

Driving Standards Agency Young People's Forum on *Learning to Drive*

Summary of activity and key ideas during pre-consultation

10.01.08

1. Purpose of this document

Driving Standards Agency (DSA) is currently reviewing the learning to drive process and a public consultation process will take place in 2008 to examine the key proposals. In November 2007, DSA commissioned SHM (an independent consultancy) to set up and manage a Young People's Forum on Learning to Drive as part of its pre-consultation engagement activity.

The DSA Young People's Forum (YPF) is an activity-based programme. It was established to provide DSA with the opportunity to work collaboratively with young people as key stakeholders in the learning to drive process.

This document provides a summary of the activity and key ideas that emerged from the Young People's Forum during the pre-consultation phase of activity. In particular it:

- provides a brief overview of the initial set up phase of the Forum
- captures the key ideas generated by the Forum during its first sessions
- outlines potential activity going forward (as proposed by Forum members)

2. Background and context

2.1 Involving young people in the review of learning to drive

DSA is currently reviewing the way that people learn to drive, and is in the process of developing proposals that will go out to public consultation in 2008.

DSA recognises that young people in particular are key stakeholders in any such review process as:

- they account for a large proportion both of those learning to drive and of those subsequently having accidents
- any new approach to driver learning and testing needs to engage and be comprehensible to those to whom it will apply

DSA therefore commissioned SHM (an independent consultancy) to establish and manage a Young People's Forum. The aims were to establish an activity-based programme that would harness the views and energy of young people to inform and influence the consultation process and motivate the forum members to identify ways in which they could encourage other young people to get involved.

2.2. Aim and remit of the Young People's Forum

In establishing the Young People's Forum (DSA YPF), DSA aims to involve young people in the development of a new approach to driver learning and testing by:

- working directly with Forum members in their capacity as 'advisors'
- empowering members to act as ambassadors who will subsequently encourage other young people to take part in the consultation process.

The following activity falls within the DSA YPF's remit:

Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 Develop and/or review elements of the new approach to driver learning and testing 1.2 Take part in and feed back on 'prototyping' activities 1.3 Discuss and provide responses to specific 'research' questions from workstreams 1.4 Support research activities with young people outside the Forum, e.g. by acting as co-facilitators for focus groups
Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1 Shape the presentation of consultation materials to make them meaningful and accessible to young people 2.2 Develop and/or review approaches to proactively engaging other young people during the consultation phase 2.3 Support specific proactive consultation activities, e.g. peer research 2.4 Support the analysis and interpretation of responses gathered from young people during the consultation phase
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1 Develop and/or review communications strategies and materials aimed at young people 3.2 Act as credible ambassadors in communication activity

During the pre-consultation activity in November/December 2007, the focus of the Forum's work focused most heavily on strands 1.1, 1.3, 1.4 and 2.2.

DSA is currently reviewing opportunities for the DSA YPF to undertake elements of activity outlined in 1.2, 2.1 and 3.1.

Strands of activity relating specifically to the active consultation period (2.3, 3.2) or post-consultation period (2.4) will be collaboratively agreed by DSA and Forum members and will be determined by the timing of the public consultation period.

3. Setting up the Forum

3.1. Locations

The Young People's Forum consists of three groups based in England, Wales and Scotland. During November/December 07, SHM recruited and established groups in Nottingham, Cardiff and Glasgow.

3.2 Recruitment strategy

The DSA's YPF's remit encompasses elements that are both pro-active and responsive, with the opportunity for members to act as ambassadors, peer-researchers and creators of ideas, in addition to providing a mechanism for feedback.

As such, the activity differs from that of a traditional research programme and therefore in this instance it was not appropriate to employ the strict recruitment criteria that might be used for a pure action research programme. Nevertheless, where possible, SHM aimed to ensure a reasonable diversity for each group in terms of:

- age
- gender
- ethnicity
- educational/working backgrounds
- stage in driver learning (e.g. pre-learner, learner, driver etc)/learning/driving history (e.g. first-time failers, offenders)

To ensure a reasonable range of drivers/non-drivers and learners/pre-learners, SHM recruited 16 – 20 year olds to the Nottingham and Glasgow groups and 18 – 25 year olds to the Cardiff group (with the proviso that anyone aged over 20 had passed their test in the previous year).

