



Department
for Transport

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Our Ref: MC/325655

21 January 2021

Dear Peter,

Thank you for your further letter of 15 January, about the expiry of theory driving test certificates during the COVID-19 pandemic.

I do appreciate the effect the current situation is having on learner drivers and approved driving instructors (ADI), but we have considered this matter carefully and our conclusion remains that extending the validity of theory test pass certificates would be an unacceptable risk to road safety.

As I discussed in my previous response, those with theory test certificates expiring will have taken their test in early 2019. Since then, their lessons and practice sessions have been significantly curtailed and it is therefore likely that their knowledge base and hazard perception skills will have diminished. This will clearly have a negative impact on the road safety of new drivers, who are already disproportionately represented in casualty statistics.

You have asked whether it would be possible for Government to enlist the help of Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) ADIs to ensure pupils have a good theoretical knowledge and sign off before allowing a candidate to take the practical test.

As you know, the Road Traffic Act 1988 allows a full driving licence to be issued only if the person has passed both the theory and practical tests within two years of each other. It is not therefore possible to overlook the legal position and two-year validity period on the grounds that ADIs will vouch for their candidate's knowledge and skills. Although ADIs are well-qualified and proficient in driving and instruction, they are not experienced assessors. This is evidenced by the current practical test pass rate of 47%.

I can assure you once it is safe for driving tests to resume, the DVSA will have in place measures to increase testing availability. This includes offering overtime and annual leave buy back to examiners, asking all those qualified to carry out tests (warrant card holders) to do so, and conducting out of hours testing (such as on public holidays).

A recruitment campaign is also underway to increase the overall number of driving examiners available for testing and the DVSA continues to assess further options for increasing testing capacity and reducing the backlog as quickly as possible.

I remain grateful to learner drivers and their instructors for their continued patience at this time.

Yours,
Charlotte

BARONESS VERE OF NORBITON