



BRIEFING PAPER

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Young and novice drivers

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Summary

This paper explains the car driver licensing and testing arrangements for new drivers and provides information on various initiatives – such as graduated driver licensing, post-test restrictions and ‘black box’ monitoring devices – which have been discussed as ways to help make these drivers safer.

It is illegal to drive a motor vehicle in the UK without holding a valid driving licence. Licence entitlements vary depending on when they were obtained and the type of vehicle you wish to drive. Legislation in this area derives from EU law. It is as yet unclear what the impact of Brexit might be on this policy area.

The minimum driving age for cars in the UK is 17. The Government and others have expressed concerns about the proportionately higher rate of accidents amongst younger and newly qualified (novice) drivers. Successive governments have discussed what should be done to tackle this. While changes have been made to pre-learning education and the test itself, none have implemented more radical proposals such as graduated licensing or post-test restrictions, despite calls from road safety organisations.

Most recently, the Conservative Government published a road safety statement in late 2015 which talked in general terms about learning to drive and new drivers. DVSA consequently published a Motoring Services Strategy and a consultation paper in 2016 which propose possible changes to the theory and practical driving tests.

Other briefing papers are available on driver licensing in general, older drivers and medical fitness to drive, and motorcycle licensing. These and information on other driving-related issues can be found on the [Roads Topical Page](#) of the Parliament website.

1. The driving age

In the UK you normally need to be 17 before you can get a provisional licence and start learning to drive a car. You can apply for a provisional licence and take your test when you're 16 if you're getting, or have applied for, the enhanced rate of the mobility component of Personal Independence Payment (PIP).

The minimum age for driver licensing is set down in EU law under the collected European Driving Licence Directives.¹ Article 4(6) of the Third Directive, which is currently in force, states that driving licences for category B vehicles (i.e. cars) may be issued from the age of 18, though it provides Member States with the discretion to lower this to 17.

Whenever the minimum driving age comes up in debate it is usually in the context of **raising it to 18**. However, there are measures – such as graduated driving – which if introduced *could* have the effect of lowering the provisional driving age to 16 (i.e. you would need a year to pass all elements of the graduated test so in order to begin driving at 17 you would be able to get a provisional licence at 16). However, whenever graduated licensing has been proposed in the past it has usually been taken to mean an increase of the driving age to 18 (i.e. you would get a provisional licence at 17 and your final licence at 18).²

The arguments for **lowering the driving age** are likely to be focused on increased independence, particularly for those who live in rural areas where public transport provision may be poor. That said, there are other options such as bicycles and mopeds, the latter of which you can ride at 16. There also a number of organisations that give driving lessons off road to under 17s (the law states that you cannot drive on the public roads until you are 17, so driving off road gets around that prohibition).³

It is as yet unclear what the impact of Brexit might be on driver licensing and testing: it seems likely that the UK would adopt a system compatible with that across the EU in order to retain the benefits of mutual recognition.

¹ [80/1263/EEC](#); [91/439/EEC](#); and [2006/126/EC](#)

² see, e.g. Transport Committee, [Novice drivers](#) (seventh report of session 2006-07), HC 355, 19 July 2007, para 49

³ e.g. the [Under 17 Car Club](#)

2. Accident rates and young driver safety

Government figures show that 23 people aged 16/17 were killed in cars in 2015, compared with 19 aged 0-15:⁴

Reported casualties by road user type, age and severity, Great Britain, 2015

	Number/percentage change compared to 2014								
	Killed		Seriously injured		Slightly injured		All casualties		Road traffic
	Number	% change	Number	% change	Number	% change	Number	% change	% change
Car occupants									
Children: 0-15 years	19	6	315	-1	6,681	-3	7,015	-3	..
Young people: 0-17 years	42	27	555	-3	9,248	-4	9,845	-4	..
Adults: 18-59 years	480	-6	5,492	-2	79,568	-3	85,540	-3	..
60 and over	232	-9	1,755	-3	12,902	-5	14,889	-5	..
All casualties ¹	754	-5	7,888	-2	103,065	-3	111,707	-3	1

