

DSA'S ROLE IN INFLUENCING DRIVER AND RIDER BEHAVIOUR

Rosemary Thew
Chief Executive
Driving Standards Agency

1. THE CHALLENGE

The Government's strategy has set challenging targets for the reduction in road casualties. DSA has an important part to play and is determined to help in the delivery of these targets by setting standards for safe drivers, riders and vehicle trainers. Crucially, DSA is committed to positively influencing the values and attitudes of young people toward driver and rider safety on today and tomorrow's roads.

Our strap line 'safe driving for life' illustrates DSA's fundamental purpose in establishing driving as a life skill from the 'cradle to the grave'.

2. CONTEXT

The role of the Driving Standards Agency (DSA), an executive agency of the Department for Transport, was redefined in the Government's road safety strategy, 'Tomorrow's roads – safer for everyone'. Ministers agreed that DSA would contribute to improvements in road safety through:

- establishing, developing and disseminating best practice in driving and riding on the road; before people start to drive, as they learn and after they pass their test;
- ensuring high standards of instruction for different types of driver and rider;
- conducting the statutory theory and practical tests efficiently, fairly and consistently across the country;
- providing a centre of excellence for driver and rider training and driving standards.

The expanded remit has enabled the Agency to play a more active role in all aspects of road safety and use its expertise and resource to help, advise and provide guidance in an effort to drive down casualty figures amongst all groups of road users.

3. DRIVER, VEHICLE AND OPERATOR GROUP

The Driver, Vehicle and Operator Group (DVO) consists of four Department for Transport Agencies – Driving Standards Agency (DSA) , Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA), Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA) and the Vehicle Certification Agency (VCA).

The aim of the DVO group is to promote safe, secure drivers and vehicles on our roads. Strategic priorities lie in improving services and providing value for money for the services supplied to customers, together with protecting all road users by tackling those who don't comply with their legal obligations.

In support of these priorities, the Group is developing a One Stop Service (OSS) strategy, focusing on the needs of private and commercial customers.

DVO's goal is to provide more "joined-up" customer services, which make compliance simpler and which deliver significant improvements in efficiency and effectiveness.

An example of this approach can be found by visiting either www.direct.gov.uk or www.transportoffice.gov.uk .

4. DSA'S AIM

DSA aims to promote road safety in Great Britain through the advancement of driving standards and, in particular by testing drivers (including motorcycle riders) and driving instructors fairly and efficiently.

We endeavour to influence drivers' behaviour for the better throughout their driving career and cut novice accidents by concentrating on the early years of driving in the run up to their test and the period immediately after.

Within the nucleus of this remit we continue exploring innovative ways of advancing driving standards and adopting a cohesive modular approach to further contribute to road safety improvements. In the coming year, under new enabling powers available to us once the Road Safety Bill is enabled, we will be seeking to honour our commitments to modernise driver and rider training as set out in the Government's Road Safety Strategy.

5. GOVERNMENT TARGET 2010

While we have one of the best road safety records in Europe an annual road death toll of over 3,200 is unacceptable. DSA is fully committed to the Government Strategy and we will work tirelessly to help achieve these target reductions:

- Killed, Seriously Injured - 40% overall reduction
- Killed, Seriously Injured - 50% children reduction
- Slight Casualty Rate - 10% reduction

In turn DSA has adopted its own target of reducing the numbers of killed and seriously injured in the 16-24 age group by 40% over the same period.

6. NEW DRIVER ACCIDENTS

To be effective in our objective of cutting road casualties we continue to review current initiatives and seek new ways in which to change the attitude and behaviour of those long identified as high risk – including looking at when and where they are most at risk.

Government statistics pin point that 1 out of every 5 new drivers is involved in an incident within the first 6 months of driving.

Most of these accidents:

- involve a single car
- occur on rural high speed roads
- take place late at night

Most at risk are:

- Young males between 17 and 25 years

7. TEACHING DRIVING AS A LIFE SKILL

We are encouraged by the fact that the majority of test candidates take some professional tuition.

