

**LEARNING TO DRIVE**  
**A CONSULTATION PAPER**

Automobile Association response to  
The Driving Standards Agency's  
Consultation paper 'Learning to Drive'

## **LEARNING TO DRIVE - the way forward.**

### **The AA View**

#### **The problem**

There are two distinct problems that affect young drivers and which can make them unsafe on the roads. However, we believe that a majority manage to drive quite safely.

- Many have the wrong attitudes towards driving and see it as an expressive activity, that will impress their friends and which involves high speeds, risk taking and excitement. This does not necessarily mean that they do not know how to drive safely – they may just choose not to.
- Others may have passed their tests but have not gathered sufficient experience to drive properly. This lack of experience may just be a lack of hours on the road, or may be a lack of driving in varied conditions – town, country, or motorway, darkness or rain, while needing to find their way, etc.

Many will suffer from both problems.

There are constraints on how the problems can be resolved.

Practical issues need to be confronted. Not all learner drivers are 17, neither will all immediately have access to their own car, or any car, on passing the test. Some people will have very good reasons to pass a test quickly, and are unlikely to hazard safety by doing so. Enforcement resources are finite, and the probability is that any enforcement of laws relating to new drivers will only come at the expense of enforcement of other areas of motoring law. Learning to drive costs money, and the system has to allow people to obtain value for that money, and not to be required to spend extra solely to meet legal requirements.

#### **A solution**

The AA broadly agrees with the proposals to change the test and to make it competence based. We agree with the idea of decoupling the four parts of the test.

We do not feel that there is a need to impose wide-ranging additional legal requirements on learners or on new drivers. But we do feel that new drivers should be incentivised to follow the course to the driving test that has been shown to be most effective in producing safe drivers.

The AA therefore suggests that there are two routes to a full driving licence:

- **The standard route.** Here a learner has to pass the four parts of the test. Some time limits exist within which the parts must be passed, as is the case at the moment.
- **The incentivised route.** This process incentivises learners who do one or both of the following –
  - Undertake an approved pre-driving course. This will be a classroom based attitudinal and theoretical course, and completion will either exempt the driver from the theory test or allow it to be taken at a younger age, even before a driving licence is issued, and to be valid for longer than the conventional theory test. The idea is that it should be possible to take the course any time after the completion of GCSE examinations (ie, in some cases 15 years and 10 months) and for any theory test pass to remain valid until age 23 (ie after university).
  - Complete a learning to drive course and be signed off as having done so by an ADI. This course would have to meet the DSA syllabus for learner drivers. Completion of that would allow a driver to take the practical test and to avoid taking the manoeuvring test and the hazard perception test. Proper learning to the syllabus would mean that a driver would have been assessed as having the skills necessary to pass both of these tests. At any time a driver should be able to leave this route, and revert to taking the four part test.

Fuller details are given in Appendix A

It is also important to note that there is a problem with young people opting out of the system and driving unlicensed. Making the driving test too tough or the licensing process too complicated could increase the number of people doing this.

The AA sees some merit in arrangements which would prevent new drivers driving at high risk times or under high risk circumstances, such as late at night or with passengers of a similar age. However we do not see how this could be fairly

introduced without prejudicing working lives and without either introducing widespread exemptions or absurd prohibitions. Additionally there would be enforcement difficulties. Understanding this we see why no proposals have been made for this kind of measure.

The AA has suggested a system that could overcome these objections. This is outlined in Appendix D and we would urge the government to consider this system if it decides to introduce some form of graduated licensing. We also feel that private practice, generally with parents is a key part of gaining driving experience. The insurance industry can do much to make this a more affordable option and therefore one that is used more by Britain's learners.

Appendix B gives detailed answers to the questions posed by the consultation document, and Appendix C outlines measures that the AA has considered and discarded.

As a cautionary note, it is essential that the drug driving issue is looked at in parallel with the learning to drive consultation. The drug driving problem is not adequately quantified at present, and it is likely that its greatest impact is among the young. If the drug driving problem is as great as some reports suggest, it could be a major reason for accident levels among young drivers. A recent AA Populus poll of 17,500 members showed that 50% felt that drug driving was as big a problem as drink driving and this view is frequently echoed within the road safety world. It is vital that the "learning to drive" changes take account of some fundamental problems that affect young driver accident rates such as drugs, drink and seat belt wearing.

