



House of Commons  
Transport Committee

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**Road safety: young  
and novice drivers:  
Government Response  
to Committee's Fourth  
Report of Session  
2019–21**

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**Second Special Report of Session  
2021–22**

*Ordered by the House of Commons  
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## Transport Committee

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

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# Second Special Report

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The Transport Committee published its Fourth Report of Session 2019–21, [Road safety: young and novice drivers](#) (HC 169) on 2 March 2021. The Government response was received on 30 April 2021 and is appended below.

## Appendix: Government Response

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### Preface

The Government thanks the Transport Select Committee for its report on Young and Novice Drivers. Road safety is a priority for the Department for Transport, and we share the Committee's desire to improve safety for all road users.

The Department for Transport submitted evidence to the committee in March 2020 followed by Baroness Vere, the Roads Minister, attending an evidence session in October 2020.

In November 2020 further answers were given to those questions that were not answered on the day. These letters were sent to the Transport Select Committee by Baroness Vere.

The Committee has made nine recommendations to the Government which are answered below in as much detail as we can provide.

It is important to note that the information contained in this response is accurate as of 22 April 2021.

**Recommendation 1:** *The Department should commission a study of crash rates for older novice drivers and how the driver's experience level contributes to these crashes. This would allow the Department to understand better the risks around older novice drivers and whether to monitor and target more actively crash rates amongst this demographic.* (Paragraph 33)

Evidence from around the world suggests that the increased risks faced by young novice drivers are caused by a combination of young age and inexperience.<sup>1</sup>

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1 Alfonsi, R., Anmari, A., & Usami, D. S. (2018). *Lack of driving experience*. European Road Safety Decision Support System, developed by the H2020 project SafetyCube. Retrieved January 15, 2019, from [https://www.road-safety-dss.eu/assets/data/pdf/synopses/Lack\\_of\\_driving\\_experience\\_032018.pdf](https://www.road-safety-dss.eu/assets/data/pdf/synopses/Lack_of_driving_experience_032018.pdf)

Kinnear, N., Lloyd, L., Helman, S., Husband, P., Scoons, J., Jones, S., ... Broughton, J. (2013). *Novice drivers: Evidence Review and Evaluation*. Department for Transport. Transport Research Laboratory. Retrieved January 15, 2019, from <https://trl.co.uk/uploads/trl/documents/PPR673.pdf>

Pressley, A., Fernández-Medina, K., Helman, S., McKenna, F. P., Stradling, S., & Husband, P. (2017). *A review of interventions which seek to increase the safety of young and novice drivers*. Department for Transport. TRL and Department for Transport. Retrieved January 21, 2019, from [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/609828/interventions-to-increase-young-and-novice-driver-safety.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/609828/interventions-to-increase-young-and-novice-driver-safety.pdf)

Road Safety Observatory. (2012 (revised 2018)). *Young Drivers Evidence Synthesis*. Road Safety Observatory. Retrieved January 15, 2019, from <http://www.road-safety-observatory.com/Review/10043>

There is some evidence that driver inexperience is of greater importance, which means that older novice drivers are still more risky than those who are more experienced in terms of collision involvement. However, evidence also suggests that teenage drivers have consistently higher crash rates than drivers aged over 25, even after controlling for the length of time that the licence had been held for.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, it is likely that older novice drivers (which we are assuming to be those aged over 25 years) are less riskier than younger novice drivers.

Monitoring crash rates amongst novice drivers would help us to verify this, but to understand how risks and experience differ by age, we would need to monitor crash rates amongst both older and younger novice drivers.

As reported road casualty data does not link to licence details, it is not possible to identify novice drivers from this data. In order to gather data on crash rates amongst older novice drivers and investigate how driver's experience and age contribute to crashes, bespoke research would be required (likely surveys of a large sample of new drivers which is resource intensive).

Given how the Department already know that it's a combination of age and inexperience that contributes to collision risk amongst young drivers, and there is evidence to suggest older novice drivers are less riskier than younger novice drivers, further work to monitor crash rates may not be the best use of limited resources.

