



House of Commons
Transport Committee

Novice Drivers

Seventh Report of Session 2006–07

Volume I



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Report, together with formal minutes

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The Transport Committee

The Transport Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Department for Transport and its associated public bodies.

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The current staff of the Committee are Tom Healey (Clerk), Annette Toft (Second Clerk), Clare Maltby (Committee Specialist), Louise Butcher (Inquiry Manager), Alison Mara (Committee Assistant), Ronnie Jefferson (Secretary) and Laura Kibby (Media Officer).

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1 Introduction

1. Novice drivers are among the most vulnerable drivers on our roads. It is eight years since the Transport Sub-committee of the Environment, Transport and Rural Affairs Committee published its Report on Young and Newly-Qualified Drivers.¹ In that time, there has been little progress in tackling the problem of road deaths and injuries among novice drivers. This is in stark contrast to the success there has been in reducing road casualties across the population as a whole.

2. Because of this lack of progress, we decided to revisit the subject and examine the potential for more radical measures which would be more effective in reducing casualties. We announced the terms of reference for the inquiry on 2 November 2006.² The Department for Transport subsequently published its Second Review of the Road Safety Strategy, in which it committed to undertake a thorough review of the way people learn to drive and are tested. The Department told us that it was “very open-minded about what should go into that consultation document at this stage.”³ **We hope to see evidence that the Department is true to its word and that bold measures will be given proper consideration. The appalling collision rate of novice drivers clearly demonstrates that the problem must not be ignored. “Do nothing” is not an option. We will return to this issue in the next year to review progress. In the meantime, we recommend that the Department, as part of its consultation process, undertake further analysis of the collision-involvement rates among young drivers, distinct from newly-qualified drivers.**

3. In this report we present a selection of measures to address the novice driver problem. There is evidence which demonstrates the potential effectiveness of each measure. Introducing all of these measures would be an approach which would aim to reduce risk on all fronts. But if the Department were to pick and choose between the package of potential measures, such decisions must be clearly supported by evidence. The scale of deaths and injuries amongst novice drivers and the victims of their inexperience indicates that the current regulatory regime is failing. If the whole package of recommendations in this report were to be implemented, the UK would then have one of the most rigorous driver training, testing and post-test regimes in Europe. But for these measures to be fully effective, the Government must ensure that people are not able to bypass the system altogether and drive on our roads unlicensed and uninsured. It is believed that nationally something in the region of one million people are driving without a valid licence.⁴ The Government’s first priority must be to tackle the growing “underclass” of drivers who are on the roads illegally. Otherwise the impact of any attempt to improve road safety by addressing the licensing framework, driver education and driving behaviour will be lost.

1 Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee, Nineteenth Report of 1998–99, Young and Newly-Qualified Drivers: Standards and Training, HC 515

2 See Press Notice 81/2005–06, http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/transport_committee/trans05_06_press_notice81.cfm

3 Ev 109

4 HC Deb, 21 November 2006, col 36W. In March 2006 the police randomly stopped nearly 6,000 vehicles in compliance checks and 1.6% of vehicles were non-compliant with driver licensing requirements.

4. In the course of this inquiry we took evidence from road safety groups, the police, motoring organisations, the insurance industry, driving instructors and examiners, the unions, academics, local authorities, the Driving Standards Agency and the Minister for Transport, Dr Stephen Ladyman MP. We are grateful to all those who gave written and oral evidence, and in particular to our Specialist Adviser, Robert Gifford of PACTS. We would also like to thank RAC for inviting the Committee to observe a focus group of young novice drivers.

2 The vulnerability of novice drivers

Defining the problem

5. In research studies, the definition of novice drivers tends to be those with less than three years driving experience. Clearly all drivers aged 20 or under are by definition novice drivers. But since people pass the driving test at all ages, there are novice drivers in all age groups. The table below details the number of people passing the car driving test at different ages in 2005–06. The great majority of candidates who pass the driving test are under 25. Of the 794,210 people who passed the practical test in 2005–06, only 197,137 (25%) were aged over 25.

Table 1: Number of people passing the car driving test in 2005–06 by age

Age	Number passing the practical driving test
Under 17 ⁵	86
17	188,660
18	134,247
19	69,080
20	47,489
Aged 20–25	205,000
Over 25	197,137
All ages total tests passed ⁶	794,210

Source: Department for Transport (Ev 85 and Ev 98) and Driving Standards Agency 2005–06 Annual Report

6. The data that would be required to identify exactly how many crashes are caused by drivers within the first three years of passing their driving test are not readily available. Casualty statistics collated by the police include the age of drivers and casualties, but not the date at which their licence was issued. As a result, attempts to estimate the novice driver casualty problem tend to use youth as a proxy for novice status. Drivers aged between 17–25 years are classed by the Department for Transport as “young drivers”. Because this is the only data available, much of this report by necessity refers to “young drivers” rather than “novice drivers”. **We recommend that the Department for Transport, in collaboration with the police, should collect the data necessary to understand the scale and nature of the crash involvement of novice drivers, independently of young drivers.**

7. Novice drivers are at a significantly increased risk of being involved in a road collision. Several statistics illustrate the problem:

- in 1998, drivers aged 17–21 accounted for 7% of the total driving population, but they comprised 13% of drivers involved in collisions;⁷
- one in eight driving licence holders is aged under 25, yet one in three drivers who die in a collision is under 25, and almost one in two drivers killed at night is under 25;⁸

5 Persons in receipt of the higher rate of the mobility component of the disability living allowance may be issued with a licence at 16 years.

6 Driving Standards Agency Annual Report and Accounts 2005–06

7 Ev 85

- 27% of 17–19 year-old males are involved in a road collision as a driver in their first year of driving;
- 1,077 people died in 2005 in crashes involving a driver aged 17–25 (of whom 377 were drivers aged 17–25).⁹

8. Novice drivers are particularly vulnerable in the first year after taking their test. The TRL's Cohort Study showed that 18% of all new drivers were involved in at least one crash within one year of passing their test.¹⁰ This fell to 13% in the second year, and 10% in the third year. Although the casualty data indicate the alarming prevalence of young drivers in collisions, this data does not attribute causation for the crash. However, research undertaken for the Department for Transport found that young drivers in fatal collisions, especially those under 20 years, were nearly 12 times more likely than those aged 35–65 years to have been at fault.¹¹

9. The Minister and the Department repeatedly claimed that these collisions were simply “bumps and scrapes”.¹² But the Department's own evidence demonstrates that nearly 38,800 people are killed or injured each year in collisions involving at least one driver with less than two years' post-test experience and nearly 5,000 of these are deaths or serious injuries.¹³ The Minister divided novice drivers into one unproblematic, law abiding group, and one small group of people who were “rather lawless and anarchic in their attitudes [...] a [...] subset of the driving population which is driving very dangerously”¹⁴ who are responsible for the collisions and casualties. The fact that 18% of *all* new drivers were involved in at least one crash within one year, suggests that this division fails to recognise the risks also faced by responsible young drivers.

10. In addition, young novice drivers tend to drive older vehicles which have fewer safety features than are offered on newer cars. This means that in the event of a crash, the injuries inflicted tend to be worse than they would have been in a newer vehicle with better secondary safety features. According to the Department, 20% of the 17–22 year old male drivers killed in collisions were driving cars more than 13 years old.¹⁵

11. While all novice drivers face an increased risk of collision compared to more experienced drivers, men are particularly dangerous drivers, as Table 2 shows. This is despite women having a lower pass rate in the driving test than males: 35.8% and 47.8% respectively. The trend shows that over the past four years, young male driver casualties

8 Ev 20

9 Department for Transport informal briefing to Committee 13 December 2006. The total number of road deaths in 2005 was 3,201.

10 Forsyth, E. (1992a) Cohort Study of Learner and Novice Drivers, Part 1 TRL Report 338. Forsyth, E. (1992b) Part 2 TRL Report 372. Forsyth, E., Maycock, G. and Sexton, B. (1995) Part 3, Project Report 111. Maycock, G. and Forsyth, E. (1997), Part 4, TRL Report 275. Transport Research Laboratory, Crowthorne, UK.

11 Department for Transport (2007) Second Review of the Government's Road Safety Strategy, page 19, quoting Ward, H; Christie, N; Broughton J; Clarke D; Lyons R; Trends in Fatal Car Occupant Accidents, DfT London (2007) www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/roadsafety/strategytargetperformance/2ndreview/

12 Qq 347, 353, 377, 406

13 DfT (2002) Introducing a more structured approach to learning to drive: Consultation. By way of comparison, in 2002 there were 39,407 people killed or seriously injured in traffic collisions in total (Road Casualties Great Britain 2005).

14 Qq 347–349

15 Department for Transport (2007) Second Review of the Government's Road Safety Strategy, page 19

have reduced, while young female driver casualties have increased. Nevertheless, more than three times as many young male drivers are killed or seriously injured, than females.

Table 2: Young driver casualties by sex

17–19 old drivers killed or seriously injured	2002	2003	2004	2005
Male	929	918	830	869
Female	251	274	288	276

12. Novice drivers are clearly very vulnerable on the road. They also pose considerable danger to their passengers and other road users. The Department for Transport must ensure that tackling this group of casualties is given a high priority across Government.

Lack of progress

13. The Department has introduced a variety of incremental measures designed to improve novice driver safety over the past decade or so. These include:

- introduction of “Pass Plus” on a voluntary basis in 1995 to provide further training for newly qualified drivers;
- the New Drivers Act 1995 introduced revocation of licences for new drivers who accumulate six penalty points;
- introduction of the theory test in 1996;
- changes to the practical test in 1999 (the test length was increased from 35 to 40 minutes, test routes include higher speed dual carriageways, all less serious faults are recorded and more than 15 result in failure);
- launch of the Driving Standards Agency’s Driver Record logbook in 2002; and
- the introduction of the hazard perception test in 2003.

14. However, the measures introduced to date appear to have had only a marginal impact on novice driver safety. As the figures in Table 3 below show, the rate of novice driver fatalities as a proportion of licence holders has increased substantially over the past ten years. The number of young people holding a driving licence has fallen quite sharply between the early 1990s and today.¹⁶

15. In comparison to this deteriorating picture of novice driver casualties, the number of people killed and seriously injured in road traffic collisions as a whole had reduced by 33% in 2005 compared to the 1994–98 average.¹⁷

16 The National Travel Survey suggests that the proportion of people aged 17–20 holding a licence increased from 27% in 2004 to 32% in 2005, after a steady downward trend from the peak of 48% in 1992–94.

17 Department for Transport Road Casualties Great Britain 2005

Table 3: Fatality rates for car drivers aged 17–20: 1992–2004

Year	Deaths	Full Driving Licence figures	Rate (per 100,000 licences)
1992–94	167	1,326,000	12.6
1993–95	160	1,224,000	13.1
1994–96	162	1,143,000	14.2
1995–97	168	1,133,000	14.9
1996–98	172	1,174,000	14.6
1997–99	162	1,173,000	13.8
1998–2000	154	1,131,000	13.6
1999–2001	154	1,001,000	15.4
2002	181	929,000	19.5
2003	192	861,000	22.3
2004	178	820,000	21.7
2005	192	998,000	19.2

Source: Department for Transport (Ev 162). Licence figures for 1995 onwards are based on weighted data.

16. We questioned several witnesses about the reason for the increased novice driver casualty rates but were unable to identify the cause of the problem. The Minister suggested that the worsening rate could be to do with the increasing number of miles driven and an increase in lawlessness among some young people.¹⁸ The Cumbria Road Safety Partnership developed this picture, suggesting that some young people’s attitude to driving “reinforces established understanding of young peoples’ attitudes to risk taking behaviour [...] across a range of activities including alcohol and drug abuse and sexual behaviour [...]”¹⁹ Superintendent Thwaites added, “It is part of a wider agenda [...] about anti-social behaviour and nuisance in general.”²⁰

17. The Minister accepted that there is a problem, and indicated a commitment to tackle it: “I am accepting there is a problem. Even if that is a problem of something getting worse or a problem of it not getting better fast enough, I am entirely accepting there is a problem which needs to be addressed.”²¹ He also agreed that, in addressing the novice driver casualty problem, the Department “should follow the evidence and everything else is just prejudice.”²² We support this statement and hope to see the Department live up to this standard.

18. The overall gains made in road casualty reduction as a whole, since the targets were set in 2000, have not been matched among novice drivers. Indeed, the rate of novice driver casualties appears to be worsening, and there is little understanding about why this is the case. The measures implemented by the Department over the past twelve years have been incremental and have failed to cut novice driver casualties. A change in approach is now required. There should be research into the reasons for the increasing rate of novice driver casualties in order that policy-makers better understand the

18 Qq 360–361

19 Ev 126

20 Q429

21 Q360

22 Q351

problem and are able to design initiatives to address it. The Government must consider much bolder action to prevent these tragic deaths and injuries.

3 A more structured approach to learning to drive

The existing system of learning to drive

19. In the United Kingdom people wishing to drive must be at least 17 years old. They are then able to apply for a provisional licence in order to begin to learn to drive on public roads. Learners can take lessons with an Approved Driving Instructor and practise driving with an accompanying driver. Accompanying drivers must be at least 21 and must have held a full UK licence for three years. The Driving Standards Agency (DSA) is responsible for maintaining and checking the standards of all Approved Driving Instructors. According to the DSA, those who pass their driving test have had, on average, about 45 hours of professional training combined with 22 hours of private practice.

20. In order to drive unaccompanied, learner drivers must pass a theory test and a practical driving test. The theory test is made up of two parts: multiple choice and hazard perception, and candidates need to pass both. Once the theory test has been passed, learners can take the practical driving test. In the practical test, candidates are examined on their general driving and on two reversing exercises (reversing around a corner; turning in the road; or reverse parking). They are also tested for basic checks that a driver would carry out to ensure the vehicle is safe for use. Candidates may also be asked to carry out an emergency stop. Candidates can make up to 15 minor driving faults and pass (16 or more results in failure).²³ One serious or dangerous fault results in failure.²⁴ Committing three minor faults in the same area leads to the candidate receiving a serious fault for a repeated mistake, thereby failing the test.

21. Once someone has passed both the theory and practical driving tests they are able to drive unaccompanied on all public roads, with no restrictions or further training required. The only different regulation that novice drivers face is disqualification for a lower number of penalty points under the New Drivers Act 1995 (see Chapter 10).

Problems with the current system

22. The existing process of learning to drive was heavily criticised by many of our witnesses.²⁵ We heard that it encourages people to seek to pass the test in the minimum time possible, rather than learning to drive safely.²⁶ Research has identified that many

23 Minor faults are less serious errors that do not cause any actual or potential danger to other road users. Typical examples include harsh use of the brakes, crossing of hands on the steering wheel and excessive hesitation at a junction.

24 Dangerous faults are those that result in actual danger, either to the driver or to other road users. Serious faults are recorded when the candidate repeatedly makes the same driving error or is unable to perform one of the set manoeuvres correctly.