- 99% of test candidates have some professional instruction
- Around 94% attend for test in a driving school car

- 46 hours is the average amount of instruction with an Approved Driving Instructor before passing the driving test
- 22 hours is the average amount of private practice before passing the driving test

Whilst these statistics illustrate willingness from new drivers, parents and carers to acknowledge and embrace the need to employ professional instruction, improvement in the driving test national pass rate has not followed.

8. NEW DRIVER EXPERIENCE

Despite an increase in professional instruction, the current national pass rate of 43% is disappointing and we are extremely concerned at the standard of many candidates presented for test. Indicators suggest that new drivers still lack acceptable levels of practical experience prior to taking their driving test.

- 50% have never driven in adverse weather conditions
- 12% have never driven in the dark
- 2% have never driven in the rain

9. DSA'S COMMITMENT

We are fully committed to a wide range of activities and initiatives encompassing:

- Education
- Keeping informed
- Raising instructional standards
- Helping reduce motorcycle casualties
- Legislation
- Pass Plus
- Vocational drivers
- Current initiatives

We recognise we do not act alone. Road Safety professionals and Industry representatives play an increasingly important role in helping the agency to succeed in the implementation and delivery of road safety initiatives.

10. EDUCATION - ARRIVE ALIVE

Education and skills development is key to ensuring continuous improvement in all walks of life - and road safety is no exception.

10.1 The Arrive Alive Road Safety Programme

DSA is dedicated to influencing young peoples' attitudes towards road safety, learning to drive and passing the driving test.

We aim to do this by discussing important road safety issues in an informed environment. The award-winning Arrive Alive, Bike Alive and Classic Road Safety Programme presentation is delivered to a variety of organisations including schools and colleges, the armed forces, agricultural colleges, youth and professional football teams, probation services, young offenders units and prisons, Approved Training Bodies, Senior Citizen Associations and social clubs.

We are proud of the recognition Arrive Alive has received as a major influencing initiative and in 2002 the programme won The Prince Michael International Road Safety Award. Driving examiners are reaching out more and more into the wider community delivering tailored presentations to young and older drivers and riders. Currently our road safety message has already reached about 200,000 students over a period of four years.

Additionally, an independent evaluation of the programme carried out by BITER (The British Institute of Traffic Education Research) confirmed that the overall impact was very positive and the content was relevant to the age group targeted.

10.1.1 Arrive Alive – Three Modules

As demand for Arrive Alive grows and becomes more diverse we recognise the need to adapt to specific target audiences.

There are now three specialised modules in use:

Module 1 - Pre drivers in schools and colleges

Module 2 - Young Offenders convicted of taking a motor vehicle without the owners consent (TWOC)

Module 3 – Pitched towards prisons and is hard hitting

12.1.2 Arrive Alive – Syllabus

The syllabus informs pre-drivers how to find and access quality professional tuition and aims to demystify the driving test by focussing on:

- attitudes
- selecting an instructor
- preparing for the test
- demystifying the test
- speed
- gaining experience
- drink/drugs and driving

A great deal of emphasis is placed on hazard awareness and anticipating the actions of other road users, plus we include useful information about both the theory and the practical tests. Interaction and discussion is encouraged throughout the presentation.

The presentation focuses on the vulnerability of the new, young driver, the dangers of drinking and taking drugs when driving, the use of speed and the consequences when it's not used correctly with video footage highlighting the results of road traffic accidents.

12.2. Education - Structured Learning

Historically, DSA targets have been service orientated, focusing on test waiting times, telephone answering etc. The plan is that a DSA road safety target should be cascaded down from the new casualty reduction target, so encouraging the development of strategies to achieve it.

Most driving instructors agree that following a structured learning programme, (such as that contained in the Drivers Record) is beneficial to both the instructor and the pupil. DSA encourage ADIs to promote gaining experience through private practice.

12.2.1. Drivers Record

The driver's record is based on the recommended syllabus for learning to drive and lists all the competencies necessary to safe driving. It will help a learner driver to see what progress they have made and identify the competencies yet to be covered.

