

Transport Committee

Oral evidence: Young and novice drivers, HC 169

Wednesday 2 September 2020

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Members present: Huw Merriman (Chair); Ruth Cadbury; Lilian Greenwood; Simon Jupp; Robert Langan; Chris Loder; Karl McCartney; Grahame Morris; Greg Smith; Sam Tarry.

Questions 1 - 77

Witnesses

[I](#): George Atkinson and Ian Greenwood.

[II](#): Elizabeth Box, Head of Research, RAC Foundation; Dr Neale Kinnear, Head of Behavioural Science, Transport Research Laboratory; and Mary Williams OBE, Chief Executive, Brake.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: George Atkinson and Ian Greenwood.

Q1 **Chair:** This is the Transport Select Committee's first evidence session in our inquiry on young and novice drivers. We have two witnesses with us for our first panel. Could the first witness introduce himself, please?

Ian Greenwood: Good morning. My name is Ian Greenwood. I am a road safety campaigner.

Q2 **Chair:** Thank you, Ian. George, would you like to introduce yourself?

George Atkinson: My name is George Atkinson. I am also a road safety campaigner.

Q3 **Chair:** Good morning, Ian and George. Thank you very much for being with us this morning. Ian, your sound is a little unclear. The broadcasting team is, hopefully, going to work on it and get you back to full level. I will ask George to answer the opening question.

Could you both explain to us your experience in the issues campaigning on road safety? What brought you to your campaigning work, and what have you been involved in?

George Atkinson: On 12 January 1998, my daughter was killed while walking on a pavement in Enfield to attend a ballet class. As she was 30 minutes late, my wife and I went looking for her and ended up at the scene of the crash.

We have used Livia's untimely demise in a positive way to promote, encourage and protect safe driving. We do this by involving ourselves in campaigns for better enforcement of the road traffic laws, better legislation and better sanctions against proven dangerous drivers, and better road safety education.

On the issue of better road safety education, I have been involved with Brake and its Too Young to Die campaign, and with a road safety programme called Safe Drive Stay Alive, in which I am still involved. We are sponsors of the Livia Award for Professionalism and Service to Justice. This is an award given in Parliament every year and is now in its 21st year. It is an award given to a Metropolitan road traffic police officer for going the extra mile.

While I am interested in all aspects of road safety campaigning, I get involved greatly in the road safety education part of it. The programme that is nearest and dearest to me is Safe Drive Stay Alive. I have been involved with Transport for London and some behavioural change specialists in reviewing the programme in the London area.

I am also very passionate about issues like the graduated driving licence, especially looking at the reasons why young drivers are involved in so many collisions. Would you like me to go into that part of it now, or would you



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like me to concentrate on other areas? Your question seemed to be quite broad.

Q4 **Chair:** Yes, it was broad. We will be going into depth as we go through the session, so we will keep it at that broad response if that's okay.

George Atkinson: One of the fundamental questions of road safety comes into four areas. We are looking at the biological reasons why young drivers are involved in collisions. We are looking at the matter of road traffic law enforcement. We are looking at the level of experience of young drivers. We are also looking at the level of responsibility. I can deal with any of those if you want me to.

Looking at the biological reasons for young drivers being involved in collisions, the physical maturity of a young driver is fully completed by the late teens. The part of the brain that actually deals with the identification of hazards and risk assessment does not fully mature for a young male until the age of 25, and for a female until the age of 21. It is this that causes a great deal of the problems for young drivers on the road. That is one of the fundamental reasons why they are involved in so many collisions.

For every three drivers taking to the road, one will be involved in a road traffic collision within the first six months. As a percentage of drivers making up the total of the driving population, they are only 7%, yet they are disproportionately involved in something of the order of 24% of all injury collisions and 24% of all fatal collisions. That is obviously worrying. At the last count, young drivers were responsible for over 39,000 of all types of category casualties. They are involved in something of the order of 354 fatal casualties as well.

Looking at inexperience, one of the biggest challenges that a new driver will experience coming on to the road once fully qualified will be driving independently of an instructor and sharing the road safely with other drivers. Many young drivers will experience driving on a rural road for the first time, with its big sweeping bends, and during the night those roads are unlit. When you look at the level of casualties on those roads involving young drivers, over 80% of all the fatal collisions that occur involve young drivers. Something of the order of over 70% of all types of casualties involve young drivers.

Young drivers are not too keen to use motorways—not all of them, but some of them. They find that form of road and driving very intimidating. Many of these drivers will encounter different road conditions—rain and ice—and different volumes of traffic. Young drivers with lack of experience become very vulnerable, and they feel vulnerable.

When you look at the issue of responsibility, many young drivers have to show their passengers that they are driving the vehicle safely. The problematic area for some of these drivers is instructing their passengers to wear their seatbelt.



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Q5 Chair: George, can I ask you to pause there? We have many questions and we will go into many of those issues with you. We want to take good and precise evidence. I have the opening from you, which is superb. I am going to ask Ian to introduce himself and what has brought him to this campaign. Then we will get into the meat and ask you questions.

Ian Greenwood: My background is as a volunteer campaigner, fundraiser and somebody who is now interested in road safety and studying road safety, essentially as a victim of a road crash.

To explain why I am with you this morning, I want to share two things. One is my own family story. In October 2008, my daughters Alice, who is behind me in the photograph, and Clara were being driven home by their mum from Alton Towers having had an amazing weekend. On that same road that night, driving in the opposite direction were eight young drivers in five cars, all under the age of 23. They were racing each other down the road at high speed in the dark and in the wet. One of the racing cars lost control and there was a devastating crash. Three people were killed that night, including Alice just before her 13th birthday. Her neck snapped. Clara and her mum were admitted to intensive care units in Derby and Nottingham, and that night our lives changed in a split second. Since then, we have had no freedom to escape our new life.

I believe that if we took road safety more seriously in Britain, as we do with rail and air safety, Alice might be celebrating her 25th birthday later this year. The death of a child is so indescribable that we do not even have a word for it. If your partner dies, you are a widow or widower. If your parents die, you become an orphan, but as the parent of a child who dies there is not a word to describe me or their mum.

Why am I here today? It is quite simple. I welcome the fact that you are holding the inquiry. It is a really positive step, but I want Parliament to take road safety seriously. A good start would be helping young and novice drivers to be safe, and there is a lot more we can do. You as members of this Committee could start showing some of the leadership that we need right now and putting in some positive action.

I am not an expert in the field at all, but we know a lot about the problem, and we have known it for a very long time. We know that we have a problem with the number of young people killed on our roads. We know that the crashes kill the second highest number of young people in the country. We know that nearly one newly qualified driver in five crashes within six months. We know that there is up to 10 times increased risk when young people drive at night. We know that the risk rises when there are passengers in the car with a young driver.

We know that there is compelling evidence, which I am sure the experts will tell you about, on the effectiveness of a graduated driving licence. We know that Parliament has been discussing the risk associated with young drivers since 1937; I found a quote from *Hansard* from a guy called Reginald Sorenson in 1937. We know that in a debate in 2014, which has



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been the only specific debate in Parliament in the last 20 years, Robert Goodwill, for the Government, said that the freedom—I repeat the word: freedom—of young drivers should not be restricted.

We have failed young drivers. We continue to see avoidable deaths. Now is the time to do something after 83 years of talking about it. It is a combination of my interest and my own background, and for Alice and Clara, that I want this Committee to seriously consider doing something positive and not just talk about this particular issue. That is why I have joined you this morning.

Chair: Ian, thank you so much. Our condolences go to you, Ian, for the loss of Alice and the impact on Clara and their mum; and to you, George, for your loss of Livia. We have the greatest respect for the fact that you are turning that tragedy into something positive for others.

We want to use this session. We have until quarter past with you. We have loads of questions to ask you. If you keep the answers as brief as you can, we can get as much evidence as we can on the various subjects. We look forward to hearing your ideas and views.

Lilian will open with regard to the reasons for high collision rates with young and novice drivers.

Q6 Lilian Greenwood: Good morning, Ian and George. Thank you for your very powerful opening remarks.

George, you referred to a couple of the potential reasons why young drivers are more likely to be involved in crashes and collisions, and be killed or seriously injured. Can you take us through what you think the key factors are in those high rates among young and novice drivers, and if there are differences between young novice drivers and novice drivers more broadly? It would be useful if you could flush those out. What do you think are the key factors that we need to address in the reasons for those higher rates?

George Atkinson: I have already gone through the first one—the biological reason why young drivers are involved in so many collisions. There is also their lack of experience of driving. I do not think that the actual learning process in the UK is fit for purpose when it comes to teaching young people to drive. Yes, they are very good at the technical aspects of driving. There is no doubt about that. But when a young driver comes on to the road—I am talking about young drivers—their concentration is on steering the vehicle, changing gear and braking. They may be focused on the technical part of driving, but they are not focused on the hazards ahead of them on the road and all the other pitfalls for young drivers. They are not able to perceive or anticipate road dangers. That is fundamental.

We need to address those sorts of points. I do not think they are addressed during the learning process. I would like to see a minimum learning period that allows people to concentrate not just on the practical aspects of driving, but on road dangers as well.



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The other part I talked about is the inexperience of drivers. Again, in the learning process there is no guarantee that a driver will actually be taken on to a rural road with wide sweeping bends, where the majority of young driver collisions occur. At the same time, on those types of road, there is no evidence to show that drivers have any experience of driving in the evening. When you look at the proportion of driver collisions, on average 43% of them occur between the hours of 10 o'clock in the evening and 5 o'clock in the morning. That shows you that most of the driving done by young drivers takes place during the night-time and is most probably for reasons of recreation.

It is quite clear that distractions make young drivers more vulnerable on the road. A recent RAC survey found that 35% of the youngsters surveyed admitted to driving when looking at their emails and engaging in talking with other people. During the night-time, many young drivers will be driving with passengers. Those passengers can be an added distraction to the young driver.

There are two issues. One is passengers. When you look at the stats with passengers, you find that 25% of all passenger injuries and fatalities are young people. There is a problem in that direction as well.

Q7 Lilian Greenwood: Thank you. Ian, the list from George was brain development; inexperience, particularly of rural roads and driving at night; lack of hazard perception; distractions like mobile phones; and the distraction of and danger to young passengers. Are there any other factors we should be thinking about when we are looking at the reasons behind the disproportionate likelihood of young and novice drivers being involved in collisions and crashes?

Ian Greenwood: I agree with what George has described. From what I have read, I think the evidence is pretty clear. There are academics here today who can tell you very clearly what those are.