25 Ev 1, 6, 20, 25, 44, 56–59, 70, 72, 126, 137–144 and 155

26 Q185, Ev 56, 58, 142

people distinguish between learning to drive and learning to pass the test.²⁷ The Minister acknowledged that this was a problem.²⁸

23. For many people, the cost of learning to drive is seen as a burden. A one-hour lesson with an approved driving instructor generally costs between £20 and £25.²⁹ The theory test fee is £21.50. The practical test fee is £48.50 on weekdays, and £58.50 on evenings and at weekends. For an average driver the cost of learning to pass and becoming qualified is therefore likely to be about £1,000.

24. Mr Lepine, of the Motor Schools Association of Great Britain, told us:

“I think a lot of people [...] do the minimum required to pass the theory test in the first instance, the hazard perception test and then the driving test. If people were required to follow a structured syllabus and a properly structured way of learning to drive that would make for some improvement [...] the problem is young people and their mums and dads want them to pass their tests as quickly and as cheaply as possible, whatever they might say in focus groups. The truth of the matter is that puts pressure on the driving instructor to allow them to take a test before they are ready.”³⁰

25. The fact that less than half the people taking the test pass it demonstrates the poor level of preparedness that the current system provides.³¹ People obviously apply to take the test in advance of acquiring the necessary skills and experience to be able to drive consistently at the required standard. Research has shown that many successful driving test candidates are not consistently at the test standard.³² It was suggested that a more structured approach to learning to drive would help raise the standard of test candidates, the pass rates and improve their safety once qualified. We were advised that there would be benefit in increasing the driving experience that learners have before they pass the test and are permitted to drive solo.³³

The Second Review of the Road Safety Strategy

26. The Minister told us that he accepted that the existing training and testing regime was deficient. He said: “I entirely share the view that the way we teach people to drive and the way we test them [...] needs to be fundamentally reformed.”³⁴ The Second Review of the Government’s Road Safety Strategy, *Tomorrow’s Roads: Safer for Everyone*, was published on 26th February 2007, during the course of our inquiry.³⁵ The driver training and testing

27 Department for Transport 2007 “The Good, the Bad and the Talented: Young Drivers’ Perspectives on Good Driving and Learning to Drive” Road Safety Research Report No. 74. Department for Transport: London

28 Q419

29 £25 for one lesson with a BSM instructor in London and Q218

30 Qq 189, 221

31 The pass rate was 43% in 2005 (Ev 72)

32 Department for Transport informal briefing (13.12.06)

33 Ev 1, 6, 20, 25, 40, 56–58, 70–72, 138, 142–144 and 151

34 Q355

35 Department for Transport (2000) *Tomorrow’s Roads: Safer for Everyone* and Department for Transport (2007) *Second Review of the Government’s Road Safety Strategy*

regime formed a central component of the Strategy Review, and the document proposed a systematic reform of the way people learn to drive. It states: “The time has come to reform fundamentally the way people learn to drive. We need to do more than tinker with the particular elements, we need to overhaul the current system for learning, including predriver education, testing and maintaining driving skills through life.”³⁶

27. The Review describes how the reform will be based on a new framework of competencies, which will underlie all the education, training, testing and lifelong learning initiatives. It outlines the following three elements of the framework:

- a new competency and knowledge framework setting out what a candidate must know and be able to do;
- a modern training syllabus setting out what a candidate needs to learn; and
- a systematic set of assessment criteria setting out how the testing stage will establish that a candidate has covered the syllabus properly and can demonstrate the required level of competence.³⁷

The Department states: “Our overall aim is a simple one: that anybody who prepares properly across the whole syllabus will expect to pass the test; and those who skimp or treat the test as a matter of luck will fail.”³⁸

28. We welcome the proposals set out in the Government’s Second Review of the Road Safety Strategy, and the Department’s intention to reform the driver training and testing framework.

Quality of driving instruction

29. A systematic reform of the training regime will require comprehensive re-training of Approved Driving Instructors. We received evidence that the quality of driving instruction was in some cases poor. We also heard that the method of training was outmoded. RoadSafe argued that, “The current system of driver education is based largely upon fault correction [...] A move to a more educationally based approach is overdue.”³⁹ More information on attitudes to driving can be found in the Chapter 5. The Department has suggested that the new framework will be built on a modern template, consistent with the vocational frameworks being established across the education system and in industry.⁴⁰

Continuing professional development

30. The Road Safety Act 2006 made provisions to improve the standard of instruction delivered by Approved Driving Instructors, including the introduction of mandatory quality assurance arrangements in those areas of driver training that are not currently

36 Department for Transport (2007) Second Review of the Government’s Road Safety Strategy

37 Department for Transport (2007) Second Review of the Government’s Road Safety Strategy, page 35

38 *ibid*

39 Ev 72

40 Ev 109

regulated.⁴¹ The Department has announced plans for the continuing professional development (CPD) of Approved Driving Instructors, and the DSA told us that it is working with industry partners to set up a CPD programme.

31. There is concern among an industry of self-employed instructors about who will cover the cost of the requirement to undergo ongoing training and development.⁴² Mr Grigor, the Driving Examiners Branch Secretary of the PCS Union, explained: “getting independent contractors to undertake that kind of training when in reality there is not much of an incentive to do so is problematic.”⁴³ The Department for Transport advised that the majority of instructors would “have to meet the costs of CPD as one of a number of business expenses.”⁴⁴ Despite these concerns, the Motor Schools Association of Great Britain is in favour of compulsory continuing professional development for instructors.⁴⁵ Mr Lepine told us: “At the moment the industry is working with the Driving Standards Agency in order to put together a voluntary scheme which we very much hope Ministers will make compulsory in the very near future.”⁴⁶

32. There was also a suggestion that the entry requirements for driving instructors were too low.⁴⁷ RoadSafe suggested that the whole instruction industry should be more professionalised, with instructors having a greater understanding of the higher-level cognitive functions which underlie driving skills.⁴⁸ Representatives of the Under 17 Car Club suggested that there should be a shift in focus in the promotional material of driving schools. They suggested that the focus should be away from the test pass rate, which arguably further encourages instructors to “teach the test”, towards an emphasis on collision involvement rates of former pupils in order to provide a better incentive to quality instruction.⁴⁹

33. There is consensus that the process of learning to drive must be improved if casualties are to be cut; if such reforms are to be successful, it is paramount that the quality of driving instruction be significantly raised. In such a competitive commercial environment, it is unlikely that a voluntary continuous professional development scheme would be fully effective, and we therefore support a mandatory continuous professional development programme for all driving instructors. We recommend the Department, as part of its reform of the driver training and testing framework, to

41 Source: Department for Transport Press Notice (08.11.06) “Road Safety Bill granted Royal Assent.”

42 Q202

43 Q204

44 Ev 109

45 Q206

46 Q207

47 To become an ADI a candidate must: have held a full UK or EU unrestricted car driving licence for a total of at least four out of the past six years prior to entering the Register after qualifying; and not have been disqualified from driving at any time in the four years prior to being entered in the Register. All convictions, motoring and non-motoring, are taken into account. Applicants must pass an enhanced level criminal record check. Driving instructors must also pass two practical examinations within two years of passing the theory examination. The qualification examination is in three parts: a computer based theory test, a practical test of driving ability, a practical test of ability to instruct. Candidates may take the theory test as many times as necessary, but are only permitted a maximum of three attempts at each of the practical tests within the two year qualification period.

48 Ev 72

49 Ev 35

examine carefully ways of raising the entry requirements for registration as an Approved Driving Instructor.

Pass Plus

34. Pass Plus is a training scheme for newly-qualified drivers which was introduced in 1995. The training is available only within the first 12 months of passing the test. It consists of six practical modules which cover driving in town, in all weathers, on rural roads, at night, on dual carriageways and on motorways. There is no test at the end of it: instead driving is continually assessed by the instructor. Pupils must successfully complete all the modules in the course. The scheme is voluntary and approximately 13% of newly qualified drivers complete the course.⁵⁰

35. Several witnesses indicated their support for this scheme and suggested that it helped reduce novice driver casualties.⁵¹ Indeed, many insurance companies offer a discount on the cost of insurance for novice drivers who have successfully completed the course, assuming that their risks of collision are reduced.⁵² However, emerging evidence from the Association of British Insurers shows that Pass Plus drivers have only a marginally lower collision rate than drivers who do not participate in the scheme.⁵³ Preliminary research commissioned by the Department and published in 2006 found that, after controlling for variables in background and psychological characteristics, there was “little or no difference between Pass Plus takers and non-takers in terms of their accident rates or their driving behaviour”.⁵⁴ **It is important that the Department for Transport properly and promptly evaluates measures such as Pass Plus following their implementation. The Department’s full evaluation of Pass Plus is due in December 2007—12 years after the scheme’s implementation. If the results from the Association of British Insurers’ ten year study are accurate, it could be that novice drivers, and others, are being given a misleading picture of the safety benefits which accrue from undergoing this extra voluntary training.**

50 Ev 85

51 Ev 20, 25, 56, 58, 119, 126, 138 and 151

52 Ev 20, 25

53 Ev 20 and Ev 109, para 8.1

54 DfT Behavioural Research in Road Safety 2006 Can we use the Cohort II data to explore the effects of taking Pass Plus? M. A. Elliott, TRL.

4 A minimum learning period

Evidence for a minimum learning period

36. Preliminary analysis of research data suggests that, for drivers of all ages, the reduction in collision liability which they experience between their first and second year of driving post-test may be as high as 42.5% as a result of gaining experience alone.⁵⁵ Other research, undertaken in 1997, found that male drivers who took longer to learn to drive had significantly fewer collisions than drivers who completed their training in just a few months. A similar relationship was found for male drivers who drove higher mileages while learning.⁵⁶ The Association of British Insurers told us that each year, 50,000 17 year-olds pass the driving test with less than six months driving experience. It notes, “If the learning period takes place during the spring and summer months, many of these drivers may obtain a full licence having never driven in ice or snow, or even in the dark.”⁵⁷

37. The challenge, then, is to secure the benefits of this experience before allowing people to drive unaccompanied. The expectation is that a minimum learning period would go some way towards achieving this. The DfT’s own consultation document found that a minimum 12-month learning period could each year prevent 800–1,000 deaths and serious injuries and 6,000–7,000 casualties in all.⁵⁸ This is a significant casualty reduction to be achieved from just one initiative. It is expected that a six-month minimum learning period would have a much diminished impact, resulting in an estimated 120 deaths and serious injuries being prevented each year.

38. Sweden increased the period of pre-driver training by lowering the age of obtaining a provisional licence while keeping the minimum age for unsupervised driving at 18 years. In 1993 it lowered the age at which people could start to learn to drive from 17 years six months, to 16 years. The results of this initiative showed that with extended supervised practice there was a significant reduction in crashes.⁵⁹ Following the change, the average hours of training and practice increased from 47 hours, to 118 hours. Collision rates during the first two years of unsupervised driving fell by 40% for those people that started practising before the age of 17 years and six months, compared to the old system, once adjusted for socio-economic and other factors.⁶⁰ The authors of a research report commissioned by DfT in 2002, stated, “Sweden achieved [...] substantial improvements in novice driver safety [...] so this type of measure merits very serious consideration in

55 Ev 85 quoting “Cohort II data”

56 Ev 20

57 *ibid*

58 Department for Transport (2002) *A More Structured Approach to Learning to Drive: Consultation*

59 Gregersen, et al 1999 “Evaluation of 16 years age limit for practising in Sweden” TRL Limited. And Gregersen et al 2000 “Sixteen years age limit for learner drivers in Sweden – an evaluation of safety effects” in *Accident Analysis & Prevention*, Vol. 32 Issue 1

60 C Baughan, H Simpson (2002) *Graduated driver licensing – a review of some current systems*, TRL Report 529, page 14

Britain. Unfortunately, results from Norway have been less encouraging; the reasons for this need to be better understood.⁶¹

Raising the age of full licensing

39. Introducing a minimum 12-month learning period in the UK would effectively raise the minimum age at which people can drive unaccompanied from 17 to 18 years. The minimum age for solo driving across Europe was set at 18 years by Council Directive 91/439/EEC in 1991, however the UK (along with only Ireland and Austria) has a derogation for a lower age limit.⁶²

40. In 2005–06, just 24.2% of people passing the test were under 18.⁶³ Although they represent only a relatively small number of drivers (197,425 in 2006),⁶⁴ preventing these people from driving unaccompanied would in some cases cause hardship. This would be particularly pronounced for those young people dependent on private vehicle transport for access to employment and education opportunities. It might also impinge on the family and social lives of these young people.

41. In addressing the novice driver casualty problem it is necessary to make an informed choice about the balance to be made between driving entitlement, risk, and costs—both economic and social. As the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development / European Conference of Ministers of Transport report, *Young Drivers*,⁶⁵ states:

The key point is that young driving is not without its risks, and decisions taken with regard to driving ages should factor in this risk. In other words, the need for mobility at a given age should be balanced with the costs of that mobility, in terms of human life and health, as well as economic impact, based on data that is as complete and reliable as possible. Put differently: how much personal mobility should be exchanged for how many deaths and injuries related to young driver risk? At what point does the risk of preventable deaths and injury become excessive?

42. We asked the Department for Transport to provide its assessment of the economic and social costs that would be associated with a 12-month minimum learning period which would in effect raise the solo driving age to 18 years. Despite stating in its original memorandum that: “It would have a significant adverse impact”; the Department subsequently told us that actual cost assessments had yet to be undertaken.⁶⁶ The Department did, however, provide data to show the percentage of 17 year-olds taking part in its the Cohort Study who drive to and from a place of work or study, which show that

61 *ibid*, page 1

62 Council Directive 91/439/EEC of 29 July 1991 on driving licences sets a minimum age of 18 for cars drivers, but Article 6(2) allows a derogation.

63 Ev 85

64 Ev 98

65 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) / European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT) 2006 *Young Drivers: The Road to Safety* Transport Research Centre, OECD Publishing, page 127

66 Ev 109, para 5.2

68.1% of the sample do so on at least four days a week. The research does not provide information about alternative forms of transport available for these journeys.⁶⁷

43. The Department for Transport is in the process of reforming the training and testing regime for learning to drive. It expects to consult “later in the year” on these reforms.⁶⁸ **Given that work is well underway on reforms to the framework for learning to drive, we are greatly concerned that the Department has not undertaken any objective assessment of the costs and benefits—both economic and social—of changes to driving entitlement, as part of restructuring the process of learning to drive. The Minister has told us that the reforms would be based on evidence, not anecdote, and we seek reassurance that these evaluations will indeed be instrumental in determining the Department’s course of action. We are furthermore concerned that the lack of evaluation of these options is indicative of a lack of ambition in the scale of change the Department is contemplating.**

Support for a minimum learning period

44. There was support from many of our witnesses for the introduction of a minimum 12-month learning period.⁶⁹ The ABI stated that recent research had found that increasing the length of the learning period and enforcing minimum levels of driving practice had significantly reduced the novice driver collision rate in the United States.⁷⁰ RoSPA and the Under 17 Car Club suggested that a 12-month mandatory learning period should be accompanied by lowering the age for obtaining a provisional licence to 16 years and six months.⁷¹ Citing research which found that 12% of drivers who had recently passed the test had never driven in the dark, PACTS argued that the minimum learning period should include a requirement to drive in a wider range of conditions, such as motorway and night driving.⁷²

45. The driving schools were not in favour of a minimum learning period. While accepting that the safest drivers are those that have had plenty of driving experience, BSM told us: “There is no reason to suggest that someone who has held a provisional licence for a specific period of time would actively gain practical experience driving the car. We believe pupils would put off starting to learn until nearer the end of the ‘learning period’.”⁷³ The Department for Transport reinforced this concern: “Extending the period in which only a provisional licence is available would allow more time for learners to practice, but they would not necessarily do so.”⁷⁴ The Motor Schools Association suggested that a minimum learning period would be impractical and misleading.⁷⁵

67 Ev 109

68 Ev 109

69 Ev 1, 6, 20, 70, 138 and 144, Q457

70 Ev 20

71 Ev 35, 138

72 Ev 144

73 Ev 56

74 Ev 85

75 Ev 58

46. We acknowledge these difficulties. But the risk that learners will continue to bunch driving practice in the final few months could possibly be overcome with a combination of a minimum number of hours of tuition, possibly through set periods of the year and a requirement to complete a structured syllabus before applying to take the test, see paragraph 52, below.