Once the record is fully completed it will show that all the skills linked to safe driving has been covered to a satisfactory level and that the pupil is ready to take the test.

The driver's record has two separate parts. The first part is designed for the instructor to record detailed progress on a lesson-by-lesson basis. The second part is designed for the pupil to keep, to show progress toward each of the key competencies.

A recent study showed that those pupils who used the Drivers Record achieved a higher pass rate than those who did not. DSA are encouraging all driving instructors and candidates to make full use of the system. Use of the driver's record is currently voluntary.

DSA are keen to encourage constructive feedback from driving instructors, pupils and members of the public as part of a national trial to enable us to further develop the concept.

During the next 18 months two DfT funded research studies will evaluate and make recommendations on developing both the Pass Plus scheme and the Drivers Record. The agency will be working closely with the contractors and the driving instruction industry to ensure that we maximise the value from the work.

13. Keeping Informed

As a member of CIECA, the International Commission for Driver Testing Authorities, DSA is actively involved in European Road Safety and shares knowledge and experience with member countries. The European Union is driven by a common desire to cut deaths on roads. European influence and legislation will determine future directives impacting on driving instruction in Great Britain.

14. Higher Quality Instruction

Provision has been made in the Road Safety Bill to develop a registration scheme for all categories of instructor and trainer that would give more flexibility in terms of entry requirements, continuing development and progression between categories.

The Bill also provides for regulations to be drafted to extend the registration scheme to cover those who train driving instructors of all categories. This could include entry requirements, development and quality assurance.

The improved qualification process for registration could be much more flexible than the current system. It could allow accreditation for prior learning, by mapping skills against a competency framework and offers the possibility of a system that allows deferred entry or access through alternative routes.

Longer term we are reviewing the format of the instructional test. To encourage training in the broad range of instructional techniques required by a modern trainer we plan to move away from the rigidity of pre-set tests, especially during the second phase. This will discourage the rote training and learning of the exercises that make up the pre-set tests and necessitate knowledge, understanding and the flexible application of a range of teaching methods and styles. An additional bonus will be that each phase will more closely replicate a 'real' driving lesson and allow examiners to assess all aspects of the 'lesson'.

We are confident that this change will improve the quality and content of training and result in instructors who are better prepared to meet the challenges they face upon qualifying as an Approved Driving Instructor. This should help improve the pass rate for the instructional test, currently 26%, reduce the number who 'fail' their first check test and help ensure that pupils receive more appropriate and effective training from newly qualified instructors.

We are consulting closely within the Industry to find agreement on implementation of mandatory Continuing Professional Development (CPC) for Approved Driving Instructors.

15. Helping reduce motorcycle casualties

Despite initiatives such as the introduction of Compulsory Basic Training (CBT) and the Direct Access Scheme (DAS) for motorcyclists the number of casualties on powered two wheels is unacceptably high.

Together with our European partners we are working toward the implementation of EU legislation on motorcycle testing. This major change, which must be implemented by 2008, makes for huge and far-reaching demands on how we and the motorcycle training industry approach motorcycle training and testing.

The National Motorcycle Strategy developed in partnership with major stakeholders identifies where improvements can be made to increase rider safety. The strategy includes:

- A complete review of training and trainer qualifications
- Improving the content and quality of training modules
- Initiating a voluntary register for post test motorcycle training
- Developing resource materials
- Designing and implementing a training scheme for new motorcyclists

16. Legislation

For the first time in 17 years a Road Safety Bill is passing through parliament. Hopefully, it will be enacted toward the middle of this year.

The Bill will incorporate a wide range of issues including, drink driving, speeding, penalties and enforcement, driver fatigue, driver licensing and - impacting directly on all of us.

DSA will look to use powers provided by the Bill to draft regulations to move forward on our road safety and modernisation commitments within the Road Safety Strategy. We plan to introduce a modern fully consolidated and integrated, mandatory registration scheme for all instructors (and those who train trainers) in an effort to improve standards of those who provide professional instruction, raise the professionalism of the industry and provide the public with an informed choice of quality trainer, ultimately to help reduce casualties on our roads.