Eleven drivers per million population aged 16-19, and 19 drivers per million population aged 20-29 were killed in 2015 – the next highest rates is 18 per million for drivers over the age of 80. More than 2,000 car drivers per million population aged 20-29 were injured – by far the highest among any age group:⁵

Reported casualties by age band, road user type and severity, Great Britain, 2015

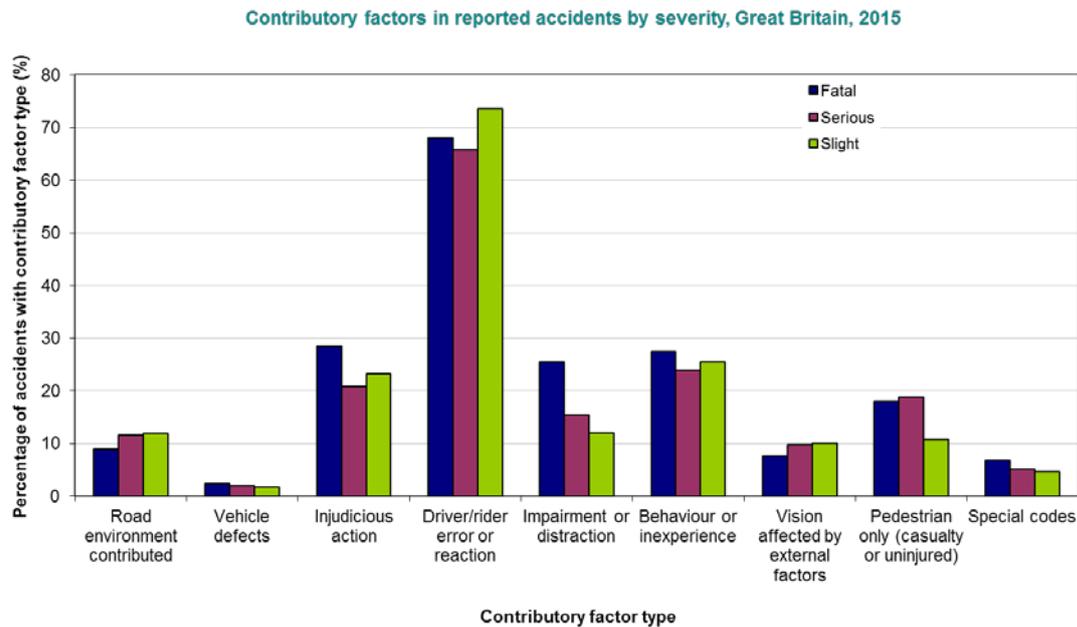
	Number of casualties												
	0-4 ¹	5-7	8-11	12-15	16-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80 and over	All ² ages
Killed	4	4	8	9	18	48	44	44	56	47	52	74	408
KSI³	168	216	412	487	334	743	520	501	541	461	435	458	5,348
All severities	812	1,010	2,016	2,479	1,800	3,949	2,802	2,515	2,161	1,636	1,294	1,083	24,061
Car													
Drivers													
Killed	0	0	0	0	33	161	57	69	57	41	60	56	534
KSI	0	0	0	3	411	1,551	882	835	752	542	482	371	5,869
All severities	0	0	0	14	4,702	20,841	15,662	13,793	10,279	5,337	3,254	1,939	76,432
Passengers													
Killed	6	4	1	8	35	53	11	15	12	11	26	38	220
KSI	78	55	78	120	458	669	288	205	184	194	205	193	2,773
All severities	1,548	1,424	2,120	1,909	4,791	8,353	4,196	3,075	2,678	2,002	1,496	861	35,275

'Learner or inexperienced driver/rider' was cited as a contributory factor in 55 fatal accidents in 2015, and 4,483 personal injury accidents in total:⁶

⁴ DfT, [Reported road casualties in Great Britain 2015](#), 30 June 2016, RAS 30002

