

The Department for Transport Young Drivers Research Debrief

13th June 2014

Research objectives

Who we spoke to

Executive summary

The learning process

Choosing a driving instructor

Getting a car

The risks on the road

Response to interventions

The perspective of employers

Conclusions

Background

Young drivers are a key issue

Statistics show that young people, particularly young men, are more likely to be seriously injured or killed in a car accident.

Young drivers are a key opportunity

Young drivers are at a stage when interventions are possible. In particular regarding the driving test and driving license.

Understanding attitudes and behaviour in relation to...

1. Experiences of the learning process
2. How driving instructors are chosen
3. Going on to get a car (potentially with a telematic)
4. Perceptions of the risks on the road
5. Response to potential interventions

Two key interventions...

Mandatory driving lessons

A few key lessons would be made mandatory for anyone learning to drive.

These would cover the aspects of driving that are particularly high risk: driving on rural roads, driving at night and driving on motorways.

Drivers would be able to gain experience of driving in these situations under the supervision of an Approved Driving Instructor.

Graduated driver licensing

A more gradual approach to licensing would be introduced where the right to drive in certain situations is acquired over time.

A minimum learning period...

- Anyone taking their driving test would be required to have spent a minimum of 12 months learning to drive.
- The period would be measured from the time a driver applied for their provisional license until the time they took their driving test.

It would allow the driver to take more lessons, gain a wider range of experience, and have more time for what they've learned to sink in

For the first 12 months after passing the driving test...

- Drivers wouldn't be permitted to drive between the hours of 11pm and 4am
- Would only be allowed to drive cars with 2.0 litre engines or smaller.
- Drivers under 24 wouldn't be allowed to carry passengers under 24 (other than immediate family members)

This would mean drivers gained experience on the roads before driving in the situations that are most likely to cause accidents.

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Three key groups to cover

Young drivers



Hearing directly from young drivers about their attitudes and behaviour.

Understanding the response to interventions from the people most affected.

Their parents



Adding the perspective of a key influencer in the process.

An audience who would be indirectly affected by interventions.

Potential employers



Understanding key stakeholders who employ young drivers.

Also affected by interventions, although less directly.

Considerations for recruiting young drivers

Driving
experience

Age of
driver

Location

Gender

SEG

Currently
learning

17 - 20

Rural

Male

BC1

Newly
qualified
(<12 months)

21 - 24

Urban

Female

C2D

More
experienced
(>2 years)

Mix

Other criteria

Attitude
to risk

A spread of
agreement:

*“I Never/ Rarely/
Sometimes/
Often drive in a
way that would
be considered
risky”*

Car
ownership

A mix of:

Owning a car /
borrowing
parents car

(Newly qualified
and more
experienced
groups).

Driving
regularity

To be driving
at least twice a
week.

(Newly qualified
and more
experienced
groups).

Exclusions

None to have
been seriously
injured, or have
close friends/
family killed or
seriously injured
in accident.

None to work in
related sectors.

Young driver groups sample

	Experience	Age	Urban/ rural	Gender	SEG	Location
1	Currently learning	17 - 20	Rural	Male	C2D	Guildford
2	Currently learning	21 - 24	Urban	Mix	C2D	Manchester
3	Currently learning	17 - 20	Urban	Mix	BC1	Manchester
4	Currently learning	21 - 24	Rural	Female	BC1	Guildford
5	Newly qualified	17 - 20	Rural	Mix	BC1	Bristol
6	Newly qualified	21 - 24	Urban	Male	BC1	Birmingham
7	Newly qualified	17 - 20	Urban	Female	C2D	Birmingham
8	Newly qualified	21 - 24	Rural	Mix	C2D	Bristol
9	More experienced	21 - 24	Urban	Mix	BC1	London
10	More experienced	21 - 24	Rural	Mix	C2D	Banbury

Groups with parents of the young drivers

	Experience	Age (of child)	Urban/rural	Gender	SEG	Location
1	Currently learning	Mix	Rural	Mix	BC1C2	Guildford
2	Currently learning	Mix	Urban	Mix	C1C2D	Manchester
5	Newly qualified	Mix	Rural	Mix	C1C2D	Bristol
6	Newly qualified	Mix	Urban	Mix	BC1C2	Birmingham

Recruiting employers

The challenge of recruiting employers

Recruit from a vast group and try to cover...

A wide range of company sizes, different sectors, different job roles.

A possibility that many may not have much involvement with road safety.

The practical solution for recruitment

Ask for volunteers from the Road Safety GB website...

A group of companies where road safety is of importance.

Interviews with people who have a much higher level of interest in road safety.

With the caveat that we spoke to employers with a much higher level of involvement with road safety than average, we opted for the practical solution

The people we spoke to

Job Title	Nature of business	Company size	Vehicle type
Health and safety officer	Veterinary and horticultural training	90	Grey fleet cars
Transport manager	Kitchen and bathroom furniture manufacturer	400	Cars/vans/LGVs
Transport manager	Commercial laundry	600	Vans/LGVs
Transport manager	Property maintenance	950	Vans
Head of logistics	Data warehousing	2,000	Vans/LGVs
Fleet driving instructor	Energy provider	11,000	Grey fleet cars/vans
Training and development manager	Steel manufacturing	19,000	Cars/Vans
Vocational and operational trainer	Delivery	37,000	Cars/Vans/LGVs

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Executive summary

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In this research we found that learning to be a good driver is mostly seen as building confidence.

This confidence was seen as key to being safe on the roads, but when it developed into over-confidence it led to taking risks.

This is significant because it suggests that the risks taken by young drivers on the road are more to do with the driver's attitude than any lack of skill.

Learning to drive is a process that continues in the months after the test: you learn a more natural way of driving, learn the real rules of the road, and gain experience in more situations.

Whilst the test was generally seen as fit for purpose, many felt there could be more focus on skills like defensive driving and particularly driving in situations like motorways could be added.

Graduated driver licensing was resisted by all groups: it was seen to impose very inconvenient restrictions without making a practical difference to road safety.

In contrast, mandatory driving lessons were supported: they were seen as worth the investment, and assumed to make a significant difference to road safety.

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The perspective of employers

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Driving was key to independence

Gaining independence is crucially important

Day-to-day life: shops, doctors appointments, take-aways etc.

Social life: seeing friends and partners

Work or college life: managing a timetable of lectures, or shifts at work.

I am learning to drive so I am less reliant on other people to get about, mainly my mum. (Female, Learning, 17-20, BC1, Urban, Manchester)

Particularly for young drivers in rural areas

In urban areas learning to drive was seen as important.

But in rural areas, without public transport, it was necessary.

Much more likely that lessons will start at 17.

Here it is far more essential. In London there is so much public transport but here you have to walk 3 miles to the closest bus stop. (Female, Newly Qualified, 21-24, C2D, Rural, Bristol)

An incredibly emotional thing

A feeling of freedom for the drivers

More than the practical advantages of independence.

The freedom to go where you want when you want

Often young drivers would go off in their cars for the sake of it.

And liberation for the parents

No real resistance to the idea of their children driving.

It liberates them from the role of unpaid taxi driver.



I wanted to drive for the freedom. That feeling of just being able to go where you want when you want. (Female, More Experienced, 21-24, C2D, Rural, Banbury)

The barriers weren't significant enough to get in the way

No real concerns with learning

Learning to drive can be stressful.

Driving on the roads can be dangerous

But these weren't raised as serious issues.

I was nervous about not being very good at driving. I was nervous of people beeping me and being under pressure. (Male, Learning, 17-20, BC1, Urban, Manchester)

And the costs were worth it

The cost of learning, but also the cost of driving.