## **Appendix A**

### **An incentivised path to safer driving.**

At the moment the keys to making new drivers safe drivers seems to lie with improving the attitude that they demonstrate when (and even before) they take to the wheel, and in ensuring that new drivers have covered the whole syllabus for learning to drive before they take their test.

It is very hard to see a totally practical way of changing the learner driver system to require drivers undertake a system that does this, without seriously inconveniencing some people, or creating a highly complicated regime with many exemptions and with different rules for drivers of different ages and in different circumstances. The system has to be able to cope with people from abroad, learners in their twenties, older learners and people who have very urgent needs to get a licence (for example a recent widow in a rural area). There is also a concern that some rules would be needed to stop learner drivers “short circuiting” the system and that these rules would be a considerable annoyance to people trying to learn in later life.

There are a number of changes to the way we learn to drive that all parties seem to agree. Something needs to be done to teach pre-drivers the correct attitudes. Drivers need to cover a curriculum for learning to drive – not just take the test. The test should be competence based, and the “decoupled” into four components. The logical approach is to build all these into one way of taking the test – “the preferred route” and incentivise this. And then to leave “standard route” broadly comparable to what is available today for those who do not want to use the incentivised route, or who for some reason cannot.

### **The preferred route.**

#### ***Part one: Attitudes to driving***

The goal for this route is to ensure that drivers have the right attitude to driving, and are well versed in the theory side. This is most likely to take the form of some kind of pre-driver course, that meets criteria laid down by DSA. As an incentive to take this route drivers who have done so should be entitled to different rules for the theoretical test. This would mean:

The theory test could be taken at any time after completing the course and reaching the age of 15 years and 10 months. This would allow secondary schools to run the course after the end of GCSE examinations. Such an arrangement would overcome the transport problems that could dog courses held in the evenings or holidays – school would still be “in” and school transport available. This would not mean that courses could not be run at other times, for other age groups, or away from school premises.

Because many drivers would not take their tests for a considerable period after the course, drivers who have taken the course should have their theory test certificate valid until their 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday. This would mean that they did not lose their incentive if they chose not to drive until after they had completed a university course.

There will be those who would argue that this arrangement would compromise road safety by allowing drivers who were “out of date” on their theory to take later parts of the test. The AA would argue that this should be more than offset by the advantages of the classroom tuition, and that if this is not the case, there would be little purpose in having classroom tuition. Additionally a driver who had passed his theory test at 17 would be in exactly the same position by age 25.

This incentive is substantial, has no cost, yet may well mean that most potential drivers attend the course. We are not sure whether course attendance could provide exemption from the test, without contravening EU law, but if this is possible it is an option that should be considered.

### ***Part two – learning to drive***

The goal here is to incentivise drivers to learn to drive, not to pass the test. The AA has looked at a variety of ways of achieving this, and feels that the best method is to persuade drivers not to take their practical test until they have completed a DSA approved syllabus for learning to drive. The best way to do this is through the achievement of a “sign off” from an approved driving instructor (ADI) to take the test, and again to change the rules relating to the driving test to incentivise this approach.

Any driver who has worked through the syllabus and been signed off by an ADI will have mastered the manoeuvres element of the driving test. They should therefore be exempted from this test – in effect the ADI will act as a designated examiner for this part of the test. It also seems absurd to suggest that any driver who has achieved a sign off will not be capable of passing the hazard perception test, and again, the sign off should provide exemption from this test. Not having to take these tests would provide a good incentive to follow this route.

Key to this system would be that ADIs could adopt the necessary flexibility in giving a sign off. They may have a learner who has only driven with them. They may have one who has benefitted from much practice with supervisors, most likely parents. They may have one who has arrived from another instructor, or after a lay off from learning. ADIs will have to be able to apply consistency in declaring a driver ready for test. There will be many learners who will believe (some no doubt rightly) that they are not being signed off solely because the instructor does not wish to lose a source of income. There will also be others who may seek to “persuade” an instructor to sign them off too early. Because of this learners must be able to opt out of the incentivised route, and methods must exist to allow instructors to be “looked at” if complaints are made.