Minimum number of hours practice or tuition

47. We heard many suggestions about the level of tuition and practice which should be required. These varied from no mandatory tuition, to 100 hours practice. RoadPeace argued for more driving experience: “we do support a requirement for a minimum of 50 hours driving, but 100 hours should be considered. This should be supervised but not necessarily by a driving instructor.”⁷⁶ The AA Motoring Trust concurred that in terms of road casualty reduction, it would be beneficial for learner drivers to have 100 hours driving practice, but the organisation also recognised that this would be expensive for those without a voluntary supervisor and that private supervised practice would be difficult to enforce.⁷⁷ Brake suggested that learner drivers should undergo a minimum of 10 hours professional tuition in a car with dual controls.⁷⁸

48. Again, the driving schools did not favour these minimum standards, arguing that learners should progress through a syllabus at their own pace.⁷⁹ RoadSafe suggested that a minimum learning period could be tailored to each individual according to the outcome of risk assessment based on personality traits.⁸⁰ While this would arguably be the most effective approach, there is a danger that the inconsistency would lead to confusion, which would risk bringing the whole system into disrepute.

Proposal for a minimum learning period

49. We consider that the evidence of the consequent prevention of death and serious injury would justify the introduction of a 12-month learning period. We recommend that a 12-month minimum learning period should be introduced as part of the structured approach to learning to drive. This would increase the minimum age at which someone is entitled to a full driving licence, and thereby able to drive unaccompanied, to 18 years, in line with most European countries. Given the risks involved in driving, it seems reasonable that the minimum age for holding a full driving licence should be 18 years.

50. To prevent learners bunching all their tuition into a short space of time, we suggest that they should be required to take a specified number of hours of professional tuition at different points during a 12-month period. This should also ensure that learners have experience of driving in various weather and lighting conditions. Different

76 Ev 6

77 Ev 40

78 Ev 1

79 Ev 56, 58

80 Ev 72

witnesses had different proposals about the minimum number of hours to be required, from 10 to 100 hours. We think it is reasonable to specify a minimum number of hours of professional tuition, but it should be emphasised that this is an absolute minimum. We do not believe the evidence as to what number this should be is conclusive. The figure should therefore strike a fair and proportionate balance between cost and the anticipated safety gains.

51. Although experience has a larger impact on collision risk than age, age is also a factor which influences risk.⁸¹ We would therefore not be able to recommend a lowering of the minimum age for obtaining a provisional licence without very robust evidence that this would have a beneficial impact on road casualty rates. We have not received such evidence during the course of our inquiry. Therefore, **we do not recommend lowering the minimum age of obtaining a provisional licence. In its response to this Report, we invite the Department to detail what research it has undertaken or commissioned into the safety impacts of lowering the minimum provisional licence age, and what the results showed.**

52. We are aware that changing the rules surrounding the age of driving entitlement by introducing a 12-month minimum learning period will have a negative effect on some young people's mobility. **The impacts of a 12-month minimum learning period should be closely evaluated, with particular regard to changes in novice driver casualty rates, and inclusion in education and employment.**

Signing-off a structured syllabus

53. A requirement to learn how to drive according to a structured training programme enjoyed more support among the driving schools.⁸² Indeed, many instructors already work from a syllabus and complete a logbook. The Driving Standards Agency launched the Driver Record logbook on a voluntary basis in 2002. According to the Department, its aim is "to ensure that the learner and instructor take a structured approach to learning and gaining experience in each of the competencies which are assessed in the practical driving test."⁸³ The Department has a research project underway which should report at the end of 2007 on the extent of use of the Driver Record, and the influence it has on the level and nature of pre-test driver training and experience, and on driving test performance.⁸⁴

54. There was a call from within the driving instruction industry to make the logbook scheme mandatory.⁸⁵ BSM explained that it had been using its own version of the logbook for many years and that 90% of its instructors use this method. The company stated that it is essential that the scheme becomes mandatory, because "Anything less than mandatory imposition will be self-defeating, as only the better instructors will use a logbook with a

81 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) / European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT) 2006 Young Drivers: The Road to Safety Transport Research Centre, OECD Publishing, page 36, quoting Maycock et al 1991, Maycock 2002, Cooper et al 1995, Carstensen 2002

82 Ev 56, 58, Q251

83 Ev 85

84 ibid

85 DIA (2007) Safer drivers, safer roads: Saving young lives through better driver education

willing learner, whilst the less committed instructor will ignore the system, be driven by the learner's desire to pass at the least cost, so making shortcuts."⁸⁶ **We will be interested to see the results of the Department's research showing what the impact has been of the Driver Record. We recommend that if the results show that it is effective, then the logbook should be made mandatory.**

55. It has been suggested that approved driving instructors should be required to sign-off core competencies of the syllabus before candidates are permitted to apply to take the test.⁸⁷ This raises some concerns over the objectivity of instructors signing off their own pupils, particularly since instructors would benefit financially from requiring prolonged tuition. Under the existing system instructors are already under some pressure from learner drivers, and often their parents too, to keep the number of lessons to a minimum before applying to take the test. The poor pass rate indicates the scale of this problem. Mr Grigor, of the PCS Union, explained that the driving examiners would not be confident of the impartiality of instructors signing off their own pupils' work or achievement.⁸⁸

56. There are potential difficulties with a signing-off system. However Mr Cunliffe, of Lancashire County Council, made an analogy with MOT tests and the success in professionalizing the vehicle maintenance sector.⁸⁹ He called for a change in ethos among the driving instruction industry, accompanied by continuing professional development, to give driving instruction the same status and responsibilities as any other vocational training.⁹⁰

57. It was suggested by RoSPA that once a mandatory log book system was well established, it might be possible to include an assessment of some basic manoeuvres, such as reversing or the three-point turn, which are currently covered in the practical test, in order to free more time on the test to assess candidates' higher level driving abilities, such as risk assessment and hazard perception, in a greater variety of driving situations.⁹¹

58. The 12-month minimum learning period should be accompanied by the introduction of a structured syllabus, which will spread the development of driving skills and abilities over the year. Instructors should be required to sign-off each module once the learner has consistently achieved the required standard. Learners should not be able to present to take the test until all modules have been successfully completed. This approach should go some way to raising the driving standard of test candidates.

59. We would also like to see clearer communication to all learner drivers (and their parents, where appropriate) that they are embarking on a year-long course, which, like all new skills, will require practice to acquire, and that there are no shortcuts. At the outset, learners should be advised of the content of the syllabus and the time it is likely to take to complete it in full.

86 Ev 56

87 Ev 126

88 Q229

89 Q461

90 Qq 458–461

91 Ev 138

5 Attitudes to driving

60. At no point in the process of driving instruction are learner drivers advised, in any structured or systematic way, of the risks of driving and dangers of the road. There is currently no part of the training or testing regimes which addresses attitudes to driving and road safety. The high rate of novice driver casualties would suggest that this is an oversight with dangerous consequences.

61. In fact, evidence demonstrates that over-confidence, sensation seeking, and impulsive behaviour are factors in a substantial number of the collisions caused by novice drivers. A study commissioned by the Department for Transport found that “a large percentage” of novice driver collisions are the result of “failures of attitude” rather than skills deficits.⁹² Many witnesses identified that attitudes towards driving and safety are crucial in determining driving behaviour and risk taking.⁹³

62. The indication is that although novice drivers may have been taught to drive safely, they frequently over-estimate their abilities, and the desire to show off is a strong factor in persuading novice drivers to drive in dangerous and high risk ways. As RoSPA states:

“Young drivers, especially men, tend to be over confident [...] They consistently rate their own skills as above average. They commonly see “good driving” as the ability to master the controls of the car at higher speeds [...] They tend to over-estimate their ability to avoid the hazard and its consequences. It takes new drivers up to two seconds longer to react to hazardous situations than more experienced drivers.”⁹⁴

63. It has been identified that young drivers gain a strong sense of their identity from driving and see it in terms of personal empowerment. PACTS noted that in focus groups, 17–20 year olds responded positively to statements, that driving:

- is a way of projecting a particular image of myself
- gives me a feeling of pride in myself
- gives me the chance to express myself by driving the way I want to
- gives me a feeling of power
- gives me the feeling of being in control
- gives me a feeling of self-confidence
- gives me a sense of personal safety.⁹⁵

92 D Clarke, P Ward, and W Truman 2002 TRL Report 542 In-depth accident causation study of young drivers prepared for Road Safety Division, DfT.

93 Ev 10, 25, 40, 44, 58, 70, 85, 126, 138, 144, 151 and 155

94 Ev 138

95 Ev 144

Perhaps more alarming, but by no means unique, were the responses given by young drivers in a focus group in Cumbria: “Although I speed I do consider myself a good driver. I can overtake big lines of traffic where most people just wouldn’t try.” And: “I just like going fast—fast enough to push me back in my seat. The adrenalin is great—nothing like it.”⁹⁶

64. These feelings of control, confidence and power are reflected in the finding that nearly half of young drivers a year after passing the practical test nominated their driving as “a bit better” or “much better” than average, compared to all other drivers.⁹⁷ This belief is arrant nonsense, since their crash risk is far higher than other age groups.

65. The Police Federation suggests that poor attitudes to driving are more pronounced in male, rather than female, novice drivers, and in younger drivers, whom it described as being “blind to their own fallibility.”⁹⁸ Professor Frank McKenna confirmed this pattern: “younger people are more impulsive and engage in more sensation seeking [...] Antisocial tendencies as indexed by standard forms of criminality peak about age 17 which, of course, is the age at which it is possible to obtain a licence.”⁹⁹ Peer pressure is a significant factor for many novice drivers. Research has found that if young drivers have a young passenger—and especially if that passenger is male—they will drive at higher speeds.¹⁰⁰

Tackling over-confidence

66. These behavioural and attitudinal aspects are not detected in the current practical or theory driving tests, and it would be extremely difficult to do so.¹⁰¹ There is a need for some education and training provision to tackle the attitudinal problems and particularly over-confidence among novice drivers.

67. RoadSafe suggested that inflated self-confidence could be successfully redressed through a type of training called “frontal lobe intervention” which puts emphasis on improving participants’ self assessment of their higher level driving skills.¹⁰² It is designed to promote awareness of one’s limitations in real driving situations as well as in discussion groups, ultimately leading to a decrease in risk-taking behaviour. RoadSafe suggested that driver training should be reformed to include the “executive” cognitive functions which control behaviour, such as emotion regulation, hazard anticipation, risk management and anticipating the consequences of one’s actions. They told us “Brain imaging studies have shown that these frontal lobe executive functions are not fully developed until young people reach the age of 25 years, at the same time when age disappears as a risk factor for crashes.”¹⁰³

96 Ev 126

97 Ev 144

98 Ev 10

99 Ev 70

100 Ev 70, quoting McKenna, Waylen & Burkes, 1998

101 Ev 6, 25, 35, 58

102 Ev 72

103 *ibid*

68. PACTS called for the driver training framework more closely to match this full range of competencies.¹⁰⁴ It pointed to experience in Sweden, where the learner driver regime now reflects a matrix of driving tasks and competencies. This is set out in Table 4 below. The matrix moves across mastery of the vehicle and traffic handling, to awareness of risk factors, and self assessment of driving skills and driving style. The aim of the Swedish system is to make learner drivers realise their own limitations and thus counteract overestimation of their ability and skill; it aims to emphasise the concept of risk perception and risk awareness. It is also designed to raise awareness of the influence of personal preconditions, social norms and motivational factors on driving behaviour and risk.¹⁰⁵

Table 4: Matrix of driving competencies

	Knowledge and skill	Risk increasing aspects	Self assessment
Preconditions and ambitions for life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relations, lifestyle, age, group etc, and driving behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensation seeking • Group norms • Peer pressure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introspective competence • Own preconditions • Impulse control
Transport and driving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modal choice • Choice of time • Role of motives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alcohol, fatigue • Low friction • Rush hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Own motives influencing choices • Self critical thinking
Driving in traffic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffic rules • Co-operation • Hazard perception 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disobeying rules • Close following • Low friction • Vulnerable road users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calibration of driving skill
Vehicle construction and control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Car functioning • Protection systems • Vehicle control • Physical laws 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No seatbelt • Breakdown of vehicle systems • Worn out tyres 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calibration of control skill

Source: *Changes to the Licensing System in Sweden*, Nils P. Gregersen, VTI, Sweden

Hazard perception training

69. Hazard perception training was also identified as a potential way to decrease risk taking behaviour.¹⁰⁶ It is well known that novice drivers have relatively poor hazard perception skills (normally taking 30% longer than experienced drivers).¹⁰⁷ Hazard perception training has been shown to improve hazard perception skills and to reduce the choice of speed.¹⁰⁸ However, the current hazard perception test introduced as part of the theory test in 2003, has severe limitations. **We are concerned that four years after its introduction, the Department has yet to publish an evaluation of the impact of the hazard perception test on novice driver collision involvement rates.**

104 Ev 144

105 Nils P. Gregersen, *Changes to the licensing system in Sweden* VTI, Sweden, <http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/roadsafety/drs/novicedrivers/conference/changestothelicensingsystemi4662>

106 In the context of driving, hazard detection refers to the ability to read the road and anticipate forthcoming events.