Often being paid (willingly) by parents.

And when paid themselves (more often when older) still seen as worth the investment.

The cost discouraged me a bit. The cost of running and car and insurance. I think the lessons is just a little part of it. (Male, Learning, 21-24, Urban, Manchester)

It's important to note that, by definition, everyone we spoke to saw the motivations to drive as outweighing the barriers.

The three key stages in the learning process

1. Control



Initially the focus is on controlling the car.

Starting smoothly, changing gears etc.

2. Awareness



Then the focus shifts to the road around you.

Hazard perception, checking mirrors etc.

3. Confidence



Finally, building up your confidence

Feeling comfortable on the road in different situations.

Confidence then feeds back into improved control and awareness

Confidence seen as the key to being a good driver

**Confident
driver**

1. Control

Mastered the car,
driving in a
smooth fluid way.

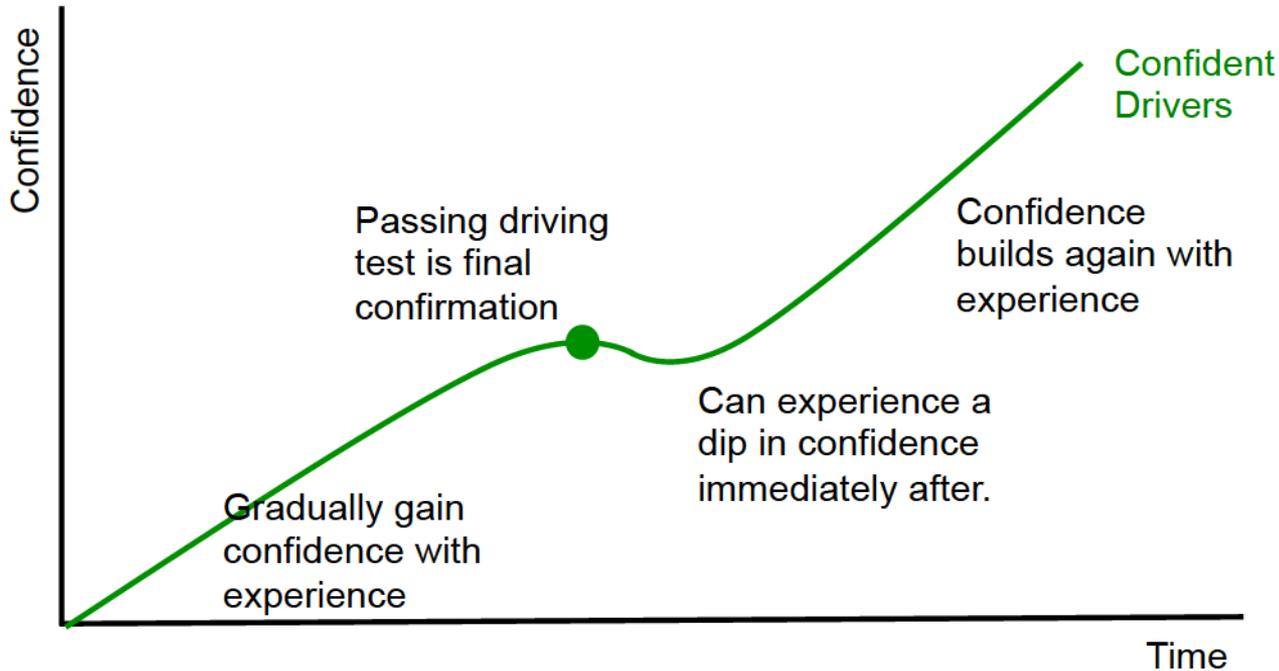
2. Awareness

Awareness of
road, anticipating
hazards.

3. Confidence

Calm, collected,
often assertive.

The journey for Confident Drivers



Confidence builds in line with experience.

Consider themselves fully confident within 12 months of test.

The majority of young drivers.

Before ten lessons you were scared to go out in the car without someone, then as you reach that stage, you want to go out and you are confident in your ability. By the time I passed I was pretty much there. I dwelled on the Magic Roundabout and motorways for a while. I knew I had to do them. Once you do all those things you learn not to let them eat away at you. As soon as you trust your own ability you are fine. (Male, Newly Qualified, 21-24, C2D, Rural, Bristol)

Nervous Drivers generally seen to be bad drivers

Confident driver

Nervous driver

1. Control

Mastered the car, driving in a smooth fluid way.

Lacking control, driving erratically

2. Awareness

Awareness of road, anticipating hazards.

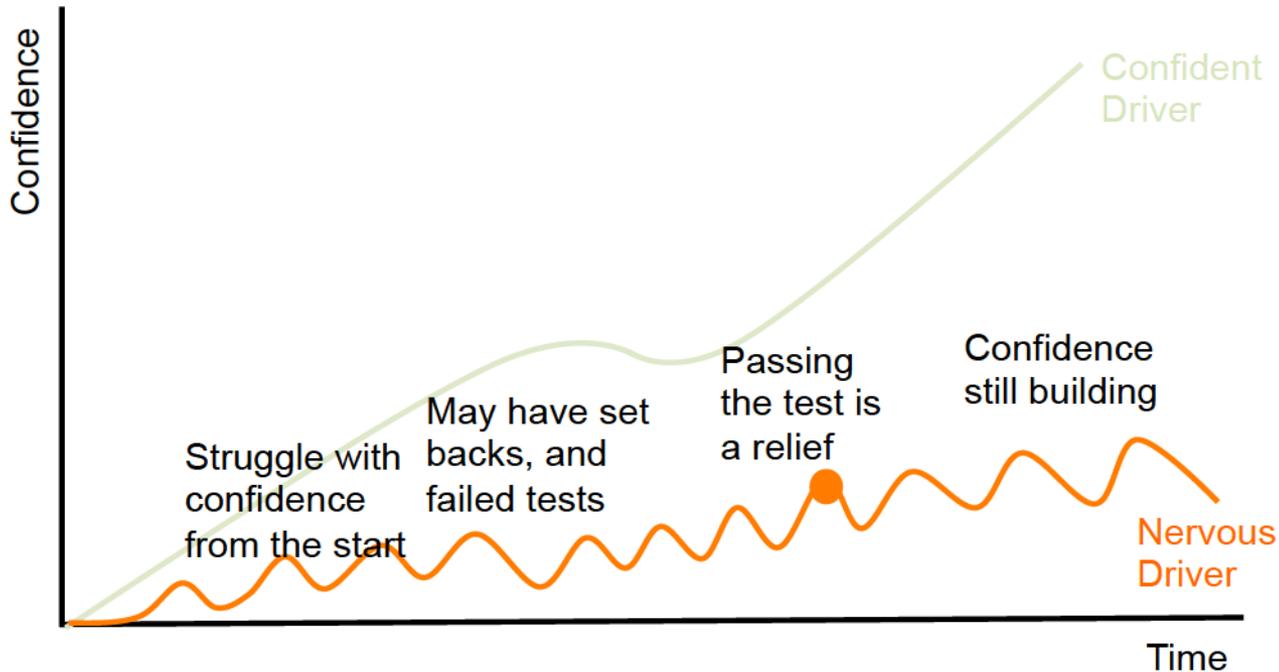
Unaware of road, pulls out in front of others.

3. Confidence

Calm, collected, often assertive.

Nervous, "flappy", hesitant.

The journey for Nervous Drivers



Struggle to build confidence and suffer set backs.

May never quite achieve full confidence.

Identified in others, but few saw themselves this way.