What I would add from my own personal experience is that if you listen to the discourse around road safety, if you look at "Top Gear" on TV and the computer games that young people play, there is a lot of noise in the system around speed and fearlessness. Thinking about my own experience when Alice died, there were five young people who set out to drive their cars that night with no fear, but also with no malice and no intent, I hope. They did not think. A lot of the safeguards that we need to put in place to help and protect those young people are about addressing those factors, because they do not think. It is about fear. It is about not thinking.

All the things that George has just described are absolutely right, but I think the responses to some of them need to take more control and more responsibility from them, because of the fear that they do not have. Cars are a lot safer. They drive at speed and there are the consequences that I have shared from my own experience and that of many thousands of other people.



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I do not think I would add anything more specific.

- Q8 **Lilian Greenwood:** In the higher rates of collision, which is more important? Is it reckless driving—the lack of thinking—is it inexperience, or is it a combination of the two? What is the balance? Ian, do you want to comment on that?

Ian Greenwood: It is different depending on the circumstances of the young people. In some crashes it will be one, and with others it will be the other example. I do not know what the balance would be. In thinking about solutions, you need to address both of them. I do not think it is about saying that we need to sort one out but not the other. It is about putting in systems and processes, something like the graduated driving licence, to address both. Whatever factors are causing the young person to drive recklessly or not think, whatever it might be—looking at their phone or changing their music on Spotify—the restrictions that I am looking for to help those young people need to address all those different factors. I do not think it is about ranking them.

- Q9 **Lilian Greenwood:** George, do you have any comment on that?

George Atkinson: I agree with Ian. We have to address all those factors. When you are looking at the different causes of collisions, you are looking at excessive speed, drink driving and the distractions available to young drivers. The answer you are going to come up with is that the learning process has to be extended. That is one thing.

The supervisory part of driving and the hours they spend learning to drive need to be formalised. After that, there are the obvious risks that drivers experience as they are maturing. You are looking at the risks that novice drivers who are older than 25, and upwards, are more prone to making. There are things like restricting the drink drive limits for young drivers and novice drivers over a long period—in other words, the provisional part of their licence. It cannot just be that you pass your test and that is it. You have to keep an eye on young drivers. If you do that, you will get a big reduction in collisions involving young drivers, as we have found out in places like Australia and New Zealand.

Northern Ireland is introducing its GDL by the end of this year. For drink driving, the alcohol concentration in the blood is zero. It is zero for many of the countries that have introduced GDL. It is also banning mobile phones. We know this is a persistent and growing problem within the young driver population. Therefore, we should be banning not just mobile phones but hands-free. Get rid of that. Don't let them be tempted to use mobile phones.

I have touched on the passenger side of it. This is a serious problem with youngsters. They not only go out there and kill themselves and other road users; they are also killing their passengers. If passengers are seen to be a distraction for young drivers between the hours of darkness, so be it. What we ought to do is ban young drivers driving with young passengers.



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It has been shown that they are four times more likely to crash if they have two to three young passengers in the car. Let us take that risk away from young drivers.

Lilian Greenwood: Thank you for making that point, George. I was personally contacted by Sharron Huddleston. I am sure that many of you know the campaigning that she is doing on behalf of her daughter Caitlin, who was tragically killed as a young passenger with a young driver who sadly was also killed. I am sure we will talk in more detail about some of the issues you have raised.

Chair: We are going to talk in depth in a second about graduated driving licences. Before we do that, we want to look at the current learning and testing framework that we have.

Q10 **Greg Smith:** Good morning, Ian and George. I would like to pick up on a couple of things that came out of the last section, if I may, before talking about intensive driving courses.

You made a comment, George, about young drivers possibly never having driven on a rural road, a winding or sweeping country lane with national speed limits. There are lots of those in my constituency. It struck me that the way we teach people to drive means it is perfectly possible to learn to drive having never driven at night, never driven on a rural road, possibly never having driven in the rain and never having driven in the wet or snow or other adverse weather conditions.

Do you think it might be good for people learning to drive at any age, but especially young people, to add to the learning process, or bolt on, a technical understanding of the way the car works in different conditions, and indeed cars of different power? What would be your view of changing the learning process? Before we let a young person or anyone learning to drive on to the road, should they go to purpose-built centres or on to skid pans with sprinklers on them, so that they understand how the vehicle behaves in different conditions before they put a wheel on the actual road with other users? George, do you want to go first?

George Atkinson: I am sorry; I cannot hear you. You are very quiet.

Greg Smith: Ian, did you hear me?

Ian Greenwood: I did.

Q11 **Greg Smith:** Perhaps you can go first, and maybe we can get a message to George about what I said.

Ian Greenwood: If we oversimplify some of the solutions, we have a problem. The answer I hope you get to is that there will be a suite of changes.

Focusing on the learning, which was your question, I think that the current way we teach young people to drive is not fit for purpose, and we end up with lots of circumstances where, as you have just described, they do not have either the time or length of experience. It is feasible to have a very



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short period of driving experience and still pass your test. If you live in a city and you drive for not many months, you can pass your test and have no experience of different conditions or different types of driving, as you have described. I have mates who live in rural Cheshire. The roads in rural Cheshire are very different from those in Liverpool, for example, which is where they were tested. They end up, having passed their test, driving on the rural roads that you describe in your constituency without that level of experience.

I agree that there are significant problems with the way we help young people to get that experience. We do not mandate time. That is one of the reasons I support some form of graduation or some form of provisional approach to enforce time when they have to get different types of experience, whether that is motorway, which I know has been recently changed, or whether it is rural roads or different weather conditions.

If I think about my own experience, one of the young people who was driving was not the one who hit the car, but they had passed their test literally weeks before they were driving that night. They were driving in the dark with no street lighting, in the wet, at speed and with no seatbelt on. I agree with you that the current approach is not fit for purpose. The solutions need to be much more appropriate for different conditions and to require people to experience those different conditions before we let them drive big heavy cars around the country.

Q12 **Greg Smith:** That is very helpful. Thank you. I guess the nub of what I am getting at is to get your view. In the 1990s, the Government introduced the theory test, so there was a hurdle to get over before you could actually get behind the wheel of a vehicle and learn to drive it. What would be your take on introducing another hurdle before you get in a vehicle on a road, and to force people wanting to learn to drive to really understand the way the vehicle behaves, in a custom facility? It might be a racetrack, not to go racing but somewhere that is away from other road users, so they can really understand how the vehicle behaves in different environments.

People would learn to control it, first of all. Then, for example, they would learn on a skid pan how the car would behave if it was wet or dry on turning a corner, or whatever the condition might be, before we graduated them up to being on a highway. George, did you hear me that time?

George Atkinson: I did. I understand the point you are trying to make, but I think testing in this country is telling people how to pass the test itself. It is like carrying out an educational test, but you are cramming it before you take the test. That is what driving is like here. You have your instructors, and I am sure that they are all very well meaning; there are some very good instructors out there.

I have talked to many people who have relayed their experience of learning to drive. They are learning to drive to pass a test. What needs to happen is what they have in Australia. There is a minimum learning period and a minimum supervisory period. The number of hours that people have to



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partake in driving in some parts of Australia is 120 of supervisory driving. With the best will in the world, you cannot say that is cramming to pass a test. You are going to encounter many different road dangers while you are taking your lessons. You are going to encounter different road conditions. You are going to encounter many different road volumes of traffic, so you are building up your knowledge of driving. It is not just the mechanics of passing the test.

There should be some element of the different types of collision that can occur and why those collisions occur. I think you can do that through road safety education, the common causes of crashes and how we can mitigate that sort of vulnerability on the road in our early years on the road as well. Road safety education has a big part to play.

We should be investigating the common causes of collisions for young drivers and address those in the learning period. In other words, if most collisions occur on rural roads, why aren't we carrying out lessons on rural roads? If big sweeping bends on rural roads are a big problem for young drivers, why aren't they being allowed to experience them?

For every hour of learning formally from a paid instructor, there should be two hours of practice from a qualified driver or from a parent in the car providing their own advice for the youngster. There are many reasons, but the elongation of supervised driving is one thing. They should be afforded the luxury of a minimum learning period of up to one year. I certainly think we should be formalising instruction as well, by means of a logbook.

Q13 **Greg Smith:** That is very helpful and you make some very valid points, particularly around forcing lessons to go on rural roads and maybe to drive at night. Bluntly, in my opinion, it should be to go on a motorway. We should be teaching young people about controlling a vehicle on a multi-lane, fast-moving road as well.

How would you feel though about intensive driving courses perhaps being discouraged or banned, and replacing the learning process with, as you have just described, a multi-tiered learning experience, maybe with a set number of hours? Going back to my original question, that would focus on getting the person learning to drive to really understand how a car will react on different roads at different speeds and in different conditions in an off-road environment first.

One of the big problems we have discovered here is controlling the vehicle on a twisty, turning rural road. If somebody learned first in a simulated off-road environment—not a computer-simulated environment—what would happen if they tried to take a corner too fast, that would give them real practical experience of understanding, in a safer environment where there are no other road users, what any particular vehicle would do if they tried to take at 60 a bend that you should not take at any more than 30. They would be off into the run-off area of whatever environment they were doing it in. That practical experience would let them learn the hard way, but in a safe way. Ian, what are your thoughts on that?



Ian Greenwood: It is about a combination for me. The problem is that we do not mandate them to get more experience. You used some very specific examples around rural roads. Whatever the solutions could look like would need to address that problem. Only doing off-road simulation and testing would not be enough, in my view. There is something about increasing their knowledge so that they understand, when they are driving at 80 mph on a 50 mph road in the wet, what the implications of their actions are when they hit a bend. You do not go around the bend; you hit the tree. Or you hit my daughter's car. All those are valid and important, but they are not instead of mandating a length of time that allows them to have different experience on real roads.

I agree with George that we should be mandating a fixed period, whether hours or months, to enforce their getting that different experience. It can be supplemented with the things that you are suggesting in terms of off-road simulation and all those different experiential things, but it does not replace the lack of experience. It gives more depth and knowledge about specific circumstances, but I would not want that to be instead of lengthy mandated experience required before tests.

Greg Smith: Just for the record, I was not suggesting it was instead of; I was suggesting an additional tier of learning, before someone learning to drive actually got on to a real road, to understand the mechanics of the vehicle and what it does in different conditions. Thank you; your answers have been very helpful.

Chair: We are into our last 10 minutes now, so I appeal for brief questions and answers. We want to take some evidence from you on policy changes you would like to see. We will start with the graduated driver licensing ideas.

Q14 **Ruth Cadbury:** I endorse the Chair's comments to you both about your reasons for being involved in this important issue.

My question is on the graduated driver licensing that you are both strong advocates for. It is a method used in other countries, and in Northern Ireland now, as a way of improving the safety record of young and novice drivers. It potentially covers a range of different measures. Which of those measures, in particular, do you think are the most effective?