The Government will therefore consider the case for such research further and weigh up against other research priorities. It should also be noted that while all participants in Driver 2020 are younger (aged 17–24), we can use the data to understand the role of age, e.g., to understand if teenage novice drivers have higher crash rates post-test than those in their 20s.

**Recommendation 2:** *We recommend that the Department conducts research to investigate whether drivers who pass their test after undertaking intensive driving lessons are at increased risk of being involved in a crash in their first two years of driving.* (Paragraph 42)

We agree with the Committee's recommendation that further study on whether intensive driving lessons are associated with a greater risk of a collision post-test (compared to regular lessons) may be useful.

While we recognise that people learn to drive for different reasons and that an intensive approach to learning might suit certain people in certain circumstances, several research studies have shown that increasing the amount (and breadth) of pre-test on-road experience can decrease the risk of collision post-test.

For this reason, The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) messaging encourages learners to obtain a broad range of pre-test driving experience and intensive courses are not encouraged as they are contrary to this. The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) official learning materials, and the accompanying on-line Drivers Record,<sup>3</sup> promotes learners obtaining a broad range of pre-test driving experience, including on

2 [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/24437141\\_Effects\\_of\\_Age\\_and\\_Experience\\_on\\_Young\\_Driver\\_Crashes\\_Review\\_of\\_Recent\\_Literature](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/24437141_Effects_of_Age_and_Experience_on_Young_Driver_Crashes_Review_of_Recent_Literature)

3 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keep-a-record-of-your-pupils-driving-lessons>

different types of roads and in different traffic conditions such as at night and in different weather conditions. As well recording driving experience, the Drivers Record also allows the learner and their ADI to monitor progress through the learning to drive process and acknowledge when the learner moves from being prompted by the trainer to driving independently of detailed instructions. DVSA is further promoting the benefit of the Drivers Record as part of its communications to support the safe resumption of driver testing following the interruptions caused by the covid pandemic.

We do not have any formal evidence around crash rates for those who pass their driving test after undertaking intensive driving lessons, but DVSA examiners do raise concerns about the standard of some test candidates who learn in this way, but we have no evidence of their post-test history.

To obtain evidence to verify whether those who undertake intensive driving lessons are at an increased risk of being involved in a crash post-test (compared to those who learn in a more traditional way), we would need to monitor crash rates amongst novices. As indicated in our response to recommendation 1, this would require bespoke research likely involving surveys of a large sample of new drivers (it is possible that both recommendation 1 and recommendation 2 could be addressed via a single study). This would be resource intensive to collect, but as we lack firm evidence of the safety implications of intensive driving lessons we agree it would be helpful to have more information. As research projects for this financial year have already been agreed by Ministers, we will consider whether research in this area should be considered as part of the 2022/23 research programme.

**Recommendation 3: *We recommend that the Department for Transport provides an update to the Committee on progress with the Driver 2020 project by July 2021.*** (Paragraph 81)

We can update the Transport Select Committee on the progress of the Driver 2020 project in July 2021, however we are able to state now that we will not have any findings by this date.

The project was due to report in early 2022 but is now scheduled to report early in 2023 due to the impact of COVID-19 and resulting lockdown measures (in particular, the cessation of driving lessons and most driving tests for periods in both 2020 and 2021 which have impeded learners progress through the project).

We will have some initial findings on the impacts of the novice driver interventions (telematics and the mentor agreement) in Spring 2022 and the Department will be able to update the Committee on these at that time. We will also share the final findings with the Committee when the project completes, expected Spring 2023.

**Recommendation 4: *The Department should provide further information about the Rural Roads Working Group, including its membership, scope, objectives and when and how often it plans to meet.*** (Paragraph 83)

The Rural Roads Working Group was placed on hold in November 2020 as Department resourcing prioritised COVID and Brexit/Winter Response work. To this end, all work on the Working Group has been officially paused.