To start with I was really really scared. On the first lesson you are meant to drive home I was like no, on the second I was like no and on the third I was still scared... Manoeuvres I wasn't good, it took me ages....I failed 2 times as well I wasn't comfortable with myself, I didn't think I was capable of driving...I couldn't get used to doing everything at once. (Female, Newly Qualified, 17-20, C2D, Urban, Birmingham)

Daring drivers confessed to being over-confident

Confident driver

Nervous driver

Daring driver

1. Control

Mastered the car, driving in a smooth fluid way.

Don't feel complete control of car.

Feel they can keep the car under control at high speeds.

2. Awareness

Awareness of road, anticipating hazards.

Feel they might miss things on the road.

Claim better awareness, and faster reaction times.

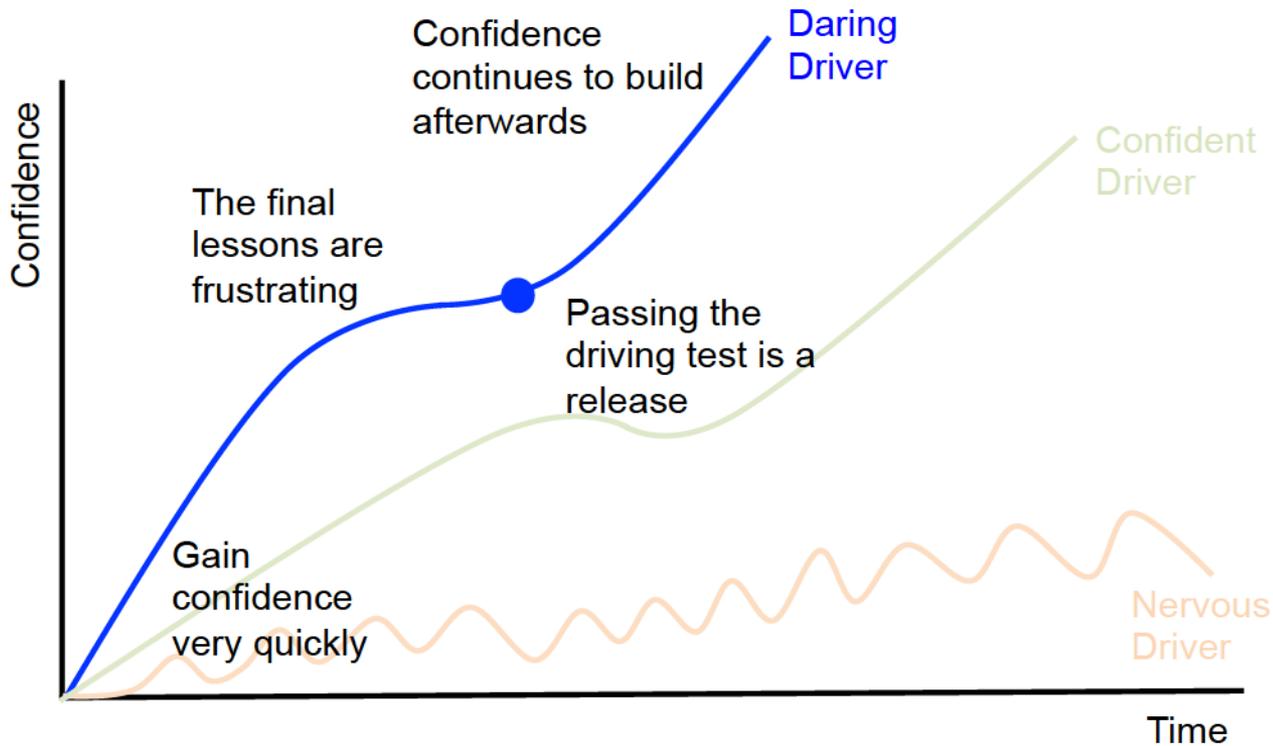
3. Confidence

Calm, collected, often assertive.

Nervous, "flappy", overly cautious.

Brimming with confidence, often described as over-confident.

The journey for Daring Drivers



Confidence quickly builds to overconfidence.

Almost always young men.

The first lesson was easy as I had been out with the old man quite a bit. Then getting the manoeuvres right. Then the lessons were boring after you've had a few. You just want to do the test. Just after the test I was chuffed and then five or six weeks later I was a good driver. (Male, Newly Qualified, 21-24, BC1, Urban, Birmingham)

Projecting confidence was clearly important for young men

Young men often talked about their own confidence

Consistently rated themselves more highly in confidence than young women.

And often pointed out how quickly they had gained confidence.

Over-confidence wasn't seen to be a bad thing

Confidence at the wheel seen as a symbol of self-confidence generally.

And too much confidence wasn't necessarily a negative.



I put very confident because I do feel very confident....I have been driving bikes and cars illegally for a long time, I'm pretty confident in my ability....Sometimes I do drive like a bit of a knob. Just generally I speed. (Male, Newly Qualified 20-24, BC1, Urban, Birmingham)

An area not addressed by the driving test

Risk may be the result of a lack of skill

There are skills that aren't covered by the driving test (discussed later).

These may well mean young drivers are at risk.

It is more likely to be caused by an excess of confidence

Young (male) drivers have a particularly cocksure attitude behind the wheel.

These certainly lead to them taking more risks.

He passed first time with merits, no faults and I think it went to his head a bit. After 6 months he got a speeding ticket the police followed him home and said it is a shame as they could tell by how he handled the car he has the makings of an excellent driver but he is young and stupid and that can kill you can't it.
(Female, Parent of Newly Qualified, BC1C2, Urban, Birmingham)

One area not covered by the driving test is driver attitudes, the equivalent of a speed awareness course was sometimes suggested as a good idea.

The learning process was clearly different before the test and after the test.

It was sometimes described as *learning to pass*, then *learning to drive*.

This was mostly the case with the people we spoke to who had already passed.

There were three reasons for this...

1. Finding a way of driving that feels natural

Before the test you learn the best practice



A focus on learning techniques and manoeuvres by rote.

Something that can get a little bit tiresome (particularly for the more confident drivers).

Parents aren't always clear on the technicalities.

After the test you find your own way of driving



Driving becomes looser, and eventually more instinctive.

Some initially see this as becoming a worse driver, but ultimately seen to be better.

Parents feel it's acceptable to drive in a less formalised way.

2. Learning the real rules of the road

A highway code followed by all drivers



Where rules are clearly followed.

E.g. Driving at 30mph, following rules of behaviour.