Ian Greenwood: On my reading of the evidence—as I say, I am not the expert—there are three things for me. There is a lot of evidence about night-time driving. I am not going to quote any numbers at you, but very significant improvements have been made elsewhere by restricting driving at night. Whether you do that from midnight or 1 o'clock in the morning to 9 o'clock—

Ruth Cadbury: A brief answer is fine.

Ian Greenwood: There is different evidence. No. 2 is that having your mates in the car is a huge distraction. Again, there is loads of evidence that by not having your mates in your car you are less likely to be distracted.



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One of the reasons that Parliament has not been interested in this before is that it stops people getting to their job and back. Actually, you can mitigate that by not having your mates in the car at night and by having no alcohol. You can still go to work. That is the third thing.

The other one is the experience part of it—the time that they have experience in order to drive. The probationary period is really important.

Q15 Ruth Cadbury: George, which of the measures do you think are the most effective? Is it the same three as Ian?

George Atkinson: Ian has struck a chord with me. I think the night-time driving is definitely one. It is whether you restrict young drivers from driving from 9 pm through to 5 o'clock in the morning, or whether you restrict them from midnight through to 5 in the morning.

Young drivers are vulnerable, especially in the first two years on the road. If they are vulnerable, I do not think they should be driving with any young peer passengers in their vehicle at all. I agree with Ian on that one.

The other mandated thing the Committee wants to look at is drink driving. It is still a problem. It is a problem for 60% of young drivers. I think the alcohol blood concentration should be zero for young drivers, and that should cover a provisional period of two years. It should apply to novice drivers as well as to young drivers.

Mobile phones and hands-free should apply not only to young drivers, but to novice drivers as well over a period of two years. We should look at the minimum learning period for a young driver. It is all right to get into a car with an instructor and be instructed how to drive the car, but you need a period of practice, outside the instructor, with a parent or another supervisor, to practise what you have been taught. That needs to be done. The supervisory driving period ought to be something in the order of 120 hours.

One of you mentioned intensive driving. I see the current lessons being given to drivers as intensive learning. All they are doing is cramming to get them through the test and on to the road. That ought to stop. We should give young drivers time to breathe and time to gain experience on the roads, on motorways as well as rural roads, with night-time driving and in different volumes of traffic to sort out their braking distances and understand the different conditions you have to drive under.

Q16 Ruth Cadbury: Thank you. I am a resident and an MP in west London, where you can generally study and work without needing to drive a car. There are accusations that graduated driver licensing discriminates unfairly against young people in rural areas and that that would impact on social mobility. What do you both say about that?

George Atkinson: I go back as far as the introduction of seatbelts. I remember the clamour and campaign about seatbelts when people were



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saying they were a breach of our civil rights. When we look back, we can see that the introduction of seatbelts saved many thousands of lives.

Forgive me. I don't mean to offend, but it is the role of Parliament to provide leadership and direction on these issues, and to provide reasons why these things are introduced. I do not think it is a breach of human rights to get into a car and kill someone else just because you live in a rural area. No, I don't think so. We have to look at the facts and be brave enough to address them when it comes to safe driving.

Ian Greenwood: There are ways to be creative to help the young person you have just talked about. If they work in a pub and it is in the middle of nowhere, and they have to drive on a rural road, there are things that can be done from a policy point of view to mitigate that risk. That is the first thing. Policymakers need to be creative to address that challenge.

Parliament has been talking about this forever. For me, it is just a complete excuse. If you are asking me to choose between a daughter who is still alive because of a graduated driving licence and some mild restrictions on her ability to drive, or a dead daughter, the answer is really very obvious. Parliament and policymakers can be creative to address that challenge. I think it is an excuse not to act.

Ruth Cadbury: Thank you. You have both made those points very powerfully.

Q17 **Chris Loder:** I want to say, to start with, that a good friend of mine passed away in a road traffic accident a couple of years ago. I wondered whether the panel had any views as to how much road markings and absence of cats' eyes may contribute to accidents, particularly in rural areas and in bad weather. Do you have a brief comment or view on that, Ian?

Ian Greenwood: First of all, they are not accidents; they are crashes. It is obvious when you are driving down a road and the street lighting is not very good—my own example with Alice's death—or the road markings are not very clear and they have not been repainted for donkey's years. Some of those are just common-sense things. I absolutely agree that good maintenance is very important.

Q18 **Chris Loder:** I agree with you that maintenance is important. I am just asking whether you think that is a real contributory factor to what we are seeing.

Ian Greenwood: Yes. I was going to give an example.

Q19 **Chris Loder:** The example is fine, Ian. I just wanted to get a quick, short answer. I butted in a little bit, but we are a bit close for time.

Ian Greenwood: The answer is yes.

Q20 **Chris Loder:** George?

George Atkinson: I live in a rural area. I live in Rugby and I fully agree with you. I would even go further than that. It is not just on the rural roads



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where stop markings at a junction are faded. If you go into your local supermarket and look at the markings for parking, driving and coming up to a roundabout at those supermarkets, they also have very poor visibility. They are not clearly marked at all.

Q21 Chris Loder: In your opinion, do you think councils take the responsibility for road markings and keeping them to a good standard seriously or not?

George Atkinson: I think they take them seriously, but, like all areas of business, they have a priority list that needs to be attended to. They have limited resources. They are obviously saying that road safety is an important matter, but when they go around looking at the markings they say, "Well, can we re-mark them in six months' time rather than two months' time?" I am sure there is a lot of that going on. Road safety does not escape the lack of resources that is going around at the moment.

Chair: Thank you, Chris. Our condolences to you and your friend's family. There are two last questions I want to get in, even though we are over time. The first is around black-box technology, and the final question will be about preventing drink driving.

Q22 Grahame Morris: Thanks very much, Ian and George, for sharing your experience and the expertise you have developed in such terrible circumstances as to how we might reduce the incidence of collisions and crashes. One thing we have not mentioned so far in terms of mitigation and identifying particular risks is the use of technology. A philistine like me would say a black box, but telematics has come on in leaps and bounds over recent years.

What are your views, Ian? Could we reasonably apply that in these circumstances to novice and young drivers? Would it be something that you would recommend?

Ian Greenwood: Yes. Clara drives now and she has a black box in her car. Technology is part of the solution going forward. I have a view that there is no silver bullet in all these questions. Black boxes, telematics and other forms of engineering or technology innovation are absolutely part of the solution going forward. My worry, though, is that we put too much focus on the technology and ignore some of the other policy areas. You are going to talk about alcohol in a minute, and alcohol is another example.

In terms of black boxes, from an insurance point of view from the young person's perspective, you can sell them very clearly to the young person or the novice driver. There are huge advantages financially for them as an individual. The road safety benefits have been proven. From my point of view, it is a no-brainer. I do not know why we do not mandate them.

Q23 Grahame Morris: George, do you agree?

George Atkinson: Yes, I do. The analysis of the information in the black box is a bit like shutting the gate after the horse has bolted. These things tend to get scrutinised once a collision has actually taken place.



In Italy—it goes back to 2010 or 2012—they made it mandatory for black boxes to be in all new cars. I can see that happening in the United Kingdom, especially when we get the autonomous car coming on stream.

I worry about how often black boxes are going to be investigated. I am sure a responsible parent will look at their child's black box regularly. When will the insurance companies look at the black box? Is it just before the insurance policy runs out? I do not see the black box as a substitute for good learning or a minimum learning period, but I see them being a benefit for the courts. In other words, when a car driver has been banned, their reintroduction on to the roads must include a black box being installed in the motor vehicle.

Grahame Morris: Thank you very much, George. I am going to hand back to the Chair because I know we are short of time and we want to cover a little bit more ground. Thank you very much indeed for your contribution.

Q24 **Simon Jupp:** Good morning to the panel. Thank you very much for your emotive and very engaging testimony so far this morning. Since 2000, we have seen the Think campaign on television—those emotive adverts that make you stop in your tracks the first, third and fourth time you see them on television.

In the decade that followed the conception of those adverts, deaths in the UK reduced by 46% on the roads, which is a hugely positive step. Recently, a new campaign was launched. I am not what many would determine as a young man any more, sadly, but it is called the Pint Block campaign. Essentially, it encourages young men to intervene to stop a mate drinking and then driving. At the moment, because of a variety of different things I am sure, it appears to be relatively low profile. How much of a problem do you think it is? Do you think a campaign like that will actually help?

George Atkinson: I have positive feelings for the Think campaign. It is an important part of road safety education. Through the Think campaign, you find different ways of engaging with young drivers. The one with a rapper in the car being a persistent nuisance to the driver, and the driver telling him, "Hey, leave me alone," is a good one. Finding different ways to engage with young people is important.

I do not think this is a substitute for elongating the supervisory learning period for young drivers or the number of lessons that they actually take, but for the time of year, for Christmas—

Q25 **Simon Jupp:** I am sorry to interrupt, George. I just thought it would be interesting to ask you this briefly. Do you think one of the issues we face is that it is not actually clear to some people how much they can drink before they get behind the wheel? Of course, many people feel that they cannot drink anything before they get behind the wheel. Some people think it is one or two units. It is not entirely clear, is it?

George Atkinson: I am sorry; I didn't hear you. You are very quiet.



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- Q26 **Simon Jupp:** I apologise. I will project more for you. The point I was making was that sometimes alcohol units and the amount that we can consume before we get behind the wheel, in some people's minds—of course, many people choose not to drink at all—would be a contributing factor. Perhaps there is a lack of understanding as well. That is why I mention this particular new campaign to stop men getting behind the wheel after a few pints.

George Atkinson: My opinion on drink driving is that there should be zero alcohol in the body. That is the start. The actual campaign itself, yes, I think would be of benefit. I am sorry, I do not want to procrastinate, but I found it very difficult to pick up the question.

- Q27 **Simon Jupp:** I apologise. I will go to Ian with that question and ask him about the Pint Block campaign. Do you think the idea of saying to a friend in the pub, "Actually, you've had too much. You can't get behind the wheel," is a positive thing? Have you seen it yet? Do you think it will work?

Ian Greenwood: Yes; I agree with you. Think does a great job. They target. One of the ones I remember is the guy who was a hit and run, and the dead child kept appearing on the screen in different scenarios when he was at work and in the office. Think does a great job. The campaigns are targeted, and they address all the different issues.

You focused specifically on alcohol. I have not seen the one you are talking about, but the ones where the keys are taken off their mates in the pub are useful. I agree with George. The basic problem is the confusion around blood alcohol levels. I think we are still the highest in Europe in terms of what we allow in England and Wales. I think Scotland has changed it. That is a problem that we need to address.