3.3 Recruitment process

SHM promoted the opportunity for young people to apply for the Forum via a range of mechanisms within each of the chosen locations:

- university and college networks within the city
- youth centres
- local council youth programmes
- workplaces with a relatively high number of young employees (e.g. call centres).

Applicants were then selected according to whether:

- they had expressed a genuine interest in membership in conversations and on application forms
- space was available within the group
- they broadened the diversity of the overall forum membership

3.4 Forum membership

Appendix A provides an overview of the group members. Initial group sizes are:

Nottingham: 17 attending members (17 in pool)

Cardiff: 13 attending members (15 in pool)

Glasgow: 6 attending members (10 in pool)

Forum membership enables participants to attend up to 5 local group meetings over a period of approximately 6 months (depending upon consultation dates), along with a Whole Forum event that will bring together all three groups. Forum members also have the opportunity to participate in additional individual activity, depending upon their availability, strengths and areas of interest. All Forum members are paid in their capacity as advisors and ambassadors.

Recruitment for first meeting of the Glasgow Forum is ongoing at 10.01.08.

4. Pre-consultation activity

Table 1: Overview of pre-consultation activity to date (as at 10.01.08)

Date	Event	Location	Attended by:
10.11.07	Group Event 1	Nottingham	Forum members SHM facilitators
17.11.07	Group Event 1	Cardiff	Forum members SHM facilitators
27.11.07	MCIA Youth Day	NEC, Birmingham	5 Forum members SHM facilitators
29.11.07	Group event 2	Nottingham	Forum members SHM facilitators DSA colleagues
29.11.07	Group event 2	Cardiff	Forum members SHM facilitators
19.12.07	Group event 1/2 (combined)	Glasgow	Forum members SHM facilitators

5. Key ideas from Event 1

[Remit strand 1.1]

5.1. Definition of a 'good driver'

Forum members were asked to articulate what constituted a 'good driver'. They identified characteristics that could be broadly categorised as physical, social and emotional. Forum members defined a good driver as someone who:

Physical characteristics

- *"is aware of what is going on around them, like other drivers and pedestrians"* (Nottingham)
- is in a fit state (not drunk, ill or tired)
- knows how to drive smoothly
- knows all the relevant information (e.g. has theoretical knowledge of traffic rules and safety, knows the roads they're driving on)
- is able to anticipate what happens ahead of them
- is experienced in handling different driving environments
"I think the individual should go out and try driving in different environments" (Glasgow)

Social characteristics

- abides by the rules (e.g. the laws and the speed limits)
"Someone who does it by the book" (Cardiff)
- sometimes speeds a bit, but only if no one else on the road
- is responsible/sensible
"Social awareness is something that needs to be emphasized in the learning process – how your actions affect people." (Glasgow)
- encourages others to wear seatbelts

Emotional characteristics

- is patient and keeps his/her temper
"They shouldn't get road rage or anything – they should be able to keep calm" (Nottingham)
- concentrates and doesn't get distracted e.g. by children messing around, loud music, drunk passengers etc
- doesn't react to backseat drivers
- stays alert
- is cautious but confident
"Someone who has confidence and is not overwhelmed by driving – but not over-confident" (Cardiff)

5.2 Ideal ways to learn to drive

Forum members began to formulate ideas for ways in which people could learn to drive in future:

- a) so that young people enjoy the experience

- b) to reduce accidents
- c) to prove to insurers that you should pay a lower premium

a) To enjoy the experience

- start learning about driving at school
 - *“take a short GCSE level course in learning to drive, invite guest speakers into talk about it.” (Cardiff)*
 - *“integrate simulator sessions into the Enrichment or PSHE curriculum”(Nottingham)*
 - *“provide an opportunity for young people to gain a certificate” (Nottingham)*
- make the hazard test real
 - *“get rid of the artificial test, and instead ask the learner to sit in the driver seat and comment on potential hazards while the instructor drives.” (Cardiff)*
- vary when and where lessons take place
 - *“we should learn to drive in different environments, like the city, the country, at night etc.” (Nottingham)*

