

THE SAFETY OF YOUNG DRIVERS AND RIDERS – THE SITUATION IN THE UK

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INTRODUCING ECM RESEARCH SOLUTIONS



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Behavioural Scientist | Road Safety Researcher

Specialist areas

Young driver safety | Rider safety | Behaviour change |
Intervention design & evaluation | Road safety education

ECM Research Solutions

Independent consultancy specialising in road safety research and
behavioural science

Working with

Government | Police | Emergency services | Road Safety partnerships
NGOS and charities | Industry | Academia

Recent collaborators:



Department
for Transport



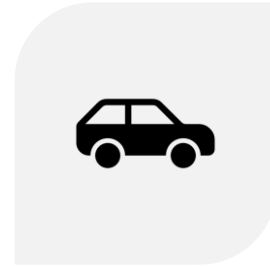
OUTLINE



THE UK ROAD SAFETY
PICTURE



WHY YOUNG PEOPLE
ARE AT HIGHER RISK



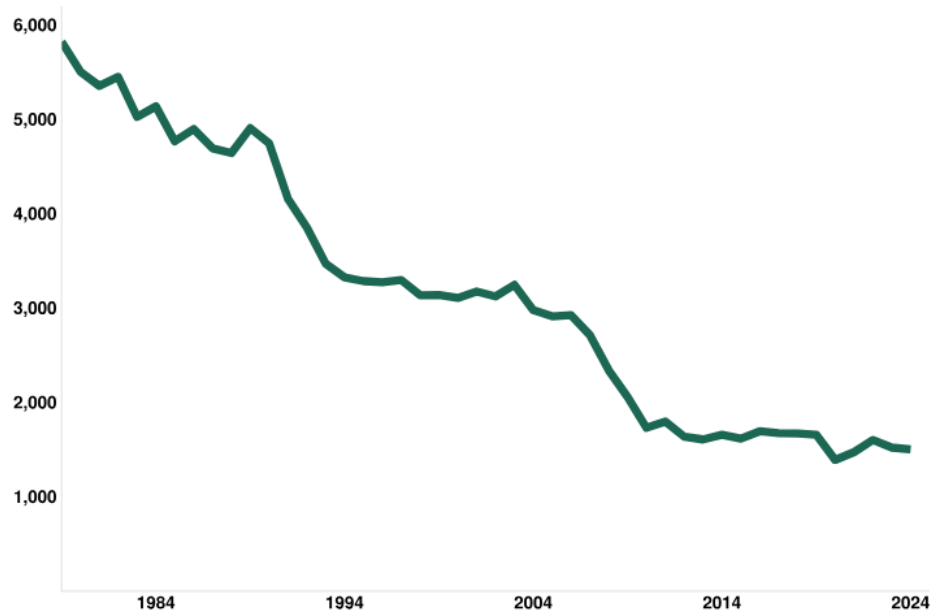
LICENSING AND
WHAT WORKS



THE FUTURE OF
YOUNG DRIVER
SAFETY

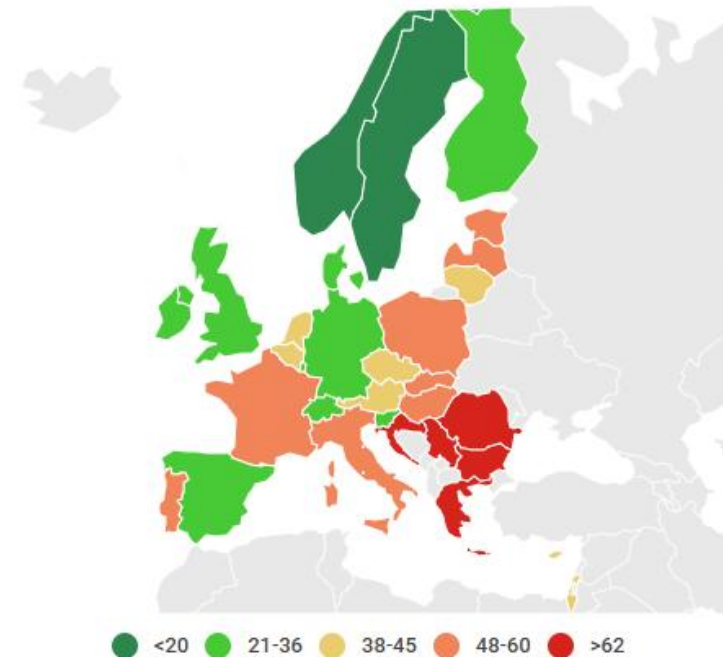
THE CURRENT UK ROAD SAFETY CONTEXT

Reported road fatalities in Great Britain, 1979 to 2024



- Long-term reductions in road deaths
- Progress has slowed in recent years
- Young drivers and riders remain high-risk groups

Road deaths per million inhabitants, 2024



Sources: UK Department for Transport (2024), ETSC PIN Report (2025)



WHY YOUNG DRIVERS MATTER

Young male drivers aged 17-24:

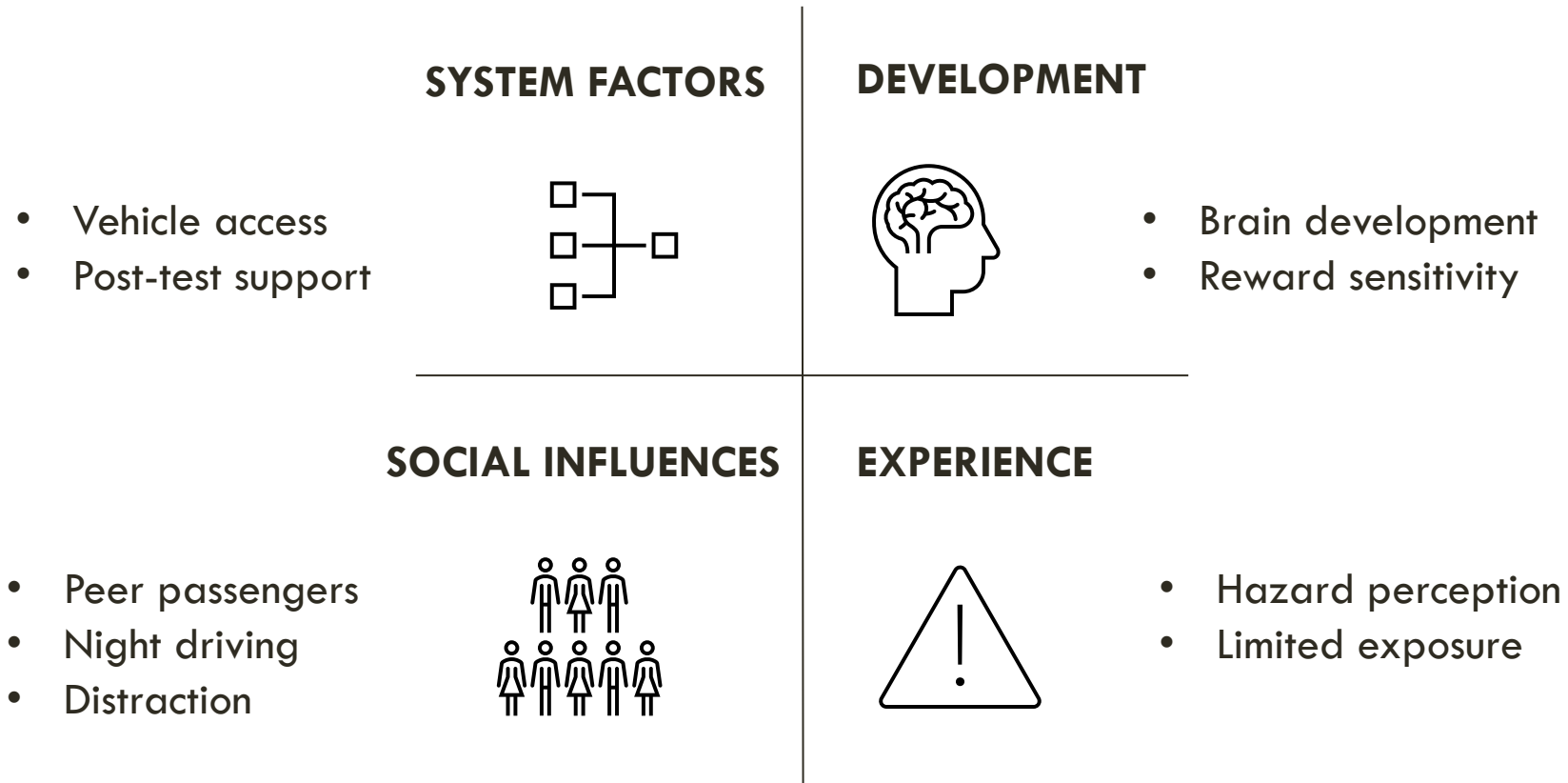
4x higher KSI rate
compared with
drivers aged 25+