I hope the theme you are hearing from me is that any solution is a combination. Yes, education is part of the mix. Yes, reducing or eliminating blood alcohol as part of what we are allowed to do is part of the mix, plus the other things we have talked about. Think does a good job, yes.

- Q28 **Simon Jupp:** Very briefly, and a one-solution answer please from each of you, what more should the Government do to try to prevent young drivers from drink driving? What is the one thing you would like the Government to think about and focus on?

George Atkinson: Youngsters find it very difficult to establish what will take them over the limit for driving and what will keep them under the limit. Therefore, it should be zero. There should be no substitute at all and no procrastinating about the level or whatever. It should be zero blood alcohol concentration.

Ian Greenwood: The same answer from me. We need clarity. It is confused, and clarity would be having zero blood alcohol levels for everybody, not just young people.

Simon Jupp: I appreciate the opportunity of speaking with you both this



morning. Thank you very much.

Chair: Ian and George, that concludes our session. We would like to thank you both very much for the ideas you have brought. I am minded that you mentioned that Parliament has not been debating and discussing this enough in your view. Actually, it has this morning and you have obviously used the legacy of Alice and Livia to do that. I hope that that means as much to you as it does to us. I want to end by saying thank you very much indeed. I hope you will follow our report and recommendations very closely. Thank you.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Elizabeth Box, Dr Neale Kinnear and Mary Williams OBE.

Q29 **Chair:** We now move to our second panel. We have three academics and experts from road safety charities. I will ask you to introduce yourselves.

Dr Kinnear: Good morning. My name is Neale Kinnear. I am head of behavioural science at TRL, the Transport Research Laboratory.

Elizabeth Box: Good morning, everybody. I am Elizabeth Box, head of research at the RAC Foundation. I am also a PhD research student at Cranfield University, researching young driver safety and pre-driver education.

Mary Williams: I am Mary Williams, chief executive of Brake, the road safety charity. We are also a victim support charity. We run the national roads victims service, which is a case management service across the UK for victims of bereavement and serious injury following road crashes.

Q30 **Chair:** Mary, Elizabeth and Neale, good morning and thank you very much for being with us. We have a lot of questions to try to get through in the hour. We will try to put them briefly to you. If you can put the answers back to us briefly, we would appreciate it.

Young drivers make up 7% of licence holders, yet they account for 21% of all car drivers killed or seriously injured. How satisfied are you that successive Governments have treated this matter with sufficient concern?

Mary Williams: Very unsatisfied. One of the important things to consider is that the new drivers Act, which as we know enables revocation of a driving licence within two years after six points accumulate on a licence, is a starting point. There is almost an opportunity now to see it as the road to a phased or graduated—whatever you want to call it—driver licensing system from that point.

The various components of a phased licensing system have been well and truly tested and trialled across many different nations with inordinate success. The more components you bolt on to a phased driver licensing system, the more casualty savings you can achieve. It is not only that. There are administrative benefits to having such a phased driver licensing



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system. It perhaps places less burden on the administrative process of licensing because our teens are coming through in stages in a sense.

There is so much evidence that a phased driver licensing system saves lives, whether you are talking about the additional restrictions—some of which you have already heard about this morning, such as restrictions on passengers, night driving, or alcohol—or whether you are talking about a minimum learning period for professional tuition. It is the way forward.

It is absolutely unacceptable and not comprehensible, certainly not to our victim group, that such an obvious development has not yet occurred in Great Britain.

Elizabeth Box: We certainly do not have the best young driver safety system when we look at international comparisons. In that regard, there is a lot more that we can do. There is a huge amount of evidence and research out there to tell us what is effective and what is not. There is certainly more that our Government can take on board in that regard.

One of the important things to bear in mind from what the research tells us is that it is difficult to tell the difference between higher and lower-risk individuals. What is generally recommended is that you take a population-based approach with things like graduated driver licensing, rather than a very individual-focused approach, because that has been found to be more effective.

The previous evidence session touched on a number of different approaches. We need to take a systematic approach to how we deal with young driver safety rather than focusing on fixing individuals. We need to look at how we can fix things within the system to make it easier for young people to make the right sorts of choice. That can be laws or legislation.

With regard to things that the Government have done positively, it is good that in their road safety statements they have some ongoing support for Driver2020, which is run by Neale and his colleagues over at TRL. That is a randomised control trial looking at how effective different approaches can be. It is great to have that level of evidence and research that the DfT is backing.

The practical driving test is now akin to more real-world conditions, which is a positive. As spoken about in the other evidence session, the Think campaign has developed its approaches. It is much more positive to see that they are focusing on this age group, particularly of young males, and focusing on things like humour and targeting that age group rather than using fear appeal, which we know does not typically work as well with that group.

There is a lot more that we could be doing in the UK, particularly around licensing. There are different approaches we could be taking to pre-driver education, which I am sure we will get to later. It is good to see that there have been some developments as well. It is important to recognise that we



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are world leading with regard to hazard perception testing and awareness. Other countries are looking to follow us in that regard. We know that one of the most effective things we can do is to skill up young people's hazard perception awareness to bring them in line with more experienced drivers.

Dr Kinnear: I echo what Liz has just said about the systematic approach being really important, rather than focusing on individual young drivers and trying to fix them. I guess your question was around whether we were content with what has happened over the last few decades.

Ultimately, we would have to question why the evidence has not been followed from a public health perspective, whereby lives and casualties could have been saved if action had been taken. By the Department's own figures, in 2002, 800 to 1,000 deaths or serious injuries would have been prevented just with the implementation of a 12-month learning period. Yet by the end of the consultation in 2004, that was deemed as not sufficient for legislative action. In 2008, the Transport Select Committee said that there had been too much dragging of heels on the issue. I guess it is important that this Committee is now looking at the issue again to question why we have an evidence-based approach that has not been implemented to date.

Q31 **Chair:** Neale, we have talked a lot about young drivers, but anecdotally at least, it appears that people are putting off their test dates, so we should focus on novice drivers. ALA insurance brokers have found that 28% of older novice drivers admit to having a collision within their first year. Do you think the Government should do more to collect data on the performance of older novice drivers?

Dr Kinnear: One difficulty we have is that STATS19—the data we hold on collisions where the police are involved—does not collect the experience level of the driver involved. It just takes the age, so it is very difficult for us to analyse people who are inexperienced and involved in crashes, particularly older drivers. If we want to look at novices, we have to just look at 17 to 19-year-olds, who are, by default, novices because of their age.

We could do more by making it easier to collect the data. You are right that we need to look at the issue of being a novice and inexperience as being the critical factor. All novices, regardless of their age, are at increased crash risk due to their inexperience. For example, in the first year of driving for a 17-year-old, age will account for a 6% reduction in risk, but gaining 5,000 miles of driving will reduce their risk by 36%. It is the gaining of experience for all novices, irrespective of age, that is important.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed. Let us start getting through the evidence. We want to look at the reasons behind higher collision rates.

Q32 **Lilian Greenwood:** Thank you, panel, for your answers so far. Mary, in your written evidence you said that the brain development of young drivers means they are more likely to be involved in a road traffic collision. I am



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interested in the difference between young novice drivers and older novice drivers.

Can you elaborate a bit on that evidence and what it means? Can you particularly cover whether there is any gender difference? I understand that young women's brains mature earlier than young men's. Is that right, and does it make a difference?

Mary Williams: That is right. Many psychologists have studied the issue. I am simply reporting at second hand what I have learned from them. Neale would be able to refer you to the various bits of research on this. Certainly, it is the case that the frontal lobe development means that, particularly later for males, it can be harder to mitigate instinctive risk taking—"instinctive" may be the wrong word, but certainly higher risk taking—and a lack of understanding about the need to take care, due to that still-developing brain.

As Neale said, there is the situation where in the first six months to a year of driving you also have the mechanical skill issue. There are a number of things going on. I would make a plea to the Committee. We know that young and novice drivers are causing casualties in really high numbers. They are often killing their own generation. They are killing themselves and their passengers. They are killing their friends who have chosen to walk home from the pub rather than drive home, and children, as we have heard this morning. We can keep debating for the next decade the whys and wherefores of cognitive development and mechanical skill learning, or we can accept the evidence of phased driver licensing schemes in many nations around the world that are reducing casualties, and take action in line with that.

I have attended psychological conferences about young and novice drivers for 20 years and been told all kinds of fascinating bits of information about why young drivers take risks. Some young drivers take risks because, for example—there is some good research from Otago University on this—they are in a lower socioeconomic group and they have been brought up around risk taking. That is just one example of why so many young people are involved in collisions as a result of young driver behaviour. That is the way I would answer it.

Elizabeth Box: I want to elaborate a little on the brain development side. It is important to recognise that our understanding of the human brain and the adolescent brain has changed significantly over the last 10 to 20 years. We know a lot more now.

Essentially, that research tells us that you have staged brain developments. By the age of, say, six, children have their occipital lobes fully developed. That is the sight-related issue and why getting glasses at a young age is important.

What we find for teenagers is that they obviously have developing brains. They have a developing hormonal environment. They have



neurotransmitters—serotonin, oxytocin and dopamine. Dopamine is the interesting one because it is relevant for feelings of pleasure. It is very variable for young people. There are different levels of dopamine. They need more input for pleasure than adults do. You can imagine that that sort of hormonal environment leads to young people needing to seek more input for that pleasure. They are more likely to take risks, and that is exacerbated by their peers.

We have talked about the frontal lobe not developing until the third decade of life, until about 25. The other thing to recognise is that we have a risk-taking environment, and planning or self-control is not fully developed at that stage. What the research has found is that by the age of 16 young people are very good at planning in cool and emotionally neutral environments. They can sit in a classroom and develop plans as well as any adult could. It is when they get into hot emotional environments that they find it very difficult to regulate their behaviours. Obviously, that is the situation we find ourselves in with cars. They are with their peers in a hot emotional environment and they are not able to regulate their behaviour.

There are things we can do. We can help them develop better planning about what they are going to do in those scenarios and take it through. The key thing to recognise is that the issue of risk taking in adolescents is biologically based. It is conserved even across species and across cultures. The real plea is for us to develop interventions that are based on the brains that young people have, rather than the ones that we hope they would have.

Q33 Lilian Greenwood: Neale, as the psychologist on the panel, do you have any comments to add, particularly on what the policy implications are with respect to the fact of young people's brain development, and, as Elizabeth has described, the tendency for more risk-taking behaviour in certain circumstances?