b) To reduce accidents

- impose restrictions when we first start learning to drive
 - *“limit the number of passengers you can take with you initially” (Nottingham)*
 - *“introduce i-cube insurance...which lowers the premium, but prevents young people from driving between 11.00pm and 5.00pm” (Cardiff)*
- increase the number and length of driving lessons
 - *“increase the length of lessons for a 6 month period prior to taking a test” (Cardiff)*
 - *“introduce a minimum number of lessons with a qualified instructor”(Nottingham)*
- learn to deal with distractions
 - *“we should practice with music on, or people talking.” (Nottingham)*
- raise the age at which you take your test
 - *“people should learn to drive at 17, but shouldn’t be able to obtain a full licence until they’re 18.” (Nottingham)*
- introduce awareness-raising sessions about the effects of drugs/alcohol etc
 - *include awareness courses to emphasise the effects of tiredness, drugs, alcohol and weather conditions on driving” (Cardiff)*

c) To prove to insurers that you should have a lower premium

- introduce a grading system
 - *“if you get an ‘A’, you pay a lower premium, you should be able to re-take to improve your grade.” (Nottingham)*
- continue to improve driving skills once you have a full licence
 - *“insurance companies could offer ‘improvement’ driving lessons” (Cardiff)*

6. Key ideas from Event 2

[Remit strands 1.1 and 1.3]

Having reflected on the Forum outputs from event 1, and building on the members' ideas about learning to drive at school, developing readiness to drive and ongoing learning, DSA asked Forum members to input to specific research questions:

Learning about driving at school:

1. What do you think about the idea of taking a pre-driver qualification at school?
2. Is this something you'd be interested in doing?
3. What things about road safety and preparing to drive would you be interested in learning about/ what topics do you think it should cover and why?
4. What age group should this be targeted at?
5. Do you think everyone should have to do this?
6. If it was voluntary, what would encourage you to do it?
7. Do you think a qualification of this sort would also be valuable to people who are not at school?
8. If so, what might encourage them to do it?

Developing and assessing readiness to drive:

9. If you were starting with a blank canvas, what assessments do you think there should be to make sure someone is safe to drive on their own and have a full licence?
10. As part of this, think about how skills could be assessed i.e. types of assessment and mix of theory and practical
11. How could the assessments be made realistic and relevant?
12. What would help you prepare for these assessments?
13. What about recording your progress to prepare for these assessments? Would this be helpful? How could this be done?

Ongoing development and assessment of driving skills

14. How could you carry on learning and improving your driving skills once you have got your full licence?
15. What would help you to do this? And what would encourage you to do this?

DSA colleagues attended the Nottingham event to engage with Forum members directly on these topics.

6.1 Learning about driving at school

Forum members across all three groups advocated the development of a course, qualification or certificate that allowed young people to start to learn about driving at school:

'It would be of particular interest to those who wanted to pass their driving test at the earliest

opportunity.” (Cardiff)

“I think that it’s good that you’d do it in school and that you’d see it as part of your overall education, because in some professions driving is essential.” (Glasgow)

Nottingham and Cardiff members suggested that any such course should probably:

- Be **voluntary/optional whilst at school**, taking place either within or out of school hours (e.g. as a lunchtime club option, after school or integrated into optional curriculum subjects)
- Be initially offered to those between **15 – 17 years old**
- Be **taught by trained instructors who might be driving examiners/instructors**, young people with driving experience or (less popularly) teachers

Glasgow members considered that the course itself should be **compulsory at school** as part of the personal and social development course. However, they felt that *“anyone who was interested in taking the course further to get a qualification could do this in a school period set aside for hobbies.” (Glasgow)*

Many Forum members thought that such a course or qualification should probably **form a compulsory part of the learning to drive process** at whatever age this is undertaken and should therefore **be available to others no longer at school (e.g. other pre-learners) at community centres** etc.

6.1.1 Course content

Forum members across all three groups felt that a holistic approach is necessary to the development of any such course, and they suggested a format that combines theoretical knowledge with practical skills, along with exercises that will help develop the essential social, emotional and cognitive skills.

“The course would have to be something that shows driving as a social issue.” (Glasgow)

In particular, Glasgow members emphasised the appropriateness of placing such a course as a module within the wider PSHE curriculum.