Accordingly examiners should be asked to record “signed off” drivers who drive awfully on test and where nerves cannot be blamed. This could imply premature signing off or impersonation (the driver “signed off” may not be the one who turns up for the test) and should be investigated further. Similarly a process should exist where a “not ready” driver who can pass the test on the “standard route” should be able to complain about the instructor who would not sign him off. The DSA should investigate such cases to ensure the incentive system is not being abused. We would suggest that examiners for the practical test do not know which route to the test has been used. We would also expect to see some system to ensure that cars are available to people who use the standard route (and that instructors who allowed cars to be used in this way were not penalised in any way), and that de facto compulsion to take the incentivised route is not allowed to occur.

Drivers who take the preferred route should still take the practical element of the driving test, including any changes made as a result of this consultation.

It must be accepted that it is not possible for all parts of a syllabus to be completed – weather conditions and geographical location are among the factors that will determine what needs to be omitted.

### **The standard route**

The existence of a preferred route necessitates the existence of a standard route. The main aim of this route is to provide for learners who for one reason or another do not want, or just cannot, take the incentivised route.

This test should incorporate all the elements of the current test, decoupled into the four parts all of which must be taken. Whether the four parts must be taken in the traditional order – theory, hazard perception, manoeuvres, practical will to some extent depend on the level of incentive that is felt to be needed. Obviously having to take them in order, and having to pass one before you could book the next would increase the “incentive” to use the other method. But at the same time this could place unnecessary hurdles in the way of some people (especially over the age of 25) who wanted to take the test.

If future research suggests other methods of learning to drive that produce safer drivers they too could have “preferred” routes created to incentivise them. Similarly the preferred route can be changed to reflect evidence gathered in the future.

## **Appendix B**

### **ANSWERS TO SPECIFIC QUESTIONS ASKED IN THE CONSULTATION**

#### **Q1 What views do you have about our explanation of the high accident rate among newly-qualified drivers?**

We believe that there are two main issues – the wrong attitude, which leads to risk taking and showing off, and inexperience probably in the form of being unprepared for all but the minimum difficulties that driving involves. Both need to be tackled in different ways. If a new driver has the wrong attitude and wants to drive his way, we can never guarantee that driver training will convince him that he should drive another way, or that testing will identify that he will do so. We may be able to make him drive in the prescribed way for his test, but cannot guarantee that he will drive that way any longer. To make that type of change we have to influence the attitude that makes him want to drive his way and that has to happen before he drives a car. Our research shows that he develops the wrong attitude long before he takes to the wheel, even to learn. Any new way of learning to drive needs to tackle attitudes.

Inexperience comes in two forms. There is inexperience that is best tackled by tuition and supervised driving before the test is taken, and which can also be tackled by post test training. This is inexperience in the basic skills of driving and driving in different conditions – put another way – not having enough driving under your belt. But there is also inexperience that can only be overcome through hundreds, if not thousands of hours of driving, and whether there is any way that this kind of inexperience can ever be overcome has to be open to argument. Ever longer and more complex training, coupled with strictly enforced probationary rules could help overcome the problems but this has to be weighed against the costs, both to new drivers themselves, to the enforcement authorities and to the UK as a whole – especially if the rules deter people from driving. It also has to be weighed against the growing number of people who pass the driving test and then hardly drive for several years.

#### **Q2 Do you have any comments about the contents of the partial Impact Assessment published alongside this Paper?**

While unable to verify many of the assumptions made, we find it hard to disagree with the conclusions reached.

#### **Q3 What are your views about our analysis that improved training and testing is the best way of improving the safety of newly-qualified drivers?**

It is the most practical way of tackling the issue. The current system is old, and was devised in days gone by. New training techniques that tackle the issues that have



emerged over the last 20 or so years can do much to tackle these issues. It is important though that any new system is practical for all types of candidate, and that procedural obstacles do not stop safe drivers passing the test at the first opportunity. The cost and complexity of new arrangements must also be controlled so they do not deter would be drivers, or lead to more people driving without a licence. Complexity of regulation does not necessarily imply improved safety.