Dr Kinnear: Liz has covered some of the science around brain development. In terms of policy, we have to look at it from the safe systems approach and look at safe road users. That is making our roads and our systems of bringing new drivers into the system realise that the drivers we are bringing in—if we are licensing at 17—have limitations. Therefore, we have to make it as safe as possible for them to enter the driving system as fully-fledged licensed drivers.

From a policy perspective, a phased licensing approach is a more natural one. It fits with any learning and development of a skill. Driving is a technical skill, but it plays out in a very social context that offers expressive opportunities. Young people often use vehicles to express themselves. A phased licensing approach allows us to protect the young driver and other road users while they are learning. That would be the case for any skill.

We could take the example of football. You can teach someone to kick the ball quite easily, but to put them in a game situation is a completely different context. They might not be as good at anticipating where they



should be—their positioning and so on. Driving on the road has potentially fatal consequences; it is not a game. We have to have a system in place that allows drivers to learn through their natural process.

The key thing that Liz pointed out was that this is a human biological issue and the system needs to fit around that. All countries have an over-representation of young and novice drivers in their collision stats. It is not a UK-only thing. It is about trying to find the best approach to provide a protective environment for them to learn in.

Q34 Lilian Greenwood: One aspect of the protective environment that seems potentially very important is around carrying passengers. Mary, the research that Brake produced stated that young drivers are four times more likely to be involved in a fatal collision when they are carrying young passengers than when they are driving alone. That is a very stark statistic. I suspect it relates to the previous question. What are the reasons for that disparity? I know it is stating the obvious, but what should be done to reduce it?

Mary Williams: It is important to state the obvious, which is that, if we are not allowed to carry passengers, we cannot kill passengers in our vehicles. Thinking about teen deaths in the road casualty figures, if you look at the 16 to 19 age bracket and compare it with the 20 to 29 age bracket, you will find that teens on our roads are dying in the largest numbers. Nearly half those teens, as a rate, are dying inside cars, with just over half the people in cars being passengers and not the driver—31% are riding motorbikes, mostly over 50cc, and a quarter are pedestrians or cyclists. Those are the ways that teens are primarily dying on roads.

If you look at the 20 to 29 age bracket and how those people are dying and being seriously injured on the roads, you find that the rates are maintained across all those road user categories, apart from passengers in cars. They are halved. We know that teen drivers carry their teen friends. We know that teen drivers are basically, in effect, free commercial taxi drivers. That is the truth that contributes to the high casualty rate caused by young drivers, who are also killing vulnerable road users outside vehicles, and other vehicle occupants of course.

If we consider young drivers as taxi drivers for their mates, we need to consider them not just as inexperienced drivers, not just as drivers with cognitive development issues and not just as drivers with all kinds of other factors playing on them, such as mobile phone addiction, pressure to drink alcohol and social pressures of various descriptions—drugs as well. If we consider them also as occupational drivers, we will start to think sensibly about a phased driver licensing system in the same context that, for example, many of the fleet supporters of Brake do when they are training, evaluating and monitoring their novice and young commercial vehicle drivers of various types. These are the well-risk-managed corporations that Brake works with.



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We need to consider the casualty figures around passengers and, as has been said so eloquently by Liz and Neale, we need to consider solving the problem through looking at systems rather than individuals. As a parent of a teenager, it is not a matter of arguing or discussing with your teenager whether they accept a lift from their friend. It is a matter of simply saying, "It is against the law." As a young driver who is coming under pressure to carry their friends, it is simply a matter of saying, "It is against the law." It is enabling; it is giving young people the power to be safe and to protect the lives of other young people.

Elizabeth Box: I want to add to Mary's contribution some information about research that Neale at TRL did for us, and we updated in 2018, about the effect of graduated driver licensing, and the effect of stronger or weaker passenger components in particular.

The update we did in 2018 showed that if we introduced a graduated driver licensing system in Great Britain, and if we had similar reductions to other countries—say a 20% reduction in casualties within that particular age group, which is what other countries have typically found—we would have 2,733 fewer casualties and 281 fewer people killed and seriously injured. That was particularly involving 17 to 19-year-old drivers. You would have greater effects if you increased the age range.

The key thing was around passengers. The strong passenger component was focusing on having no 15 to 24-year-olds at all, unless you had a 25-year-old-plus driver in the vehicle, versus a weak passenger component, which was having no more than one 15 to 19-year-old passenger in the car, unless you had somebody over 25.

On the difference between the strong and the weak effect, only having one passenger—the weak effect—was 51% effective versus the strong passenger component; it was half as effective as having no passengers at all. All that research has been done to look at how you cut it and what the effect of these things is. Obviously, the stronger it is, the better effect you will have. It comes down to a political decision at the end of the day about safety and mobility.

As others have said, there is the right to have mobility and freedom, but there is also the right for young drivers to be within a system that protects them, given their level of experience. There is the right of parents to have a system that protects their children if they go in with limited experience. You can look at it from those different angles as well.

Q35 **Lilian Greenwood:** Neale, is there anything you want to add on that specific point about protecting young passengers?

Dr Kinneer: There is a really stark statistic. In 31% of fatal collisions involving a young driver, it is the young driver who is the fatality. If we are looking at 2016 data, the other 245 people are passengers or other road users. It really is a public health thing; it is not just about an individual



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driver who we are looking to try to prevent from doing something bad. It is protecting everyone who is using the road.

To build on that, I did a quick analysis to update what Liz was talking about. Had a GDL system been implemented in 2013 following the review, we could have prevented 122 fatalities by 2018, and over 2,000 killed and seriously injured by that time, equivalent to a cost saving of almost £1 billion. If we had implemented it in 2005, following the review at that time, we would have prevented almost 550 fatalities and almost 8,000 killed or seriously injured, which works out at over £3.5 billion saving in costs to society. There are potentially important savings to be made with some of the legislation that could be brought in.

- Q36 **Lilian Greenwood:** Am I right in thinking it has a dual effect? If you do not have other young passengers in the car, you are less likely to be involved in a crash. Obviously, if you are involved in a crash, it is more likely to do more harm if you have passengers in the car. Is that right? Mary is nodding.

Dr Kinneir: That's right.

- Q37 **Chair:** Could I come in on one point that Mary made? Young people might find it quite offensive if they were told that they are not allowed to get into a car once they have passed their test. They would understand that risks are increased, but there is a risk in every single daily transaction. What would you say to young people who might feel that they are just being mollycoddled and controlled by the state, and not able to have the same freedoms as other generations have had?

Mary Williams: We work in schools. We work with teenagers. We work in a way that enables them to think about risks and to engage in campaigning; to put them in the driving seat of campaigning. We have found that young people are intelligent; they are capable of understanding the issue just as well as we are in this Committee hearing, and they are capable of coming to the same conclusions. They are then willing to advocate with the charity for change to phased licensing.

We must also remember that we have had 70 years, as has been explained earlier this morning, of driving being considered as an aspirational thing to do. It is something to do with independence, almost a right and something that is potentially cheap, which is of course incorrect, and as an overwhelming icon of independence for young people. That is not always the case any more.

We see from the national travel surveys that are published that many young people see driving as something that they do not want to do because they are too busy. They want to be digitally connected. Many of them can get to their places of education and work without driving, so we have a real mixture of culture now, which is something we can build upon. We can utilise our education system to inform young people on a public health platform about the risks associated with the issue of learning to drive and



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the sensible solutions that are, we hope, being put in place as a result of the Committee's work, and our own advocacy and the lobbying of victims to enable and protect young people. I do not think that it is about young people taking offence at all. They are bright.

Chair: That debate may continue.

Q38 Greg Smith: Mobile phone use was touched upon in the last session. Clearly, the attempt to physically handle and use a mobile phone when driving is straightforwardly illegal and comes with very harsh penalties, for good reason. Do we need to look at a better element of education around the risks of physically holding and trying to operate a mobile phone among young people and novice drivers, and lock it into the learning and testing process a little bit, and not try to throw the baby out with the bathwater, but equally lock into the learning process how to safely do other things while you are driving, just as we have added to the learning and testing process how to follow a satnav? It might be singing along to the radio, which everyone does, or embracing the technology that is coming through; my car reads my text messages to me as I am going along.

That will ensure that we are not just banning and stopping everything, but enabling young and novice drivers as they learn not just to engage gear, release clutch, mirror, signal, manoeuvre, but actually learn the process of managing other things, from the radio to voice-operated controls, to following satnavs. Isn't that a better way to go about ensuring that young people are equipped to get on the road?

Dr Kinnear: You make some very good points regarding training and the safe use of in-vehicle entertainment systems and legal technologies as part of the test. As you mention, satnav has been included. That being involved in the test actually led to more practice with satnav by learners. Things that are put into the test will impact on the way that drivers learn.

Mobile phones are a particularly difficult technology now, because they connect with in-vehicle systems. It is not necessarily about holding the mobile phone. It could be things like you mentioned, such as the system reading a text message to you. You do not feel you are doing anything illegal at all, but in fact it could be distracting. Is that text message relevant to safe driving? That is the key question. Are the tasks you are doing when driving relevant to the task of maintaining safe driving performance? If not, do they need to be done at all at that point, or could they be done when the vehicle can be stopped?

There is a need to realise that technology is now part of vehicles and that safe use of that technology is important. A mobile phone ban at this stage would be unlikely to be successful and would be very difficult to implement and enforce because it is so integrated with the vehicles. However, the technology providers can put in place systems to control the use of that technology while you are in motion. The key area is working with the technology providers to make sure that the software is suitable and relevant.



We recently tested Apple CarPlay and Android in our simulator, for IAM RoadSmart, and found, with touch control, some really concerning time that people were taking their eyes off the road to engage with the system. Voice control systems, on the other hand, allow people to maintain their eyes on the road and are better, although there is still some distraction. These systems can improve a lot, and we should work with the technology providers to improve the systems to become more intuitive, and then integrate them into the learning process to be used safely.

Q39 **Greg Smith:** Does anyone else have a particular view?

Elizabeth Box: I agree with a lot of what Neale has just said. We know that young drivers are particularly susceptible to distraction, with mobile phones being a big one of those.

We would like to see the learning to drive process moving much more towards helping people to develop strategies and plans for how they are going to manage the risks. Essentially, what you are talking about is what you are going to do with your mobile phone in the car. Are you going to put it away in the glove box so that when it goes off you are not going to deal with it? I know we have talked a lot about general policies, but these individual plans are very individual. It will depend on what works for which person.

As Neale said, there is a lot of technology now available. There is soft blocking of calls coming in. We should be actively encouraging young people to make use of the technology that is there to make sure that they have safe driving behaviours.

There is some research going on in Australia at the moment trying to understand when young people use mobile phones, and whether they use them at intersections or on boring pieces of road. They are trying to use technology to highlight to young people when they could pull over to use their phone, or when it might make sense. That is recognising, as you say, that phones are not going to go away. Technology-enabled vehicles are here to stay, but we have to integrate them with the driving task and make sure that safety is the primary focus.