107 Ev 70, 72

108 Ev 70

70. The Motor Schools Association of Great Britain described its disappointment at how the hazard perception test had been introduced. It explained that the organisation had long campaigned for its introduction on the basis that it would encourage learners into classrooms to study for the test, and to discuss with their peers attitudes towards driving, speed, alcohol, risk-taking and so on.¹⁰⁹ Indeed the research undertaken for the Department in 1998, which underpinned the hazard perception test, found that only a combination of classroom and on-road training was effective in achieving a significant increase in the proportion of hazards detected early with “the correct action taken”.¹¹⁰

71. In practice, it seems that the training element has not materialised. The Motor Schools Association of Great Britain told us that: “the word quickly spread amongst novice drivers that this test was little more than another computer game that, with a little practice, was relatively easy to pass”. The organisation called for compulsory group training with peer discussion.¹¹¹ The Minister acknowledged the need for a group learning component in driver training. He said:

“Maybe one of the things that we need to introduce into this is some training which people will take with their peers, because I think one of the things which really does enforce the message in people’s minds about their responsibilities and their need to follow certain social norms is actually thinking that their peers expect them to do that.”¹¹²

72. A further method of raising awareness of risks is through “commentary driving”. With this technique, the participants maintain a running commentary while driving or watching a video scenario, explaining to the driving instructor what they see, which risks may arise and what measures should be taken to avoid those hazards.¹¹³ We heard that this technique had been effective in reducing risk-taking.¹¹⁴

73. Delivered properly, hazard perception training has been shown to have a tangible effect on attitude and subsequent driving choices. We suggest that the Department’s proposed “knowledge framework”, should incorporate higher level functions in order to target the over-confidence displayed by some novice drivers. Learner drivers should be required to demonstrate an understanding of the consequences of one’s actions and awareness of one’s limitations through self-assessment training. We recommend that some component of group-based learning should be a mandatory part of learning to drive. This should cover driving theory, risks, hazard perception, self-assessment and traffic law. The activity must be part of an approved and regulated system. We encourage the Department to research what would be effective.

109 Ev 58 and Q212

110 DETR (1998) The effects of hazard perception training on the development of the novice skills driver Road Safety Research Report No. 4 K L. Mills et al

111 Ev 58 and Q213

112 Q367

113 Ev 72

114 Deery, H.A. (1999); Gregersen, 1993, quoted in Ev 72

74. The Department for Transport recently commissioned research to examine the causes of overconfidence in novice drivers. This research study concluded that for some novice drivers, overconfidence is a purposive act rather than a cognitive failure. This means that novice drivers are deliberately adopting an inflated belief in their own abilities in order to position themselves in a particular way in the “theatre of driving”. For these drivers, overconfidence is a necessary part of building and maintaining the desired image of oneself. The report argues that as a result, these novice drivers are likely to be largely impervious to facts, evidence and argument; but their overconfidence could be challenged by ridicule and shame.¹¹⁵ It states:

“Talking about risks will never shift the attitudes of those young drivers (mostly male) for whom overconfidence behind the wheel is a matter of personal identity. Our only alternative – other than waiting for them to grow up or kill themselves – is to make this identity an unattractive and untenable one.”¹¹⁶

75. This finding makes the case for policy to take more seriously the fact that driving is a social activity as well as a physical activity. **The Department’s Road Safety Research Report No. 74 suggested that driver education and training should be set in a real-world context and should seek to address the actual beliefs, attitudes and behaviours of novice drivers. In its response to this report we invite the Department to set out how it plans to incorporate this approach.**

115 Department for Transport (2007) “The Good, the Bad and the Talented: Young Drivers’ Perspectives on Good Driving and Learning to Drive” Road Safety Research Report No. 74. Department for Transport: London

116 *ibid*

6 The driving test

Practical driving test

76. There is some consensus that the current practical driving test is a poor indicator of driver safety and subsequent crash involvement.¹¹⁷ For example, the pass rate for males is several percentage points higher than that for females; even though males then go on to have a much higher collision rate. Norwich Union stated, “Some excellent drivers find it hard to pass if they take a cautious approach.”¹¹⁸ RoadPeace concurred: “Failure to make progress, i.e. going too slowly, is a leading reason why drivers fail the test yet speeding is a leading contributory factor to novice driver crashes.”¹¹⁹ In addition, research shows that many novice drivers consider that what they have been taught to pass the driving test is irrelevant to how they will drive once qualified.¹²⁰

77. The compressed timeframe of one 40-minute test—in which candidates are required to demonstrate manoeuvres, driving on different road types and speeds, an emergency stop, and vehicle safety checks—in effect gives very little time to assess actual driving ability, decision-making, risk assessment and attitude to safety. Mr Cummins, of BSM, voiced his concern that driving test routes tend to be concentrated around towns, and exclude rural roads where a significant proportion of novice driver collisions actually take place.¹²¹ The driving school explained that because of the time constraints, very little time is spent driving on dual carriageways during the test.

78. BSM stressed the importance of test candidates having experience of “the complete variety of roads” during the supervised learning period.¹²² The driving examiners similarly called for more realistic driving tests which included the full range of road types and manoeuvres. Higher risk driving environments for learner drivers and test candidates would require use of dual control vehicles to ensure the safety of the learner driver and the supervising driver. The driving examiners were confident that if such a requirement were made, dual control vehicles would soon become readily available for hire.¹²³

79. Changes were made to the practical driving test in 1999 in order to give more time for driving rather than performing set manoeuvres. The Department told us: “The extra time means that, where practicable, candidates are taken on to a high speed road and are expected to drive up to the limit, subject to road conditions.”¹²⁴ But the evidence from driving instructors was that this remained inadequate. The Motor Schools Association stated:

117 Ev 1, 6, 25, 126

118 Ev 25

119 Ev 6

120 Department for Transport (2007) “The Good, the Bad and the Talented: Young Drivers’ Perspectives on Good Driving and Learning to Drive” Road Safety Research Report No. 74. Department for Transport: London

121 Q195

122 Ev 56

123 Ev 59

124 Ev 85

“One of the most common reasons for [...] accidents amongst inexperienced novice drivers is turning right from a busy major road into a side road [...] However, on a practical test the candidate may only carry out one turn of this type and may be fortunate that traffic volumes are low or they happen to get it right on that occasion.”¹²⁵

80. Calls were made for the driving test to be extended to one hour. BSM suggested that this would permit driving test routes to include the type of hazards where young drivers are known to be involved in crashes. It argued that, “The double-length test for repeat offenders has shown that candidates subject to longer scrutiny by examiners are more prone to reveal their true risk taking.”¹²⁶

81. The Department is considering reforming the driving test as part of its review of the driver training framework. It told us, “Since we recognise that the syllabus needs to be broader, it follows that the testing process may also need to be changed substantially.”¹²⁷ **We agree that the driving test needs to be reformed. The driving instructors and examiners made a powerful case for allowing test candidates onto high speed roads, and if necessary onto motorways—because in some places these are the only high speed roads to be found. But such a measure should only be introduced along with a requirement for candidates to take the test in a dual-control vehicle.**

82. **A more structured approach to learning to drive should include a requirement for some tuition with an approved driving instructor in a properly equipped dual control vehicle. This would make it possible to devise a driving test which had more real-world validity, through requiring experience of all types of road and manoeuvre, and particularly those which seem to cause novice drivers such difficulty: rural roads, bends on high speed roads, and turning right from a busy major road onto a side road. The driving test content should be kept under review and be guided by research about the causes of novice driver collisions.**

83. Candidates are currently permitted to make 15 driving faults in their practical test. Research shows that high-fault candidates tend to be intrinsically less safe than drivers who make fewer faults on the test.¹²⁸ The Department told us that this limit had been introduced in 1999 as part of a phased approach to introducing a limit of 12 faults—a level which the evidence showed would screen out the candidates with the highest crash liability.¹²⁹ However, based on subsequent evidence which suggested that there would be little further safety benefit in lowering the limit to 12, the Driving Standards Agency did not make further reductions to the threshold.¹³⁰ **The Cohort Study II, commissioned by the DfT, is due to provide analysis of the driving test in summer 2007. We suggest the score threshold for passing the practical and theory tests should be revised in light of this evidence.**

125 Ev 58

126 Ev 56

127 Ev 109

128 Baughan et al (2005) Novice driver safety and the British practical driving test, TRL Report 652

129 Ev 109

130 *ibid*

84. We are also concerned about reports of people impersonating candidates in driving tests. Since records began in 2004, there have been 70 convictions for offences arising from driving test impersonations and a further 79 individuals received cautions.¹³¹ A further 96 court cases are currently pending and 502 investigations are ongoing. **People who obtain driving licences through such fraudulent means are a danger to themselves and other road users. The Government must investigate the problem of test candidate impersonation as a matter of urgency.**

Theory test

85. There was similar doubt that the theory test had achieved its objectives in promoting safer attitudes and behaviour.¹³² As explained above (see paragraph 70), there is concern that the hazard perception test was introduced in such a way as to encourage only minimal hazard perception training in preparation, potentially limiting its effectiveness.

86. Driving schools have also criticised the decision to publish the theory test questions and answers in full for the multiple choice aspect of the test, fearing that this encourages candidates to learn by rote, rather than developing a more in-depth understanding of the Highway Code.¹³³ MSA stated:

“Most novice drivers are able to score over twenty-five correct answers with no training or preparation whatsoever. They then read the question bank and are able to retain enough knowledge to answer correctly the extra half dozen questions they need to achieve a pass mark. The problem is that they have demonstrated knowledge but not understanding.”¹³⁴

Brake called for the theory test to include more emphasis on the risks which drivers pose and face and the consequences of bad driving. This could include, for example, understanding how speed affects the survival chances of a pedestrian hit by a car.¹³⁵

87. Despite the theory test being introduced in 1996 and the hazard perception test in 2003, the Department has not yet completed an evaluation of the effectiveness of these measures in improving the safety of novice drivers. The impact of the hazard perception test is due to be reported in summer 2007 as part of the Cohort II study.¹³⁶ **Although we understand that it takes time to see the full effect of the implementation of new initiatives, we are disappointed by the delay in evaluating the impact of the theory test. If the results of the evaluation cast any doubt on its benefit, the Department should consider reducing the role of this element of the test.**

131 HC Deb, 15 May 2007, col 650W

132 Ev 58

133 Ev 56, 58

134 Ev 58

135 Ev 1

136 Ev 85

7 Graduated driver licensing

88. Graduated driver licensing systems provide a staged progression from initial learning to unrestricted solo driving. Restrictions are imposed during early driving to reduce exposure to the most high risk driving situations. Graduated licensing systems are in place in several states of USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Sweden, Norway, Finland, France and Northern Ireland. These systems have different components and impose different restrictions.

89. Examples of elements used in different countries include restrictions on where drivers may drive (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 (such as permitted alcohol levels). Requirements such as additional training, or periods of crash 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.

Perspectives on graduated driver licensing

90. We note that the Department for Transport's written submission stated that in April 2004, following consultation, it had decided against introducing restrictions for newly-qualified drivers. It gave the following justification: "Experience is a matter of development, but it cannot be right for the passing of the test to leave substantive questions about readiness to drive."¹³⁷ This argument is severely undermined by the fact that such large numbers of newly-qualified drivers (18%) go on to have crashes in the first year after qualifying. Clearly the driving test is not adequately ensuring the safety of novice drivers.

91. Two days before giving oral evidence, the Minister wrote to the Chairman of the Committee stating that the Government had decided not to pursue restrictions as part of a graduated licensing system, because "we see the reform of driver training and testing as an alternative approach which addresses the underlying causes of the concerns we have with novice drivers."¹³⁸ Yet research commissioned by the Department had already concluded that, "There is little research evidence that increased formal driver training improves safety."¹³⁹ **Whilst we share the Minister's hope that a reformed education and training framework will instil a more responsible approach to driving; there exists little evidence that this will be adequate.** It is a fact that novice drivers face a very considerably inflated crash risk when driving late at night, with passengers, and after consuming even small amounts of alcohol. Over-confidence and inexperience result in poor driving choices and ultimately collisions and casualties.

92. When questioned by the Committee in oral evidence, the Minister was slightly more open-minded to the prospect of graduated driving licence systems, stating "I am not going to close down any options at this stage because it would be wrong to do so [...] but

137 Ev 85

138 Ev 99

139 C Baughan, H Simpson (2002) Graduated driver licensing – a review of some current systems, TRL Report 529

instinctively I do not see that [graduated licensing] as being the answer [...]"¹⁴⁰ **When considering the potential of graduated driver licensing systems, we hope that the Government will be led by the evidence, and not by a blind hope that more, and more effective, driver training will be adequate to prevent the large numbers of novice driver casualties.**

93. In oral evidence, the Minister also suggested that where graduated systems had been introduced in Europe, these countries had only managed to reach casualty rates already achieved in the UK. This picture is, however, a little misleading. There are almost no restrictions imposed on solo driving by novice drivers under any of these European systems. They tend instead to involve different treatment of violations by novice drivers. By comparison, the graduated licensing systems in New Zealand, USA, Australia and Canada include actual restrictions on solo driving by novice drivers, for example, night restrictions, passenger restrictions and lower alcohol limits. These countries have lower novice driver casualty rates than the UK. For example, an analysis of young driver deaths, as a proportion of all driver deaths, taking into account the population of young people, showed that in Britain, the proportion of young drivers killed per total drivers killed was 2.9 times greater than the proportion of young people in the population. In New Zealand this is 1.9, in Canada 2.2, in Australia 2.2, and in USA 2.4. This suggests that the distortion of risk for young (and novice) drivers is more pronounced in the UK.¹⁴¹

94. In 2002, the Department for Transport commissioned a study by TRL into the effectiveness of graduated driver licensing. This study looked at the experience and effectiveness of restrictions in other countries. The report concluded that several elements of licensing systems had been effective in other countries and could be considered for introduction in Britain. The authors acknowledged that there were difficulties in translating experiences from other countries into the UK, and predicting what the effect would be, because the training and testing frameworks, as well as the road environment, were so different. However, the report stated,

“Despite this caveat, a serious case can be made for introducing some elements of graduated licensing, or graduated learning, systems in Britain [...] Novice drivers in Britain do have problems with alcohol, night driving, and passengers, and there is good reason to expect benefits from measures that address these problems directly.”

95. A more recent study for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the European Conference of Ministers of Transport collated the findings of recent international studies to conclude that most evaluations of graduated driver licensing show significant reductions in crashes and fatalities, albeit with great variation. Some studies have reported a reduction in crash rates of 4%, whereas others have reported reductions as large as 60%.¹⁴² The report notes:

140 Q363

141 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) / European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT) 2006 *Young Drivers: The Road to Safety* Transport Research Centre, OECD Publishing, page 28, Table 1.1

142 *ibid.* See Hedlund et al 2003; Senserrick and Whelan 2003; Hedlund and Compton 2004; Hedlund and Compton 2005; and Hartling et al 2005

“the period immediately following full licensing is especially risk intensive, as drivers experience solo driving for the first time [...] Post licence protective measures limit the complexity of the driving task, and protect the novice driver from dangers resulting from poor self-regulation and self-control in the period in which higher order skills are still “under construction”.”¹⁴³

96. Primarily as a result of this international evidence, there is a very large degree of support for a graduated driver licensing system, from a wide variety of witnesses: safety organisations, academics, researchers, the police, the insurance industry, and driving instructors.¹⁴⁴ Professor McKenna, of Reading University, identified that the tendency to frame restrictions as “deprivations of freedom” meant they are often perceived as controversial and contentious, but there was a wealth of evidence that introducing and enforcing driving restrictions had reduced casualties.¹⁴⁵ He pointed to seatbelt-wearing, motorcycle helmets, speed limits, and drink-driving legislation as examples of effective restrictions in the UK.