It is easy to devise systems built round the view that all learner drivers are 17, that all want to pass their test as soon as they can at minimum effort, that all will immediately have a car of their own, and that all will drive dangerously. However, this is not the case.

There is scope for incentivising people to train in the way that research (and to a limited extent gut feeling) suggests is best. This is the centrepiece of the AA proposal in Appendix B, which also has a capacity to take in the flexibility needed for a driving test regime appropriate to all who need to enter it.

**Q4 Which do you think would be most helpful to improve the educational value of the theory test?**

Our preference would be to continue the status quo, leaving a transparent system where there could be no allegations that people had failed on surprise questions, where the answers were illogical, or that questions were “stealthily” being made harder as part of the “war on the motorist”.

Publication of the questions alone would generally meet the same requirement and is also acceptable

Both the other options are unacceptable. The question bank defines what needs to be understood to pass the test. Without it they would not know the depth in which subjects needed to be learned. There would also be the risk that candidates could be misled by poorly produced or mischievous websites or publications. The current method overcomes these issues.

It must also be remembered that the information age means that most, if not all, candidates will have access to the internet and that sites will soon spring up giving details of questions and answers. Secrecy of the question or answer bank can never be assured.

Should the current arrangements be changed, we would expect that this is announced well in advance. People who have bought books, and learned their content should not find that their investment of time and money is wasted because the basis of the test has suddenly changed.

**Q5 Do you agree or disagree that case studies could have a role in helping assess whether learners have understood driving theory better?**

As a pure answer to the question they can. However, educationalists need to be able to guarantee that people who would otherwise drive safely would be able to handle such studies. Not every safe driver is literate and articulate.

**Q6 What other methods could be used to assess whether learners understand driving theory?**

It has to be questioned whether any more understanding of driving theory is needed. Drivers who do not know the rules are nowhere near as big a problem as drivers who ignore rules they know. Additionally we go to great expense to explain the rules on site for most of the areas where an understanding is vital (ie level crossings), and we have to accept that the more complex rules may not be apparent to strangers to the area, let alone people from abroad. The prime aim should be to make road rules intuitive and logical, rather than requiring them to be learned.

**Q7 How can we improve road safety using the hazard perception test?**

The development of the test needs to be continued, taking into account new research. Again the key is in making the drivers who pass the test safer, not making the test more difficult. It is also necessary to decide whether a driver who has followed the syllabus for learning to drive, and who has been certified as having done so by an ADI, would actually need a hazard perception test. If hazard perception cannot be learned by following the syllabus, where can it be learned?

**Q8 Do you agree or disagree that the marking system for the practical test should focus more on evidence of competence than on evidence of weakness?**

Yes. However there is still a need for the lack of competence to be able to be categorised and explained to the candidate. Additionally it must be resolved whether one bad error should result in immediate failure or whether such a failure should be acceptable if the remainder of the drive is competent, or if the failure results in no harm and is not totally the fault of the driver. Competent may not mean error-free.

**Q9 Do you agree or disagree with the introduction of independent driving into the practical test?**

The idea seems sensible. Again, though, much depends on how this can be done. The test should not be failed because a driver cannot remember the instructions, or understand how they relate to a certain piece of road. Similarly it must be ensured that doing your test in your home town does not place you at a greater advantage than those who are away from home. The current rationalisation of driving test centres seems to mean that many more people will be taking their tests on roads with which they are not familiar.

It would seem logical that the exercise should involve following signs. However, procedures will have to be in place to ensure that signs remain visible (foliage is cut back) and have not been removed or vandalised. The testing process will have to ensure that failure to take the correct turn (or taking the unsigned route due to local knowledge) does not result in failure, and that the task does not become easier for some because they can follow the car in front which may also be a driver taking the test!

**Q10 Do you agree or disagree with the introduction of Situational Judgement exercises into the practical test?**

We have serious concerns about this, although we can see some advantages. We would like it to be proved that this exercise will not be a memory exercise that may be beyond many people. Are even experienced drivers, far removed from the nervy pressures of a test, able to remember traffic factors that affected their joining a roundabout after they have negotiated the roundabout? And will everyone capable of driving safely be able to remember what happens and express how? Or will coaching in how to remember what happens in the “situation” become a key part of learning to drive even though it has no role in being a safe driver after the test. The AA must oppose the concept unless these fears can be overcome.