The EU Drivers Certificate of Competence (CPC) Directive will bring vocational drivers in line with many other industries where stringent entry criteria and ongoing development is the norm.

Bus drivers who pass a vocational test after September 2008 and lorry drivers after September 2009 will be required to gain a Certificate of Professional Competence in addition to passing their licence acquisition test before they can work as a vocational driver. Existing drivers who qualified before those dates will acquire a CPC but as with all vocational drivers will need to undertake a minimum of 35 hours training every 5 years from that date to maintain their CPC.

17. Pass Plus

Pass Plus is a voluntary post-test training scheme for new drivers within the first 12 months of passing their test, designed to build upon existing skills and knowledge to help reduce accidents in the period when they are most vulnerable. By developing their ability to scan, anticipate and plan for and deal with all kinds of hazards it helps new drivers gain valuable experience on the roads.

Statistics show that new drivers are more likely to have an accident in the first two years of passing their test than at any other time in their driving career. In the first 6 months of driving, one driver in five is involved in an accident.

We also know that most accidents involving newly qualified drivers occur at night and on higher speed rural roads. Many will benefit from further experience in adverse weather conditions and darkness and we know that they will not have had any opportunity to experience motorway driving prior to taking their test.

Specifically aimed at new drivers, although anyone who holds a full UK licence is eligible to take part in the scheme, Pass Plus was designed by DSA with the help of insurers and the driving instruction industry. Re-launched in Spring 2004 the syllabus and methodology of assessment was revised. Promotional material, including a new CD was sent to driving test centres for distribution, Pass Plus registered ADIs and Road Safety Officers.

A growing number of local authorities, including Transport for London, are actively backing Pass Plus with many offering to subsidise the cost.

17.1. Pass Plus Modules

The Pass Plus syllabus is made up of six practical modules which include:

- driving in town
- driving in all weathers
- driving on rural roads
- driving at night
- driving on dual carriageways
- driving on motorways

Following successful completion the trainee is eligible for substantial discounts on their car insurance from participating insurance companies.

18. Vocational Drivers

The government Road Safety Strategy has expanded the role of DSA to include assessing the standards of driving of professional drivers and assisting their employers to achieve higher safety standards.

18.1. The Voluntary Registration Scheme for Fleet driver trainers was launched in 2002.

Fleet driver trainers are Approved Driving Instructors (ADIs) who specialise in providing training to fleet drivers of cars and vans and have gained entry to the DSA register by passing additional examinations or by successfully completing a DSA accredited training course. The scheme follows the work of a group involving DSA, employers, risk-managers, insurers and trainers, and consultation with interested parties.

18.2. Occupational Driver Assessments

By providing an independent driving assessment carried out by specially trained DSA examiners Occupational Driver Assessments aims to:

- Identify and specify the driver training needs of organisations and individuals
- Improve and increase the awareness of road safety
- Increase driver awareness of driving and road safety issues
- Help employers achieve high safety standards
- Promote the culture of continual driver development

18.3. Driver Quality Monitoring:

The driver quality monitoring service (DQM) provides an objective and informed perspective of a bus and coach driver's ability. Specially selected and trained DSA examiners assess the performance of bus drivers 'in cognito' whilst the driver is engaged in their day to day work. This enables a realistic appraisal of their skills, attitudes and behaviour to be made and passed by to the employer so that any necessary training and support can be undertaken to reduce any risk to the driver, bus or other road users.

18.4. Taxi Testing

Taxi Testing was introduced 1999. DSA examiners now conduct driving tests on behalf of many Licensing Authorities on a national basis. The Agency take the view that professional Hackney Carriage and Private Hire drivers have a special responsibility in

the safe transportation of fare paying passengers. The test encourages potential taxi drivers to take training and ensures that only those who can demonstrate that they are safe are allowed to work professionally.

Every journey should be a safe one. Taxi drivers make millions of safe and efficient journeys in Britain each year and the safe completion of each journey totally depends on the skill of the driver.