Forum members suggested the course should cover:

- **Development of practical skills**
e.g. learning about structure/mechanics of car, how to change a tyre
- **Introduction to related financial and legal issues**
e.g. how to make an insurance claim, your rights/responsibilities
- **Knowledge of social and civil responsibilities**
e.g. aspects of road safety relating to accidents, mobile phone usage etc, First Aid, what to do if you witness accidents, drug & alcohol limits etc
- **Awareness of social and emotional factors**
e.g. an attitude/apptitude test

6.1.2 Motivations and incentives for taking the course

Forum members felt that if the course was voluntary, people might want to take it to increase their knowledge and feel better prepared for their driving test. They also felt that it would motivate people to know that by taking the course their **insurance premiums might be reduced in future** or that **the qualification could contribute in some way to the learner's final driving test result**. Forum members might additionally be motivated to take the course by **driving-related discounts**:

"Maybe it could get you a discount off your licence or first driving lessons?" (Nottingham)

Members suggested that the qualification could help to build CVs/school records, count as a contributory element towards a GNVQ or perhaps contribute to the number of UCAS points for university entry.

6.1.3 Qualification name

Members suggested that the course could be called:

- The pre-driving assessment
- BTD: beginning to drive
- Driving FUNdamentals
- L2D: learning to drive
- Earlylearning@school.time
- Young Safety Scheme

6.2 Developing and assessing readiness to drive

Forum members felt that if a learner is really 'ready to drive' s/he should be able to demonstrate competency in three key areas:

- Physical ability
 - demonstrate control of the car in different situations
 - understand the basics of how a car works
- Social skills and empathy
 - understand how drivers should interact with others on the road
- Emotional maturity
 - know how important it is to be in the right frame of mind – and have the self-knowledge and skills to ensure you can stay patient and remain focused

Forum members acknowledged that it would be difficult to assess the 'softer' skills of self-awareness and empathy with other road users as part of a formal assessment process, but feel strongly that there needs to be a greater emphasis on developing these during the learning to drive process – and stressed that **this should form a core element of the learning experience**.

“It would be good if there was a clever way of assessing people’s maturity without undermining them.”(Glasgow)

6.2.1 Developing readiness to drive

Members felt the learning experience should include:

- Practical approaches that **develop specific mental or physical skills**
e.g. simulators, cone tracks, basic maintenance and repair knowledge
- First-hand **experience of different driving environments**
e.g. night driving, country/city, dealing with distractions in/outside the car
- Opportunities for reflective practice
e.g. exercises that
 - encourage learners to become more **aware of their emotional state behind the wheel,**
 - **take people out of their comfort zone** (followed by a review with driving instructor)
 - encourage people to **appreciate the difficulty of driving**
- **Targeted advice and guidance from instructors**
e.g. differentiated approaches for differing levels of confidence

6.2.2 Recording progression

Forum members recorded a mixed response to current systems of recording progress in booklets. Some already had experience of using a progress booklet and found it a useful way of charting improvement. However, others found it patronising or even demotivating. Members feel that any written progress record should be optional – and warn that careful attention should be paid to the positioning and design:

*“The ones at the moment are a bit too much like your school record card...it needs to be something that doesn’t feel like this, or people...will just think they’re patronising and not take it seriously.”
(Nottingham)*

6.3 Ongoing development and assessment of driving skills after gaining a licence

In principle, most Nottingham and Cardiff Forum members were in favour of continuing to develop driving skills after a full licence has been achieved, as they felt that there is not enough support after the test and *“it would keep a check on your skills and attitudes.” (Cardiff.)*

However, the majority felt that if this became compulsory, it should be free of charge *“It’s for the safety of others, and you’ve already proved you’re good enough once, so government should pay to protect others in future.” (Nottingham).*

They suggested varying timeframes for re-assessment, ranging from *“every few months after you first pass” (Nottingham)* to *“every ten years.” (Cardiff)* They also suggested that drivers are

assessed on a range of different aspects e.g. physical fitness (eye tests), theory tests and practical assessments.