The idea also raises questions over the use of translators. Many who could take a test in English may not feel that they could answer questions in English. The examiner could well end up marking the translator’s ability to translate, as well as the candidate’s ability to answer.

**Q11 Do you have any comments on the way in which we test specific manoeuvres in the practical test?**

As explained earlier, there would be a logic to allowing those who complete an approved programme of driving instruction to miss the manoeuvres altogether. This would be an incentive to follow the preferred method of learning while still leaving other routes open. At the same time the competence to perform manoeuvres would have been demonstrated to, and approved by, and driving instructor.

**Q12 Do you agree or disagree that:**

**a) The theory test should be uncoupled from the hazard perception test**

Yes. As stated above this should also allow the theory test to be used as an incentive to potential drivers to take classroom instruction in areas that should change their attitude to driving

**b) The specified driving manoeuvres should be tested separately from the general driving part of the practical test?**

Yes, but it must remain possible and practical for both tests to be taken in succession and passed in either order.

**Q13 What are your views about providing more comprehensive feedback to all candidates at the end of each assessment, regardless of result? Please explain your reasons:**

The AA can see no difficulties with the principle of this. Not just the candidate should be present, but also a “friend”, instructor, parent or someone who can help the candidate absorb the information. Feedback should also be given to those who pass the test, about where they could have done better.

**Q14 What are your views about the proposed student workbook? How useful would a voluntary document be for all learners when they start learning to drive?**

A workbook would be welcomed. An official version should be produced, but individual schools should be able to use their own. Following the course in the books should show when a driver was ready to take the test, and identify what needs to be done to follow the preferred route to the driving test.

**Q15 Do you support the idea of progress being recorded in a student workbook?**

Yes. The extent to which this occurs and the importance of the information contained must however enter the equation. A lost book should not have huge consequences for the learner driver, and if the book becomes a key to being able to take the test, arrangements should be made to ensure that instructors and a central agency keep copies. Were there to be a mandatory minimum number of lessons the log would have considerable value – perhaps as much as £1000. The book would be the only proof that a learner had followed the syllabus, especially if a change of instructor became necessary.

**Q16 What sort of information should be considered in creating a star rating system to help learners in choosing their instructor?**

If there are no requirements on learners to use instructors, we see little need for any system. Should legal requirements to use an instructor be introduced some kind of system is needed to ensure that learners are fully aware of the qualities of the instructor that they are employing.

**Q17 What are your views on the usefulness of publishing the pass rates for different instructors?**

We are sceptical that this has a value. Apart from questions about whether pass rate is a fair measure of an instructor's ability, we are also concerned that it may lead to learners being "ditched" or not taken on by instructors who feel they may endanger their pass rates.

**Q18 Do you agree or disagree that learners should be required to have a 'test readiness' certificate signed by a supervising driver or driving instructor, before they can take a practical test?**

It should not be a requirement. There should however be incentives to those who do this. This is outlined earlier in this document.

Two levels of failure should be introduced – "acceptable" failure, and failure because the candidate is not remotely ready for test. Any instructor who certifies test readiness for a candidate who fails in the latter group should have this recorded, so that investigation by DSA is possible. We believe that an examiner should be able to distinguish between a bad performance caused by nerves and one caused by total under preparation.

**Q19 Do you agree or disagree that practical test candidates and their supervising drivers would benefit if the supervising driver were to sit in on the test?**

We have no problems with the idea provided it is practical (room in the vehicle). It would not seem practical to require someone to be there, and there may be issues if the candidate does not want to be accompanied yet the supervisor wants to be there. It does need to be asked whether supervisors (especially parents) would have trouble not helping the driver, or whether sitting in should be at the candidate's discretion. Having a supervisor present, particularly if the supervisor is also paying for learning to drive, could increase the strain on the candidate.