97. Although there was strong agreement that graduated driver licensing should be introduced, there was less consensus over the detail of what the restrictions should be.

Restriction on driving at night

98. The research evidence indicates that night-time curfews are one of the most beneficial elements of graduated driver licensing in lowering crash involvement, and severe crashes in particular.¹⁴⁶ In North Carolina, a graduated driver licensing system was introduced with a night-time restriction beginning at 9 p.m. The system resulted in a 43% crash reduction during the night-time restriction period, compared to 20% in the day, suggesting that 23% was due to night-time restrictions alone.¹⁴⁷ Michigan introduced a midnight–5 a.m. restriction, which resulted in a 53% reduction in night-time crashes, compared to 25% reduction in crashes overall. Research undertaken for the Department for Transport concluded that, “There is evidence that night-time restrictions can be very effective at reducing night-time accidents [...] though effectiveness will depend on the level of enforcement.”¹⁴⁸

99. The inflated crash risk for novice drivers at night-time is thought to be a result of a combination of factors. Some novice drivers will never have driven during darkness ahead of passing the driving test, despite the fact that driving in darkness requires different skills to daylight driving.¹⁴⁹ Perhaps more importantly, however, night-time driving tends to be for different purposes to daytime driving, for example, it is more often a social and

143 *ibid*

144 Ev 1, 6, 10, 25, 35, 56, 59, 70, 128, 137, 144, 151, 155, and DIA (2007) Safer drivers, safer roads: Saving young lives through better driver education

145 Q270

146 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) / European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT) 2006 Young Drivers: The Road to Safety Transport Research Centre, OECD Publishing, page 141 referencing Senserrick and Whelan 2003

147 *ibid*, referencing Foss et al 2001

148 C Baughan, H Simpson (2002) Graduated driver licensing – a review of some current systems, TRL Report 529

149 Ev 20

recreational activity. As a result, the likelihood of driving while under the influence of alcohol or drugs or while fatigued is much higher at night. Peer pressure is also likely to be a significant contributor to the driving choices which result in night-time collisions. Driving exposure is itself higher because young novice drivers in particular are more likely to be on the road late at night, compared to the general driving population.¹⁵⁰

100. The RAC Foundation identified that 50% of accidents involving young male drivers which result in death or serious injury occur at night, compared with 35% for older drivers.¹⁵¹ The Department for Transport identified that collision numbers are especially high for 17–19 year olds between 9 p.m. and midnight.¹⁵² Norwich Union told us that young drivers account for 45% of road fatalities between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m.; are 10 times more likely to have an accident at night; and are 56% more likely to suffer an injury between 1 a.m. and 5 a.m.¹⁵³

101. This evidence indicates that restrictions on driving without a supervising driver at night-time would be effective in reducing deaths and injuries. Restricting night-time driving raises some concerns in terms of social inclusion and accessibility. The Department has identified that the risk is inflated from as early as 9 p.m. and a curfew which began this early would certainly affect those novice drivers who need to travel by private transport for work in the evenings, and it would be a constraint on the social life of many more.¹⁵⁴

Restriction on driving with passengers

102. Driving with passengers has been show to significantly inflate the crash risk of novice drivers, and young male drivers in particular.¹⁵⁵ The crash risk increases with each additional passenger carried, and it is nearly three times higher when carrying three passengers, than when driving alone, as demonstrated in Figure 1.¹⁵⁶ Not only does the chance of a collision occurring increase, but with a car full of passengers, the number of casualties also rises sharply. We heard from Mr Cunliffe, of Lancashire County Council, how the number of passenger casualties in novice driver crashes was a persistent concern.¹⁵⁷ **The very real risks associated with young novice drivers carrying passengers mean that young male drivers are now the biggest killer of young women in this country.**¹⁵⁸

150 Ev 85

151 Ev 44

152 Ev 85

153 Ev 25

154 Ev 40

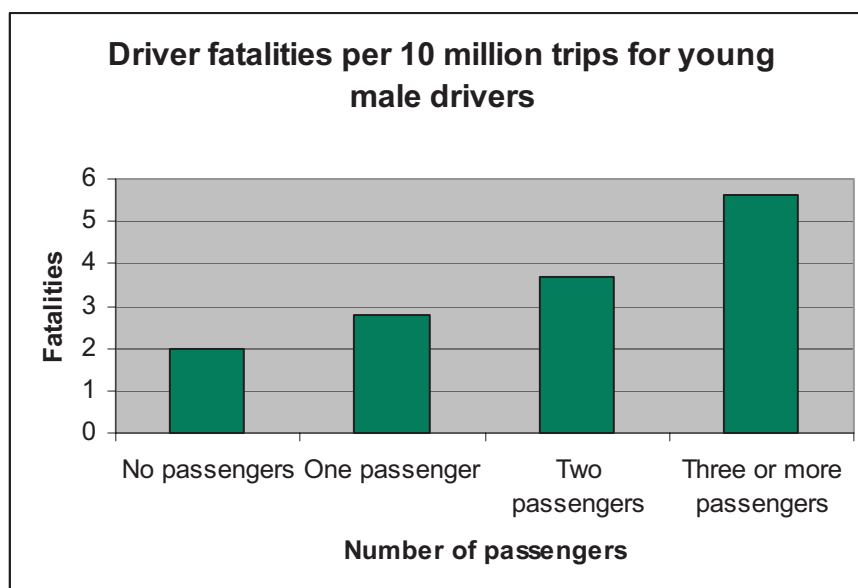
155 Ev 70

156 Ev 20

157 Q438

158 Ev 72

Figure 1: The effect of passengers on young driver fatalities



103. The official USA estimates state that night-time driving restrictions combined with peer passenger restrictions are linked to crash reductions of 60% during the hours of restriction.¹⁵⁹ A study of the impact of passenger restrictions on casualties, taking into account different compliance levels, found that with 90% compliance of passenger restrictions, there would be 31–42% fewer road deaths among 16–17 year old group, and with 50% compliance, this would still result in a 15–22% reduction in deaths. The research report commissioned by the Department for Transport concluded that, “Given the association between passengers and accidents, particularly amongst teenage drivers, introducing passenger restrictions for drivers when they first begin driving unsupervised is an option that merits serious consideration.”¹⁶⁰

104. Again, such restrictions would create difficulties for some people, for example those who learn to drive specifically because they need to carry people, including children.¹⁶¹

Alcohol limit

105. Novice drivers (and inexperienced drinkers) are at increased risk of a collision when driving after consuming alcohol.¹⁶² Studies have focused on young drivers in particular, and research has proven that for a substantial proportion of young drivers, crash risk increases at lower concentrations of alcohol than is the case for older and more experienced drivers.¹⁶³ Even small amounts of alcohol have a substantial effect on the driving safety standards of novice drivers.

159 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) / European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT) 2006 Young Drivers: The Road to Safety Transport Research Centre, OECD Publishing, page 141

160 C Baughan, H Simpson (2002) Graduated driver licensing – a review of some current systems, TRL Report 529

161 Ev 85

162 C Baughan, H Simpson (2002) Graduated driver licensing – a review of some current systems, TRL Report 529, page 26

163 *ibid*

106. Indeed the European Commission has recommended that an alcohol limit of 0.2 g/l be set for young drivers.¹⁶⁴ In many parts of America, Canada, and Australia, novice drivers already have an alcohol limit of between zero and 0.2 g/l.¹⁶⁵ In the UK, the permitted blood alcohol concentration is 0.8 g/l for all drivers. The introduction of laws in the USA which permitted licence confiscation for drivers aged under 21 with a blood alcohol concentration of up to 0.2 g/l, led to a 21% reduction in single-vehicle, night-time fatal crashes among drivers under 21, compared to states that did not introduce such laws.¹⁶⁶

107. The OECD report examined the casualty reduction effectiveness of reducing the permitted alcohol level for novice drivers.¹⁶⁷ It found that, starting from a permitted blood alcohol level of 0.8 g/l, it would be effective in casualty reduction terms, to lower this to zero or 0.2 g/l. In contrast, it found that lowering the permitted blood alcohol level from 0.8 g/l to only 0.4 or 0.6 g/l did not produce significant reductions in alcohol-related fatalities.

108. Several witnesses supported a lower permitted alcohol content for novice drivers as part of a graduated driver licensing system.¹⁶⁸ This support was based on the evidence that the driving standards of novice drivers are more readily affected by alcohol, and that drink-driving offences are also more prevalent among young drivers.¹⁶⁹ PACTS noted that breath test statistics show that young men under 21 are persistently around 12% of people found guilty of drink-driving, far disproportionate to their licence numbers.¹⁷⁰ Compared to drivers of all ages, young drivers aged 17–19 are 10 times as likely to have a drink-drive crash and young drivers aged 20–24 are 4.5 times as likely to have a drink-drive crash per mile driven.¹⁷¹ A small number of witnesses recommended that the permitted blood alcohol limit be lowered for the entire driving population.¹⁷²

109. There was opposition to the proposal from those witnesses who were against graduated driver licensing in general.¹⁷³ The opposition was based on a belief that having separate limits would send a confusing message about drink-driving, which risked obscuring the central message of “don’t drink and drive”. The authors of the 2002 TRL report suggested that a lower drink-drive limit as part of a graduated system might instil safer drink-driving habits even after the restricted period had ended. They also acknowledged, however, that the drink-drive problem was most prevalent among people in their early 20s and so raising the alcohol limit at just the point when drivers might enter this high risk demographic could be problematic.¹⁷⁴ There were particular concerns about

164 Ev 85

165 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) / European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT) 2006 Young Drivers: The Road to Safety Transport Research Centre, OECD Publishing

166 *ibid*, referencing Hingson et al. 2004

167 *ibid*, page 140

168 Ev 1, 6, 70, 138 and 144

169 Ev 6, 70, 138 and 144

170 Ev 144

171 Ev 1

172 Ev 1, 138

173 Ev 40, 44, 85

174 C Baughan, H Simpson (2002) Graduated driver licensing – a review of some current systems, TRL Report 529

the practicality of enforcing two different alcohol limits. We recommend that the Department for Transport, with the Home Office, should evaluate the enforceability of two blood alcohol concentration limits: one for novice drivers, one for the general driving population.

110. Based on the evidence available, we believe there is a case for reducing the permitted blood alcohol concentration from 0.8g/l to zero (or 0.2g/l, which in practice is effectively zero) for novice drivers. If the Department introduces a lower permitted blood alcohol concentration for novice drivers it must be assiduous in countering any impression that it is acceptable for more experienced drivers to drive under the influence of alcohol. We understand that the Department is to shortly consult on proposals to address the problem of drink-drive collisions. We welcome this much-needed investigation and look forward to a thorough examination of what should be the permitted blood alcohol concentration for drivers. The Department for Transport must tackle drink-driving through ongoing publicity and enforcement campaigns targeted at all drivers, including the young and newly-qualified.

Limiting engine size

111. A small number of witnesses suggested that there should be a restriction on the engine size for novice drivers.¹⁷⁵ Figures from the Department show that novice drivers already tend to drive vehicles with smaller engines than other drivers. The average engine capacity for drivers aged 17–19 was 1366 cc; for drivers aged 17–25 it was 1479 cc, and for drivers aged 26 and above it was 1758 cc.¹⁷⁶

112. There is little research evidence to support restrictions on engine size for novice drivers. According to the OECD report, “Only the Australian states of Victoria and New South Wales restrict novice driver access to high power vehicles [...] There is considerable doubt about the effectiveness of this measure.”¹⁷⁷ This may be due in part to the fact that many of the crashes caused by novice drivers result from travelling at inappropriate speed for the conditions and losing control, rather than driving at very high speeds *per se*. Cars of any size engine allow novice drivers to travel too fast in residential and urban areas, and too fast for bends on rural roads—which is where many collisions occur.¹⁷⁸ The high insurance charges for novice drivers make powerful vehicles prohibitively expensive for many young and novice drivers.

Proposal for graduated driver licensing

113. Taking into account the international evidence, we recommend that restrictions be introduced for newly-qualified drivers. These restrictions should be framed in a way least likely to impinge on novice drivers when the risks of collision are lower.

175 Ev 1, 148

176 Ev 85

177 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) / European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT) 2006 Young Drivers: The Road to Safety Transport Research Centre, OECD Publishing

178 Ev 138, Q31

- Novice drivers should be prohibited from carrying any passengers aged 10–20 years, between the hours of 11 p.m. and 5 a.m.
- The permitted blood alcohol concentration should be reduced from 0.8g/l to zero (or 0.2g/l) for novice drivers.

114. Our recommendation is based on the research information already published. There are decisions to be made about how long the restrictions should be in force. Witnesses' suggestions varied from "a few months"¹⁷⁹ to two years.¹⁸⁰ There is also the question of whether restrictions should be lifted after the passage of time, after a second driving test, or on evidence that further training had been undertaken. There was some support for a second driving test.¹⁸¹ There are also arguments about whether the restrictions should be lifted sooner for novice drivers aged over 25 years (as in the New Zealand system), according to the risks involved. **All these decisions about the detail of novice driver restrictions under a graduated driver licensing system should be robustly grounded in the evidence of their casualty prevention potential. As an initial proposal, we suggest that the restrictions for novice drivers should apply for 12 months after passing the test.**

115. The Department should undertake more research on exactly what combination of restrictions in a graduated driver licensing system would be most effective in reducing road death and injury among novice drivers, but this must not be an excuse for delaying action. Having implemented restrictions on novice drivers, the Department must closely monitor the impact. It must check for any unintended and undesirable results, and be ready to modify the system if negative safety effects are identified.

Enforcement of graduated driver licensing

116. One of the main objections to a graduated driver licensing system is the difficulty faced in enforcing such a system.¹⁸² The AA Motoring Trust told us: "We have concerns about any new laws being applied to new drivers unless there is a considerable level of enforcement applied to them. Otherwise new drivers will lose respect for the law."¹⁸³ The Minister shared these concerns: "I have not heard any convincing case from anybody yet about how it could be enforced."¹⁸⁴ The Department also emphasised that those novice drivers who were most unlikely to obey traffic laws as a whole, would be very unlikely to comply with such restrictions.¹⁸⁵

117. Other witnesses suggested that enforcement of a graduated driver licensing system would be no more difficult to enforce than existing traffic law.¹⁸⁶ Professor McKenna

179 Ev 155

180 Ev 1, 56

181 Ev 25, 35, 59

182 Ev 35, 40, 44, 137, Q291

183 Ev 40. The AA Motoring Trust is now part of the IAM Motoring Trust.

184 Q363

185 Ev 85

186 Qq 291–292

advised “There are difficulties in enforcement [...] but some of the police simply say that those difficulties are the same difficulties they have in enforcing seatbelts, mobile phones, et cetera.”¹⁸⁷

118. Advocates of graduated driver licensing suggested that the introduction of the restrictions would lead to a cultural change, and that for many people it would become self-enforcing. The role of parental enforcement for young novice drivers was identified.¹⁸⁸ We heard that the experience in the USA had been that the parents were the main enforcers of the restrictions. Restrictions on novice drivers would act as a deterrent to driving in certain high-risk conditions, and where the restrictions were violated, this would be enforced retrospectively by the police.