⁵ *ibid.*, RAS 30025

⁶ *ibid.*, RAS 50001



Analysis by motoring research charity the RAC Foundation found that over half of the drivers under the legal driving age of 17 involved in crashes in 2015 were injured, including one who was killed and 11 seriously hurt. The accidents also resulted in 48 passenger and pedestrian casualties, including two who were killed and eight seriously injured. AA president Edmund King said that “These children should be playing Gran Turismo or attending under-17s car clubs rather than crashing illegally on the real highway”.⁷

Previous research for the RAC Foundation showed that while teenage drivers (17-19) make up only 1.5% of full licence holders they are involved in 12% of accidents where someone is killed or seriously hurt and one in five newly qualified young drivers will have an accident within six months of passing their test.⁸

The European Commission (EC) notes that in developed countries, traffic accidents are the main cause of death among 15-24 year olds: the fatality rate of drivers aged 15-24 is up to twice as high as that of more experienced drivers. Further, for every young driver killed in a crash, an average of 1.3 other people also die. Accidents involving young drivers are often caused by loss of control or speeding and are more likely to happen at night.⁹

⁷ [“Four-year high for underage car crashes”](#), *Sky News*, 10 October 2016

⁸ RAC Foundation press notice, [“Youngest drivers killing or injuring hundreds of their young friends and family annually”](#), 14 May 2015

⁹ EC, [Novice drivers](#) [accessed 29 November 2016]; for older international comparisons, see: OECD policy brief, [Young drivers: the road to safety](#), October 2006

3. Driver attitudes

The Think! campaign, in its review of young driver attitudes between 2006 and 2015, found that overall:

Young drivers are more likely to engage in and know others who engage in dangerous driving behaviours. In particular, speeding and mobile phone usage are much more frequent among the younger group. Young drivers are less likely to agree that many behaviours are dangerous and more likely to find a range of behaviours acceptable. The greatest risk behaviours are likely to be speeding, mobile phone use, driving without an MOT or insurance, and driving when tired or after alcohol.¹⁰

The European Commission (EC) has pointed to four key issues affecting young drivers' high crash rates: immaturity, exposure, lack of experience, and impairment in part due to lifestyles associated with their age and their gender. Young men in particular are often over-confident about their driving skills:

Immaturity

Biological research shows that at the age of 18 areas of the human brain which are responsible for the integration of information and impulse control, are still developing. Not only in physiological terms, but also in social terms youngsters are still maturing. An example is their getting away from their parents' influences and gaining more independence. As part of this process peers become increasingly important to them, particularly in lifestyle related choices.

Exposure

Young drivers drive more frequently during high risk hours and under high risk circumstances. Examples are night-time driving, speeding, carrying passengers and a less frequent use of safety belts and driving older cars with fewer safety features.

Lack of driving experience

Learning to drive demands a lot of practice before expert levels are reached. In comparison, vehicle handling skills are relatively easy to master in only a few hours, while skills such as anticipation of potentially hazardous traffic situations require years of practice ... However, the complexity of the driving task is very much under the driver's control also, because of his personal choices on driving speeds, following distances, and position ... In making these choices, inexperienced drivers in particular need to aim at large safety margins in order to compensate for their lack of experience. In reality however, young inexperienced drivers tend to choose for safety margins which are too small. To a large extent, this phenomenon is a consequence of the fact that this age group tends to overestimate its skills and to underestimate the complexity of the traffic situation. This is particularly the case for young males.