**Q20 Do you agree or disagree that practical test candidates and their supervising drivers would benefit from the supervising driver sitting in on the debrief at the end of the test?**

Again the idea seems reasonable. Again we feel that this should be at the candidate's discretion.

**Q21 Do you think an Attitude Advisor is likely to offer benefit by: a) providing useful guidance to students to help their learning programmes?**

**b) providing useful guidance to their supervising drivers?**

During the 1990s the AA worked on a similar project – the Learner Driver Questionnaire which was published in the Drive pack produced by DfT and HMSO. Obviously we support the idea of pre drivers being able to explore their attitudes and receive some information to help them try to change.

**Q22 How much do you think that learners would benefit from attending driver discussion groups?**

They should exist. But much will depend on the learner and his ability to interact in this sort of group. Attendance should be incentivised, not mandated. It may be quite hard to arrange meetings of learners all at roughly the same stage of the learning process, particularly in rural areas, taking into account that they cannot drive and that as many may work the sessions would have to be at times when public transport was not widely available.

**Q23 Are you aware of any evaluated road safety education programmes which could inform our work with pre-drivers, and that you would like to make us aware of?**

We are unaware of whether the Alexei Sayle “Drive” pack was evaluated or whether the AA LDQ contained within this was part of any evaluation.

**Q24 As well as the subjects mentioned in this Paper, what else should be covered in the pre-driver qualification in safe road use?**

The key messages are those affecting attitude. So much depends on how near those taking the course are to driving and whether they will be able to visualise some of the theoretical concepts. We would also wonder whether the course would be most attractive to the less academic pupils, particularly those who could see themselves ending up seeking employment as a professional driver.

**Q25 How can we make this qualification appeal to as wide a range of people as possible? How can it be made engaging, and where should it be made available?**

It should be incentivised through the theory test, and provided at a time of year when students are available, and not under pressure to work for other exams. There would appear to be an attraction in arranging for the qualification to be recognised not only in the school and learning to drive worlds, but also in the transport and van driving industries.

**Q26 What are your views on a pre-driver qualification in safe road use? Do you think young people would benefit from participating in it?**

Yes, most. It should be incentivised through the theory test. It has to be accepted, though that many people will not take their tests at 17, and of those who do many will then not have regular access to a car. Similarly the system has to cope with those who take their tests in their twenties, or even later.

**Q27 How do you think we can use additional qualifications to encourage a culture of lifelong learning?**

The system has to have the buy in of employers and insurers. To do that the system will have to be shown to reduce collisions, and probably cut fuel costs. Business is unlikely to support lifelong learning because it is a “good idea” – they need real proof that it works.

**Q28 How can motorway driving be taught more effectively?**

The time has come to tackle the issue of whether motorway driving instruction is essential for safety and therefore should be permitted (perhaps under professional supervision) for learner drivers, or whether it is wholly irrelevant given the safety record of motorways and the availability of dual carriageway A roads to learners.

Public opinion on the dangers of motorway driving is not borne out by statistics and the AA believes that the continuing debate on motorway training may be more a response to perceived danger than evidence on accidents.

**Q29 How can we best apply our reforms for learning to drive to those who want to ride a motorcycle?**

Obviously the competence based approach should extend to motorcycles, and the arrangements as far as possible should mirror those for car licences. Additionally, pre driver training and similar initiatives should be designed to cope with both groups.



## Appendix C

### **CHANGES TO THE DRIVING INSTRUCTION AND TESTING PROCEDURE CONSIDERED BY THE AA AND DISCARDED.**

Many proposals have been made on how the driving test, and the way learners learn, could be changed. We have considered these, against the following requirements:

- Any measure must be appropriate for all learners – not just 17 year olds;
- Any system that gives “powers” to driving instructors (ie being sole arbiter of when a driver is ready for test) must offer adequate consumer protection;
- Systems must not be over bureaucratic. We are seeking improved driver safety, not increased complexity;
- Any system must accept that young people (particularly those at university) do not stay in the same place and may not be able to have the same instructor. Similarly instructors do leave the industry. Learner drivers are also likely to lose documentation;
- A course of driving instruction is a considerable investment. Any system must ensure that people are not required to pay for lessons solely to meet rules. If they are ready to take the test they should be able to take the test.