Where it's assumed everyone else is following the rules

A shared space where people make their own rules



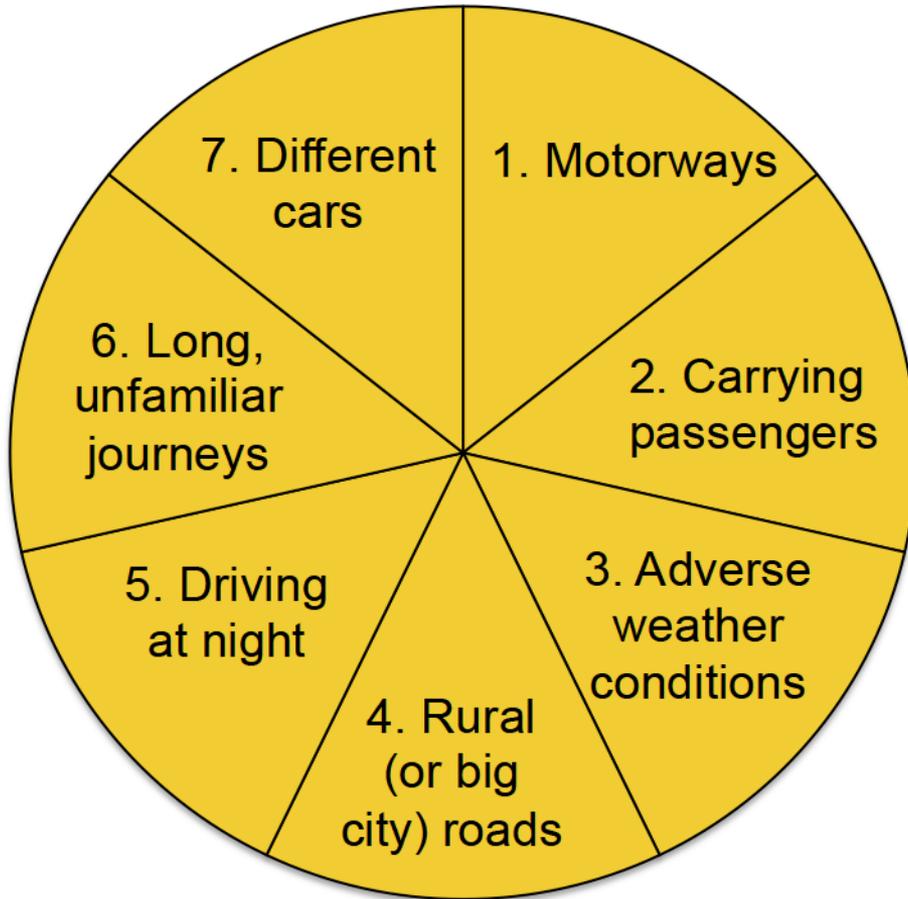
Where bending the rules is accepted.

E.g. Breaking speed limits, flashing lights to say thanks.

Where it's assumed that everyone else is "an idiot".

3. Gaining experience of more situations

The 7 trials of the new driver



Limits to how much experience driving lessons can provide.

Some instructors might include e.g. rural roads, driving at night.

After passing the real experience begins.

And often one area (most notably motorways) becomes the final confirmation you can drive.

Parents were sometimes intervening e.g. accompanying on a motorway, restricting passengers.

Some room for improvement in the test

1. Best practice driving technique

Often cited as something you discard when you start to drive, but accepted as it instills the right principles.

2. Official rules of the road

Also accepted that the test focuses on the Highway Code, but scope for preparing drivers for the real rules of the road, in particular defensive driving.

3. Limited experience of situations

The area where there was a great deal of support for adding to the driving test, and giving drivers more experience of different situations.

Overall, however, it's important to note that young drivers and their parents felt the driving test was a good preparation for the road.

Summary

This research would suggest there are three key stages of learning to drive: control, awareness and confidence.

Confidence was seen as by far the most important of these, and ultimately the key to being a good driver.

Most who had passed the test saw themselves as Confident Drivers, a point they reached within 12 months of passing.

Some Daring Drivers happily admitted to being over-confident, they had built confidence very quickly, and risky behaviour was a display of this confidence.

Attitude was an area not addressed by the interventions and would be worth considering in the future (e.g. a speed awareness course).

There was clear evidence that driving is seen as different after the test: you learn a more natural way of driving, learn the real rules of the road, and gain experience in more situations.

The test could be improved to address some of these areas, but generally it was seen to be a good test to prepare drivers for the road

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Conclusions

How the decision was made

Often chosen by the person who is paying

Parents of younger drivers tended to research and choose the driving instructor.

Older drivers, who were more likely to pay, were more likely to choose.

I got given one. Two neighbours had passed with him. I was told from day one he was authoritative and loud but I just went with it. (Male, Learning, 17-20, BC1, Urban, Manchester)

Mostly looking for a recommendation

In most cases looking for a recommendation... likely to be an independent instructor.

In the absence of a recommendation more likely to go for a reputable driving school e.g. AA.

I got lots of recommendations when I was 17 but all my friends have passed now. So I am looking at the more well respected driving people you can learn with – the AA or Red. Without the recommendation that is what I would go on. (Female, Learning, 20-24, BC1, Rural, Guildford)

What mattered most was the personality of the instructor

A “close” personal relationship

You’re spending a lot of time with an adult you don’t know.

In a car you’re in close physical proximity to them.

You’re isolated from everyone else.

Women often expressed a preference for another woman.

Smells nice. If you are in a car with them you don’t want a smelly person. Calm voice, good sense of humour. Being able to relate to them. You spend a lot of time with them. (Female, Newly Qualified, 21-24, C2D, Rural, Bristol)

Ultimately about the building of confidence

All instructors can teach you control and awareness.

Ultimately what differentiates them is the building of confidence.

Something that depends on the individual.

Many drivers had switched instructors because of a personality clash.

My first one was a bloke and he got angry if I did anything wrong it really put me off. The woman I had afterwards was amazing. She laughed at me, so I could get over it and feel comfortable. (Female, More Experienced, 21-24, C2D, Rural, Banbury)

Helping to build confidence

Confident drivers wanted support



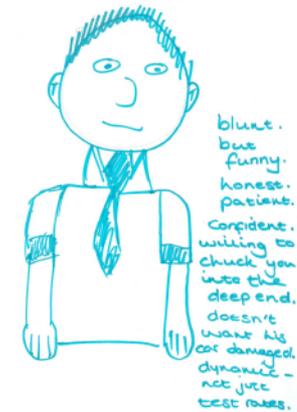
Relaxed and laid back. Corrective but not mean with it, she was confident, made you feel confident. (Female, Newly Qualified, 17-20, C2D, Urban, Birmingham)

Nervous drivers wanted nurturing



Someone that builds you up. Then you are encouraged. (Male, Learning, 21-24, C2D, Urban, Manchester)

Daring drivers wanted to be challenged



He pushed me in at the deep end, made it challenging so you were learning something, not tedious. (Male, Newly Qualified, 17-20, BC1, Rural, Bristol)

Very difficult to assess value

The price is something you don't know



The main driver of cost was number of lessons: no one knows how many will be required.

Perception most charged a similar price.

Some wanted to try for fewer lessons, others were reluctant to cut corners.

Price wasn't really a factor, they are all pretty similar. (Male, Learning, 17-20, C2D, Rural, Guildford)

The quality of instruction is down to personality



Assumed all instructors go through the same training.

And all teaching the same set of skills.

It's just about finding the personality that fits.

I would think the quality to be standard, it's just the personality that varies. (Female, More Experienced, 21-24, C2D, Rural Banbury)

Very difficult to assess value for money



Very difficult to assess value as quality not as clear as in other areas.

Might pay more for a reputable driving school in absence of recommendation.

If you go for one of the BSMs you can be confident they are going to teach you all you need to pass. (Male, More Experienced, 21-24, BC1, Urban, London)

Parents had mixed results in role of instructor

Parents who abstain

They feel too anxious about it.

They question how good their advice would be.

They don't have the right relationship with their child.

It is taking Andrew longer as I won't take him out. I don't because he will learn my bad habits, also I am frightened. (Female, Parent of Learner, C1C2D, Urban, Manchester)

Parents who give practice

Typically wait until child has gained control and awareness.

Helping them gain experience and confidence.

Depending on the parent, it can be a help or a hindrance.

One or two hours a week isn't enough for them. It is about giving them more experience. (Female, Parent of Learner, BC1C2, Rural, Guildford)

Parents who teach

Teaching the basics to save money.

Don't tend to do any research beforehand.

Often a bad experience, and the driver picks up bad habits.

Having been made redundant I thought I would save money by buying her a car and teaching her myself. (Male, Parent of Learner, BC1C2, Rural, Guildford)

As drivers get older and move out of home parents still play a role, other family members step in e.g. boyfriend, older sibling.

Parents of younger drivers played a key role after the test

Monitoring for the first months



Keeping a check on their driving when they get a lift.

