



*The parents' campaign for safe driving tuition*

**INTRODUCING A MORE STRUCTURED APPROACH  
TO LEARNING TO DRIVE  
LEARN AND LIVE'S RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION  
PAPER**

**April 2002**

## INTRODUCTION

Learn and Live has been campaigning for most of these proposals for over 12 years. We are pleased that some at least are at last being considered but are disappointed that the Government still questions the benefits of many of our objectives.

In particular, it is essential to increase supervised driving practice as part of a Graduated Driving Licence. There is overwhelming evidence of its benefits from all parts of the world. Where this has been most successful is where it has not allowed people to obtain a full licence before they are at least 18 years old. Government has a duty of care to all citizens to adopt a system that will reduce death and injury. Members of the public are not always in the position to research the benefits for themselves but the evidence in favour of a Graduated Driving Licence system is incontrovertible.

Thought should be given to an effective means of displaying tax, licence and insurance details in a simple form on the vehicle. More detailed evidence could later be presented to a police station together with evidence of personal identity or by direct computerised access to a central database e.g. the DVLA. Modern technology could supply several alternative ways (including reading details from a distance). This could greatly enhance enforcement.

Learn and Live asks why this country insists on tinkering with driver training? We appear to be incapable or afraid of a complete overhaul of driver training and licensing requirements.

### Question 1

Do you agree with the intention to introduce mandatory logbooks? If so, who should sign the logbook to confirm that the necessary training has been completed (the test candidate/accompanying driver/ADI?)

*We strongly support the introduction of mandatory logbooks as soon as possible. The logbooks should be signed by an ADI.*

*We recommend a supplementary sheet for use by accompanying drivers. These accompanying drivers should satisfy further criteria as detailed in response to question 6.*

### Question 2

Do you consider that the learning period should be extended? If so, how long should the minimum period last and what, if any, exemptions should be permitted? Should there be any changes to the licensing age requirements?

*There should be a minimum learning period of 12 months. The age for learning to drive should not be lowered under our current system without the total adoption of a Graduated Licensing System. Extending the training period must not mean that youngsters are exposed to risk at an earlier age.*

*Learn and Live wants the learning process split into 3 stages, Learner, Novice & Full Licence Holder.*

*The learner period should be for a minimum of 12 months and include theory test, instruction and supervised practice with restrictions followed by a practical driving test. However, general roaduser education can be implemented at an earlier age.*

*The novice period would be for 2 years with continued instruction on those elements now included in Pass Plus with partial supervision and restrictions, eventually leading to a full privileges licence.*

*There should be no exemptions; in particular "crash courses" should only be used for refresher courses. Intensive courses do not ensure that learners will experience different road and weather conditions and therefore the purpose of this document is defeated. There would obviously be those capable of driving safely after this type of training but it is the experience of many driving advisors that it is youngsters who are most keen to take advantage of this shortcut.*

*Evidence from New Zealand, Canada and the United States shows that allowing exemptions increases crash risk. Recent research shows that those USA & Canadian states where youngsters taking driver education courses were permitted to reduce the practical learning period, experienced an increase in crash involvement. Sweden has allowed youngsters to start carefully supervised learning at 16 but this only extends the learning period and still does not give them a full licence until they are 18. Moreover all supervisors have to be at least 24 and must have held a clean licence for at least 5 years.*

*In many other areas reducing the age of learning has either had no benefits or has increased crash risk. Those countries that allowed this have now stopped it, because of the increased crash rate. The Transport Select Committee proposed that the extended period should stretch up to the age of 18, not down to 16. The benefits of extending supervised practice, described by Sweden would be achieved, with less risk of the problems found in Norway and other countries.*

*Studying and preferably training for the theory test could begin at 16+ but this should not be used to allow youngsters to take the theory test so early that it bears no relation (in their minds) to practical driving lessons. Each element should complement the other.*

*At no time should anyone be able to achieve a “full privileges” licence immediately after passing the practical driving test.*

### **Question 3**

**Should new pre-test requirements be introduced? If so, what should they be and how would they be enforced?**

*All candidates should complete an attitude questionnaire when they take the theory test. There is a great deal of research that demonstrates the link between attitude and crashes. We understand that attitude tests are already proving useful in Australia.*