Impairment

In addition to their social and biological immaturity and their lack of driving experience, young novice drivers are often impaired while driving. This impairment results from alcohol and drug use,

¹⁰ Think!/DfT, [THINK! Road Safety Biennial Survey, 2006-2015](#), 26 May 2016, slide 78

fatigue and distraction. Compared to expert drivers, alcohol deteriorates the young driver's driving task performance to a larger extent. Illicit drug use is on the increase in this age group, in principle resulting in increased crash risk. In particular, the combined use of different drugs and alcohol leads to extreme high crash risks. Youngsters are also strongly affected by loss of sleep, the task duration and the biological clock, that is when driving during sleeping hours ... Distraction as a cause of driving errors is more prominent in novices than in experts. Furthermore, youngsters are frequently distracted, by for instance passengers or mobile phone use, which lessens the attention for the traffic situation.¹¹

Research commissioned by the Department for Transport in 2007 found that many young people “drew the conclusion that passing the test has very little connection with actual competence – and most took the view that it is only after one has passed that one really starts to learn to drive”.¹² Two kinds of possible explanation for the overconfidence of many young drivers were identified in the report: the possession of ‘natural talent’, and the need to build and maintain a particular image and identity (mainly given by young men).¹³ The report concluded that “an understanding of the experiences, perspectives and motivations of young drivers ... provides a constructive basis for change”.¹⁴

¹¹ EC, [Novice drivers](#) [accessed 29 November 2016]

¹² DfT, [The Good, the Bad and the Talented: Young Drivers' Perspectives on Good Driving and Learning to Drive](#) (Road safety research report No. 74), 2007, p6

¹³ *ibid.*, p7

¹⁴ *ibid.*, pp7-8

4. Learning to drive

The driving test in Great Britain consists of two parts: a theory test and a practical test. Since 1983 the broad framework for the driving test has been set out in the relevant European Driving Licence Directive. The Third Directive ([2006/126/EC](#)), agreed in December 2006, came into force on 19 January 2013. Article 7 and Annex II of the Third Directive contain the current framework.

In domestic law, the requirement to undertake and pass a test of competence in order to obtain a full driving licence is set out in section 89 of the [Road Traffic Act 1988](#), and Part III of the *Motor Vehicles (Driving Licences) Regulations 1999* ([SI 1999/2864](#)), both as amended. The test must be administered by a Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA)-approved examiner.

Information on driver instruction and instructors can be found in HC Library briefing paper [SN2844](#).

4.1 Theory test

The broad framework for what should be in the theory test is set out in Annex II to the Third Directive. This includes things like characteristics of various types of road [e.g. motorways] and the related statutory requirements and safety factors relating to the vehicle, the load [e.g. trailers] and persons carried. The form of question and detailed content are left to national governments, in the case of the UK, the DVSA. The official DVSA Driving Manual and the Highway Code both contain the information which would assist one to pass the theory test. The DVSA changes the questions from time to time and keeps the test under review.

There are two parts to the theory test: the multiple choice part and the hazard perception part. Both parts of the test are taken on the same day. The questions in the multiple-choice part and format of the hazard perception part depend on what kind of vehicle you want to drive. You need to pass both to pass the theory test. If you have a Safe Road User Award you can take a shorter 'abridged' car theory test. You will receive a theory test pass certificate: you cannot book a practical test without one.¹⁵

The current car theory test fee is £23.¹⁶

4.2 Practical test

The practical driving test is designed to see if you can drive safely in different road and traffic conditions, know the *Highway Code* and can show this through your driving ability. Before you start the driving ability part of your test, you'll have an eyesight check and be asked two vehicle safety questions (also known as the 'show me, tell me' questions). The driving part of the test lasts about 40 minutes. Throughout the test the examiner will be looking for an overall safe standard of driving, including stopping, pulling out, reversing and around ten minutes of

¹⁵ HMG, [Theory test: cars](#) [accessed 30 November 2016]

¹⁶ as set out in Regulation 30 of the 1999 Regulations, as amended

independent driving designed to assess your ability to drive safely while making decisions on your own.¹⁷

The current car practical test fee is £62, rising to £75 on evenings, weekends and bank holidays.¹⁸

Having passed the practical test and obtained a licence one may also undertake a Pass Plus training course. It takes at least six hours and is for drivers to improve their skills and drive more safely. It can only be taught by Pass Plus registered approved driving instructors (ADIs). Successful completion of the course can lead to car insurance discounts.¹⁹

4.3 Graduated driver licensing

A graduated driver licensing (GDL) system aims to provide a staged progression from initial learning to unrestricted solo driving using measures to restrict exposure during early driving, exert a supervisory influence over driver behaviour during the first part of a driver's solo driving career or improve the level of training and experience accumulated before driving solo without restrictions. GDL can consist of a number of different elements, designed to best fit local conditions. Many of these are, in effect, post-test prohibitions (see below).