Monitoring their driving through telematics.

It [telematics] gives you a bit of peace of mind for them out there. Lou couldn't thrash it because he knew it would affect his mum. (Male, Parent of Newly Qualified, BC1C2, Urban, Birmingham)

Imposing restrictions for the first months



Not allowing driving with lots of passengers

Avoiding certain situations: long unfamiliar journeys, motorways

We had a rule. Our eldest daughter had to wait 4 months before she had anyone in the car. (Female, Parent of Newly Qualified, C1C2D, Rural, Bristol)

This was the most effective role that parents played in driver safety, and more could potentially be done to encourage it.

Summary

As discussed, a key part of learning to drive a car was gaining confidence.

It was assumed that most instructors would be able to teach control and awareness, but helping to build confidence was what differentiated them.

For that reason driving instructors were mostly judged on their personality, and how they helped the individual build in confidence.

This intangible measure of quality, along with uncertainty about cost, made it very difficult to make rational judgments as to the value you might be getting.

Parents often played a role in the learning process, although this often had mixed results.

They were arguably much more effective as the keeper of the car keys: monitoring progress and restricting what was allowed until the driver was ready.

Encouraging more parents to adopt this role might be an alternative to introducing some of the interventions such as graduated driver licensing.

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Conclusions

Young drivers want their first set of wheels

The first car is a practical choice

Not so much a personal choice, or a personal statement.

Something that is more of a priority for the second car.

You just need four wheels that are going to get you round.

Mainly about what you can afford

The cost of the car, and often more importantly, the cost of insurance.

Often something parents are willing to help with initially.



When you are 18 and buying a car yourself it is about the cheapest you can get but when you are 22 you are less worried about the price of tax and insurance, you can afford a newer car. (Male, More Experienced, 21-24, BC1, Urban, London)

Their parents are thinking about safety

Cost is still of importance

Particularly given that many parents are the ones paying.

But safety is what really matters

A reliable car that isn't going to break down.

A safe car that will protect them in a crash.

A smaller engine to limit the potential for accidents.



We couldn't spend a fortune on a car for him but we got an Audi because it is solid. So if he bumps into a Fiesta he isn't going to come off second best. (Male, Parent of Newly Qualified, C1C2D, Rural, Bristol)

Telematics seen as a tool for enforcement rather than education

Saw them as enforcement

Associated with restricting speed and freedom generally.

Highly emotive to impose restrictions at a moment when you want to enjoy your freedom.

Now I've been without one I wouldn't get one. I've enjoyed so much freedom. And if I went to one I would really have to think about driving again. I know it brings the money down but you can't drive freely. (Female, Newly Qualified, 17-20, C2D, Urban, Birmingham)

Struggled to see them for education

Some interest from those learning, but after passing you learn from your own experience on the road.

Telematic data, whilst objective, might not reflect the real situation.

You might check data initially, but would grow quickly tired of it.

I think because it has no punishment to it, it might make you think about it a little as you don't want to get caught speeding but I don't think it would have much effect. (Male, Learning, 17-20, BC1, Urban, Manchester)

Whilst seen as enforcement, it was accepted that enforcing a speed limit would make drivers safer

Parents were divided on the idea of telematics

Most didn't want telematics on their car

Those sharing cars didn't want their driving monitored.

Something they felt they had moved beyond in their driving careers.

When Chloe passed her test them were the cheapest things but I refused. I thought this is my car I ain't being penalised. (Female, Parent of Newly Qualified, BC1C2, Urban, Birmingham)

Many didn't want to be monitoring their children

They weren't particularly interested in the information.

They felt they would be imposing themselves on their children's freedom.

It borders on sneaky. You have to give them space they need to learn. You're Big Brother aren't you. Like that sneaky programme where parents watch their children on holiday. (Female, Parent of Learner, C1C2D, Urban, Manchester)

Some saw it as a good enforcement tool for them

Some were glad to have restrictions on their child's driving.

Wouldn't monitor the information closely, but would check now and again.

I would recommend it because it makes them drive more carefully. I think they should insist, if you are a new driver you should be made to have one fitted. (Male, Parent of Newly Qualified, BC1C2, Urban, Birmingham)

Ultimately seen as a quid pro quo for cheaper car insurance

Some decided it was a deal worth making



Can live with the enforcement.
Savings seen to be substantial.

For me it was a drastic saving - a £1000 or so. (Male, Newly Qualified, 21-24, BC1, Urban, Birmingham)

Others ultimately turned it down



Enforcement too much of a restriction.
Savings not significant enough.

It's good but at the same time you want to be that 5 or 10% reckless every now and again, a little bit of fun. I was going to do it but thought for the sake of a hundred quid or so it wasn't worth it. (Male, Newly Qualified, 21-24, BC1, Urban, Birmingham)

Summary

Whilst both are very conscious of cost, drivers and parents see cars in very different ways.

The driver is looking for their first set of wheels, and as long as the car gets them from a to b they're happy.

The parent is looking for something that will keep their child safe. They are more likely to look for something that is reliable, safe and not too fast.

There was a high awareness of telematics across the groups.

They were firmly seen as an enforcement tool rather than an education tool, and many recoiled from the idea of having them.

Ultimately they were accepted as a quid pro quo with insurance companies... trading the freedom of the driver for a reduced premium.

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Young drivers didn't see themselves as at risk

Young drivers didn't see themselves at risk

Initially assume the drivers at risk are old people.

But accept an element of young drivers are dangerous.

Don't think that the young drivers statistics apply to them.

Old people. Really old people in their 70s. They have slower reaction times. As you get older you get that. (Male, Learning, 17-20, BC1, Urban, Manchester)

But their parents can appreciate the risk

Also tend to think older drivers are the risk.

Also aware of an element who are more at risk.

But more likely to see the young drivers statistic applying to their child.

They have an awful lot to learn in one go. I think we are throwing a lot at them at a time when they might not have the emotional maturity to handle it. (Female, Parent of Learner, C1C2D, Rural, Guildford)

Attribute the casualties to the reckless few

Inexperience not seen to be the main issue

In the months immediately after passing, accidents might be caused by a driver in an unfamiliar situation.

Seen as a random and unfortunate event.

Mostly attributed to speeding

All could identify a type of young male driver who drives recklessly.

Some young men could identify themselves being in this group, but didn't think it would happen to them.



Young boys I reckon [are most at risk].
Boy racers. Showing off and in fast cars as well. (Male, Newly Qualified, 21-24, C2D, Rural, Bristol)

Speeding seen as the main risk by drivers

Drivers

1. Speeding

2. Multi-tasking

3. Carrying passengers

Sometimes it is tempting to drive too quick...The amount of times I have sped down to Bristol or driven like an idiot. (Male, More Experienced, 21-24, BC1, Urban, London)

Parents

1. Carrying passengers

2. Multi-tasking

3. Speeding

When my son first passed his test he thought it was normal to drive round every night with his mates. If there are that many in the car and the music is on, they are all distracted, it isn't safe. (Female, Parent of Newly Qualified, BC1C2, Urban, Birmingham)

1. The three types of speeding

1. Deliberate risk-taking



Driving a car as fast as you can for the thrill.

Taking a risk is the whole point.

Difficult to influence attitudes and behaviour.

2. Displays of confidence



Driving at speed to feel and look confident.

Speeding is part of a young driver's self image.

Difficult to influence attitudes and behaviour.

3. Justified in the circumstances



Speeding because you're in a rush or running late.

Just something you do at the time.

A little easier to influence attitudes and behaviour.

2. Multi-tasking was seen as a permissible risk

A common behaviour

Most participants admitted to being distracted whilst driving.