*Others may argue that attitude would be difficult to assess and correct responses could be learned but it would at least focus attention on this aspect of driving.*

### **Question 4**

**Do you consider that compulsory off-road basic training for learner car drivers should be introduced?**

*Learn and Live considers that compulsory off-road training should be introduced. Learners should be taught basic car handling away from other traffic.*

*In the past there were more opportunities for learner drivers to learn basic car handling in controlled conditions e.g. on supermarket car parks. This is no longer possible because of the introduction of Sunday trading and 24-hour shopping.*

*With the massive increase in traffic and the resultant jams, allowing learners on the roads before they are able to set off, steer, change gear, brake safely, reverse between cones etc. only increases the frustrations of other motorists and the risk of aggressive driving on both sides.*

### **Question 5**

**Do you consider that compulsory theory training should be introduced? Do you have any suggestions for improving theory learning on a voluntary basis?**

*This should be introduced as soon as possible. The way the subject is learned can influence how much is understood and retained, not merely as a hurdle to be passed and then forgotten.*

*Driving instructors should be encouraged to group together and be rewarded for providing the necessary facilities and running accredited courses in 6<sup>th</sup> forms or colleges. The Internet could also be used more fully for this purpose.*

#### **Question 6**

**Do you consider that accompanying drivers should be required to take a compulsory training course? Do you have any suggestions for voluntary initiatives to assist accompanying drivers?**

*All drivers who wish to supervise learners should have held a clean licence for a minimum of 3 years. The current legal requirements make no mention of this. It is nonsense not to specifically exclude drivers who have points on their licences.*

*If learners were allowed to begin practical training before the age of 17, then any supervisors should be at least 24. Learn and Live appreciates the difficulty involved in requiring accompanying drivers to take compulsory training. However, the influence and effect exerted by accompanying drivers can be enormous, for good or bad. We do not think that this proposal can be adopted at this time. However, careful thought must be given to determining a set of criteria for such drivers, some of which are already legal requirements.*

*Accompanying drivers should be required to sit in on at least 2 lessons with the learner and the ADI. They should complete a questionnaire that includes the following:*

- *Age*
- *Experience (as an active driver)*
- *Licence and insurance record*
- *Accident record (particularly injury accidents)*
- *Theory test pass*
- *Pass Plus taken*
- *Other advanced driving qualifications e.g. IAM, RoSPAD, DIAMOND Advanced Driver*
- *Supervisors could be registered on a supplementary logbook (see Question 1).*

#### **Question 7**

**Do you consider that learner drivers should be compelled to take professional tuition? If so, how many hours should be the minimum requirement?**

*Learner drivers should be required to take some professional tuition, nominally 8 hours preferably more. This is to ensure that learners understand the responsibilities involved in learning to drive.*

*We recommend that accompanying drivers should sit in on lessons for 2 hours.*

*Some form of Graduated Driving Licensing should be compulsory.*

*Full licences without any limitations, should not be awarded immediately after passing the practical test. Pass Plus should be compulsory after the practical driving test while the driver is in a probationary code licence. They should be required to take further instruction after the driving test, preferably with an ADI with dual controls, and while displaying P plates.*

*Current road conditions are difficult enough for experienced drivers. Learn and Live considers that a combination of mandatory professional instruction and carefully supervised additional practice over a sufficient length of time is likely to produce the safest drivers.*

#### **Question 8**

**Do you consider that learner drivers should be permitted on motorways? If so, do you think they should be subject to any special accompanying driver rules or restrictions on the type of car they may drive?**

*Learners should not be allowed on motorways.*

*They should be required to take instruction after the driving test, preferably with an ADI with dual controls, and while displaying P plates. Most ordinary supervisors are not themselves well enough trained, as is demonstrated by the tailgating and poor lane discipline.*

*Many ADIs working some distance from a motorway already incorporate several aspects of Pass Plus in a carefully planned extended route that incorporates several of the required modules.*

*Allowing learners on motorways would be very dangerous as the current pass rates are so low and this would permit those who cannot even drive safely for a 40 minutes period to drive on motorways.*

*Given their known lack of hazard perception skills, they are ill prepared to cope with the speed, tailgating and poor lane discipline of other motorists.*