19. Current Initiatives

DSA has already achieved successful in-roads to improving road safety by the introduction of many new initiatives.

19.1. Hazard Perception Test (HPT)

In 2002 the hazard perception element was introduced into the Theory Test. The introduction was based on evidence that experienced drivers had better hazard perception skills, as measured by the test than new drivers and that those drivers who were accident involved achieved lower scores on the hazard perception test than those who had been accident free.

The Cohort study, a Department for Transport funded research project being carried out by TRL is compiling a database of from questionnaires completed by new drivers about how they learnt to drive and about their subsequent accident and conviction record during the 3 years after passing the test. Test performance data from their theory test and practical tests is also analysed as are changes in their attitude over time. It is hope this comprehensive study will provide an insight into how changes, including the introduction of the HPT, have impacted on driver training and subsequent attitude and behaviour post-test.

19.2. Vehicle Safety Checks

It has always been part of the recommended tuition syllabus that learner drivers be taught an understanding of vehicle legal and safety requirements, coupled with basic car safety checks.

Following changes to EU legislation vehicle safety checks were introduced into the practical driving testing from 1st September 2003, thus ensuring that all candidates could demonstrate a minimum level of competence.

19.3. Arrive Alive Classic

It is estimated that by the year 2010 approximately 60% of drivers will be over 55 years of age. The Classic presentation was launched in 2004 in recognition of the increasing amount of older driver actively on road who have never taken any post-test training with the aim of providing advice on the types of problems they may face and possible solutions to enable them to maintain their mobility and safety for as long as possible.

19.4. Arrive Alive Bike

The agency is dedicated to influencing young people's attitudes to learning to ride and passing the motorcycle test. Arrive Alive Bike was launched in September 2005

DSA do not wish to either persuade or dissuade young people to ride motorcycles, potentially a lethal piece of machinery, but we do recognise that an increasing number of young people are turning to motorcycles and scooters as a more cost effective means of transport as well as for pleasure.

We are very aware of the dangers that riding can bring and that right from the start motorcycling must be coupled with a sense of responsibility and the correct attitude. To this end we visit and present, totally free of charge, to many organisations which include schools and colleges, the Armed Forces, youth football teams, the Probation Service and Young Offenders' Units.

We visit establishments involving young people to whom we can deliver information regarding important, life saving practises and relevant road safety messages - encouraging the maxim of "Safe Riding for Live".

Like the Arrive Alive for car drivers, the presentation focuses on the vulnerability of the new, young rider, the dangers of taking drugs and drinking when riding and the use of speed and the consequences if it's not used correctly. The presentation also includes a section on pillion passenger responsibility.

The presentation does use DVD footage showing the results of road traffic accidents and the consequences of rider error. We include this in an effort to reduce the risk of

road traffic accidents, which may result in a young person becoming a killed or seriously injured (KSI) statistic.

19.5. Eco-safe Driving

The current focus on Eco-safe driving reflects the increased awareness and the need for economically/environmentally friendly driving without any compromise on safety.

Having included information on driving in an environmentally friendly way into the DSA range of multi-media publications plus introducing assessment of eco-safe driving into the ADI qualification examination last October, we are developing plans to introduce an assessment of this competency into other statutory tests.

19.6. DSA Integrity Team

Identity theft affects over 100,000 people every year. By obtaining a few of personal details it is possible for a criminal to open up bank accounts, obtain credit cards, claim benefits and also apply for official documents such as a driving licence.

DSA have a dedicated Integrity Team who are determined to contribute toward the elimination of fraud and driving test impersonation. Working with our DVO partners, DVLA and by sharing information with Inland Revenue we are in a much stronger position to act against and provide police with sufficient evidence to secure prosecution.

20. Working together to achieve

DSA, as part of the wider DVO Group, recognises the level of dedication and commitment from its partners within the road safety industry – and especially the major role of RoSPA in sustaining such a high public profile in road safety awareness.

Together we will continue to make a significant contribution toward achieving Government targets and ensuring that tomorrow's roads are indeed safer for everyone.