119. Effective police enforcement would require some changes to the law. For example, Brake advised that in the USA, the experience showed it is difficult to enforce without the power to randomly stop drivers, because it is impossible to tell how long someone has held their driving licence while they are driving along the road. It was suggested that some form of visible indication of novice driver status would be required on the outside of the vehicle, such as ‘P’ plates.¹⁸⁹ The Police Federation advised that to be enforceable, graduated driver licensing would need to be introduced with a more sophisticated driving licence, which would indicate driver status.¹⁹⁰ The Police Federation also suggested that drivers would have to be legally required to carry their driving licence.¹⁹¹ RoadPeace suggested that with moves to introduce compulsory ID cards, the requirement to carry a driving licence while driving should not be problematic.¹⁹² The level of roads policing would need to be enhanced if this system was to be enforced properly.

120. We acknowledge that enforcing a graduated driver licensing system may be complex. However, we accept the view of the police and others that it would be no more difficult than enforcing some existing traffic laws. In practice, it is likely to be largely self-enforcing, and where this is not the case, it would be mainly enforced retrospectively. It would provide a deterrent to high-risk behaviour and would give robust support to parents and guardians of young novice drivers, who seek to control their vehicle use.

187 Q291

188 Q292, Ev 70, 138

189 Ev 35, 56

190 Q41

191 Q62

192 Ev 6

8 Driver education

Influencing early attitudes to driving

121. There is a large body of opinion, and growing evidence, that young people pick up attitudes to driving and road safety long before they reach the minimum age to hold a provisional licence.¹⁹³ Indeed, research conducted by Reading University for the AA Foundation, showed that many young people of secondary school age, and males in particular, were showing signs of developing undesirable attitudes to driving. They found this included having the view that they already know how to drive, that learning to drive will be easy, and that it will improve the popularity of the new driver. They also found that the pupils were developing an affinity for speed.¹⁹⁴ Given the evidence that attitudes are one of the most important factors influencing collision rates of novice drivers (along with inexperience and age), ways of shaping safer attitudes to driving are urgently needed.

122. Research commissioned by the Department for Transport found that young people make a distinction between learning to pass the test and learning to drive, and between the law and ‘lore’ of the road.¹⁹⁵ The Department concluded that this shows “extensive work is needed on pre-driver education and other early influences, as well as on driver training prior to the driving test, so that more young people develop a safe attitude to driving.”¹⁹⁶ The Department developed this theme as part of its proposals for reform in the Second Review of the Road Safety Strategy:

“We need [...] education to influence attitudes long before people reach 17 [...] We will start influencing attitudes early, and young people should leave school with a better understanding of the risks of the road. There is a great deal to be gained from linking the new framework of competencies to the formal education framework.”¹⁹⁷

123. The Department has stated its commitment to developing a package of better quality materials to allow teachers to teach road safety as a stand-alone subject, and also as part of other existing mainstream subjects, such as English and Science.¹⁹⁸ Some witnesses called for road safety and driver education to be made part of the National Curriculum.¹⁹⁹ The Minister did not make any commitment that road safety and driver education would form part of the National Curriculum, stating that although he would like children to be exposed to road safety messages at school, it was not the place of a Transport Minister to determine the content of the National Curriculum.²⁰⁰ Pointing to the limitations of a voluntary

193 Ev 1, 6, 40, 56, 85, 119, 123, 126, 138, 151, 155

194 Ev 40

195 Department for Transport (2007) “The Good, the Bad and the Talented: Young Drivers’ Perspectives on Good Driving and Learning to Drive” Road Safety Research Report No. 74. Department for Transport: London

196 Ev 85

197 Department for Transport (2007) Second Review of the Government’s Road Safety Strategy

198 Department for Transport (2007) Second Review of the Government’s Road Safety Strategy

199 Ev 1, 6, 56, 126, 155

200 Qq 421–423

approach, Cumbria County Council noted that because the road awareness training it provided in schools was a voluntary module, some schools did not participate.²⁰¹

124. There was a strong feeling that education within schools should emphasise the dangers and responsibilities of driving, and that it should engage with the social and cultural aspects of driving, in addition to the physical skills, in order to shape attitudes at an early age.²⁰² Several organisations—including driving schools, road safety charities, and fire and rescue services—already provide education programmes in schools and colleges. Brake described how its trained volunteers delivered road safety presentations to young people. Feedback on the scheme suggested that the young people had engaged with the presentation, and “consider the advice to be memorable, with many pledging to use what they have learnt by driving safely [...]”²⁰³

125. **We understand that attitudes to road vehicles and driving are formed very early, and later influence the way people choose to behave when driving. We support the principle that school-age children should learn both about road safety in general, and specifically about the dangers and responsibilities of driving, long before they reach the age of 17. The Department for Transport must work more closely with the Department for Children, Schools and Families, local authorities and schools to ensure that the messages disseminated are effective.** We note the benefits of education initiatives delivered by people bereaved or injured through road collisions, but we acknowledge that such schemes rely on the courage and efforts of victims, and as a result they can be extremely difficult to provide.

Local authority driver education schemes

126. Some local authorities, in conjunction with local road casualty reduction partnerships, have already developed education schemes aimed at improving novice driver safety. We received examples from Transport for London, Warwickshire, Cumbria and Lancashire. Some details of the schemes are given below.

Transport for London and the London Borough of Havering

127. As part of a project run by Transport for London, in partnership with the London Borough of Havering and the emergency services, 3,500 students aged 16 and 17 were shown a film of a fatal road crash and the events leading up to it.²⁰⁴ The film includes a scene in which young people, of a similar age to the audience, are extricated from a vehicle. Interspersed with the film are testimonials from road safety officers, emergency service officers, and a crash survivor who explained how the experience had changed their life. The project ends with a bereaved parent talking to young people about what it is like to lose a loved one in a road collision. TfL is commissioning before and after research to determine if this is a suitable means of achieving long-term attitude and behaviour change.

201 Ev 126

202 Ev 1, 6, 155

203 Ev 1

204 Ev 151

Cumbria Road Safety Partnership

128. Cumbria Road Safety Partnership has implemented a similar scheme which uses the Fire and Rescue Service to visit senior schools with a hard-hitting “Road Awareness Training” package that graphically illustrates the consequences of a road crash. The partnership advised that the programme had been proven to be effective in making “teenagers aware of the dangers of bad driving”.²⁰⁵

Warwickshire Casualty Reduction Partnership

129. Since 2004, secondary school pupils in Warwickshire have received a programme of road safety education through each school year. The programme consists of a series of short, hard-hitting modules of approximately one hour each, delivered by a team of specialist trainers. The modules were developed with the support of Warwickshire Casualty Reduction Partnership, the police, approved driving instructors, the Fire and Rescue Service, Warwickshire Road Safety Unit, education departments and schools.²⁰⁶ The scheme aims to influence pupils’ future attitudes towards driving, and to encourage a consideration of the impact of driving inappropriately on both themselves and others. The modules for year groups 11 and 12 include pre-driver education, as well as four practical driving sessions.

130. The Warwickshire scheme is being evaluated in terms of participants’ views of the programme, and in terms of its actual effect on young driver casualties. Results from market research undertaken to date show positive results, however the impact on casualty rates is not yet available. Young driver casualty statistics from 2003–04 are being used as a baseline, and evaluation will be ongoing for 6–10 years, to cover the first full cycle of pupils passing through the programme.²⁰⁷ Warwickshire County Council advised that the participation rate by schools for 2006–07 is 69%, which is predicted to rise to 85% by the end of the academic year.

Lancashire County Council Pre Pass Support Scheme

131. Lancashire County Council has implemented a scheme aimed at drivers who accompany learner drivers on extra practice sessions, called the Pre Pass Support Scheme.²⁰⁸ This innovative scheme—it is the first of its kind in the country—uses both theory and practical elements to assist accompanying drivers in their task of supervising a learner driver. It is designed to enhance skills and safe driving attitudes and behaviours, in conjunction with professional tuition. It also raises the awareness of the accompanying driver to the vulnerability of novice drivers. It is delivered by trained, approved driving instructors and experienced presenters and has been made available free of charge. Since the course began in 2004, 236 accompanying drivers and 173 learner drivers have attended.

205 Ev 126

206 Ev 123

207 Ev 123

208 Ev 119

132. The Pre Pass Support Scheme is being evaluated by academics at Cranfield University over the next two years.²⁰⁹ Learners who participated in the scheme will be contacted at intervals to ascertain crash involvement statistics for new drivers whose accompanying drivers had attended the course. Feedback from participants indicates that they found the scheme helpful.

Under 17 Car Club

133. Practical driving education is also provided by the Under 17 Car Club.²¹⁰ The Club provides pre-licence off-road driver training to children aged between 11 and 16. Membership is open to young people from all backgrounds from the age of 11. Over the past 30 years, 3,000 children have been taught to drive through this scheme. The Club has developed a tuition and assessment process with the support of approved driving instructors, police and emergency service drivers, RoSPA and the IAM.

134. Based on a recent survey, the yearly collision rate for ex-Club Members is 1 in 10 compared with a national average for novice drivers of 1 in 5. Paul Silverwood, President of the Club told us that he believed the scheme encouraged young people to develop responsible attitudes, technical skills, and a positive road safety ethos. He also explained that the syllabus was designed to develop participants' understanding of vehicle dynamics and the handling limitations of themselves and the vehicles, and to encourage a defensive and risk-averse driving attitude. The Club is developing a Summer School to open access to more young people.²¹¹

135. We were impressed by the evidence we received from the Under 17 Car Club of the effectiveness of their off-road driver training for young people aged 11–17. We understand that schemes such as this are resource intensive and require the commitment of parents and guardians, as well as the young people themselves, but we nevertheless suggest that the potential to broaden such schemes to reach a wider group should be assessed.

Effectiveness of education

136. Whilst all these schemes appear to be very positive developments, no evidence is yet available (other than for the Under 17 Car Club) to prove the efficacy of such schemes in reducing novice driver casualties. RoadPeace urged that driver education schemes should be evaluated with the same rigour as engineering measures, before being promoted. It quoted the conclusion of researchers, Williams and Ferguson, “Despite decades of research indicating driver education does not reduce crash involvement among beginning drivers, it still has tremendous appeal as a means to improve driver safety.”²¹²

137. Participation in voluntary schemes, such as Pre Pass Support and the Under 17 Car Club, risks being self-selecting. Effort should be made to ensure that pre-driver education

209 Ev 119

210 Ev 35

211 Under 17 Car Club Summer School Draft Business Plan

212 Ev 6, Williams and Ferguson (2004), *Driver education renaissance?* Injury Prevention: 10, p 4–7.

schemes reach all young people, including those who leave school at 16. This requires a partnership approach with employers, as well as schools and colleges. Cumbria County Council runs a “Safer Business Driving” initiative which delivers driver training for occupational drivers. This is not tailored exclusively to young people or novice drivers, but would cover employees of those businesses which fall within scope of the definition of occupational driving.²¹³

138. We were presented with several examples of local authorities' work in promoting road safety in schools, with a particular emphasis on novice driver safety. Much of this work is impressive, but the evidence for its effectiveness is only anecdotal. Although we acknowledge that it is notoriously difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of educational initiatives, some local authorities have attempted to put a monitoring system in place. We recommend that the Department for Transport undertakes an overarching evaluation of the impact of driver education programmes, in order to help establish which schemes are most effective in reducing actual casualty numbers. The results of the evaluation should be disseminated to Local Education Authorities and schools, in the form of good-practice guidance. We commend the work of those local authorities, and Transport for London, which have sought to directly tackle the problem of novice driver casualties, through the services they provide.

9 The role of the insurance industry

Sharing data on novice driver collisions

139. In order to assess risk and determine insurance premiums, the insurance industry collects a wealth of data regarding the types of traffic collisions which involve novice drivers. The Minister described how valuable that data would be to the Department, in its work formulating policies to cut novice driver deaths and injuries. He said:

“[...] I am very keen to work with the insurance industry to get access to some of their data [...] because that data might help us to identify at what point in a driver’s career the likelihood of serious and fatal accidents significantly starts to increase [...] we do not have the detailed evidence I would like to have and the insurance industry almost certainly does have it [...]”²¹⁴

140. The Minister told us there had been difficulties in getting access to the commercially confidential data held by the companies, and in particular, to the level of detail the Department would find useful.²¹⁵ The Association of British Insurers explained that there is no single industry-wide database containing such information, because such a database would contravene competition law. We understand from the Department and the Association of British Insurers that progress has been made, and that the industry is working with Government to test a prioritised set of hypotheses against the data it holds.²¹⁶ **We encourage the insurance industry to make data available to the Department for Transport, in order to help inform national road safety policies. This is a matter of national importance and collaboration and co-operation are essential.**

141. Different government agencies are involved in collecting and collating data relating to driver licensing and casualty and crash statistics. The DVLA holds information about driver licensing. The police collate data on road collisions in the STATS 19 database.²¹⁷ The Department explained that the STATS 19 traffic collision form does not record the driving licence numbers of the drivers involved.²¹⁸ A review of the content of the STATS 19 form recently considered adding this requirement, but the proposal was rejected because of concerns that it would increase the burden of work for the police. In contrast, police collision reports do record driving licence numbers, but these reports exist only on paper and the data is therefore not collated and available centrally for analysis. **Given the importance of understanding the nature of novice driver collisions and casualties, it is unacceptable that the Department for Transport and the police are not collaborating to make best use of existing data regarding traffic collisions and driving licence information.**

214 Qq 347–350

215 Q351

216 Letter from ABI to Dr Stephen Ladyman MP and Q351

217 Casualty data is published jointly by the Department for Transport and National Statistics in the annual document Road Casualties Great Britain.

218 Ev 109

Insurance charges for supervised learner drivers

142. The decisions made, and policies offered, by the insurance industry have a direct impact on novice driver behaviour and training. Witnesses drew attention to the importance of novice drivers having plenty of supervised driving practice ahead of taking the test. Some witnesses suggested that one of the barriers to novice drivers undertaking private practice is the high cost of insurance to allow them to drive the family car.²¹⁹ They suggested that more affordable insurance would encourage novice drivers to support their professional tuition with greater levels of private practice. The ABI provided data to indicate the levels of risk and cost associated with supervised learner drivers, novice drivers and the general driving population. It argued that the data justified the higher premiums for supervised learners compared to general driving population.

Table 5: The cost of insurance claims and premiums for learner drivers, novice drivers, and overall driving population

		Proportion making claims	Average cost of claims	Average premium
Supervised learner driver	Male	16%	£602	£726
	Female		£264	£559
Novice driver	Male	32%	£1,710	£1,311
	Female		£587	£837
Overall driving population	Male	16%	£283	£400
	Female		£209	£330

Source: Association of British Insurers

143. These figures show that, unlike novice drivers, supervised learners make only the same proportion of claims as the general driving population; their crash risk is no higher. Where male supervised learners differ from the general driving population, is in the *cost* of their claims, which are higher than the general driving population, but still much lower than that for novice drivers. It should be noted, however, that female supervised learners have a lower average claim cost than males in the overall driving population (although their average premium is still noticeably higher than that for the overall male group).