However, Glasgow members did not feel it necessary to reassess all drivers, and that further learning should apply only to those drivers who are repeat or persistent offenders:

"You've already passed your test and if you show yourself to be a good driver by not getting into any kind of trouble, then you should be able to keep going." (Glasgow)

However, they suggested the introduction of **a probationary year after passing the test in which P plates were compulsory.**

Nottingham and Cardiff members felt that if it was optional to undertake further learning, people might be motivated to do it by reduced insurance premiums, discounts/credits or accumulative card schemes for car-related purchases. However, Glasgow members did not feel that anyone would voluntarily opt to undertake further testing.

7. Motorcycle Industry Association Youth Day

Remit strand 1.4

The Motorcycle Industry Association's Youth Day was held at NEC Birmingham on 27th November 2007. It aimed to promote safe road use to young people and was attended by over 700 young people aged between 14 -17 years of age. It was therefore decided to take advantage of this event to further understand young people's views on driver training. Five DSA Forum members attended this event in order to:

- get feedback from other young people on the ideas they had generated at the induction event
- capture the names and contact details of young people who might be interested in taking part in the forthcoming consultation process

The Forum members shared their ideas on **ideal ways to learn to drive** (developed at Event 1) with an audience of 300 young people, who then rated the potential impact of these suggestions via an interactive electronic voting system.

6.1 Ideal ways to learn to drive

Forum members presented their following suggestions *on ideal ways to learn to drive*:

A. Start learning about driving at school

- We could look at driving in Citizenship or PSHE
- We could attend workshops led by driving instructors
- We could have lessons on the theory, or on how to maintain a car or manage finances

B. Get more experience before the test

- There could be compulsory modules on motorway driving, night driving, etc
- There could be chances to try driving with passengers or listening to music
- There could be a minimum number of lessons

C. Get a grade, not just a pass/fail

- Getting a 'merit' or a 'distinction' might help you get cheaper insurance
- There could be a chance to improve your grade by doing more lessons or another assessment

D. Get assessed for our 'maturity'

- We might be able to get cheaper insurance if we can prove we're a sensible driver
- We could take some kind of attitude test, or maybe get references from driving instructors or other to show we will be responsible

E. Make learning as practical as possible

- We could do the theory and hazard tests as a passenger, describing hazards or answering questions while someone else is driving
- We could start learning on driving courses

- We could use realistic simulators

F. Have more restrictions when we start

- We could have a limit on the number of passengers you can take with us when we first pass
- We could have limits on the size of engine you can have at the beginning

6.2 The voting process

Forum members invited the young people to register their vote through an interactive quiz and list in order of preference:

- The top 3 ideas that would be most popular with young people
- The top 3 ideas that would do most to reduce road accidents among young drivers
- The top 3 ideas that might help good young drivers get cheaper insurance

6.3 The results

	Most popular with young people	Reduce road accidents	Get cheaper insurance
A. Start learning about driving at school	27%	19%	25%
B. Get more experience before the test	15%	24%	16%
C. Get a grade, not just a pass/fail	17%	15%	18%
D. Get assessed for our maturity	13%	19%	14%
E. Make learning as practical as possible	17%	11%	11%
F. Have more restrictions when we start	11%	12%	16%

The format of the session (in which Forum members made a brief 5 min presentation, followed by asking the audience to vote immediately) did not allow the Forum members to go into detail about the ideas – or, crucially, for the young people in the audience to discuss or debate the ideas in any depth. **Therefore, these results should be viewed purely in the context of quickfire responses in an informal quiz environment.**

However, as the results were fairly evenly split across the 6 different options, this indicates a **reasonable level of support for each idea as an individual concept**. By looking at the more notable swings in voting, we can tentatively conclude that the young people felt that:

- Making learning as practical as possible is likely to prove popular with young people, but less likely to reduce accidents or persuade insurers to lower premiums

- Starting to learn about driving at school will be popular with young people - and could persuade insurers to lower premiums
- You are most likely to reduce accidents if young people get more experience before passing the test, including starting to learn about driving earlier and getting assessed for their maturity.

6.4 Learning about driving at school

Finally, Forum members specifically asked the young people: “*If you had a chance to learn about road safety and preparing to drive at school but it wasn’t compulsory, would you be interested in doing it?*” 85% of respondents replied that they would be interested in learning about driving at school on a voluntary basis.