*While motorways are currently statistically safer, when things go wrong, the effects are amplified by the increased speeds.*

*The fact that learners are not now allowed on motorways may contribute to their current relative safety.*

#### **Question 9**

**Do you consider that skid training should be compulsory?**

*Not before passing the practical test as it might encourage over-confidence or risk-taking. Advice/practice for winter driving could be given where appropriate.*

*Skid training should be part of post-test training in a compulsory Pass Plus.*

#### **Question 10**

**Do you consider that a longer delay period should be introduced before an unsuccessful candidate could retake the practical driving test? If so, how long should the period be?**

*A longer delay period should be introduced before retaking the practical driving test. It should be long enough to allow further lessons before a further attempt e.g. 2 months.*

#### **Question 11**

**Do you consider that a new probationary licence code should be introduced for the first two years after passing the practical driving test? If so, should drivers be required to renew their licences at the end of this period?**

*Learn and Live prefers a complete Graduated Driving Licence but this proposal would be supported as a constructive option. The probationary licence code should be for 2 years and any loss of licence under the New Driver Act should extend this period for a further 2 years.*

*Learners should be required to renew their licences at the end of this period.*

*This would make drivers better understand the seriousness of their probationary status and it would act as an incentive to drive safely and have the code removed.*

#### **Question 12**

**Do you think that displaying P-plates would improve road safety? If so, do you consider that it should be compulsory to use such plates after passing the driving test and how long should the compulsory period last?**

*Learn and Live is strongly in favour of compulsory P plates for newly qualified drivers.*

*It is vital that the plates be displayed for a minimum of 2 years to be consistent with the proposed 2-year probationary code on licences and the existing New Driver Act which applies for 2 years following the practical driving test.*

*The New Driver Act is weakened by the lack of accompanying P plates. Traffic police have reported to Learn and Live that, without an identifying novice driver plate, it is more difficult to identify the target group.*

*Learn and Live's research has been mainly into the 17-19 age group and our argument for a 2-year probationary period is based on the accident figures relating to age and inexperience relative to the whole population.*

*We know that some (often ADIs) propose a shorter period but they mainly see the more responsible learners, who take instruction and are involved in relatively few collisions.*

*The bulk of death and injury occurs after the practical test in the novice period. Lack of quality training and practice together with inexperience, over-confidence and peer pressure can be lethal. The extent of the problem is accepted and legislation must be framed to address it.*

*There is a great deal of competition about who can be first to get through the test. The requirement for all to display P plates acknowledges that novice drivers are even more at risk than learner drivers because of their inexperience and over-confidence.*

*The use of voluntary P plates by supporters of Learn and Live has demonstrated that other roadusers are normally more patient at junctions and other hazardous areas. The minority of motorists who react aggressively are usually those who treat all other roadusers with similar disdain.*

*However, It should be an offence to drive aggressively around learner and novice drivers. Most novice drivers know that they are subject to the New Driver Act, but they gamble that they will escape being picked up for any violations. Displaying plates will remind them to drive carefully.*

*\*Several questionnaire results confirm that while youngsters are naturally anxious to avoid any restrictions, they have the common sense to support the need for probationary plates.*

*\*RAC Report on Motoring 20002. \*TRL Cohort Study*

*We welcome the endorsement of the P plate design as Learn and Live has consistently stressed the importance of a design that can be easily seen and identified in different lighting conditions. We have made great efforts to point out the deficiencies of green L plates.*

*Learn and Live would urge the Government to require P plates to be displayed on both the front and rear of the vehicle for the following reasons:*

- *This is consistent with the current L-plate and the R-plate in Northern Ireland.*
- *Many novice drivers are hesitant at junctions and at roundabouts. It is sensible that approaching traffic should be able to identify inexperienced drivers.*
- *Vulnerable roadusers, especially horse riders, need to be able to identify an approaching novice driver and take extra care.*
- *Approaching pedestrians could also exercise extra caution.*

#### **Question 13**

**Do you consider that there should be a requirement to take a second practical driving test? If so, what would be the nature of that test and how should it differ from the current statutory driving test?**

*If a worthwhile Graduated Driving Licensing system were introduced, it would be possible to evaluate the effects over a trial period. At this point a second test should be introduced if necessary.*