Successive governments have been resistant to introducing a 'graduated driving licencing system' largely on the grounds that they do not want to restrict the freedom of young people (GDL can involve a longer period of driver training). This argument was summed up by the former Road Safety Minister, Robert Goodwill, in February 2014:

The Government recognise that there are many voices calling for a graduated driving licence to be considered or introduced in Britain. We recognise that there is a significant body of evidence to suggest that a GDL regime would have a beneficial effect on British road safety. However, against that we need to weigh carefully the implications for the freedom of our young people, as any such change to the law would result in some difficult cases—for instance, where a young person is stranded, unable to drive home legally—or would limit the ability of young people to offer each other lifts and thereby reduce transport costs.²⁰

In March 2015 the then Transport Minister in the Lords, Baroness Kramer, reiterated these principles, saying: "There is a difficult balance to strike between promoting young drivers safety and their freedom to access work and education. We won't rule out further measures, but at present we are focussing our efforts on technological solutions".²¹

As indicated by Mr Goodwill above, others – in particular road safety groups – have long been calling for action in this area. Most recently in May 2015 the RAC Foundation called for a graduated licensing system "given the disproportionate number of young drivers involved in accidents the conclusion must be that many teenagers are being killed

¹⁷ HMG, [Driving test: cars](#) [accessed 30 November 2016]

¹⁸ as set out in Schedule 5 to the 1999 Regulations, as amended

¹⁹ HMG, [Pass Plus](#) [accessed 30 November 2016]

²⁰ [HC Deb 26 February 2014, cc383-4](#)

²¹ [HL5768, 25 March 2015](#)

by the inexperience of their friends at the wheel”.²² In February 2015 academics and road safety professional made their regular call in the BMJ for the introduction of GDL. Their article said: “Graduated driver licensing adds an intermediate phase between the learner and full licence. During this phase, exposure to high risk conditions is minimised by restricting late night driving, carriage of similar aged passengers, and driving after having consumed alcohol. These high risk conditions have repeatedly been associated with young driver crashes”.²³

Work for the RAC Foundation by TRL, published in 2014, found that overall, a GDL system, based on the effectiveness achieved at an international level (20%), could save 4,478 casualties (433 of these being KSI casualties – killed or seriously injured) and deliver social and economic benefits valued at more than £200 million in Great Britain every year. This analysis included only drivers aged between 17 and 19 years old. A GDL system that applied to older – or all – novice drivers would therefore result in even greater casualty savings.²⁴ Older work from the United States found that sixteen-year old drivers were involved in 38% fewer fatal crashes and 40% fewer crashes resulting in injuries if their state had GDL.²⁵

4.4 Post-test prohibitions

As indicated above, many GDL schemes involve what amount to post-test prohibitions, i.e. limiting what newly qualified drivers can do or how, where and when they may drive.

Examples of prohibitions used in other countries include restrictions on where drivers may drive (i.e. the types of road that may be used), when they may drive (night-time curfews), with whom they may drive (restrictions on passengers) and under what conditions (zero alcohol levels). Requirements such as additional training, or periods of accident and conviction free driving, are also intended to encourage safer driving practices. As drivers move through the licensing system the restrictions are lifted until they equal those that apply to the fully licensed driving population.²⁶

Northern Ireland introduced R plates on 1 April 1968. The scheme required the newly qualified driver to display R (for restricted) plates on the front and rear of the vehicle for a period of 12 months after passing the test. R drivers could not exceed a speed of 45 mph. The [Road Traffic \(Amendment\) Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2016](#) received Royal Assent in March 2016. It would allow the R plate system to be replaced by N plates or similar and changes the post-test prohibitions and