Q40 **Greg Smith:** Mary, I will come to you when I have made this point. In my experience—I do not know whether this is just a Land Rover thing or whether it is all cars—with Apple CarPlay the phone has to be plugged in. You cannot engage CarPlay over Bluetooth. If the phone has to be plugged in and therefore has to be stationary, there isn't the temptation to use it. I see some of these technologies as preventing the temptation to pick up the phone, especially when Siri pops up and says, "You have a text message from so-and-so. Do you want me to read it to you?", and you just say yes or no. That is with voice control.

It would be much better to prepare young drivers, as part of the learning process, to be able to use the technologies that are coming out, rather than constantly telling them that any use of technology in the car is bad and



just to focus on holding the steering wheel. We need to prepare them much better for all the other distractions that are just part of driving, and I would welcome your thoughts on how we do that.

To put in a slightly real-life experience—not tongue in cheek—I have been driving for 25 or 26 years and there is nothing more distracting than having a child in the back seat, which hit me 23 years into my driving career. The distractions come through life. It is about preparing people for those eventualities, rather than necessarily always coming from a start-point of, “It’s bad.”

Mary Williams: You make a good point about passengers. There are some things that we can keep out of our vehicles and some things we cannot, such as our children. You can hardly tie your child to the roof rack or switch them off. As a charity, we very much lament the integration of mobile technologies into vehicles. They have been integrated to such a degree, as Neale said, that it would be challenging to legislate to take them out now.

The presiding point is that driving is the most dangerous thing that most of us do on a daily basis. We should therefore eliminate all risks that are unnecessary, including all risks from mobile phone technology. It is a switch-off approach, rather than trying to train humans to be cleverer and cleverer, which frankly we are not. It is the distraction of the call as much as the holding of anything that is the difficulty, as you have just acknowledged yourself with the child example. It is the distraction and the cognitive thinking around it that takes us away from the road.

There are very positive technological developments in vehicles, for example through the general safety regulations recently, which mean that vehicles of the future will have their speed limits controlled—the speed that they can go up to below the limit—through intelligent speed assistance. They will have the capacity to have Alcolocks fitted to them. There are ways in which we can help people within their constraints as human beings who make mistakes. That is what safe systems are all about.

It is not about, for example, putting young people on a skid pan and showing them how to develop skills to cope with wet rural roads. It is about developing systems that control drivers’ speeds to within acceptable limits on roads and developing vehicles that cannot exceed those limits and that behave sensibly. People will always make mistakes, and we want those mistakes not to be fatal.

Q41 **Greg Smith:** So that I can understand what you are saying, what do you believe is a distraction? Is listening to music while you are driving a distraction? Is thinking, “Oh, I’m a bit hot so I am going to turn the air-conditioning up,” a distraction? Is someone in the passenger seat saying, “I think we need to turn left up here,” a distraction, or are those things okay and you are more focused on mobile phone technology and text messages being read out?

Mary Williams: I think all those things are distractions. Again, to hark back to the national travel survey, young people are recognising the



dangers of driving. Something like double the number of reasons given by young people for not driving now compared with six or seven years ago are to do with safety. There is greater recognition of the difficulty of driving safely as a human being. That is forming part of the decision making not to drive by some young people. Yes, all those things are a cumulative concern. Often, there is more than one factor that causes a casualty and costs a life, or seriously injures someone.

Dr Kinnear: I want to build on the point about the general safety regulations to highlight that. TRL led that work for the European Commission. We are currently looking at the next phase, which includes driver monitoring systems to detect things like distraction. That could be technology that is brought into vehicles to monitor the attention that drivers are paying to the road in the future. It could be one technology that helps maintain drivers' awareness.

In terms of what Government could do in this space, it is around guiding the technology companies and the manufacturers about what is considered safer and what it is suitable for drivers to pay attention to. You have given the example of reading a text message that comes through a few times. The question would be, is that necessary for the system to highlight to you at a time when the system does not know what you are viewing or how demanding the road context is? Is it positive for the system to be interrupting your attention to tell you that you have a text message? You could argue that in the wrong situation that could distract you, and you could get involved in a dangerous situation.

However, there are other parts of the system like navigation that might be very useful. It is a difficult trade-off. It is about maintaining activities when driving that are relevant to safe driving performance.

Elizabeth Box: Very briefly, the point is that we are discussing young and novice drivers. What is particularly relevant for distraction for that group is that, once they have passed their driving test, they are still very focused on getting the basics of driving right—gear changes and hazard perception awareness. When we talk about distraction, we need to think that for that particular group we want to minimise it as much as possible because they are already taking a lot of their cognitive focus away from the driving task if they start to engage in a secondary task in the vehicle. It is a slightly different issue from thinking about more experienced drivers who have more automatic ways in which to drive.

Greg Smith: Thank you very much. I am conscious of time, so I will hand back to the Chair.

Chair: Thank you, Greg. I am sorry that my mobile went; it was my garage, ironically. Chris Loder is going to lead the section on male drivers and the risk of drink driving.

Q42

Chris Loder: I would like to ask the panel about young male drivers particularly. From our research on young driver fatalities, 80% happen to



be young males. Could you explain a little bit about why that is? I would be particularly interested to get a high-level breakdown of the core contributory factors so that we could understand them, if you are able to help.

Elizabeth Box: We know that young male drivers are five times more likely than women to be involved in a fatal collision. We know that they are much more present within that risk group. In terms of the risk factors, I do not think there is a huge difference with regard to gender. The key points are that the age of the driver matters, but not quite as much as the experience. Obviously, gender makes a difference to how likely a young driver is to be involved in a collision, but it is not—

Q43 **Chris Loder:** Do you know why that is? Do you have any insights as to why gender makes a difference?

Elizabeth Box: We know that males and females respond differently to interventions. If you think about traditional theatre-based pre-driver education intervention, for instance, it tends to be much more effective for young women in terms of saying they intend to drive safely than it is for young males.

There is a particular relationship that males have in their peer relationships, how that works its way out in the car and what they are trying to communicate to their peers. Within that, personality makes a big difference in terms of their impulsivity—how likely they are on a scale to behave in an impulsive manner. We find those things come up more frequently with males.

There are ways in which research has found that you can try to combat that slightly. There are particular issues and problems with fear appeal. Generally, with the young male group, you are much better off using humour. The Think campaign work is now focusing on speaking up in a vehicle to your peer passengers or behaving in certain ways, which is much better than the fear appeal. Research has shown that, if you say that something fearful is going to happen, young males are more likely to dissociate from that and not engage with the message. If you put a self-efficacy message, like, "These are the things you can do to make a difference," it engages young males more. Those are some of the things that are coming through.

Q44 **Chris Loder:** Neale, could I ask you next, please?

Dr Kinneer: It is important to note that, while there is disparity in fatalities, across all casualties the gap between males and females has been reducing over time. That said, fatal collisions are those that occur at greater velocity and are most likely related to elements of risk taking and sensation seeking. It is the brain development and impulsivity that we talked about. That might still be an area that is impacting on young males.

If we think about that age group, it is not just driving. Young males have probably more tendency, in comparison to females, with respect to many



areas of crime and antisocial behaviour. It is just that the car and driving provide an opportunity for them to express themselves.

One other aspect from a psychological perspective that could be important is that over the years we have created a fairly stereotyped social norm about what young male drivers look like. I think we can all picture it. It is seen so many times in the adverts. If we are creating that image, it leads to what we in psychology call "social norming". People tend to live up to that image, or are more likely to live up to that image, and express those behaviours because they feel that that is what is expected of them.

Q45 Chris Loder: Does it concern you in any way that we broad-brush the whole young male driver group and portray them as reckless to an extent?

Dr Kinnear: Yes, it concerns me because that is clearly not the case. The vast majority of young male drivers would feel that they were responsible and sensible young drivers. They are not going out and driving recklessly, so they probably feel that they are being broad-brushed with that image. It is unfair.

Unfortunately for them, they are still at the mercy of their inexperience simply because they have not had the opportunity to practise or drive as much. We know that miles on the road allow them to develop the critical anticipatory mental responses that protect experienced drivers from getting involved in crashes. Young people or novice drivers of any age are inexperienced, so even the safe ones are at greater risk. Yes, I think you are right; they are tarnished.

Mary Williams: I want to make the point that we have made throughout this session about the difference between looking at individuals—I would think about the male/female thing in that context—and a systematic approach to solving the problem. Once again, we could spend another 10 years debating the differences between males and females. We know that cognitive development takes longer in males than it does in females, for example.

We are unlikely to be able to legislate differently for males and females. You have heard from Neale about how the gap is narrowing anyway.

Q46 Chris Loder: I should hope we would never do such a thing.

Mary Williams: Exactly. If we can be forward focused and think about the facts of the matter in terms of casualties involving young drivers and what we are going to do about it, and think about it from that systems perspective—

Q47 Chris Loder: Mary, I am sorry to interrupt you, but I want to come back to the question I asked. It was much more about the make-up of the reasons as to why we think we have this situation. What are the component parts of the reason as to why we have the situation that 80% of young driver fatalities are male?



Mary Williams: We could look at the psychology, brain development and our culture.

Q48 **Chris Loder:** Any specific things about the culture?

Mary Williams: We could look at our media culture around vehicle portrayal and use of vehicles and males in particular—

Q49 **Chris Loder:** My first car was a Mini, Mary. I am not sure I could do very much with that.

Mary Williams: No, possibly not. Social norming was the term that Neale used. I can tell you that, when we work in colleges and schools now, we are working with a broad range of young people of different genders and different gender identities. We find intelligence, engagement and interest in protecting themselves. That is really important.

We would always bring it back to the behaviours that we are seeing and the acknowledgments of young people generally. A good one that we pulled out recently from one of our young driver surveys was that we asked young drivers about their relationship to speed, and we found that 57% of young drivers said that they liked to drive at the highest speed at which they said they could maintain control of the vehicle, compared with only 37% of all-age drivers.

Q50 **Chris Loder:** One of the things that I would appreciate from all panel members, if it were possible after this meeting, would be if you could send us a pie chart of the breakdown, in your opinion, as to why you think that is the case. That would be very helpful for us. I am conscious that when talking about it we do not necessarily get that granular detail.

I am conscious of the time, so I will move to my last part. It is about the Government. In your opinion, how effective do you think the Government have been in dealing with these issues? Should the Government be doing more to target this demographic? If you think that, I would appreciate what exactly you think the Government should be doing, rather than just making a general comment.

Chair: Chris, could I ask you to put that just to one of the experts, please?