8. Advice for DSA

Remit strand 2.2

8.1 How to engage young people

Forum members had the following advice for DSA colleagues when considering how they might encourage young people to engage in the consultation process:

- *“Separate out the different ideas you’re considering - get people to answer on specific topics in more detail” (Nottingham)*
- Use text messages, so people can text back their opinion on a specific issue immediately
- *“Get young people to hand out questionnaires- other young people will respond better to their peers” (Cardiff)*
- Provide incentives (e.g. free driving lessons) to encourage participation
- Engage young people when they’re at the stage of applying for their provisional licence, e.g. by including a compulsory questionnaire.
- *“Let young people take control e.g. design websites” (Cardiff)*
- Hold open days at test centres and let young people take cars out for a drive
- *“Talk with schools to think about how we can instil some of the ideas into our education system” (Glasgow)*
- Do *not* put information in pubs, clubs or send spam

8.2 Developing a website

Nottingham Forum members provided DSA with the following advice on developing a website for the consultation process:

- Visual impact
 - Make the questions rotate, so it doesn’t always look the same
- Content
 - Provide running totals and results for answers so far
 - Have message boards so we can discuss our ideas with other people in more detail and explain our reasoning, not just have to put ‘yes or no’
 - Avoid the use of ‘cool’ language
- Functionality
 - Have links to related sites e.g. highway code, laws, statistics, case studies etc

- Promotion
 - Ensure the site is promoted via internal Further Education and Higher Education systems
 - Consider linking it with loyalty points to incentivise people to use the site

9. Future YPF activity

Forum members proposed the following activity for the YPF programme going forward:

Pre-consultation:

- Organise a trip to carry out a website review and input into its design
- Hold team-building trips
- Talk to someone from the Association of British Insurers (ABI)
- Review statistics on road safety and young drivers
- Set up Forums in other areas of the UK
 - could be supported by internet links
 - develop links with existing groups

During the consultation period:

- Identify other opportunities to speak with young people and find out what they think e.g.
 - Take survey forms out and talk to others to find out what they think
 - Use video and/or audio documentary to capture young people's views
- Develop creative materials: e.g. make videos, improvise performances/give presentations etc
- Organise community events

Looking to the future:

- Get sponsorship (perhaps by BSM/Mercedes) for the continuation of the Forum

Next steps

The next phase of activity is currently being defined to ensure that, wherever possible and appropriate, Forum members' suggestions are incorporated into the programme going forward. The exact shape of activity will be determined by consultation dates, collaboratively agreed by DSA and SHM and reviewed on an ongoing basis.

Appendix A

Cardiff forum members (18 – 25 years)

	Gender	Age	Driving status
1	M	18	Learning – test in Dec 2007
2	F	18	Driving – 7 months
3	M	18	Driving – 12 months
4	M	18	Driving – 6 months
5	F	18	Not started learning
6	M	18	Driving – 6 months
7	F	19	Driving – 14 months
8	F	22	Driving – 12 months
9	M	23	Not learning – but passed theory test 5 years ago
10	F	23	Learning – but not a present
11	M	23	Not started learning
12	M	25	Not started learning – but has a provisional Malaysian licence
13	M	25	Learning – currently preparing for test

Nottingham forum members (16 – 20 years)

	Name	Age	Driving status
1	F	16	Not started learning
2	M	16	Not started learning
3	M	16	Not started learning
4	M	16	Not started learning
5	F	16	Not started learning - will be in April 2008
6	F	17	Not started learning
7	M	17	Not started learning – will be in Feb 2008
8	M	18	Learning
9	F	18	Not started learning
10	F	18	Driving – 8 months
11	M	18	Learning
12	M	18	Learning – but taking a break from it
13	F	19	Learning - failed test
14	F	19	Driving – 12 months
15	M	19	Driving
16	M	20	Driving – 3 years
17	M	20	Learning – in a different country

Glasgow Forum members (16 – 20 years)

	Name	Age	Driving status
1	F	18	Learning – test in Jan 2008
2	F	19	Learning
3	M	18	Not started learning
4	M	18	Driving – 7 months
5	F	17	Not learning to drive
6	M	17	Not learning to drive