²² RAC Foundation press notice, “[Teen driver crashes take toll on young passengers](#)”, 14 May 2015

²³ “[Crashes involving young drivers](#)”, *BMJ* 2015;350:h659, 11 February 2015

²⁴ TRL for RAC Foundation, [Graduated Driver Licensing A regional analysis of potential casualty savings in Great Britain](#), 27 May 2014, executive summary

²⁵ AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety press notice, “[16-year old drivers involved in 38 percent fewer fatal crashes in states with most comprehensive GDL programs](#)”, 15 February 2007

²⁶ TRL, [Graduated driver licensing – a review of some current systems](#) (TRL report 529), January 2001, pp1-2

requirements for new drivers (by e.g. removing the 45 mph speed limit).²⁷

4.5 Future changes, 2016-

In its December 2015 Road Safety Statement the Government indicated its intention to “fund in-depth new research to identify the best driver education, training and behaviour-change interventions for learner and novice drivers. This study will consider new technological interventions in addition to traditional learning methods. We will also do more to understand young drivers’ attitudes and to support increasingly targeted communications to high-risk groups, parents and peers”.²⁸

In May 2016 the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) published the outcome of its consultation on its motoring services strategy. This included proposals on road safety and driving standards, including:

- encouraging a culture of taking the practical driving test when the candidate is judged ready, rather than simply as soon as possible;
- undertaking work to assess how financial incentives might contribute to persuading learners to practise more and exploring other ways of encouraging learner drivers to be well prepared for the test, including the use of behavioural insights to design messaging around test preparedness in the test booking system;
- exploring the development of a voluntary electronic logbook, which would enable learner drivers and their instructors to record progress;
- encouraging all road users, but especially the young, to consider how they can improve their skills through post-test training;
- continuing to promote Pass Plus; and
- exploring whether the private sector could be involved in the delivery of driving tests.²⁹

This was followed in July 2016 by a separate consultation paper on proposed changes intended to improve the car driving test. The main proposals in the paper on which views were sought were to:

- increase the independent driving section of the practical test from 10 to 20 minutes;
- incorporate the use of satnavs into the test;
- Modify the delivery of manoeuvres so they are undertaken during the natural course of the drive, in a less staged way; and
- change the format for the vehicle safety questions so that one of the two questions is conducted during the on road part of the test, when the vehicle is in motion.³⁰

²⁷ for details, see: Research & Information Service Northern Ireland, [Road Traffic \(Amendment\) Bill](#), NIAR 353-14, 13 June 2014

²⁸ DfT, [Road Safety Statement](#), 21 December 2015, p17

²⁹ DVSA, [Motoring Services Strategy](#), 12 May 2016, p12-15

³⁰ DfT, [Improving the car driving test](#), 14 July 2016

The consultation closed on 25 August, DVSA has yet to announce the outcome.

5. Black boxes and insurance

In recent years, one of the issues that has arisen in relation to young drivers is the spiralling cost of car insurance.³¹ One of the solutions to this is for young drivers to agree to have 'black boxes' installed in their vehicles which monitor their driving behaviour, leading to lower premiums.

In its March 2011 report on the cost of car insurance, the Transport Committee reported on concerns that the 'first wave' of this technology had achieved poor market penetration. The Committee recommended that the Government investigate effective means of deploying and publicising the technology.³² However, by the end of 2013 reports indicated that adoption of this sort of technology was becoming more commonplace with one in five young drivers insuring themselves with Direct Line having a device fitted.³³

Research published by TRL in December 2015 indicated that several UK insurers offered policies in which a telematics device is installed in the policyholder's vehicle to collect data to quantify and risk assess driving styles and behaviours. However, it concluded that it was "not feasible to robustly assess the impact of telematics-based insurance on young novice driver accident rates using only insurance data as a primary data source". This was primarily because insurance data "do not provide sufficiently comparable and detailed exposure data for a matched sample of telematics and non-telematics policyholders".³⁴