Chris Loder: Could I ask Neale that question, please?

Dr Kinnear: To keep it short, a phased licensing approach is a systematic approach to deal with the issue. It is a protective approach and it builds on what we have in this country in an excellent test. We have hazard perception testing. We have a new drivers Act. All that feeds into what could easily be developed in a phased licensing approach. What I mean by that is a minimum learning phase and then a probationary phase that links with the new drivers Act phase anyway. That would include a night-time restriction and a peer-passenger restriction at that point. Other things could be considered, but adding those three components to the current licensing approach would have significant benefits.

Q51 **Chris Loder:** Do you believe the provisional licence approach that we have



today is ineffective in addressing the issue?

Dr Kinnear: The data would suggest that it is, given that they are over-represented in collisions. Having a minimum licensing phase is a structure that can be built on. In that, you could add having a minimum amount of hours or a minimum amount of hours of different types of driving to increase experience of various driving conditions, all of which has been shown to reduce crashes post-test.

Chris Loder: Elizabeth, I know you want to speak, but Huw is keen to crack on. If you have anything to add, please feel free to send it in writing. We would appreciate that. Thank you.

Chair: Thank you. Elizabeth; I am sure you can shoehorn in what you want to add as we go through. We have loads of evidence to go through. I have to hand the Chair over to Lilian, albeit she cannot take my chair due to, I hope, covid and nothing specifically to do with me.

Before I do so, I ask Members to target questions at individuals, not all three, and I ask the experts to keep the evidence brief so that we can crack through it. We are going to talk about high collision rates for young drivers on rural roads.

Lilian Greenwood took the Chair.

Q52 **Simon Jupp:** It is broadly understood and seen in the figures that we have higher collision rates among young drivers on rural roads. My constituency of East Devon has both a section of the M5 and a network of rural roads, many of which have passing places because they are not wide enough for two cars.

In 2016, from some of the figures I have seen, four out of five fatal casualties for young car drivers occurred on rural roads. If there was one step that each of you would press for to bring that rate down, what would it be? I will go to Elizabeth first.

Elizabeth Box: As you say, we know that rural areas are a particular issue with regard to the collision rate. Rural areas would benefit most from a graduated driver licensing approach. Rural areas do not have as many effective alternatives, so people drive more in those areas. Young people, when they are driving on those networks, experience more serious collisions as a result, because of the higher speed limits.

They are inexperienced. They are in areas of higher risk and they have greater exposure to that risk. That is why we see a particular problem with young drivers in rural areas. Graduated driver licensing would help with that.

Q53 **Simon Jupp:** Thank you very much for your succinct response. Mary?

Mary Williams: I would agree with that and would reference what Liz said about too-high speed limits. Speed limits on rural roads need reducing.

Q54 **Simon Jupp:** That is a really interesting point; thank you, Mary. Neale?



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Dr Kinneer: There are two aspects. One is during the learner phase and whether drivers get enough experience driving on higher-speed roads. That could be questioned. Post-test, driving on rural roads at night is a particular high-risk situation. Between 2 and 4 am, the risk for young drivers is eight times as high both on weekdays and at weekends. We know that that is a particular situation, hence the graduated driver licensing approach, or a phased approach with a night-time component, would protect them in the first six to 12 months of driving, were it implemented.

Q55 **Simon Jupp:** To all the panel, do you have any concerns about the impact on social mobility should any of your thoughts or processes be put in place? For people in rural areas, it is particularly important to be able to get around. Sometimes there is not a public transport network available to avoid that necessity. Do you accept that further safety measures could actually inhibit some younger people in rural areas from taking up driving, and in the vast majority of cases driving safely?

Mary Williams: I think this was covered in the first session. We are talking about a major public health issue. The majority of young people not living in those remote rural areas would be unaffected by that point. This is the trade-off that potentially could occur. When we are talking about mobility, we need to think about mobility in its broadest sense. Of course, safe and healthy mobility is enabled by having fewer vehicles, more space for active travel and more public transport. Given the gravity of what we are discussing this morning, it then becomes a moot point. That was said far more eloquently than me by one of the road crash victims talking earlier.

Q56 **Simon Jupp:** How do people in rural villages get around, then? If there are young people trying to access jobs in nearby cities, towns and villages, how do they get to those jobs? Do they walk on rural roads with passing places? How do they get there?

Mary Williams: The point is that you need to look at safe systems. You need to look at the life-saving importance of the measures that we are talking about. There have been some really worrying schemes to enable young people to get around—for example, encouraging them to buy on-the-cheap mopeds, putting them at high risk on rural roads. I do not think that is the way forward.

Investment in public transport and segregated space for people to cycle is very important. If you are living in a rural area, yes, it is important to reach your place of education. It is important to reach your place of work, but measures have to be found to enable that. This is very much counted against the life-saving measures that we are talking about here that will stop teenagers and children dying.

Simon Jupp: I could talk to you about that much more, but I will not because of time.

Elizabeth Box: To add a bit of detail to what Mary is talking about, when we look at what happens in other countries that have GDL in place, the key thing to take away from that is that most of those countries have been able



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to implement it without significant impact on travel or employment. Many are developing stricter formats now, given that they have seen the benefits.

There is evidence from the US and New Zealand that both young drivers and their parents tend to adapt quite quickly to what is happening. We ran a survey back in 2014 asking young people and the whole population what they felt about graduated driver licensing. About 43% of young people supported its implementation. That is less than 50%, but it was probably higher than you would think, given that we traditionally think of it as a restriction. As others have said, we need to move away from thinking about it as a restriction and think of it as a protective benefit for that particular group.

Dr Kinnear: Building on that, we have recently conducted reviews on this for Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man, where they are also interested in implementing a GDL-type system. There is literally no evidence that implementing GDL impacts the employability of young people. The evidence that there is, looking into it, has suggested that those in rural areas realise that it benefits them and find ways to adapt. Remember that this is a temporary thing that happens post-licence.

The young driver had to get around before that anyway, so whatever they were doing before will continue, but only at the times that are being impacted. That could be midnight to 5 am or 10 or 11 pm to 6 am. Our work for the RAC Foundation found that a restriction from midnight to 5 am would only impact 2.6% of 17 to 19-year-olds who were carrying out work-related journeys. For the saving of 453 casualties, that is the trade-off.

Simon Jupp: Thank you. One point is that I wonder who would police that sort of timeframe of restrictions on younger people driving.

Chair: Thank you, Simon. I am very conscious of time, so I am going to ask for our remaining questions and answers to be as brief as possible while covering the key points. I know that Karl can be relied on to keep it brief on the issue of graduated driving licences.

Q57 **Karl McCartney:** I have some precise questions for the three panel members. When did you pass your test? What age were you and what type of area did you live in then, and where do you live now?

Dr Kinnear: I passed my test within three months of turning 17; I was very keen. I grew up in a suburb of Glasgow and I now live in Wokingham.

Elizabeth Box: I was 18 when I passed my test. I lived in a semi-rural area. I still live in a semi-rural area in the counties outside London.

Mary Williams: I was 17. I think it is important when you pass your test at 17 to say, "Yes, I passed first time."

Q58 **Karl McCartney:** Were you in a rural area or in a city?



Mary Williams: In a rural area.

- Q59 **Karl McCartney:** I have been listening to some of the answers that all three of you have given. It seems that you are all conveniently ignoring some of the evidence that we have been given ahead of this meeting. This goes back to the gender differences and some of the brain development issues that have been raised.

Elizabeth, you specifically said that gender makes a difference to the risk of accidents. Neale mentioned that the difference was reducing over time between male and female risk.

I am not trying to get away from male bravado and the fatalities that are caused by male drivers, but once you take into account miles driven by drivers—distances driven—there is little difference between male and female drivers, both young and at any age. Do you agree with that statement, or not?

Elizabeth Box: Yes. I do not have those figures in front of me, but I believe that to be true. I think it gets to a point where we need to look at rates because that gives us an understanding—

- Q60 **Karl McCartney:** But I specifically asked the question that, if males and females drove the same distances, would there be the same risk, and you have given an answer, so I will move on to Neale. I will come back to you again in a second, Elizabeth.

Dr Kinnear: Young male drivers certainly tend to travel further than young female drivers, but young drivers travel half as much as all car drivers. I am sorry; I don't know what you are trying to get at.

- Q61 **Karl McCartney:** The point being that you, as witnesses today, have given answers that have pointed out there is a difference between male and female drivers. I am saying that we can all use statistics like drunks use lamp posts, but the bottom line is that, actually, when you compare like-for-like distances travelled, there is little difference between male and female risk of having crashes or collisions.

Dr Kinnear: What we are seeing is that the rate of all casualty collisions taken together is very similar, but for fatal collisions male drivers are more likely to be involved.

- Q62 **Karl McCartney:** I have already said I fully understand that. I am not trying to get away from it, but I was just trying to make the point that I have made. Mary?

Mary Williams: I defer to what Neale said in his reference to fatal collisions and involvement of males. I would also put in a plea, as the witnesses did earlier, to talk about crashes and collisions rather than accidents. The word "accidents" is highly offensive to our victim group because these are collisions with causes. The word "accidents" suggests—

- Q63 **Karl McCartney:** I use crashes and collisions as a way of describing them. That is fine; I am very happy to.



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I want to move on to graduated driver licensing. Both Elizabeth and Neale have referred to different figures. In 2013, we have been told that TRC published research that promoted graduated driver licensing and stated there would be annual savings with regard to collisions and crashes of 4,471 casualties and £224 million. I have also heard other figures from Elizabeth. You said 2,733, and Neale talked about £1 billion-worth of savings. Could you tell me how accurate those numbers in 2013 were, both then and now? Why do you think successive Governments have not introduced GDL?

Dr Kinnear: We can explain the differences that you have pointed out. The figures in 2013 took the last five years of data. It was 2008 to 2013 at that time. The analysis was updated by the RAC Foundation in 2017, and used the data from that time up to 2017, by which time overall crashes had reduced for all drivers and young drivers. You have a difference in figures at that point.

The figures I gave today are not published. They are the ones that I have just looked at, but they are all based on sound evidence that was reviewed on the impact of graduated driver licensing in 83 jurisdictions across the world. They evaluated the impact on crashes and casualties.

What was the second part of your question?

Q64 **Karl McCartney:** Why do you think successive Governments have not introduced GDL in this country?

Dr Kinnear: That is a very good question. I assume it comes down to the trade-off between mobility and safety, but I do not know. The evidence would suggest that we can make changes to improve the safety of young and novice drivers.

Q65 **Karl McCartney:** Compared with other countries, what are our rates like? You are obviously the experts in the field.

Dr Kinnear: Overall?