Particularly by mobile phones.

An acceptable risk

Understood to be taking a risk but...

No real appreciation of how it might affect control of the car.

The potential consequences weren't particularly salient.

A socially acceptable thing to do.



Drivers on their phones is a risk but we all do it. I have it on a dock and I just click the home screen see what is going on. (Male, More Experienced, 21-24, C2D, Rural, Banbury)

3. Carrying passengers wasn't such a problem

Passengers were generally seen as a good thing

Young drivers were more than happy to have others with them.

And could make them a more relaxed, confident driver.

Not immediately associated with risk

Accepted that on occasion they might cause a distraction, particularly with more passengers.

But overall they weren't viewed as a serious risk.

In contrast parents were highly aware of the risk of mixing a driving situation with a social situation.



I feel most confident with my friends and stuff. When I'm with my mum and dad they stress me out. She thinks I'm doing everything wrong, going too fast, makes everything worse. When I'm with my mates I'm just relaxed.
(Female, Newly Qualified, 17-20, C2D, Urban, Birmingham)

Friends would intervene in less serious situations

Sometimes wouldn't consider intervening

Intervening requires the passenger to be concerned about the risk in the first place.

This wasn't always the case.

I don't really like to admit it but I might enjoy it if I thought they were being a bit reckless. I like to have a bit of adrenaline. (Male, More Experienced, 21-24, BC1, Urban London)

Sometimes intervene as banter

Feel comfortable saying what they want to their friends.

And the friends can take it or leave it.

Commenting on driving was common.

My friend doesn't understand how motorways work. I say 'that isn't how motorways work pal'. But he doesn't get that into his head. I'll be laughing at him. (Male, More Experienced, 21-24, C2D, Rural, Banbury)

Rarely make a serious intervention

A serious intervention felt less likely.

Challenging someone, and making an issue of the way they're driving.

Older drivers were slightly more willing.

You are in their car so you can't go too far. You know when you get butterflies in the passenger seat, then I say something like I don't want to die mate, can you slow down. (Male, Newly Qualified, 21-24, C2D, Rural, Bristol)

Summary **HERE**

Most young drivers don't consider themselves to be in a group that is at risk, and they assume the statistics don't apply to them.

It was widely assumed that the statistics were driven by a reckless few young men... the worst of the Daring Drivers.

They saw three risks as particularly important to young drivers...

1. Speed was the most common risk. Given the worst cases of speeding were so deliberate, the most effective approaches were seen to be acts of enforcement (telematics).

2. Multi-tasking was also common. It was generally seen as a low risk, low consequence, acceptable behaviour. And there may be an opportunity to influence it.

3. Carrying passengers was less of a concern. Parents identified it as dangerous, but young drivers were less convinced of the risks. Again this might be an area that could be influenced.

Research objectives

Who we spoke to

Executive summary

The learning process

Choosing a driving instructor

Getting a car

The risks on the road

Response to interventions

The perspective of employers

Conclusions

Graduated driver licensing

A more gradual approach to licensing would be introduced where the right to drive in certain situations is acquired over time.

A minimum learning period...

- Anyone taking their driving test would be required to have spent a minimum of 12 months learning to drive.
- The period would be measured from the time a driver applied for their provisional license until the time they took their driving test.

It would allow the driver to take more lessons, gain a wider range of experience, and have more time for what they've learned to sink in

For the first 12 months after passing the driving test...

- Drivers wouldn't be permitted to drive between the hours of 11pm and 4am
- Would only be allowed to drive cars with 2.0 litre engines or smaller.
- Drivers under 24 wouldn't be allowed to carry passengers under 24 (other than immediate family members)

This would mean drivers gained experience on the roads before driving in the situations that are most likely to cause accidents.

The immediate reaction was to the restrictions

Not carrying a passenger

Young drivers were often carrying passengers.

Would be a real restriction on their social life.

And led to impractical solutions e.g. 5 men driving to a football match in 5 cars.

If you have a girlfriend and you are going out, do you have to tell her to get the bus? (Male, Newly Qualified, 21-24, BC1, Urban, Birmingham)

Not driving at night

For some it immediately meant restrictions on social life and work life.

For others it was more the potential inconvenience.

Impractical solutions again e.g. having to get a mini cab home rather than drive home.

My night shift finishes at 1am. I don't know what I am going to do about that. (Female, Newly Qualified, 21-24, C2D, Rural, Bristol)

Not having a 2lt engine

Already off limits because of insurance premiums.

Not an issue, but further undermined the policy by seeming out of touch.

Over 2 litres is ridiculous. If you are lucky enough to be a footballer on 50k a week maybe. (Male, Newly Qualified, 21-24, BC1, Urban, Birmingham)

A highly emotive reaction

Usually seen as an unfair restriction of freedom

Viewed as restrictions imposed after passing.

Rather than graduated stages before you fully pass.

Some groups reacted particularly strongly

Those in rural areas felt it would make life particularly difficult for them.

Older drivers were at a more independent stage of life and felt the restrictions particularly keenly.

The unfairness of treating everyone as a statistic.



It is ridiculous. It might reduce accidents but it would also reduce accidents if you banned everyone from driving. The assumption is that every 18 year old is a boy racer. (Male, Learning, 17-20, C2D, Rural, Guildford)

The measures didn't always make sense

Not driving at night

Might be more drink driving or reckless driving at night.

But the drink or the recklessness seen as the cause not the time of night.

Nighttime generally seen as safer because there are fewer cars on the road

I think it is more to do with alcohol. Roads should be safer at night that is what I've been told. You can be drunk at any time of day.
(Male, Learning, 17-20, C2D, Rural Guildford)

Not carrying a passenger

Appreciate there are times when passengers are distracting.

Often times when they aren't.

They could even add to the confidence of the driver.

Only certain people are going to distract you. My mates aren't like that.
(Male, Learning, 17-20, C2D, Rural Guildford)

Not having a 2lt engine

The one area where everyone could see the sense.

Accepted that bigger engines will encourage faster driving.

When my mates have crashed it has been in a new snazzy car they can't handle. (Male, More Experienced, 21-24, BC1, Urban, London)

And undermined by the difficulty of enforcement

Seen as difficult to spot drivers by their age

Traffic police wouldn't know from looking at the car, and might need to ask for identification.

Particularly difficult to enforce passenger restrictions

The allowance for family members felt like a loophole that could be exploited.



I think there would be more crime as people wouldn't do it. Who is going to know? Unless you get pulled over. Even then, how would they know if it was my sister in the car, she won't be carrying ID. (Female, Learning, 21-24, BC1, Rural Guildford)

There wasn't such an emotive reaction to the minimum learning period

Not such a restriction for most drivers

12 months mostly seen as a long learning period.

But it didn't feel like it would cause a great deal of frustration.

But some railed against being made to wait

The highly confident drivers wanted to pass as quickly as possible.

And some translated it into additional costs

Could lead to drivers paying for more lessons than they need.



I learned over 6 months and that is a lot of money. Plus you get to the point where you think I can do that. Or you wouldn't pass your test if you didn't so what is the point in going round and round for no reason. (Female, Newly Qualified, 21-24, C2D, Rural, Bristol)

But it didn't always make sense

One or two saw sense in gaining experience

Experience is clearly important.

And intensive courses seen to be a shortcut

A minimum learning period might translate into more experience.

12 months is not a bad thing. If you have a year's experience you'd probably get good at things. (Female, Newly Qualified, 17-20, C2D, Urban, Birmingham)

But it's hours on the road that matter

What matters is the time spent driving.

Imposing a time period might not lead to more experience.

The same amount of hours, spread more thinly.