In its May 2016 *Motoring Services Strategy* DVSA said that it would work with the insurance industry to encourage links between safe driving and lower premiums, especially for younger drivers.³⁵ Most recently in July 2016 the then Economic Secretary to the Treasury, Harriet Baldwin, said:

Some insurers offer discounts to drivers who choose to use telematics in their cars. This is usually informed by the insurer's claims experience and other industry-wide statistics. The Government does not intend to intervene in these commercial decisions by insurers as this could damage competition in the market. The respective capabilities of insurers to assess risk is a key element on which they compete. This competition is important and should lead to better products and lower prices for consumers.³⁶

³¹ further information on the cost of car insurance can be found in HC Library briefing paper [SN6061](#)

³² Transport Committee, [The cost of motor insurance](#) (fourth report of session 2010-11), HC 591, 11 March 2011, paras 51-52

³³ "Young drivers see financial appeal of the black box", *The Times*, 1 November 2013

³⁴ TRL for DfT, [Provision of telematics research](#), TRL 755, 3 December 2015, p4

³⁵ op cit., [Motoring Services Strategy](#), p15

³⁶ [Motor Vehicles: Insurance: Written question – 41007](#), 4 July 2016

6. Government policy: a brief history

The Labour Government published its road safety strategy, *Tomorrow's roads: safer for everyone*, in March 2000.³⁷ This set out the Government's plans for reducing the number of people killed or seriously injured in road accidents by 40 per cent by the year 2010. The strategy stated that better driving skills and behaviour could make a significant contribution towards reducing the number of road casualties and indicated that the Government would consult on measures to improve pre-test driving experience.³⁸ A consultation paper was published in August 2001 setting out a wide range of options for improving the process of learning to drive, including: new pre-test requirements; the use of P-plates for 6 or 12 months after passing the driving test; a lower blood alcohol level for new drivers; restrictions on night-time driving and carrying passengers; and extending the learning period for new drivers, which might include a lowering of the age for learning to drive to sixteen and a half.³⁹

The first three-year review of the road safety strategy was published in April 2004. It concluded that there was not "sufficient evidence to justify further regulation of the way new drivers learn". Instead, the Driving Standards Agency (DSA) would promote an 'education agenda' for novice drivers, building on the voluntary logbook initiative with further learning resources. It would review regulatory arrangements for driving instructors.⁴⁰

The second three-year review was published in February 2007. When the report was released the then Road Safety Minister, Dr Stephen Ladyman, announced that it would initiate "a fundamental overhaul of driver training and testing".⁴¹ The Government's consultation on learning to drive was published in May 2008. It proposed changes in four main areas: an improved driving test; an improved learning process; better information about instructors and improved instructor training; and further options for learning and qualifications.⁴² This would involve things like:

- On the **driving test** – changes to the theory, hazard perception and practical elements of the test; splitting the test overall into modules so you can 'pass as you go'; and better feedback at all stages of the test.⁴³

³⁷ DETR, *Tomorrow's roads: safer for everyone*, March 2000

³⁸ *ibid.*, paras 3.14 to 3.22

³⁹ DTLR, *A more structured approach to learning to drive*, 21 August 2001

⁴⁰ DfT, *Tomorrow's Roads – safer for everyone: The first three-year review*, April 2004, paras 99-103 and 108; the proposals for changes to instructor training are covered in HC Library briefing paper [SN2844](#)

⁴¹ DfT press notice, "[Ladyman unveils driver testing and training revamp](#)", 26 February 2007; and: *Tomorrow's Roads – safer for everyone: The second three-year review*, February 2007

⁴² DSA, *Learning to drive: public consultation*, May 2008, pp5-9

⁴³ *ibid.*, paras 11-15

- On the **learning process** – new training and testing arrangements; a new syllabus for instructors; and more practical experience driving, for example, at night and in bad weather.⁴⁴
- On **further learning and qualifications** – a new road safety qualification for school-age children; more learning opportunities post-test; incentives to undertake further training (related to, e.g. lower insurance premiums); and reforming education, training and reassessment for those who commit motoring offences.⁴⁵

