NASP
National Associations Strategic Partnership

FAQ for driver training industry stakeholders

Only learner drivers can book and manage their test

Q: What was the basis or rationale for the decision to prevent approved driving instructors (ADI) from booking tests for their students and what will the benefits be?

A: We need to make booking a driving test fair and safe for learner drivers. This includes preventing them from being charged more than the prescribed test fee and preventing their data being misused. Our call for evidence data showed that 40.4% of learner drivers paid more than the standard fee of £62 (£75 on evenings and weekends). Data shows learners paid a median of £122 for a test. To do this, we need to use technology to verify that the person booking is the learner driver.

Further detail on the rationale will be provided in the consultation report which we are working to publish.

Q: Is DVSA concerned that allowing only pupils to book tests will give rise to more FTAs and more private runners?

A: ADIs will continue to be able to use our systems to update their availability to take a learner for a test. Therefore, we do not expect to see any changes in FTAs or learners using their own vehicle because of these changes. In response to our recent call for evidence, 90% of learner drivers told us they booked their last driving test themselves through gov.uk. Our data shows that a lot of FTAs and short notice cancellations are being done through the OBS system which only businesses and ADIs have access to.

Q: What percentage of ADIs chose to allow learners only to book and manage driving tests?

A: We are currently seeking ministerial approval to publish the consultation report which will provide this detail.

Q: What will stop learner drivers passing their details to third parties to book and manage tests on their behalf?

A: We aim to prevent this by implementing a stronger identification verification and authentication in the system. We will update you when we can on how this will be done. This in addition to test bookings needing the learner's driving licence number. We have warned learner drivers around the risks of sharing their driving licence number.

Q: How will giving pupils sole control of booking tests decrease panic buying and also ensure their readiness for test and licensure?

A: This approach reduces the likelihood of unfair competition and will make the system fairer for learner drivers. ADIs will still play a crucial role in advising a learner when they are ready to take a test. We will continue to use the Ready to Pass? campaign to encourage learner drivers to only take a test when ready and to listen to the advice of their driving instructor.

Q: Many of the non-standard clients will be unable to self-book, including those with reading or learning difficulties. Will there be some alternative booking system for them?

A: We are aware that some learners will require support to book a test from an accessibility point of view, and we are working through the detail to ensure they are not disadvantaged.

Q: How effective do you think the change regarding test bookings will be and when do you expect to start seeing impact following implementation?

A: The changes will help make the booking system fairer for learner drivers. We will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the changes in due course. Once the regs and technology is in place we expect to see an impact fairly quickly after implementation of the changes.

Q: When will the changes to the booking system be implemented?

A: We aim to introduce the changes in Spring 2026. Until that point all customers will be able to use the booking system as they do now. In the meantime, we will work closely with you to prepare for the changes.

Q: Will the OBS be turned off?

A: These changes will only affect car tests – motorcycle and vocational tests will still be able to be booked through OBS. Driving instructors will also still be able to share their availability on OBS so learners can check if their instructor is available before booking a test.

Q: Has DVSA considered the impact of closing the OBS to trainers and their businesses? Intensive providers in particular have said they will go out of business because of this, where's the Impact Assessment on this newly announced raft of decisions and was it re-run after the consultation results were analysed?

A: These changes only apply to car tests. Trainer booking for motorcycle and vocational will not be affected. The primary focus of these changes is to improve the experience for car learner drivers. We are aware that the changes will impact some business models, but our priority is to make the booking system fairer for learners.

Q: What communications will DVSA be issuing to ensure that the public does not interpret the changes as slight against the majority of hard-working, honest ADIs? The implication from yesterday's announcement is ADIs are at fault for the mess, so removing them from the equation will solve it.

A: It was not our intention to imply that driving instructors are at fault. The focus of this measure is to stop bots. We will work with you to develop holding messaging for ADIs and driving schools to help explain policy rationale and objectives for the change, distinguishing legitimate ADI booking activity from fraudulent third-party exploitation. We plan to share a first draft of comms with the representative bodies group next week.