It needs to be minimum hours or I'd have just done all my lessons at the end [of the 12 month period], 'cos I'm impatient. (Male, More Experienced 21-24, BC1, Urban, London)

And drivers develop at different speeds

Accepted that drivers develop at different speeds.

Some are ready to take the test after a few months.

They would be made to wait unfairly.

People learn at different rates. If you are good you will pass in a shorter amount of time. There's no need to force them to wait. (Male, Learning, 17-20, C2D, Rural Guildford)

Parents had a very similar reaction

Mostly rejected the post-test restrictions

Restrictions would affect them: they'd have to drive their kids around.

They had a more detached, statistical, view so more likely to see the sense in the measures.

But also questioned the enforcement.

I am not against it. There could be boundaries. Not as strict as the ones there but something to stop them going at 90 mph with five kids in the car. (Female, Parent of Learner, BC1C2, Rural, Guildford)

And questioned the minimum learning period

Saw more sense in the minimum learning period, including the benefit of four seasons.

But ultimately questioned it...

It depends on the driver, and the number of hours on the road.

I think too many people get on the road too quick and have accidents. They should have to learn for 12 months. There is a whole world of difference. (Male, Parent of Newly Qualified, C1C2D, Rural Bristol)

Mandatory driving lessons

A few key lessons would be made mandatory for anyone learning to drive.

These would cover the aspects of driving that are particularly high risk: driving on rural roads, driving at night and driving on motorways.

Drivers would be able to gain experience of driving in these situations under the supervision of an Approved Driving Instructor.

Made immediate sense to drivers and parents

The main issue that was raised about the driving test

The lack of driving experiences often mentioned as a gap in the driving test.

Driving instructors appreciated for helping their students gain more experience.

Pass Plus generally regarded as a worthwhile thing to do.

Good idea. Country roads and motorways they just don't tell you . Fills that gap. The most important thing you don't do. The instructor being there means you have someone to help you along. (Male, Newly Qualified, 21-24, BC1, Urban, Birmingham)

Motorways most commonly mentioned

Motorways were often mentioned spontaneously.

Rural roads and driving at night rarely raised spontaneously.

But seen as important once they were introduced by the stimulus.

Motorway is the big one. The day you pass your test you can hit 80 mph on a motorway which is a lot faster than you will have been taught. And driving at night it is completely different to driving in the day. (Male, Learning, 17-20, BC1, Urban, Manchester)

Would willing take the lessons

Participants didn't raise any objections

This would mean extra lessons, but no one balked at the cost.

Would seem churlish to object to something that was clearly seen to have value.

There weren't any practical issues for these groups (e.g. no-one would have to drive 3 hours to get to a motorway)

If it will make me a safe and better driver then it is worth it, especially if it saves me from crashing and having to pay for a new car. It's an investment isn't it. (Female, Newly Qualified, 21-24, C2D, Rural, Bristol)

And would willingly take the lessons

The general consensus around mandatory lessons was very positive.

It may not be necessary to make the lessons mandatory by law.

If they were recommended many would take them.

Driving isn't a short term thing so it's worth learning correctly. (Male, Learning, 21-24, C2D, Urban, Manchester)

Summary

The two interventions we tested received very different reactions; there was a very negative reaction to the graduated driver licensing.

This was largely because it was new to the UK, and was seen as imposing restrictions rather than gradually introducing permissions.

The restrictions were railed against as making life difficult for young drivers, and their parents. Particularly carrying passengers and driving at night.

They were also questioned as measures that wouldn't make a practical difference, and would be difficult to enforce.

The minimum learning period, whilst not as controversial was also questioned: learning to drive is about hours on the road, and happens at different rates.

In contrast the mandatory driving lessons were very positively received, and had often been suggested before the stimulus was introduced.

Indeed many would be willing to pay for them even if they weren't mandatory: they would just need to be more clearly promoted.

Research objectives

Who we spoke to

Executive summary

The learning process

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The perspective of employers

Conclusions

Why road safety matters to employers

Employee safety

Complying with health and safety law to protect employees.

Individuals feel a duty of care towards employees.

Insurance

Premiums were reduced through accident reduction and in some cases by monitoring and assessment.

Generally within work hours

The commute was generally seen as beyond the remit of the company.

Where driving was primary commuting hours were a factor.



It's about safe working procedures and reducing risk. Since 2008 we have reduced our incidents by 78% and our insurance premiums reduced by 34%. (Medium, LGV/ Vans)

Priority varied according to the size of the company

Small company (50+)

Transport one of many roles.

Road safety not a priority.

No resource for improving road safety.

I've been here 2 years. It has taken 12 months for people to realise that when I talk to them about road safety I am trying to help, not having a go. (Small, Cars)

Medium sized company (500+)

One of many transport roles.

Road safety increasingly a priority.

Processes for improving road safety becoming more established.

We used to have more rudimentary assessments in the past which had their weaknesses. Now it is much more in-depth and we have an in-house driver academy. (Medium, LGV/Vans)

Large company (5000+)

A role focused on road safety.

In a position where road safety is established.

Extensive resources for training in place.

I am one of 6 vocational trainers. My role is solely dedicated to road safety. (Large, LGV/ Van/Car)

The skills of young drivers were rarely an issue when hiring

Car



Driving skills are secondary issue.

Leaving it to the skills of the driver.

Van



Driving skills could be primary or secondary.

Often make an assessment before or after hiring.

LGV



Driving skills are primary

Qualifications and assessment key to hiring.



As the skills of the driver become more of a focus for hiring, the fact they were a young driver was negated by the presence of assessments.

Whilst not perfect, driving test seen as adequate

In theory limited for driving for work

The lack of experience of different situations was raised. Particularly motorways.

The lack of experience in different vehicles could be an issue. Particularly vans.

I think they are potentially missing a trick not having motorway driving in there as its inevitable they'll need to drive on motorway, (Large, Vans/Cars)

In reality they've had experience

Often young drivers have gained experience before they join the company.

And in many cases they'd driven other vehicles.

We tend to find the guys are normally 19 or 20 years old before they will be employed even in vans. They have normally left school and done other work. (Large, LGV/Vans/ Cars)

Or they can be trained

In some cases they don't have experience (e.g. apprentices)

Here the driving test could be improved.

But accept that they can provide necessary experience and training on the job.

Obviously if they had done some sort of van driving qualification that would be good but we'd still assess them and train them – it's a case of continuous learning. (Medium, LGV/Vans)

Whilst it was clear that the driving test had its limits, there wasn't seen to be a great need to change it. **bigisland**

The attitude of young drivers was sometimes a consideration

1. Multi-tasking

Checking mobile phones a common issue when driving on work time.

2. Carrying passengers

Less likely to be an issue, as passenger is a colleague. But could still be a distraction.

3. Speeding

Speeding less likely on work time, particularly given the prevalence of telematics. But still an issue.

4. Driving on a hangover

A fourth area that was mentioned was driving on a hangover, something that is more likely if you have to get behind the wheel first thing.

Ultimately these were seen as rooted in young drivers' attitudes rather than lack of skills or training.

Different sized companies approached young driver attitudes in different ways

Medium sized (and small) companies

Evaluate attitudes on an individual basis.

Often make the assumption that if someone is going to do the job well, they'll drive well.

It's a question of judgment. If you see someone who is a good prospect, clean, presentable and enthusiastic, but you are concerned about their youth you'd check their assessment. If they are methodical about vehicle checks that is a sign they have a good attitude.
(Medium, LGV/Vans)

Large companies

Take a more statistical view of young drivers.

Invest in training to address attitudes (e.g. speed awareness courses).