Q66 **Karl McCartney:** Both those that have brought in GDL and those that have not. How does the UK fare comparatively?

Dr Kinnear: Comparatively speaking, the UK is very good for road safety in general. That said, there is no reason to expect that we would not benefit from further safety measures.

Q67 **Karl McCartney:** If GDL was introduced across the UK, what key rule changes for young and/or novice drivers would Elizabeth and Mary like to see included?

Mary Williams: I am not going to waste time. I would just hark back to Neale's answer. He went through the system. That system means a minimum learning period. It means restrictions post-test. That can be bolted on with a number of different measures that have already been outlined this morning. I do not think the answer needs repeating. There



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are many examples of those licensing systems around the world that can be utilised to build upon in the UK. We already have the new drivers Act. It is a fantastic foundation for us. It is about the continuum from the new drivers Act and building on that in whatever way the Government see fit. Then those measures can be built on in the future.

Q68 Karl McCartney: Do you think graduated driver licensing could be termed to be the nanny state at work. Do you think it is losing some freedoms for young people? How do you think it stands with people's libertarian stances?

Mary Williams: No; I think it is the opposite. I think it is enabling young people to be safe. It is taking enormous amounts of stress off them, their parents and their friends. It is most certainly not a nanny state. It is the responsible thing to do to save lives. It is a public health issue.

We have a situation where deaths and injuries in this country have plateaued. Within Brake, we have a vision zero approach—a safe systems approach. The ultimate aim is zero lives being lost on our roads. These are preventable casualties. We can make strides to reduce our casualties in the UK further and continue to be the pride of the world by doing that, rather than plateauing, by introducing a phased licensing system.

Q69 Karl McCartney: That is all very worthy. I would just say that obviously life is risky.

Elizabeth Box: The only thing I would add to what both Neale and Mary have already said is that countries that have GDL in place have been able to engage parents much more in the process of learning to drive in terms of minimum learning. There was a question earlier about who polices this. Largely, it comes down to parents or guardians in that perspective.

I agree with Mary that it is very much an enabling tool, to be able to help both young people and parents make safe choices in the really difficult situations that we talked about earlier.

Karl McCartney: Thank you to all three witnesses.

Chair: I am very conscious of time. We have three further questions. Simon will look at the issue of technology and telematics.

Q70 Simon Jupp: Can the panel explain the role that you see black boxes having in improving road safety for young and novice drivers and driving down insurance costs? Do you think they should play a wider part at the start of your driving life?

Mary Williams: Yes. Black boxes, in terms of telematics information so that we know the speeds of vehicles, and, indeed, what has happened in collisions, are very important. Liz will give a more rounded answer on this because she is involved in a piece of work on collision investigation.

What we need in the UK is an independent collision investigation branch, in the same way as we have one for rail, aviation and maritime. We do not. Technologies of this kind are of huge assistance to find the causations of



collisions and prevent them through hard facts. Yes, it is fantastic that the insurance industry has, in many ways, led the way through incentivising the installation of such devices. In the future, one would hope that they were standard in all vehicles and that we had an independent agency investigating all crashes.

Q71 **Simon Jupp:** Thank you, Mary. Based on that, no pressure, Elizabeth.

Elizabeth Box: I will start on the telematics issue. The high cost of motor insurance has been a big issue for young drivers for a long time. That means that over the last five to 10 years they have been moving much more towards the telematics market. Since covid, overall demand has increased significantly for pay-as-you-go insurance because people's travel demands have changed and therefore, they would like to change the way they pay for insurance.

It is important to say that car insurance premiums in Great Britain are higher than in Europe. That is largely due to differences in underwriting, regulatory approaches and insurance caps. We are a very advanced country with regard to the uptake of telematics. That is largely being driven by the young driver market because it has been traditionally so expensive for young drivers, given the collisions they are involved in, to get insurance.

The value to young drivers is that telematics moderates the risk. It reduces their insurance costs. It provides them with feedback. The feedback is really important because a number of insurance companies do essential training. If they start to see a number of red flags coming up, they call young drivers and talk them through options to try to reduce their risk. It is a good risk-management approach that parents can be involved in as well, which is important. In some ways, telematics is giving us some of the benefit that we might see from graduated driver licensing, but I see it more as complementary, rather than one or the other.

Finally, some recent research from the US Insurance Research Council said that, more generally, 80% of drivers changed their driving habits while they had telematics in place, but, when you take it out, 42% said they reverted to their previous behaviours. It is the importance of being watched and viewed that makes a difference. Young drivers typically have telematics in their vehicle for the first couple of years and then they will take it out because they can get an insurance policy that matches the cost, so they do not want it any more. Obviously, a large part of the benefit is being had in the first two years, which is when we know they are at greater risk in any case.

Q72 **Simon Jupp:** That is really interesting. I would be worried about the amount of information people had on my terrible parking. Neale?

Dr Kinneer: To build on that briefly, currently there is no good independent scientific evidence of telematic systems having the same type of effectiveness as legislation around a phased licensing approach. It is a



complementary system. It can be used along with a legislative approach to help to provide guidelines for telematic systems provided by insurance companies. In the end, insurance is a business and not everyone can access the telematics approach for insurance—possibly even just based on their postcode. It is not the same thing, but it is a complementary tool that can be used alongside.

Simon Jupp: I am very conscious of your time and ours. Time is running over, so I will hand back to Lilian.

Q73 **Chair:** I think we have lost Karl. He was going to ask the next question, so I am going to ask it. It follows on from the question about the use of technology.

What impact do you feel that the current projects such as Driver2020 and IAM RoadSmart's work with Lincolnshire's police and crime commissioner could have on improving young and novice driver safety? I know that TRL is involved in Driver2020, so, Neale, perhaps you could cover that.

Dr Kinnear: Driver2020 really is a world-beating piece of research. As I said, driver telematics has not been tested in an independent randomised controlled trial environment. It has only been tested in fleet or business environments that have biased samples of drivers who choose that and are voluntary.

Driver2020 is testing logbooks as one intervention, as well as hazard perception, and driver education, telematics and mentoring—a sort of parent/guardian contract. All five interventions are being tested against a control group, and we are recruiting 2,000 drivers per group who are starting to learn to drive or who have just passed the test.

We have currently recruited about 21,500 participants, and over the next couple of years we will be monitoring them to understand, through an independent research approach, the impact of these systems. We expect results around February 2022.

Q74 **Chair:** Are there other driver monitoring apps or educational apps that you think could have a significant impact on improving young and novice driver safety?

Elizabeth Box: There are a couple to mention. A number of insurance companies provide incentive-based products, rather than being linked to insurance: "If you drive safely, you will get money to put towards some shopping vouchers or a coffee," or whatever. There are some incentive-based products. The key ones to focus on relate to hazard perception training. There is Drive iQ and a number of programmes like that going into schools. They have hazard perception training as a background. Those are worth looking at.

Q75 **Chair:** Mary, those are an addition rather than an alternative to what you have been more broadly proposing, which is a suite of measures that introduce safer systems. Is that right?



Mary Williams: Yes.

Q76 **Chair:** Did you want to add something?

Mary Williams: Both Liz and Neale have picked up on the point that these technologies have to work within a management structure, whether that is management by an insurance company, by a parent or, in the case of fleets, by your employer. We know from evidence from the fleets that we work with that telematics used in isolation and not supported by good management HR regimes do not work so well. Once again, it is about having the system in place and not being reliant on individuals, or indeed their managers. It is very much complementary and not an instead of.

Chair: Thank you. Karl, I apologise; I stole your question because you had disappeared. Now you are muted. We will come back at the end if there is time. Finally, waiting very patiently, is Sam Tarry, who wants to ask about the impact of coronavirus on these issues.

Q77 **Sam Tarry:** Thanks to all the panel for your contributions. Thinking about coronavirus and the impact it has had, particularly on younger drivers, some of the evidence we have been presented with in the Committee has said that an estimated 200,000-plus tests have been cancelled. At the moment, obviously, theory tests are having to be done through social distancing.

I want to get your take on what you think the longer-term impacts are, if any, of the coronavirus pandemic on the learning and testing system. Around half of 17 to 24-year-olds would normally take their test this year. They are now expected to wait until 2021. As a Committee, we are very concerned about the impact on their ability to access employment or education. Can you give us your views on that in turn?

Elizabeth Box: I have been in contact with the driving instructor associations to find out how things have been going with covid and what it means for learners. The message I got from them was very much that it is extremely busy right now. They have learners booking refresher training or new learning. They are extremely busy, so there is a very high level of demand from learners. There is obviously great frustration about the difficulties of booking tests. It is great that it has been announced that more are available until January 2021, which allows people better time to prepare.

As you say, the issues for learners are about accessing employment opportunities and being able to pass their tests in a timely way. There are reports of people being reliant on others to access services, which is very difficult for young people.

There has particularly been an issue with people who have had tests cancelled and who cannot get bookings with instructors, because they have fewer lessons available in order to increase cleaning regimes, and what impact that might have on people's confidence in driving and whether it is



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breaking up their experience, and what that might mean for their ability to pass and their safety going forward.

We have a slight concern about whether people are going to present to test too early. DVSA has been saying that only 50% pass, so please do not come before you are ready, but you can understand that people might want to do that. That would obviously have potential safety implications. We hope that long term this is all going to resolve itself, but it probably needs careful looking at in the meantime.

Mary Williams: I was thinking about this in the context of the introduction of a phased licensing system. A point I very briefly made at the beginning was that there could be administrative gains from having a developed phased licensing system along the lines Liz was talking about, with regard to ensuring that people are presenting to test appropriately. A staged learning process could assist and could stage those being presented.

I suppose what I would also shoehorn in, in terms of the covid effect, would be that as the National Road Victim Service we are now seeing a very significant uptick in the work that we have to do to support victims now that more vehicles are back on the roads.

Dr Kinnear: We might see an impact on safety. We have seen a dip because of the lack of exposure of new drivers for a period of a few months. We expect that will probably return now that tests are happening.

I am part of an international young driver committee, and it is interesting to see what has happened in other countries. In some states in the US, where they have graduated systems, they have allowed drivers to graduate to the next phase of the system without actually having to take a test during covid. Their licensing has continued because they have the protective net of a system that provides a phased licensing approach. In the US, they do not tend to focus on the test as much as we do here. To be honest, it is something that we do very well and that we can build on.

Sam Tarry: Thank you very much for your answers.

Chair: Thank you very much to all the members of the panel for your evidence today. There has been a strong measure of consensus from campaigners and research institutions on the issue. We look forward to hearing a wide range of evidence in our future sessions before the Committee comes to conclusions about the issue. Thank you again. That concludes today's session.