The Working Group is still in the plenary stage with no objectives or outcomes set. The Rural Roads Working Group planning began in 2020 with discussions into finding a suitable chair, creating a diverse list of relevant stakeholders and setting a clear set of objectives.

In keeping with the original scope of the Rural Roads Working Group, the attendees will ideally be real life rural road users, those who use and understand the challenges of the rural road. We will be looking for members representing horse rider organisations, walking and rambling groups, farmers associations, motorcycle and cycling charities, the emergency services and more.

The aim of the Working Group will be to discuss with these knowledgeable members issues that they face whilst using rural roads, and how we can engage and provide targeted support to improve rural road safety that really works.

Department for Transport staff will shortly begin restart on the Working Group and hope to be able to move on with the project in Summer 2021 as lockdown eases and the country reopens. We will be happy to provide the Committee with an update on this work as it gets underway.

**Recommendation 5:** *The Department should provide an outline of the criteria that will be used to judge the effectiveness of its modular learning pilot. The Department should update us by October 2021 on its assessment of the pilot against those criteria.* (Paragraph 85)

The Driving Instructors Association are being grant funded to deliver the Modular Learning project (with the support of an independent advisory group) for the Department. The project will explore if a consistently delivered, nationally adopted modular ‘learning to drive’ syllabus (delivered face to face in car by Approved Driving Instructors (ADI’s), and with accompanying online learning and assessments) can improve the road safety of those in the 17–25 age range (as measured by a lower collision rate), compared to how a typical learning to drive journey is currently conducted. The project will examine whether the existing learning to drive syllabus is fit for purpose i.e., does it focus on the most appropriate risks. Furthermore, it will look at how the learning is best delivered to equip pupils with the ability to manage risks once driving independently.

The specific project objectives are as follows:

- To develop an e-learning suite which improves drivers risk perceptions and challenges motivations.
- To show that e-learning can complement the current UK driver training programme of face-to-face delivery.
- Provide novice drivers with an ability to better manage risks post-test.
- Confirm if collision rates, relative to mileage exposure, reduced due to modular learning experience.

The project uses a comparative trial methodology. Three cohorts of learners will be monitored and evaluated: the first will learn to drive with no changes (i.e. the control group), the second will undertake the modular programme with in-car learning and

assessments only while the third will undertake the modular programme via both in-car and online learning and assessments. The monitoring and evaluation design will use surveys and psychometric profiling at the start of the programme, immediately post-test, three months post-test and at six months post-test.

The evaluation criteria and methodology have been agreed by the advisory group and will be deployed in the summer as the participant cohorts progress through the modules.

The criteria to be used to assess the modular learning approach is as follows:

- Test pass scores
- Ability to manage driving risks post-test
- Crash rates relative to mileage driven post-test

Data for assessment will be collected through

- Online surveys (which will gather data on self-reported collisions)
- Test pass sheets
- Completion of an academically validated psychometric risk profile (designed specifically for novice drivers, which provides a means to gauge ability to manage driving risks post-test)

As the Committee acknowledged, this project has been affected by COVID-19: fieldwork was due to commence in late 2020 but could not begin as driving lessons could not take place in the United Kingdom due to the lockdown restrictions. Therefore, the trial will not start until late Spring 2021 and thus the Department will not have an update of the assessment of the modular approach against the assessment criteria by October 2021.

It is anticipated that all participants would have completed their learning by Spring 2022. Six-months of post-test experience data is required to assess the impact of the modular approach. To allow for sufficient time for analysis (plus quality assurance) and reporting we expect to provide information of the effectiveness of modular learning by Spring 2023.

We are happy to share an update with the Committee on this pilot as soon as it is available.

**Recommendation 6:** *We recommend that the Department and the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency develop the theory test to ensure it includes adequate questioning on driving at night and while carrying passengers.* (Paragraph 86)

We agree with the Committee about the importance of ensuring drivers are equipped to drive at a range of times and in different conditions.

The theory test question bank includes questions about night time driving and carrying passengers as well as questions where both these issues are distractions. The hazard perception section of the theory test includes driving at night and in different weather conditions.