144. In addition to this potential barrier to supervised driving practice, the Department for Transport identified that anyone convicted for driving while disqualified, unlicensed or uninsured are likely to have life-long difficulties obtaining insurance, meaning they could be permanently excluded from the legal driving population.²²⁰ DVLA records show that about 7,500 novice drivers lose their licence each year for driving without insurance.²²¹ These figures only include those novice drivers who have been caught and convicted. The scale suggests a widespread problem in ensuring insurance coverage among novice drivers.

145. We understand that the insurance industry seeks to price the actual risks posed by different categories of driver, in order to ensure that the cost of claims are collectively covered. It would appear, from the information provided, that female supervised learner drivers are paying above the odds compared to the male “overall driving population”. **We would encourage the insurance industry to re-examine the high insurance charges imposed on supervised learner drivers, in the interests of encouraging them to gain**

219 Ev 70, 138

220 Ev 85

221 Ev 85

maximum practice, a factor which has been shown to be crucial in promoting novice driver safety.

The role of insurance policies in promoting safer driving

146. The insurance industry has been well-engaged in the debates surrounding novice driver safety, and some insurance companies have been active in seeking to offer insurance schemes which encourage novice drivers to drive safely. For example, some insurers offer lower premiums to young drivers who make fewer journeys at night, when the risk of them causing a collision resulting in death or serious injury is particularly high.²²² Norwich Union offers an insurance package for drivers aged 18–23 which encourages young drivers not to drive at night. Policyholders are charged up to 20 times more per mile driven during the time period when crash risk is highest (11 p.m. – 6 a.m.) than at other lower-risk times of the day. The pilot, launched in January 2005, saw the number of collisions among young drivers drop by 20%.²²³ More Than offers a similar scheme.²²⁴

147. In addition, several companies offer lower premiums to novice drivers who have completed the Pass Plus post-licence training scheme. It remains to be seen whether companies will continue to offer these discounts following emerging evidence from the ABI that the safety benefit of such schemes is marginal.²²⁵ No-claims bonuses are another way of providing an incentive to drivers in general to avoid risk-taking.²²⁶ Insurance companies therefore already play an important part in influencing driver behaviour.

148. During the course of our inquiry, we also heard that young novice drivers are often driving the oldest vehicles on the road.²²⁷ These vehicles are equipped with fewer safety features. Collision records show the age of the vehicles involved, and the records illustrate that for drivers aged 26 years and above, the vehicle is, on average, five years and six months old; this rises for drivers aged 17–19 years to an average of seven years and one month.²²⁸ The EuroNCAP results give an indication to the public of the safety performance of new vehicles. But for those young novice drivers on a budget, an assessment of a vehicle's safety features may not be a consideration to which they give much weight.

149. The insurance industry has introduced some innovative schemes which offer discounts designed to encourage young drivers to modify their driving behaviour, by avoiding high-risk driving, such as driving at night. We welcome these schemes and note their apparent effectiveness. The insurance industry can play an important part in the effort to improve novice driver safety. We suggest that the industry explores what contribution it could make through insurance packages which draw attention to the safety risks posed by driving older vehicles with less effective safety features.

222 Ev 20, 25, 144

223 Ev 20, 25

224 Ev 20

225 Ev 20, 25

226 Ev 20

227 Ev 85, Q125

228 Ev 85

10 The role of penalties

Traffic law enforcement

150. It was suggested to us that greater enforcement of traffic law in general would help prevent novice driver casualties. This is because the crashes in which novice drivers are involved are frequently a result of some violation of traffic law: speeding, drink-driving, or failure to wear a seatbelt. Indeed, in 2004, about a third of car drivers in road injury drink-drive crashes were under 24 years of age.²²⁹ STATS 19 data show that the importance of speed as a contributory factor in injury crashes declines steadily with age.²³⁰ Ms Puech, of RoadPeace, told us that resources would be better spent on enforcing legislation covering speeding, drink-driving, and not wearing a seatbelt, rather than investing in a reformed training and testing regime.²³¹

151. The evidence we received has reinforced the recommendations made in our 2006 Report *Roads Policing and New Technology*.²³² It is imperative that there is more traffic law enforcement and that roads police officers are a deterrent to drivers violating traffic law, including seat-belt wearing, speeding, drink and drug driving, and licensing and insurance requirements. This will raise the standards and safety of all drivers, including novice drivers.

New Drivers Act 1995

152. In calling for better enforcement of traffic law, it is important to also ensure that the penalties for these offences are appropriate and fully implemented. In an attempt to modify the risk-taking behaviour of novice drivers, a tighter penalty regime than that for more experienced drivers was introduced with the New Drivers Act 1995. The Act, brought into force in 1997, requires the revocation of a full driving licence if the holder reaches six penalty points within two years of obtaining the licence. For more experienced drivers, accumulating 12 penalty points within a three year period leads to disqualification, for a minimum period of six months.

153. We heard a personal account of how the probationary period was thought to be effective in modifying the behaviour of novice drivers. Catherine Kershaw told us about her son, Charlie, who was fatally injured aged 20, while driving his car:

“Surprisingly the first two years following his driving test were accident free, due in no small part to the fear of acquiring six points on his licence, which under present regulations would mean his licence being taken away and a re-sit of the driving test

229 Department for Transport (2007) Second Review of the Government’s Road Safety Strategy page 19

230 STATS19 data for 1995 in TRL 542, In-depth accident causation study of young drivers , 2002

231 Q60

232 Transport Committee, Tenth Report of Session 2005–06, Roads Policing and Technology: Getting the right balance, HC 975

[...] I do feel that when the two year probation period ended his attitude to speed restrictions changed.”²³³

154. Under the New Drivers Act, about 15,000 licences are revoked each year.²³⁴ There is a particular prevalence of licence revocation among young men: figures for June 2005 to May 2006 show that, out of a total of 14,988 revocations, 77% were males 25 and under; and 35% were males under 20. The Department for Transport identified that DVLA records suggest that half of all revocations are linked to driving uninsured (for which the penalty includes six points), and about a quarter to speeding offences. It is a matter of concern that so many novice drivers are losing their licence because of a failure to purchase driving insurance. In the last chapter, we recommended that the insurance industry examine what it can do to make insurance more accessible to novice drivers. **The Department should examine whether there are more effective ways of communicating to learner and novice drivers the necessity of being properly licensed, registered and insured, before driving on public roads. We also suggest that there might be merit in reviewing the penalty points awarded for each type of driving offence, to ensure the penalties accurately reflect the danger and threat imposed on road users.**

155. An issue of very serious concern is the fact that so few of those novice drivers who have their licence revoked ever properly become re-licensed. Only about half of the drivers who have had their licence revoked under the Act have recovered their full licence by passing another practical driving test.²³⁵ This suggests that a substantial proportion of those caught by the Act may be driving unlicensed. If this is so, it means that the penalty has been seriously undermined. Ministers from the Home Office and the Department for Transport recently wrote to the Association of Chief Police Officers about the problem of disqualified driving “Disqualification is a serious penalty usually reflecting serious or repeated bad driving. It is not acceptable that some should feel they can continue to drive with impunity whilst disqualified. We look to the police to address this situation.”²³⁶ Yet driving while disqualified, and drink and drug driving offences still do not feature in the police’s “offences brought to justice” target.²³⁷

156. The scale of the problem is so grave that the Minister accepted that the 6-penalty point limit for novice drivers was not effective.²³⁸ The Magistrates’ Association echoed this picture of failure, stating “the current situation demonstrates no effective incentive to offenders to comply nor does it offer any retraining opportunity. The levels of enforcement available are proving inadequate [...]”²³⁹ **In light of the Minister’s admission that the New Drivers Act 1995 has not been successful in meeting its objectives, the Act and its implementation, must be reviewed.**

233 Ev 148

234 Ev 85

235 Ev 85, 156

236 Ev 116

237 Ev 116

238 Q374

239 Ev 156

157. Part of the reason that the New Drivers Act is ineffective must be that the penalty of licence revocation is not being effectively enforced, and unlicensed drivers are continuing to drive. These drivers have already shown a disregard for traffic law and other road users, and they continue to do so by driving while unlicensed. It has to be assumed that they are not safe to be on the road. The Home Office has stated that “it is safe to assume that the disqualified driver is more of a threat to the safety of other road users than the general run of qualified drivers.”²⁴⁰

158. The courts already take a reasonably serious view of driving while disqualified: the maximum penalty is 6 months’ imprisonment or a level 5 fine (£5000), and in 2002 nearly half the 30,415 people convicted for this offence were sent to prison. Despite this, there is a high rate of re-offending. Of a sample of offenders studied in 1996, 34% of disqualified drivers had previous convictions for that offence in a recent ten month period.²⁴¹ The rate of re-offending, and driving while disqualified and unlicensed, lead us to suggest that vehicle forfeiture should be used as a penalty for these offences. Under section 152 of the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005, the police have the power to “seize vehicles driven without licence or insurance”. It is not yet clear to what extent this power is being used against disqualified and unlicensed drivers.

159. It is a matter of great concern that the penalties of disqualification and licence revocation are not serving their purpose as a deterrent, and are being widely flouted. If penalties are to be used as an incentive to safe driving behaviour, they must be properly enforced. The Home Office should examine the potential for more effective use of the penalties for disqualified and unlicensed drivers, such as vehicle forfeiture. The police must make enforcement of unlicensed driving a much higher priority.

240 Home Office Review of Road Traffic Offences involving Bad Driving: A Consultation Paper 2005, paragraph 4.2

241 Home Office Review of Road Traffic Offences involving Bad Driving: A Consultation Paper 2005

11 Conclusion

160. A combination of driving experience, age and attitude is thought to promote safe driving. Whilst the Department for Transport, and its partners, have had success in reducing road casualties over the past decade, the same success has not been achieved for novice drivers. Measures implemented to date, have had only marginal impact on this problem. We therefore urge the Department to be bold in adopting measures which will have a real impact on reducing these deaths and serious injuries. The Department for Transport has a central responsibility to tackle novice driver casualties, using all the tools available. We wish to see action in the following areas:

- **The evidence demonstrating the scale of novice driver casualties is clear. The Department must now respond to this evidence by implementing measures which will reduce the risks novice drivers face and pose.** The Department has published little research on the impact of changes made to the driver training and testing regimes over the past decade. **This research must be published promptly.**
- **The driver training regime needs to be modernised as a matter of urgency.** A more structured learning programme—with a minimum learning period, ongoing assessment, and mandatory group theory and self-assessment training—should be supported by more effective testing and post-test regimes. **We understand that the Department is due to consult on such reforms: it must be prepared to implement these changes quickly—too much time has already passed since its last consultation on this subject in 2002.**
- A graduated licensing system should be introduced which places restrictions on novice drivers to reduce the risks they face and pose. The impacts should be carefully monitored by the Department. There is a risk that making it more difficult to obtain a driving licence will encourage more people to drop out of the system altogether and drive unlicensed. The level of unlicensed driving is already alarming. **The Department for Transport should assess the risk that any changes to the training and testing regime will lead to an increase in licensing offences. The Home Office and the police must make enforcement of licensing offences, and disqualified driving, a real priority. Serious driving offences should be included in the “offences brought to justice” target for the police.**
- The Department for Transport must do more to improve road safety education, and driver education in particular. **Closer liaison between the Department for Transport and the Department for Children, Schools and Families is required to ensure that education programmes target people at a young age, in order to begin to change attitudes towards driving. The Departments should work together to put road safety and driver education in the National Curriculum.** The Department must provide more support to local authorities delivering driver education programmes. These programmes should be based on empirical evidence of what works. **The Department should monitor and research which types of scheme have most impact in terms of reducing casualties, and disseminate the results widely.**

List of recommendations

Introduction

1. We hope to see evidence that the Department is true to its word and that bold measures will be given proper consideration. The appalling collision rate of novice drivers clearly demonstrates that the problem must not be ignored. “Do nothing” is not an option. We will return to this issue in the next year to review progress. In the meantime, we recommend that the Department, as part of its consultation process, undertake further analysis of the collision-involvement rates among young drivers, distinct from newly-qualified drivers. (Paragraph 2)

The vulnerability of novice drivers

2. We recommend that the Department for Transport, in collaboration with the police, should collect the data necessary to understand the scale and nature of the crash involvement of novice drivers, independently of young drivers. (Paragraph 6)
3. Novice drivers are clearly very vulnerable on the road. They also pose considerable danger to their passengers and other road users. The Department for Transport must ensure that tackling this group of casualties is given a high priority across Government. (Paragraph 12)
4. The overall gains made in road casualty reduction as a whole, since the targets were set in 2000, have not been matched among novice drivers. Indeed, the rate of novice driver casualties appears to be worsening, and there is little understanding about why this is the case. The measures implemented by the Department over the past twelve years have been incremental and have failed to cut novice driver casualties. A change in approach is now required. There should be research into the reasons for the increasing rate of novice driver casualties in order that policy-makers better understand the problem and are able to design initiatives to address it. The Government must consider much bolder action to prevent these tragic deaths and injuries. (Paragraph 18)

A more structured approach to learning to drive

5. We welcome the proposals set out in the Government’s Second Review of the Road Safety Strategy, and the Department’s intention to reform the driver training and testing framework. (Paragraph 28)
6. There is consensus that the process of learning to drive must be improved if casualties are to be cut; if such reforms are to be successful, it is paramount that the quality of driving instruction be significantly raised. In such a competitive commercial environment, it is unlikely that a voluntary continuous professional development scheme would be fully effective, and we therefore support a mandatory continuous professional development programme for all driving instructors. We recommend the Department, as part of its reform of the driver training and testing

framework, to examine carefully ways of raising the entry requirements for registration as an Approved Driving Instructor. (Paragraph 33)

7. It is important that the Department for Transport properly and promptly evaluates measures such as Pass Plus following their implementation. The Department's full evaluation of Pass Plus is due in December 2007—12 years after the scheme's implementation. If the results from the Association of British Insurers' ten year study are accurate, it could be that novice drivers, and others, are being given a misleading picture of the safety benefits which accrue from undergoing this extra voluntary training. (Paragraph 35)