*Evidence from Ontario, Canada supports the increased road safety benefits following the introduction of a second stage test.*

#### **Question 14**

**Do you consider that a lower blood alcohol level should be introduced for new drivers?**

*Inexperience is risky enough; any level of alcohol would increase the danger of a crash. There is evidence that all drivers have difficulty in remembering safe levels, it is therefore simpler to set the level at zero. Other countries have no difficulty with the practicalities of enforcement.*

*The evidence for the need for a zero level for learner and novice drivers is indisputable. Those countries where this has been introduced can show ample documented evidence of both its effectiveness and acceptance. To ignore this evidence is to shirk responsibility.*

*Good habits can become automatic and this is the right time to start.*

*Illegal drugs and medication also pose a risk to drivers, particularly the young. Unlike alcohol, drugs are illegal in any quantity but current thinking appears to incline towards decriminalising soft or recreational drugs for personal use. In addition, currently there is no roadside test to establish the use of drugs. However, we understand the Police are keen that one be introduced.*

*Drugs already have a zero level for all road users. We need a suitable roadside test to be introduced as soon as possible to ensure proper enforcement of existing law. In addition any road safety communications to young people and newly qualified drivers in relation to alcohol should reaffirm that driving and drug taking do not mix.*

*If, at some future point, soft drugs are decriminalised the impact this could have on drivers and road safety must be borne in mind.*

#### **Question 15**

**Do you consider that new drivers should be restricted to low powered vehicles?**

*The majority of learner drivers are aged 17-18. Most learn in a lower powered car with an ADI. It can come as no surprise to parents that their youngsters are nearing this age so there is no reason why they should not take the responsibility of ensuring that the family car should be appropriate for a learner to drive.*

*Where newly qualified drivers are in a position to purchase their own cars, these should be limited to sensible choices. We have all seen the terrible consequences of combining an inexperienced driver with a powerful car. The temptation to show off is irresistible. We already have the precedent in motorbikes.*

#### **Question 16**

**Do you consider that a lower speed limit should be introduced for new drivers?**

*Not specifically. The learner period should be extended to increase supervised experience on different road and speed conditions, (with the exception of motorways). Evidence from Sweden demonstrates that increasing supervised practice markedly reduces post-test crashes. Currently many learner drivers feel pressured to drive at the maximum possible speed. When in a dual-controlled car, this may be safe, but as unsupervised novices, they are likely to crash.*

#### **Question 17**

**Do you consider that new drivers should be prohibited from driving at night? If so, when should such a restriction apply?**

*Learner drivers are currently not required to demonstrate their ability to drive at night. This should be a required element in the logbook. Research shows that the crash risk rises during certain night-time periods. New drivers should not be allowed to drive at night immediately after passing the test. Night driving should be phased in under supervision, preferably in the form of Pass Plus.*

#### **Question 18**

**Do you consider that new drivers should be prohibited from carrying passengers? If so, what restrictions should apply?**

*Learner drivers should be prohibited from carrying other teenagers unless they are with an ADI in a dual controlled car. After the practical driving test, they should be prohibited from carrying other teenagers unless they are being supervised by a person over the age of 25, or by an ADI. The risk in carrying teenagers has been well-documented in Australia and the United States. Carrying one young passenger doubles the risk of a crash, with two or more the risk is five times as high. Learn and Live has many examples of the adverse effects of peer pressure, on the driver and the passengers. The critical factor is the age of the passengers, not the skill of the novice drivers.*

*In most areas where teenage passengers are banned, there are exemptions for essential journeys to work and school. Inconvenient as it may appear in the short-term for both youngsters and their parents, it is better to continue the chauffeuring rather than to risk multiple deaths and/or injuries.*

**Question 19**

**Do you have any other comments or suggestions for improving novice driver safety?**

*We should be prepared to take the best ideas from other countries and not be complacent about our own safety record. Fear of temporary unpopularity should not deter the Government from introducing preventative measures. We do not expect to avoid all road deaths, but many are totally avoidable with sensible proactive legislation.*

**Question 20**

**Do you have any comments on the partial RIA?**

**Costs**

*Most learners and novice drivers are within the age limits when the most likely cause of accidental death is in a road traffic accident. The costs implicit in such deaths are enormous and it makes sense to spend more on prevention.*