Q: Will the DVSA Registrar defend instructors who will inevitably refuse to take people to test who are not ready?

A: We will support instructors where they use reasonable judgment to decide that a learner is not ready to take their test and refuse to take them in their car.

We will continue to do work through the Ready to Pass? campaign to encourage learner drivers to be guided by their driving instructor on when they are ready for test.

Q: Does the DVSA recognise driving instructors as valued customers now they will lose the ability to book driving tests?

A: Yes, our priority remains making our roads safer and we can't do that without the support and frontline expertise of ADIs. ADIs play a crucial role in giving learners the right skills for a lifetime of safe and sustainable journeys on the road.

Use of Ministry of Defence (MOD) driving examiners

Q: Will learners know whether they are being assessed by an MOD examiner rather than DVSA at test?

A: No, learners will not see a difference as the test will be conducted in exactly the same way. The MOD examiners are civilian personnel.

Q: Is it likely that the provision of MOD examiners will be increased at some point?

A: We have no current plans to increase the provision of MOD examiners.

Q: What actual resource will military examiners provide in terms of full time DE equivalence and number of extra test slots their deployment will achieve?

A: 36 defence driving examiners (DDE) will do driving tests for one day a week for 12 months. This equates to 7.2 full time equivalent driving examiners. We expect they will deliver around 6,500 tests over 12 months.

Q: Will MOD examiners only be used in England?

A: The DDE will be based at the driving test centre with the highest demand to either their MOD base location or where they live.

Q: You're bringing in people from outside the organisation, what about deploying more people back to the frontline from inside DVSA?

A: We previously deployed DVSA warrant card holders back to testing. However, moving people from their substantive roles does have impacts, both for other work which we are doing and for the individuals concerned. We need to balance these impacts against the desire to improve test waiting times.

Limit on the number of times a learner car driver can move or swap a test

Q: Will ADI's no longer be able to swap tests for pupils with other instructors as we currently do by phoning the DVSA?

A: We are still working through the detail and will discuss this with you as soon as we are able.

Q: How will the swap process between learner drivers work? Will a swap from Driver A to Driver B require both of those people contacting the DVSA at the same time?

A: We are still working through the detail and will discuss this with you as soon as we are able.

Q: How will the limits on location work?

A: We are still working through the detail and will discuss this with you as soon as we are able.

Q: What specific radius boundaries will apply when altering a test location?

A: We are still working through the detail and will discuss this with you as soon as we are able.

Other

Q: When will the full consultation results be published?

A: We will announce a publication time as soon as we are able.

Q: Does the DVSA support the proposed changes?

A: Yes.

Q: Why no consultation on the decisions before announcing them? Straight from survey to policy announcement, no road testing of the ideas with the industry who could have helped highlight the risks, potentially improve the decisions made and improve the messaging?

A: The decision follows a call for evidence and a public consultation that many in the industry responded to.

Q: Given the inability to recruit volumes of DE's, won't test wait times just continue to plateaux or worsen?

A: Work to recruit and retain additional DEs is ongoing and we will continue to provide updates on this. As of the beginning of October 2025, DVSA has employed 344 driving examiner recruits who have successfully completed training and are now delivering car practical driving tests and have a further 71 in training. This represents a net increase of 46 driving examiners since July 2024.

Q: Have the bots and third parties just become a red herring and a smokescreen for the real problem which is not enough supply of tests and pupil panic buying exacerbating that?

A: The measures announced on 12 November, following our consultation, are designed to make the test booking process fairer, providing all learners with equal access to the booking system and ensuring that everyone pays the prescribed fee.

Q: Why does the Government have such a resistance to fully utilising regulated, qualified professional trainer as gatekeepers to licence acquisition? There's no mandate for pupils to have an ADI, pupils decide when they take a test and there's no mandate to have any assessment of test readiness

A: Mandating that all learners must have an ADI would remove the freedom of choice around how learner drivers want to learn and create a barrier to acquiring a licence for some. The theory and practical driving tests act as robust gatekeepers to licence acquisition.