

Bolt lets London drivers set prices days after Uber ups rates as taxi recruitment battle heats up

Uber competitor [Bolt](#) has announced it will shortly allow its [drivers](#) in [London](#) to set their own [prices](#) as apps compete to recruit amid worker shortages.

The Estonian app said it is making the [move](#) as, like Uber, it faces a dearth of drivers to meet demand levels, which have risen fast since [restrictions](#) were eased around the [UK](#).

Bolt hopes the move will attract new drivers, as being able to set prices within a range will allow those signed up to the app to ensure any journey they make will be profitable.

The app also hopes it will help tackle a rise in frequent cancellations seen by passengers in recent months, as drivers cancel last-minute to avoid a less profitable booking.

Customers will be able to pick from a list of drivers offering various prices.

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Until now, the app's 65,000 drivers were set prices for rides via a central algorithm. The new model will be trialled around the UK in the coming month, and roll-out in London by Christmas.

Sam Raciti, Bolt's manager for western Europe, said: "Drivers have consistently asked us for the ability to set their own prices so they can ensure a journey is profitable enough before it's accepted.

"These changes are part of that philosophy and will create a better functioning marketplace."

It comes just days after rival Uber revealed it would be raising its prices in London for the first time since 2017 in a bid to lure more drivers back to the platform and tackle long wait times.

The Standard revealed last week that prices would immediately be hiked by 10% in Greater London. The blanket rise means Londoners now pay more for even off-peak daytime journeys, as Uber's minimum fare in the capital has risen from £5 to £5.50.

"Peak time" fares for airport trips have also risen by 25%.

Thousands of former drivers for apps such as Bolt and Uber have not signed back on since lockdowns lifted. Many found other jobs elsewhere as passenger numbers plummeted during successive periods of restrictions. Other drivers now have many options for jobs, with soaring vacancy rates across the country.

A shortage of drivers has led to an increase in "surge pricing" across all apps. A journey that would usually cost £10 suddenly costs 1.8x that amount, for example. It has also lengthened wait times.

Uber said it needs around 20,000 more drivers to return to usual service levels.

An Uber spokesperson said at the time that it was “making these changes to help provide a better rider experience, by signing up more drivers to meet the growing demand”.