A minimum learning period

8. Given that work is well underway on reforms to the framework for learning to drive, we are greatly concerned that the Department has not undertaken any objective assessment of the costs and benefits—both economic and social—of changes to driving entitlement, as part of restructuring the process of learning to drive. The Minister has told us that the reforms would be based on evidence, not anecdote, and we seek reassurance that these evaluations will indeed be instrumental in determining the Department's course of action. We are furthermore concerned that the lack of evaluation of these options is indicative of a lack of ambition in the scale of change the Department is contemplating. (Paragraph 43)
9. We consider that the evidence of the consequent prevention of death and serious injury would justify the introduction of a 12-month learning period. We recommend that a 12-month minimum learning period should be introduced as part of the structured approach to learning to drive. This would increase the minimum age at which someone is entitled to a full driving licence, and thereby able to drive unaccompanied, to 18 years, in line with most European countries. Given the risks involved in driving, it seems reasonable that the minimum age for holding a full driving licence should be 18 years. (Paragraph 49)
10. To prevent learners bunching all their tuition into a short space of time, we suggest that they should be required to take a specified number of hours of professional tuition at different points during a 12-month period. This should also ensure that learners have experience of driving in various weather and lighting conditions. Different witnesses had different proposals about the minimum number of hours to be required, from 10 to 100 hours. We think it is reasonable to specify a minimum number of hours of professional tuition, but it should be emphasised that this is an absolute minimum. We do not believe the evidence as to what number this should be is conclusive. The figure should therefore strike a fair and proportionate balance between cost and the anticipated safety gains. (Paragraph 50)
11. We do not recommend lowering the minimum age of obtaining a provisional licence. In its response to this Report, we invite the Department to detail what research it has undertaken or commissioned into the safety impacts of lowering the minimum provisional licence age, and what the results showed. (Paragraph 51)

12. The impacts of a 12-month minimum learning period should be closely evaluated, with particular regard to changes in novice driver casualty rates, and inclusion in education and employment. (Paragraph 52)
13. We will be interested to see the results of the Department's research showing what the impact has been of the Driver Record. We recommend that if the results show that it is effective, then the logbook should be made mandatory. (Paragraph 54)
14. The 12-month minimum learning period should be accompanied by the introduction of a structured syllabus, which will spread the development of driving skills and abilities over the year. Instructors should be required to sign-off each module once the learner has consistently achieved the required standard. Learners should not be able to present to take the test until all modules have been successfully completed. This approach should go some way to raising the driving standard of test candidates. (Paragraph 58)
15. We would also like to see clearer communication to all learner drivers (and their parents, where appropriate) that they are embarking on a year-long course, which, like all new skills, will require practice to acquire, and that there are no shortcuts. At the outset, learners should be advised of the content of the syllabus and the time it is likely to take to complete it in full. (Paragraph 59)

Attitudes to driving

16. We are concerned that four years after its introduction, the Department has yet to publish an evaluation of the impact of the hazard perception test on novice driver collision involvement rates. (Paragraph 69)
17. Delivered properly, hazard perception training has been shown to have a tangible effect on attitude and subsequent driving choices. We suggest that the Department's proposed "knowledge framework", should incorporate higher level functions in order to target the over-confidence displayed by some novice drivers. Learner drivers should be required to demonstrate an understanding of the consequences of one's actions and awareness of one's limitations through self-assessment training. We recommend that some component of group-based learning should be a mandatory part of learning to drive. This should cover driving theory, risks, hazard perception, self-assessment and traffic law. The activity must be part of an approved and regulated system. We encourage the Department to research what would be effective. (Paragraph 73)
18. The Department's Road Safety Research Report No. 74 suggested that driver education and training should be set in a real-world context and should seek to address the actual beliefs, attitudes and behaviours of novice drivers. In its response to this report we invite the Department to set out how it plans to incorporate this approach. (Paragraph 75)

The driving test

19. We agree that the driving test needs to be reformed. The driving instructors and examiners made a powerful case for allowing test candidates onto high speed roads, and if necessary onto motorways—because in some places these are the only high speed roads to be found. But such a measure should only be introduced along with a requirement for candidates to take the test in a dual-control vehicle. (Paragraph 81)
20. A more structured approach to learning to drive should include a requirement for some tuition with an approved driving instructor in a properly equipped dual control vehicle. This would make it possible to devise a driving test which had more real-world validity, through requiring experience of all types of road and manoeuvre, and particularly those which seem to cause novice drivers such difficulty: rural roads, bends on high speed roads, and turning right from a busy major road onto a side road. The driving test content should be kept under review and be guided by research about the causes of novice driver collisions. (Paragraph 82)
21. The Cohort Study II, commissioned by the DfT, is due to provide analysis of the driving test in summer 2007. We suggest the score threshold for passing the practical and theory tests should be revised in light of this evidence. (Paragraph 83)
22. People who obtain driving licences through such fraudulent means are a danger to themselves and other road users. The Government must investigate the problem of test candidate impersonation as a matter of urgency. (Paragraph 84)
23. Although we understand that it takes time to see the full effect of the implementation of new initiatives, we are disappointed by the delay in evaluating the impact of the theory test. If the results of the evaluation cast any doubt on its benefit, the Department should consider reducing the role of this element of the test. (Paragraph 87)

Graduated driver licensing

24. Whilst we share the Minister's hope that a reformed education and training framework will instil a more responsible approach to driving; there exists little evidence that this will be adequate. (Paragraph 91)
25. When considering the potential of graduated driver licensing systems, we hope that the Government will be led by the evidence, and not by a blind hope that more, and more effective, driver training will be adequate to prevent the large numbers of novice driver casualties (Paragraph 92)
26. The very real risks associated with young novice drivers carrying passengers mean that young male drivers are now the biggest killer of young women in this country. (Paragraph 102)
27. We recommend that the Department for Transport, with the Home Office, should evaluate the enforceability of two blood alcohol concentration limits: one for novice drivers, one for the general driving population. (Paragraph 109)

28. Based on the evidence available, we believe there is a case for reducing the permitted blood alcohol concentration from 0.8g/l to zero (or 0.2g/l, which in practice is effectively zero) for novice drivers. If the Department introduces a lower permitted blood alcohol concentration for novice drivers it must be assiduous in countering any impression that it is acceptable for more experienced drivers to drive under the influence of alcohol. We understand that the Department is to shortly consult on proposals to address the problem of drink-drive collisions. We welcome this much-needed investigation and look forward to a thorough examination of what should be the permitted blood alcohol concentration for drivers. The Department for Transport must tackle drink-driving through ongoing publicity and enforcement campaigns targeted at all drivers, including the young and newly-qualified. (Paragraph 110)
29. Taking into account the international evidence, we recommend that restrictions be introduced for newly-qualified drivers. These restrictions should be framed in a way least likely to impinge on novice drivers when the risks of collision are lower.
- Novice drivers should be prohibited from carrying any passengers aged 10–20 years, between the hours of 11 p.m. and 5 a.m.
 - The permitted blood alcohol concentration should be reduced from 0.8g/l to zero (or 0.2g/l) for novice drivers. (Paragraph 113)
30. All these decisions about the detail of novice driver restrictions under a graduated driver licensing system should be robustly grounded in the evidence of their casualty prevention potential. As an initial proposal, we suggest that the restrictions for novice drivers should apply for 12 months after passing the test. (Paragraph 114)
31. The Department should undertake more research on exactly what combination of restrictions in a graduated driver licensing system would be most effective in reducing road death and injury among novice drivers, but this must not be an excuse for delaying action. Having implemented restrictions on novice drivers, the Department must closely monitor the impact. It must check for any unintended and undesirable results, and be ready to modify the system if negative safety effects are identified. (Paragraph 115)
32. We acknowledge that enforcing a graduated driver licensing system may be complex. However, we accept the view of the police and others that it would be no more difficult than enforcing some existing traffic laws. In practice, it is likely to be largely self-enforcing, and where this is not the case, it would be mainly enforced retrospectively. It would provide a deterrent to high-risk behaviour and would give robust support to parents and guardians of young novice drivers, who seek to control their vehicle use. (Paragraph 120)

Driver education

33. We understand that attitudes to road vehicles and driving are formed very early, and later influence the way people choose to behave when driving. We support the principle that school-age children should learn both about road safety in general, and specifically about the dangers and responsibilities of driving, long before they reach

the age of 17. The Department for Transport must work more closely with the Department for Children, Schools and Families, local authorities and schools to ensure that the messages disseminated are effective. (Paragraph 125)

34. We were impressed by the evidence we received from the Under 17 Car Club of the effectiveness of their off-road driver training for young people aged 11–17. We understand that schemes such as this are resource intensive and require the commitment of parents and guardians, as well as the young people themselves, but we nevertheless suggest that the potential to broaden such schemes to reach a wider group should be assessed. (Paragraph 135)
35. We were presented with several examples of local authorities' work in promoting road safety in schools, with a particular emphasis on novice driver safety. Much of this work is impressive, but the evidence for its effectiveness is only anecdotal. Although we acknowledge that it is notoriously difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of educational initiatives, some local authorities have attempted to put a monitoring system in place. We recommend that the Department for Transport undertakes an overarching evaluation of the impact of driver education programmes, in order to help establish which schemes are most effective in reducing actual casualty numbers. The results of the evaluation should be disseminated to Local Education Authorities and schools, in the form of good-practice guidance. We commend the work of those local authorities, and Transport for London, which have sought to directly tackle the problem of novice driver casualties, through the services they provide. (Paragraph 138)

The role of the insurance industry

36. We encourage the insurance industry to make data available to the Department for Transport, in order to help inform national road safety policies. This is a matter of national importance and collaboration and co-operation are essential. (Paragraph 140)
37. Given the importance of understanding the nature of novice driver collisions and casualties, it is unacceptable that the Department for Transport and the police are not collaborating to make best use of existing data regarding traffic collisions and driving licence information. (Paragraph 141)
38. We would encourage the insurance industry to re-examine the high insurance charges imposed on supervised learner drivers, in the interests of encouraging them to gain maximum practice, a factor which has been shown to be crucial in promoting novice driver safety. (Paragraph 145)
39. The insurance industry has introduced some innovative schemes which offer discounts designed to encourage young drivers to modify their driving behaviour, by avoiding high-risk driving, such as driving at night. We welcome these schemes and note their apparent effectiveness. The insurance industry can play an important part in the effort to improve novice driver safety. We suggest that the industry explores what contribution it could make through insurance packages which draw attention

to the safety risks posed by driving older vehicles with less effective safety features. (Paragraph 149)

The role of penalties

40. The evidence we received has reinforced the recommendations made in our 2006 Report Roads Policing and New Technology. It is imperative that there is more traffic law enforcement and that roads police officers are a deterrent to drivers violating traffic law, including seat-belt wearing, speeding, drink and drug driving, and licensing and insurance requirements. This will raise the standards and safety of all drivers, including novice drivers. (Paragraph 151)
41. The Department should examine whether there are more effective ways of communicating to learner and novice drivers the necessity of being properly licensed, registered and insured, before driving on public roads. We also suggest that there might be merit in reviewing the penalty points awarded for each type of driving offence, to ensure the penalties accurately reflect the danger and threat imposed on road users. (Paragraph 154)
42. In light of the Minister's admission that the New Drivers Act 1995 has not been successful in meeting its objectives, the Act and its implementation, must be reviewed. (Paragraph 156)
43. It is a matter of great concern that the penalties of disqualification and licence revocation are not serving their purpose as a deterrent, and are being widely flouted. If penalties are to be used as an incentive to safe driving behaviour, they must be properly enforced. The Home Office should examine the potential for more effective use of the penalties for disqualified and unlicensed drivers, such as vehicle forfeiture. The police must make enforcement of unlicensed driving a much higher priority. (Paragraph 159)

Conclusion

44. The evidence demonstrating the scale of novice driver casualties is clear. The Department must now respond to this evidence by implementing measures which will reduce the risks novice drivers face and pose. The Department has published little research on the impact of changes made to the driver training and testing regimes over the past decade. This research must be published promptly. (Paragraph 160)
45. The driver training regime needs to be modernised as a matter of urgency. We understand that the Department is due to consult on such reforms: it must be prepared to implement these changes quickly—too much time has already passed since its last consultation on this subject in 2002. (Paragraph 160)
46. The Department for Transport should assess the risk that any changes to the training and testing regime will lead to an increase in licensing offences. The Home Office and the police must make enforcement of licensing offences, and disqualified

driving, a real priority. Serious driving offences should be included in the “offences brought to justice” target for the police. (Paragraph 160)

47. Closer liaison between the Department for Transport and the Department for Children, Schools and Families is required to ensure that education programmes target people at a young age, in order to begin to change attitudes towards driving. The Departments should work together to put road safety and driver education in the National Curriculum. (Paragraph 160)
48. The Department should monitor and research which types of scheme have most impact in terms of reducing casualties, and disseminate the results widely. (Paragraph 160)

Formal minutes

WEDNESDAY 11 JULY 2007

Members present:

Mrs Gwyneth Dunwoody, in the Chair

Mr David Clelland

Clive Efford

Mrs Louise Ellman

Mr Eric Martlew

David Simpson

Mr Graham Stringer

Mr David Wilshire

Draft Report (Novice Drivers), proposed by the Chairman, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 160 read and agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Seventh Report from the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chairman do make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That the provisions of Standing Order No. 134 (Select committees (reports)) be applied to the Report.

Several papers were ordered to be appended to the Minutes of Evidence.

Ordered, That the Appendices to the Minutes of Evidence taken before the Committee be reported to the House.—(*The Chairman.*)

[Adjourned till Wednesday 18 July at 2.30 pm.]

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Ms Jools Townsend , Head of Education, Brake, Ms Brenda Puech , Campaigns and Communications Coordinator, RoadPeace, and Mrs Jan Berry , Chairman, The Police Federation of England and Wales	Ev 11
Mr Nick Starling , Director of General Insurance and Mr Justin Jacobs , Assistant Director, Liability & Motor, Association of British Insurers, and Mr Dominic Clayden , Director of Technical Claims, Norwich Union	Ev 29
Mr Paul Silverwood , President, Under 17 Car Club, Mr Neil Greig , Assistant Director, IAM Motoring Trust, Mr Andrew Howard , Head of Road Safety, AA, and Mr Edmund King , Executive Directive, RAC Foundation for Motoring	Ev 47
 Wednesday 14 March 2007	
Mr Robin Cummins OBE , Road Safety Consultant, BSM, Mr John Lepine MBE , General Manager, Motor Schools Association of Great Britain, and Mr Steve Grigor , Driving Examiners Branch Secretary, PCS Union	Ev 62
Mr Adrian Walsh , Director of RoadSafe, Dr Lisa Dorn , Director of the Driving Research Group, Cranfield University, Mr Ian Edwards , Director of Education, a ² om Academy and Professor Frank McKenna , Professor of Psychology, School of Psychology, University of Reading	Ev 76
 Wednesday 21 March 2007	
Dr Stephen Ladyman MP , Minister of State for Transport, Mr Andrew Burr , Head of Branch, Road Safety Division, Department for Transport, and Mrs Rosemary Thew , Chief Executive, Driving Standards Agency	Ev 99
Mr Neil Cunliffe , Road Safety Group Manager, Lancashire County Council, Mr Brian Pierce , Driver Education Services Manager, Warwickshire County Council, Mr Jonathan Smith , Chair of Cumbria Road Safety Partnership, and Superintendent Ted Thwaites , Cumbria Police	Ev 129

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30	Association of British Dispensing Opticians (ABDO), the Association of Optometrists (APO), the College of Optometrists and the Federation of Ophthalmic and Dispensing Opticians (FODO)	Ev 150
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33	The Magistrates' Association	Ev 156
34	Mr Frederick Simon	Ev 157
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36	Mr Adrian Spires	Ev 158
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39	Mr Geoff Bland	Ev 161
40	Further supplementary memorandum from the Department for Transport	Ev 162

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