate headquarters to areas that offer stronger connectivity, talent availability, or lower operating costs.

Relocation companies facilitate these transitions by managing complex logistics across cities and regions. This can involve transporting thousands of assets, providing temporary storage, and coordinating installation within newly developed office or industrial spaces.

From a leadership perspective within the sector, it is clear that relocation services support the broader ambition of spreading economic opportunity across the country. By enabling organisations to operate wherever they can thrive, the industry helps unlock regional potential.

# Driving professional standards

A key priority of the British Association of Removers is to ensure that the removals and relocation sector operates to the highest professional standards.

Accreditation schemes, codes of practice, and consumer protection measures provide reassurance to businesses and public-sector organisations that they are working with reputable providers.

In my role as President, I have placed strong emphasis on raising awareness of the value of these standards. Professional relocation is about far more than transporting furniture. It involves project management, risk assessment, data security, sustainability planning, and customer service excellence.

Strengthening standards across the sector ultimately benefits the wider economy by ensuring that businesses can rely on relocation services during critical transitions.

# Sustainability and innovation

Like many industries, the relocation sector is undergoing significant change as it responds to environmental and technological challenges.

Companies are investing in low emission vehicles, reusable packing systems, and improved logistics planning to reduce emissions and minimise waste. Digital technologies are also transforming the way relocation projects are managed, with advanced inventory tracking and route optimisation improving efficiency.

These innovations demonstrate that the sector is not only supporting economic growth but also evolving to meet the sustainability expectations of modern businesses.

# Policy considerations

From an industry leadership perspective, there are several areas where government policy can support the continued success of the relocation sector.

First, addressing skills shortages (particularly among drivers and logistics professionals) will be essential to maintaining service capacity. Continued investment in vocational training and apprenticeships will help strengthen the industry's workforce.

Second, the sector would benefit from greater recognition in discussions around logistics, infrastructure, and regional development. Commercial relocation is a critical enabler of business mobility, yet it is rarely highlighted within economic policy frameworks.

Finally, ensuring a balanced regulatory environment that supports sustainability while maintaining operational flexibility will allow the industry to continue delivering high-quality services to businesses across the UK.

## Looking ahead

Commercial relocation is an indispensable part of the United Kingdom's economic ecosystem. By enabling businesses to move, grow, and adapt, the sector supports productivity, investment, and regional development.

From my perspective, the industry's role is clear: we provide the expertise and infrastructure that allow organisations to transition confidently into their next stage of growth.

As the UK economy continues to evolve, shaped by new technologies, changing workplace models, and regional investment, the importance of a strong, professional relocation sector will only increase.

Recognising and supporting this contribution will help ensure that businesses across the country can continue to move forward, literally and economically.

# Moving the nation: why the UK's domestic removals industry matters for economic growth

**Mark Taylor, Managing Director, Pickfords**

When policymakers discuss the drivers of economic growth, attention understandably gravitates toward sectors such as financial services, advanced manufacturing, or digital technology. Yet there is another industry operating largely behind the scenes, which plays a critical role in enabling economic mobility across the United Kingdom: the domestic removals sector.

Every home move represents more than a change of address. It reflects a family relocating for work, a young person buying their first property, a growing household seeking more space, or an older couple downsizing later in life. Behind each of these transitions stands a removals company coordinating logistics, transporting belongings, and ensuring that families can begin the next chapter of their lives.

Collectively, these activities form a significant part of the UK's service economy. The UK removals industry generates approximately £1.2 billion in annual revenue, with domestic moves accounting for the majority of that activity.

While the industry rarely attracts the attention given to larger sectors, its economic role is fundamental: it enables people to move, and by doing so, helps the wider economy move forward.

## The operational backbone of housing mobility

The health of the housing market drives the growth in the removals industry. Every residential property transaction ultimately culminates in a physical move. Without the logistical capacity to relocate households efficiently and safely, the property market would simply not function as smoothly as it does.

In 2025 alone, there were an estimated 1.2 million household moves across the UK, each requiring some form of logistical support.

Every one of those moves generates economic activity well beyond the removals sector itself. Estate agents, conveyancers, mortgage lenders, surveyors, furniture retailers, home improvement firms, and storage providers all form part of the wider ecosystem surrounding residential mobility.

Professional removals services provide the operational bridge between property transactions and lived reality. They ensure that housing chains complete, that families transition quickly between homes, and that housing stock remains fluid rather than static.

From the perspective of economic policy, this fluidity matters. Housing mobility supports labour mobility. When people are able to relocate efficiently for employment opportunities, regional economies become more flexible and productive.

In that sense, the removals industry does not simply respond to housing market activity - it helps make that activity possible.

## A nationwide network of small businesses

One of the defining characteristics of the UK removals industry is its highly entrepreneurial structure.

While there are several well-known national operators, including Pickfords, the sector is primarily made up of small and medium-sized businesses embedded within their local communities.

There are more than 5,600 removals and storage companies operating across the UK, the vast majority of which are independent firms. Indeed, around 85% of removals businesses employ fewer than ten people, highlighting the SME-driven nature of the sector.

This structure means the economic benefits of the industry are widely distributed across the country. Removal companies employ local drivers, operatives, and administrative staff. They purchase vehicles from UK dealerships, fuel from local suppliers, and packing materials from domestic manufacturers.