Our team flag age as a concern. We deliver a 1 day young driver course to anyone driving a company vehicle aged 17-25.
(Large, Vans/Cars)

Graduated driver licensing

A more gradual approach to licensing would be introduced where the right to drive in certain situations is acquired over time.

A minimum learning period...

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- The period would be measured from the time a driver applied for their provisional license until the time they took their driving test.

It would allow the driver to take more lessons, gain a wider range of experience, and have more time for what they've learned to sink in

For the first 12 months after passing the driving test...

- Drivers wouldn't be permitted to drive between the hours of 11pm and 4am
- Would only be allowed to drive cars with 2.0 litre engines or smaller.
- Drivers under 24 wouldn't be allowed to carry passengers under 24 (other than immediate family members)

This would mean drivers gained experience on the roads before driving in the situations that are most likely to cause accidents.

Interventions became less important as drivers gained experience

Assumed to have an impact on the first 12 months of driving

The interventions were seen to have an initial impact, but would be less important after 12 months of experience.

Would be something that would affect hiring young apprentices.

But not so relevant to all young drivers.



Some of our apprentices might be 16 when we take them on so this kind of thing would affect us. (Large, Vans/Cars)

The discussion of the interventions tended to focus on particularly young and inexperienced drivers (typically apprentices)

The restrictions could present an issue for some businesses

Most notably restrictions on driving at night

Driving for work often involves driving at night.

Something that bigger companies could work around.

Medium sized companies saw more of an issue.

Passengers might be an issue

Often expected to be driving alone.

Or an older colleague could drive.

But on occasion could be an issue.

2 ltr engines weren't such an issue

Not seen as a huge issue.

Mostly they wouldn't be driving larger cars or vans.

LGVs seen separately.

And there wouldn't be a benefit to having the restrictions in place

Accepted there might be a road safety benefit in general

Identified the restrictions as applying to situations where accidents were statistically more likely to happen.

Given their more statistical view, they could see the sense in imposing restrictions.

That's exactly what I would go for. In fact I would reduce the time to 9pm. It's the peer pressure that causes accidents. (Large, LGV/Vans/Cars)

But behaviour being restricted didn't tend to happen at work.

Driving at night means someone working a shift rather than reckless groups after a night out.

Passengers are colleagues not rowdy friends.

A 2 ltr vehicle might have a telematic to monitor speed.

These apply to when they are driving socially not at work. At work their speed is very restricted through telemetry. (Medium LGV/Vans)

Feedback on minimum learning period was similar to young drivers and parents

Not expected to affect businesses a great deal

There might be instances when it prevents someone getting into work as quickly as they might.

But generally not likely to have an impact.

We would have to release people to attend driving lessons over a 12 month period but that wouldn't be the end of the world. (Large, Vans/ Cars)

General feedback similar to parents

Initially supportive of giving drivers more driving experience.

But questioned the sense when it's time on the road that matters and drivers learn at different rates.

I think it should be linked to a minimum number of lessons. The more training the better the driver. I don't like those crash courses where you can get a license in 5 days. (Medium, LGV/ Vans/Cars)

Mandatory driving lessons

A few key lessons would be made mandatory for anyone learning to drive.

These would cover the aspects of driving that are particularly high risk: driving on rural roads, driving at night and driving on motorways.

Drivers would be able to gain experience of driving in these situations under the supervision of an Approved Driving Instructor.

Mandatory Driving Lessons

Something that would apply to apprentices

In most cases young drivers would have gained experience.

But it would be valuable for very inexperienced drivers to learn these skills.

Again, motorways stood out as important

An area that tends to be more important when driving for work.



Motorway would be a positive. They have at least received some tuition but when they have their driving assessment with us we would go on the motorway with them anyway, it covers all roads. We might give further training if necessary. (Large, Vans/Cars)

A note on why young drivers weren't applying for jobs in the transport industry



Summary

Whether a potential employee was a young driver or not wasn't always a consideration when hiring.

Generally it was felt that they would have the skills required, and where the skills were lacking they could receive training

But the main issue was seen as the attitude of young drivers.

This could lead to a number of risks: multi-tasking when driving, speeding, being distracted by passengers, driving on a hangover.

Very big companies accounted for this attitude with training for young drivers, smaller companies made judgments on an individual basis.

The interventions weren't seen to have an impact on a lot of the young drivers being hired, only those who had passed within 12 months.

Graduated driver licensing was negatively received. It added restrictions without necessarily improving safety of driving at work.

The mandatory driving lessons were more positively received because they gave drivers more experience, particularly on motorways.

Research objectives

Who we spoke to

Executive summary

The learning process

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Conclusions

1. Learning to drive is the building of confidence

There would appear to be three key stages of learning to drive: control, awareness and confidence.

Confidence was seen as by far the most important of these, and ultimately the key to being a good driver.

Most who had passed the test saw themselves as Confident Drivers, a point they reached within 12 months of passing.

A minority saw themselves as Nervous Drivers, they had struggled with driving from the start and had never really built enough confidence.

Some Daring Drivers happily admitted to being over-confident: they had built confidence very quickly, and risky behaviour was a display of this confidence.

It seems likely that over-confidence of young drivers is the cause of a lot of the risky behaviour on the roads.

Significantly this was about a driver's attitude rather than their skill, something that isn't currently addressed in the driving test (e.g. speed awareness courses).

2. Learning to drive continues after the test

As has been found in previous research, it was clear that the learning process is seen to continue in the months that follow the driving test.

There were three reasons for this...

1. Rather than following best practice you adopt a more natural way of driving.
2. Alongside the Highway Code you learn the real rules of the road and respond to the way that other road users really drive.
3. You go beyond the driving situations you learned to gain wider experience such as driving on motorways and carrying passengers.

It was felt that the driving test could potentially do more to help with the second of these issues with, for example, more focus on defensive driving.

But most commonly it was felt that the third area could be addressed by giving learners experience of more situations.

3. Young drivers take three key risks on the road

Young drivers were aware of the risks they were taking on the roads. Three of these were particularly important.

1. *Speed was the most common risk.* Given the worst cases of speeding were so deliberate, the most effective approach was seen to be acts of enforcement (telematics).

2. *Multi-tasking was also common.* It was generally seen as a low risk, low consequence, acceptable behaviour. And there may be an opportunity to influence it.

3. *Carrying passengers was less of a concern.* Parents identified it as dangerous, but young drivers were less convinced of the risks. Again this might be an area that could be influenced.

4. There is widespread resistance to graduated driver licensing

Graduated driver licensing was resisted by all the audiences we showed it to.

As something new to the UK it was generally seen as imposing restrictions rather than gradually introducing permissions.

The restrictions were seen to make life difficult for young drivers and their parents, and could be an inconvenience for employers.

The restrictions that were seen as most problematic related to driving at night, and carrying passengers.

What made matters worse was the fact that the restrictions weren't expected to make a practical difference. In work time they weren't relevant at all.

Furthermore they were seen to be very difficult to enforce.

Based solely on the public reaction we wouldn't recommend introducing graduated driver licensing (although other factors obviously need consideration).

5. There is a lot of support for mandatory driving lessons

Mandatory driving lessons were generally supported by the different audiences we showed them to.

In the main, the driving test was seen as fit for purpose: it gives young drivers the basic skills and experience they need to get safely onto the roads.

But it was recognised that there might be ways of improving it (as discussed), and mandatory lessons were often mentioned spontaneously.

The most salient issue was motorway driving, although lessons in rural roads and night driving were seen as valuable too.

Such was the support for mandatory driving lessons that many said they would voluntarily take them if they were made more available.

Based solely on public opinion (again there will be other evidence to take into account) mandatory driving lessons would be worth introducing.



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