In addition to the theory test questions, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency ensures that the official education materials available to help learners prepare properly for their

theory test include information about driving at night. They also cover other challenging situations, such as driving in bad weather, and while carrying passengers. Learners can access a practise theory test to check their understanding of what they have learnt. The hazard perception preparation resources also cover driving at night and in various weather conditions.

The Stationery Office and DVSA have developed the Safe Driving for Life website, which includes information about how newly-qualified drivers can drive safely with passengers. It also explains what action they should take if passengers are causing problems. Another source for everyone from learners to older drivers is The Official DVSA Guide to Better Driving. All these matters are covered, as well as more on the human factors such as stress, mood, health, nerves and mental overload.

The National Standards for Driver Training sets out what instructors must know and understand to provide training to learners. This includes how drivers control the risks linked with carrying passengers, driving at different times in different light and weather conditions.

The driving theory test is kept under review and content and learning material are revised and updated. In September 2021, DVSA will implement the Future Theory Test Service. New content will be under development but will not be introduced until the new service has had a period to stabilise.

**Recommendation 7: *Given there is some evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of GDL but significant concerns about its impact, particularly from young people themselves, the Department should resume the study into the social and economic consequences of GDL which it committed to in its 2019 Road Safety Statement. This would provide much needed evidence on the likely impacts.*** (Paragraph 88)

Whilst the Department for Transport acknowledges the Select Committee's recommendation on continuing research into Graduated Driver Licensing, the Department will not be commissioning any research into the social and economic consequences of GDL.

Evidence has been submitted on Graduated Driver Licensing by the Department as well as during the oral session with Baroness Vere. We remain of the opinion that statistics from other countries who use a form of licensing restrictions show that it is not comparable nor necessary in the United Kingdom at this time for young and novice drivers.

We are also conscious that any move to place any form of restrictions on young and novice drivers would be detrimental to their education and employment prospects, as well as the potential to negatively affect their social and mental health during the national recovery from COVID. These effects would also be felt more severely in rural or socio-economically challenged areas in the United Kingdom.

To this end, the Department for Transport has no plans to conduct research on or implement any form of a Graduated Driving License at this time.

**Recommendation 8: *By October 2021, we recommend that the Department liaise with the Northern Ireland Executive and provide us with interim findings and the Department's conclusions on the impact of GDL in Northern Ireland.*** (Paragraph 89)

The Department for Transport is regularly in touch with its counterparts at the Department for Infrastructure in Northern Ireland.

The Graduated Pilot Scheme due to be trailed in Northern Ireland remains a priority for their Minister, however COVID has greatly affected their plans and time scales for the project. The scheme has not yet started and is expected to be delayed by the disruption to services.

To that end, it is too early for the Department to offer any conclusion on the impact of GDL in Northern Ireland.

The Department will remain in close contact with the Department for Infrastructure as their work on the Graduated Pilot Scheme progresses and with their agreement we will share any interim findings with the Committee.

***Recommendation 9: As part of the progress update on Driver 2020 we have requested by July 2021, the Department should outline the progress and preliminary findings from its research into the effectiveness of telematic technology to improve road safety. (Paragraph 91)***

As mentioned in our answer to Recommendation 3, we can update the Committee on progress with the Driver 2020 project in July 2021, however we won't have findings by this date. Initial findings on the impacts of the novice driver interventions (telematics and the mentor agreement) will be available in Spring 2022 and we have already stated that we can share those with the Committee at that time.

In the 2019 Road Safety Statement the Department committed to conducting a feasibility study on combining telematics data for young drivers to understand if safe driving could improve efficient driving. Unfortunately, due to challenges with procurement this project has not progressed.

At the Department, we believe that telematics technology has great potential to improve road safety understanding and this approach is preferable to a form of Graduated Driver Licensing. Driver 2020 will provide unique evidence to understand the relationship between use of telematics and post-test collision risk and we look forward to the final report and findings in early 2023.