*Good preparation and training is an investment in the future and must be accepted.*

*Many of those who are quick to complain about the cost of improving driver training are quite willing to spend relatively huge amounts on designer labels, alloy wheels and in-car entertainment.*

*The Government must take responsibility and set the priorities.*

**Social Exclusion Issues**

*There is no evidence from the United States and other countries that introducing a Graduated Licensing System with restrictions prevents people from driving. Comparison between states with and without GDL does not show a reduction in car use.*

*However, Learn and Live suggests that there should be educational trusts set up by motor manufacturers and other organisations that profit from the motor industry. Individuals should be able to apply for financial assistance for any increased costs incurred.*

**Environmental Issues**

*Any activity results in environmental costs. Behind every fatal or serious accident are thousands of damage-only accidents that have inherent environmental costs. The cost of additional car use resulting from reducing the number of young passengers with novice drivers must be weighed against this.*

**Question 21**

**Do you have any comments on the consultation process?**

*None.*

**Question 21**

*You are welcome to make our response public.*

**LEARN AND LIVE'S BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE**

**This consultation response is the result of a wide exchange of opinions from a variety of sources.**

**Although Learn and Live's core supporters are motivated by personal loss, we can claim to be a totally independent voice on road safety.**

**We have experience gained from the collation of accident information over more than a decade, plus world-wide research, often via the Internet**

**Learn and Live represents bereaved parents who have lost family members due to driving inexperience rather than drink/drugs/joy-riding etc.**

**The organisation is completely non-political, non-profit and not aligned to any business concern, including driving instruction. There are no subscriptions and none of its personnel is paid. We rely solely on donations but sponsors have no direct influence on policy.**

**We are concerned with crash prevention rather than the punishment of offenders.**

**We have always obtained professional advice and our closest advisors include magistrates, several road safety officers, an insurance broker specialising in the young driver market, a scientist and tertiary college lecturer and a political advisor.**

**We have carried out surveys and have always invited public comment and public reaction to our activities is on display at the Learn and Live Website on the following pages:**

**<http://members.aol.com/learnanliv/guest.html>  
<http://members.aol.com/learnlive2/infavour.html>  
<http://members.aol.com/learnlive2/against.html>  
<http://members.aol.com/voteyes.html>  
<http://members.aol.com/voteno.html>**

**International comparisons in this paper have been drawn from the following sources:**

- \*Graduated Licensing: Insurance Institute for Highway Safety Status Report December 1999**
- \*Graduated Licensing: the pros and cons –Foss, Highway Safety Research Centre, Univ. South Carolina**
- \*Graduated Licensing System Evaluation Boase, Tasca, Ministry of Transportation Ontario –1998**
- \*Novice Driver Licensing in Victoria Australia –Hull, VicRoads - March 1999**
- \*Graduated Licensing - British Columbia 1999**
- \*Behavioural Strategies for Enhancing Road Safety Through Passengers Mitsopoulos, Regan - Monash University Accident Research Centre**
- \*Saving teenage lives – National Highway Traffic Safety Administration**
- \*Accident Involvement among learner drivers – an analysis of the consequences of supervised practice: Gregerson, Nyberg, Berg Swedish National Road & Transport Research Institute 2001**
- \*Sixteen Years Age limit for learner drivers in Sweden an evaluation of safety effects Gregerson et al - Swedish National Road & Transport Research Institute – 2000**
- \*Swedish Strategies for improving safety among young drivers – Gregerson Swedish National Road & Transport Research Institute - 2001**
- \*Effects of High School Driver Education on Motor Vehicle Crashes, Violations, and Licensure Vernick et al AmJ Prev Med 1999**
- \*Effectiveness & role of driver education and training in a graduated licensing system: Mayhew & Simpson 1999**
- \*The AA Driver Training Evaluation – MOT New Zealand 1984**
- \*Evidence based road safety: the Driving Standards Agency’s schools programme – Roberts et al – The Lancet – 2001**
- \*Young & Newly Qualified Drivers – Standards & Training -Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Select Committee Report –1999**
- \*An Integrated Driving Assessment - Drummond - 2000**
- \*Graduated Driver Licensing – A Review of Some Current Systems – Baughan & Simpson -**