

# Deliveroo and Uber Eats face questions over worker black market

By [Adam McCulloch](#) on 7 Jan 2019 in [Freelance workers](#), [Gig economy](#), [Right to work](#), [Latest News](#), [Migrant Workers](#)

**The way that Deliveroo and Uber Eats engage their riders and drivers' has come under fresh scrutiny after claims emerged of a black market in delivery jobs.**

An [investigation by The Sunday Times](#) has found that jobs are traded online and some may be taken by people who do not pay tax or national insurance as they may not have the right to work in the UK.

Deliveroo and Uber Eats' parent company Uber have both faced [court proceedings](#) to establish whether the people they engage to deliver food are self-employed contractors, as the gig economy companies claim, or "workers", the employment status that allows drivers various additional rights, as unions have claimed.

Last month, the [High Court upheld that Deliveroo riders were contractors](#), not workers, since they were able to pass on a job to another rider or abandon a job. Separately, Uber lost its Court of Appeal case against a previous decision which found drivers for its cab-hailing service were workers and not self-employed.

Gig economy

[The search for clarity on the gig economy](#)

[High Court upholds Deliveroo self-employment and collective bargaining ruling](#)

[Campaigners turn to UN to tackle gig economy firms](#)

If Deliveroo riders send someone else in their place to collect or deliver food, they are supposed to carry out checks on their substitutes but do not have to prove this has taken place.

One Deliveroo worker quoted in the newspaper warned: "There is a big problem in the area I work, with people working illegally using the [app] and in a way stealing my job.

"There are... Brazilians coming as tourists and using accounts from [other] people working every single day taking hundreds of orders from legal riders and then disappearing back to their countries without paying a penny."

A Deliveroo "rider support" worker responded: "I can assure you we are taking this very seriously as this activity is clearly not legal and ramifications for us are also very serious."

The company told The Sunday Times that riders had to have right-to-work and criminal record checks, and were responsible for ensuring the same checks on their substitutes. However, both Deliveroo and Uber Eats allow delivery workers to alter the phone numbers and bank account details connected with accounts.

Chairman of the Commons work and pensions committee Frank Field MP said substitute riders were a “desperate attempt” by Deliveroo and Uber Eats “to get around the fact riders work for them”. He said their model exploited substitutes who may be “illegally in this country, whose status and health record has never been checked, and who presumably cannot pay tax or national insurance”.

The Sunday Times said it had monitored private Facebook and WhatsApp groups, through whistleblowers, where Uber Eats and Deliveroo accounts were traded. One message in a Portuguese language group quoted read: “I am renting Uber (£70) and Deliveroo (£60) / both motorbike / for women / message me privately if interested.”

Another stated: “I’m looking for an Uber account to rent temporarily for two to three weeks, I am waiting for a friend of mine who just arrived from Brazil.” One response was: “I have an account for 100 a week for those three weeks.”

One rider said that tourists were taking jobs for Deliveroo then disappearing home having paid for their holiday and not paying any tax or national insurance.

Uber Eats requires proof of the substitute’s driving licence and right to work within 24 hours and says riders must inform restaurants of a change in identity. But a restaurant owner told the Mail Online that drivers signed up by saying they use bicycle, so there is no driving licence or insurance documents to check but then they just use a car, making the insurance invalid. The owner claimed that Uber must know about this because their app indicated the speed the drivers travel at. “No bicycle can do 50mph,” he said.

An Uber spokesperson said: “We take these allegations very seriously. If we are made aware of any breaches to our requirements, we can take immediate steps to deactivate a courier’s account.

“In the future we will also be working hard to enhance our safety processes with technology-enabled solutions such as GDPR compliant facial recognition software. This will help us take immediate action to ensure everyone using the Uber Eats app is authorised.”

Julia Jackson, partner at law firm Wedlake Bell, confirmed that the fines imposed on employers who took on staff without permission to work in the UK could not be applied to

gig economy firms using self-employed contractors. The substitute workers themselves, working outside their immigration permission, may be prosecuted for illegal working. However, she said, “the Home Office are more likely to detain and remove them from the UK”.