#### **A minimum learning period**

The goal of such a proposal, making new drivers spend a year learning to drive, seems appropriate. The difficulty comes in making a system that is appropriate to all test candidates, and that is not unduly complex.

A straightforward arrangement by which drivers could not take their tests until twelve months after they were issued with a provisional licence would not achieve the object – many would simply apply on their birthdays, and not take lessons until nearer the time they could take their tests. To overcome this some sort of staged approach would have to be introduced, and such an approach would have to cope with issues like illness, being unable to afford lessons, or taking exams which could prevent stages being met.

Such a system would also impose considerable hardships on people who needed to learn in a hurry, especially in later life.

#### **Raising the minimum test age to 18**



The young driver problem affects every country, regardless of the age at which a licence can be obtained. Changing the minimum age would have little effect on accidents and could have serious detrimental effect on the driver training industry.

### **A statutory minimum number of lessons**

The AA believes that the best way to learn to drive is a combination of professional instruction and amateur supervision. We also accept that one cannot compel this course as many may not have a suitable (and willing) supervisor. But if the statutory level is set where it is roughly correct for someone without access to a supervisor, there is little incentive for an amateur to become involved (and pay for insurance).

It is also likely that the statutory minimum would become the “target” for all drivers and this would seem to prohibit a minimum below the number where readiness for test on professional instruction alone would be likely.

The system would also have to have some way of keeping track of the number of lessons received. Losing a document should not mean that a learner had to pay for another whole course of lessons, and should not expose instructors to a choice between retrospectively recording lessons or refusing and then charging for lessons that learners have already had.

### **“Sign off” from an approved instructor as fit to take the test.**

This has attractions in that it overcomes all the difficulties of drivers being ready for the test, without the pitfalls of compulsory numbers of lessons. It does however presume that instructors would not avoid authorising their clients for as long as they could, to gain extra income, and it does not necessarily cater for all circumstances. It could also pose problems for people whose instructor left them, who had learned in a disjointed fashion, or who had no proof of learning history.

Accordingly the AA feels that it is better to incentivise learning by this route, rather than require it. This will allow people who do not fit the system to take the full test.

### **Curfews and other restrictions for new drivers**

The AA has always seen the benefit in persuading young drivers not to drive at high risk times of day or with other young people in the car. But we have never been sure that legal measures to prohibit this were practical or enforceable. We have advocated an arrangement where high risk behaviours such as these could be treated as an aggravating factor in motoring offences and lead to more severe penalties. This would mean that drivers who did not commit offences would not be penalised, and that the police would continue to look for bad driving, not for new drivers. More details are at Appendix D

## Appendix D

### **PERSUADING NEW DRIVERS TO DRIVE MORE SAFELY – POST TEST CONTROLS**

The AA has long advocated a system on the lines below, which is intended to deter new drivers from driving late at night and with many passengers without actually banning them from doing so. It is felt that this arrangement will be less onerous on those who want to drive safely than many other graduated licensing suggestions, and will also avoid the need for a law with many exemptions. It will also mean that no additional enforcement effort will be needed, although it may result in more cases having to be heard in court.

- Either a probationary drivers code should be introduced, or paragraphs specific to young drivers should be included in the body of the Highway Code. This should tell young drivers not to drive between, say, midnight and 0600hrs, and not to carry more than one passenger. It could also impose other restrictions if these were felt necessary. We would prefer a specific code for probationary drivers (i.e. first two years). This could be included in their driving licence and require a signature before the whole licence was valid.
- Breaching this code would not be an offence in its own right. However, if other offences were committed it would be treated as an aggravating factor – a telling off would become a fixed penalty, a fixed penalty a court appearance, and a court may impose a heavier penalty. Courts would also be able to listen to the events surrounding the case and decide how to treat individual cases where a breach of the code might have been unavoidable, or not have contributed to the offence (i.e. delayed in traffic, passengers were siblings, etc).

This approach would give a clear message to young drivers that late night driving and carrying of passengers was not desirable. At the same time it would allow those who drive safely, especially to and from work, to continue to do so. The police, meanwhile, would only have to enforce the law against bad drivers.