As a result, the sector sustains a broad supply chain spanning logistics, manufacturing, insurance, vehicle leasing, and retail.

For policymakers focused on regional growth and the vitality of local economies, the removals industry represents a service sector whose economic impact is both widespread and deeply embedded in local communities.

## Employment, skills and workforce contribution

The removals sector also plays an important role in employment within the UK's broader logistics economy.

Across the country, the industry supports around 28,500 workers directly, ranging from removal operatives and HGV drivers to logistics planners and customer service teams.

Many of these roles require specialist training. Removal crews must understand safe packing techniques, manual handling standards, route planning, and customer service skills. Increasingly, staff must also adapt to digital logistics systems and modern fleet technologies.

The sector also provides accessible pathways into employment. Apprenticeships, driver training programmes, and operational roles offer opportunities for individuals seeking careers in logistics and transport. The estimated average salary for removals operatives in the UK is around £28,400 per year.

At a time when the UK continues to experience shortages of qualified drivers and logistics professionals, industries such as removals play an important role in developing practical skills and sustaining employment opportunities across the country.

## Enabling labour market flexibility

One of the most significant (yet least recognised) economic contributions of the removals industry is the role it plays in supporting labour mobility.

Economic growth depends on people being able to move to where opportunities exist. When businesses expand into new regions, when skilled workers take up roles in different parts of the country, or when graduates relocate for their first job, relocation becomes a practical necessity.

Without efficient removal services, these transitions would become slower, more costly, and more disruptive for households.

By enabling families to relocate smoothly, the removals industry helps businesses attract talent, supports regional labour markets, and facilitates the geographic mobility that underpins economic dynamism.

This role is particularly important in a country like the United Kingdom, where regional economic disparities remain a central policy challenge.

## A sector adapting to change

The removals industry, like many others, has undergone significant change in recent years.

Customers increasingly expect greater transparency, digital engagement, and sustainability in the services they purchase. In response, removal companies are investing in technologies such as virtual home surveys, digital inventories, and automated quotation systems.

At the same time, the industry is responding to environmental priorities. The market for environmentally conscious removal services, including lower-emission and electric vehicles and recyclable packing materials, is growing steadily, now representing an estimated £60 million segment of the market.

These innovations demonstrate that the sector is not static. It continues to evolve alongside wider economic, technological, and environmental trends.

# Challenges that require policy attention

Despite its importance to the wider economy, the removals sector faces several structural challenges.

Like many parts of the logistics industry, companies face persistent driver shortages. Recent industry data suggests that around 42% of removals firms report difficulties recruiting drivers, leaving hundreds of positions unfilled.

Operational costs have also increased significantly in recent years, driven by rising fuel prices, insurance premiums, vehicle costs, and regulatory requirements. For the many small businesses that make up the sector, managing these pressures while maintaining high service standards remains an ongoing challenge. These costs have been compounded by recent tax rises that further damage growth and investment.

Finally, the industry remains closely tied to the health of the housing market. Periods of reduced property transactions can quickly translate into lower demand for moving services.

Addressing these issues will require constructive dialogue between industry stakeholders and policymakers, particularly around workforce development, training pathways, and the resilience of the housing market.

# Recognising an essential industry

The removals industry rarely occupies the headlines. When it operates well, it does so unobtrusively, helping families transition between homes and enabling property transactions to complete without disruption.

Yet its economic importance should not be underestimated.

By supporting more than a million household moves each year, sustaining thousands of small businesses, employing tens of thousands of workers, and enabling labour mobility across the country, the removals sector plays a vital role in the functioning of the UK economy.

As policymakers consider how best to support productivity, growth, and regional opportunity, recognising the contribution of essential service industries such as removals will be an important part of the conversation.

After all, an economy that moves forward depends, quite literally, on the ability of its people to move with it.

# Asks to government

This report hopes to create a starting point for government to really consider the role of the removals sector in the homebuying ecosystem. In order to do that, our contributors from the PLG, BAR and Pickfords make the following recommendations:

- Mandate standardised upfront property information packs at the point of listing to reduce fall-throughs and delays.
- Establish a robust legal framework for liability and data trustworthiness so buyers can rely on seller-provided information without duplication.
- Introduce a single, reusable digital identity system to eliminate repeated AML and ID checks across the transaction process.
- Create a digital property logbook ("home V5C") to store and transfer verified property data across transactions.
- Require minimum timeframes between exchange and completion to allow proper planning for movers and households.
- Mandate key release by 1pm on moving day to reduce disruption and improve logistics for removals.
- Extend requirements for professional standards and accreditation to the removals sector, including greater recognition of ombudsman schemes.
- Increase enforcement against informal and non-compliant "man and van" operators to protect consumers and level the playing field.
- Reform the Apprenticeship Levy to fund flexible, short-form and lifelong training relevant to removals and logistics roles.
- Ensure decarbonisation policies for commercial vehicles are phased and sector-appropriate, avoiding premature cost burdens on operators.

All of these reforms must be implemented in a way that is both proportionate and accessible for businesses, with especial attention to the role of SMEs and overbureaucratisation in the homebuying and selling process.




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