Jackson added: “The ‘hostile environment policy’ (or ‘compliant environment’ as it has been newly dubbed) relies on third parties, such as employers, landlords and banks making checks on immigration status. A route into lucrative work without an employer, especially for payment in cash, exposes the weaknesses in the Home Office’s outsourced checking system.

“Right-to-work checks only apply to employees... but in these cases there’s no one checking. The cyclists are particularly under the radar.”

Deliveroo claimed that The Sunday Times had not provided any evidence to support its story and told Personnel Today that “Riders who work with Deliveroo must have the right to work in the UK, and a clear criminal record. Riders engaged by Deliveroo have these checks completed before onboarding; and riders who use substitutes, for example, lending accounts to friends and family members to do deliveries, are contractually responsible for ensuring the same.

“Deliveroo has a zero-tolerance approach on this matter and takes this extremely seriously including fully investigating any concerns that may arise. Should a rider subcontract to an individual without right -to-work status, Deliveroo would end their contract immediately. These obligations are clearly and consistently communicated to all riders.

“Riders’ use of substitutes has been reviewed by courts and upheld as legitimate.

“It is unfortunate that the Sunday Times has failed to provide any actual evidence to support its allegations despite repeated requests to do so.”

A spokesperson for Uber Eats added: “Anyone who delivers with Uber Eats must adhere to a strict set of safety-based criteria, including being 18 years or older, passing a criminal background check and holding a valid right to work in the UK.”

6 Responses to *Deliveroo and Uber Eats face questions over worker black market*

1.



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**Gus** 7 Jan 2019 at 10:22 pm #

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I'm delivery rider and many times I've heard about that, people renting accounts to illegal people.

[REPLY](#)

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2.



**taxpayer** 9 Jan 2019 at 10:29 am #

in Bath the problem of Uber 'cyclists' using cars is rife....Uber have been given proof repeatedly but nothing has changed

[REPLY](#)

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3.



**Ronaldo** 9 Jan 2019 at 10:43 pm #

Many people from Brasil are using holiday visas/fake documents and working illegally for UberEats/Deliveroo/JustEats.

They do the following:

- > Rent official accounts from UK/EU citizens.
- > Use multiple accounts at once to steal jobs from other drivers.
- > Use apps to fake their GPS location which helps steal jobs from other drivers.
- > Have a combination of no business insurance, tax, or driving licence.
- > Stab other drivers tyres.
- > Steal food from restaurants.
- > Don't even have thermal equipment to keep the food from going cold.
- > Don't care about the customer.
- > Can't call the customer if they need help finding the drop off locations because they can't speak English.
- > They aren't paying income tax.

[REPLY](#)

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4.



**Malik** 12 Jan 2019 at 11:25 am #

I have seen people whose account was deactivated but there are many black sheeps working in deliveroo office who take few hundreds pounds to activate their account again ,and i heard from one guy he told me he paid deliveroo zone manager couple of pounds to not check his immigration documents , and deliveroo didnot check his right to work

[REPLY](#)

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5.



**Adam** 14 Mar 2019 at 12:19 am #

Reported and showed evidence of several such drivers registered as cyclists to Uber at a local green light hub. Was told very clearly "we don't care". While their actions had already made this manifestly clear, it's disappointing to be told so in plain

English. Almost all of the genuine “delivery partners” have moved on and only the cheats remain.

[REPLY](#)

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6.

**Tom** 15 Jun 2019 at 11:15 pm #

I recently worked for Deliveroo in Exeter, car drivers told me how they take out delivery insurance and pay the first instalment, send the certificate to Deliveroo and then stop paying the monthly instalment and from then on work without insurance. I was also told that scooter and car drivers register as bicycle riders so that they can operate with out insurance, apparently after the initial checks Deliveroo rarely check again.

I also came across a cycle rider who had lost his right to work in the UK but was working by using his friends account, again no checks.

Just about every body working for Deliveroo in Exeter also claim that they are not registered to pay tax or NI again, no checks.