In April 2009 the DSA published the responses to the consultation and a further consultation paper on the introduction of an abridged learner theory test from October 2009 alongside its wider consultation paper on a new road safety strategy for 2010-20.⁴⁶ This latter document stated the Government's intention to "take forward a programme of measures that will strengthen the way that people learn to drive and are tested, and create a culture of continued and lifelong learning".⁴⁷ This would involve the following measures:

- roll out of a new pre-driver qualification in safe road use;
- an abridged theory test for those students awarded the new pre-driver qualification;
- a trial to assess the effectiveness of a new learning to drive syllabus and process;
- a requirement for the supervising driver to accompany the candidate during a practical car test; and
- an assessment of competence whilst the candidate is driving independently in the practical driving test.⁴⁸

In the event, during its last two years in office the Labour Government made the following changes to driver testing:

- Altered the theory test for learner car drivers to include questions set in a 'case study' context, to better assess candidates' understanding of driving theory;⁴⁹
- Set a new, abridged theory test for learner car drivers, designed to supplement a new Safe Road Use voluntary qualification aimed at young people aged between 14 and 16. Those who obtain the qualification will be able to take the abridged (cheaper) theory test within certain timeframe;⁵⁰ and
- Allowed greater flexibility in the number of reversing manoeuvres that are normally performed by learner car drivers during the practical driving test, reducing the overall requirement to allow a

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, paras 16-18

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, paras 23-31

⁴⁶ DSA, *Learning to Drive - Report on Consultation*, April 2009; and: *Consultation: an abridged theory test for learner car driver*, April 2009

⁴⁷ DfT, *A safer way: consultation on making Britain's roads the safest in the world*, April 2009, para 7.10

⁴⁸ *op cit.*, *Learning to Drive - Report on Consultation*, p3; full details in section 5

⁴⁹ DSA press notice, "*Case studies go 'live' in theory test today*", 28 September 2009

⁵⁰ *Explanatory memorandum* to the *Motor Vehicles (Driving Licences) (Amendment) Regulations 2010* (SI 2010/1203), April 2010

refocusing in the practical test “so that the emphasis is less on manoeuvres and more on general driving”.⁵¹

The Coalition Government, which took office in 2010, published a strategic framework for road safety in May 2011. Before that date it implemented two changes: to introduce an ‘independent driving’ element to the practical car driving test to “assess the candidate’s ability to drive safely whilst making decisions independently”; and to stop publishing the questions used in the driving theory test to “help ensure that new drivers learn the principles behind driving theory rather than just learning answers”.⁵²

The road safety framework included a number of proposals, including those to:

- develop a new post-test vocational qualification;
- develop more targeted and effective marketing, building upon behavioural science; and
- improve the initial training for learner drivers and riders through better consumer information and ensure driving and riding instructors have the right skills and qualifications.⁵³

It did not include any mention of the post-test restrictions for younger drivers or graduated licensing that many have expressed such an interest in over recent years (see above). However, it did indicate the Government’s intention to develop a new post-test qualification to succeed Pass Plus.⁵⁴

In March 2013 the Government announced its intention to publish a green paper in ‘spring 2013’ on improving the safety of and reducing risks to young drivers. It also stated that the Government was considering the possibility of imposing temporary restrictions on newly qualified drivers.⁵⁵ In the event the green paper did not materialise and the Government’s most recent proposals, set out in 2015-16 are set out in section 4.5, above.

⁵¹ *ibid.*

⁵² DSA press notices, “[Independent driving introduced into tests](#)”, 27 September 2010; and: “[DSA to stop publishing questions used in theory tests](#)”, 1 November 2010

⁵³ DfT, [Strategic Framework for Road Safety](#), May 2011, pp9-10; full details in section 4

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, para 4.8

⁵⁵ DfT press notice, “[Government to overhaul young driver rules in bid to improve safety and cut insurance costs](#)”, 25 March 2013

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