- Young drivers are disproportionately at risk
- Young driver collisions affect passengers and other road users
- Young male drivers face the highest risk

Source: UK Department for Transport Younger Driver Factsheet (2024)

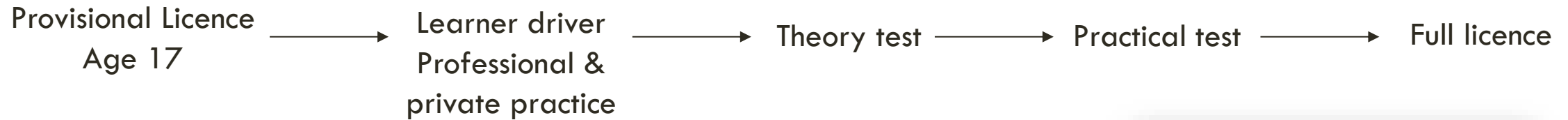
Risk is highest in the first months after licensing

WHY ARE YOUNG DRIVERS AT HIGHER RISK?



Young people are learning within a high-risk system

HOW YOUNG PEOPLE OBTAIN A CAR DRIVING LICENCE IN THE UK



The UK driving test is relatively rigorous, but post-test support is limited

UK SYSTEM FEATURES

No minimum learning hours

No mandatory learning period

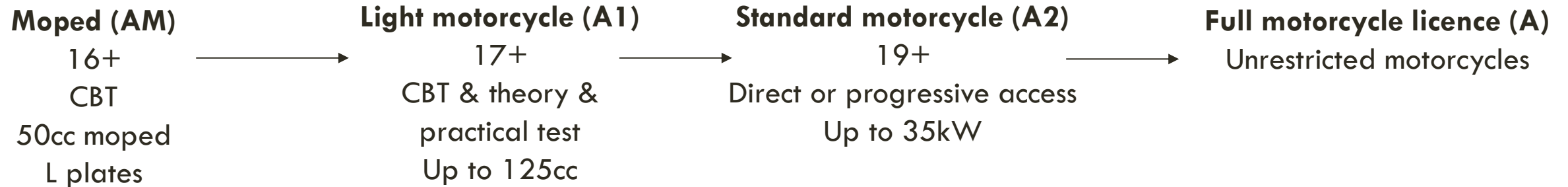
No graduated licensing system

Strong reliance on parents and private practice





MOPEDS & MOTORCYCLES IN THE UK



The UK motorcycle system is more graduated than the car licensing system.

KEY FEATURES

Compulsory Basic Training (CBT) is required before riding on the road

CBT is not a full licence

Motorcycle licensing is progressive by age and power

Young riders remain a high-risk group



WHAT DOES THE EVIDENCE SAY WORKS?

STRONGEST EVIDENCE

Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL)

Night-time restrictions

Passenger restrictions

Minimum learning periods

Lower alcohol limits

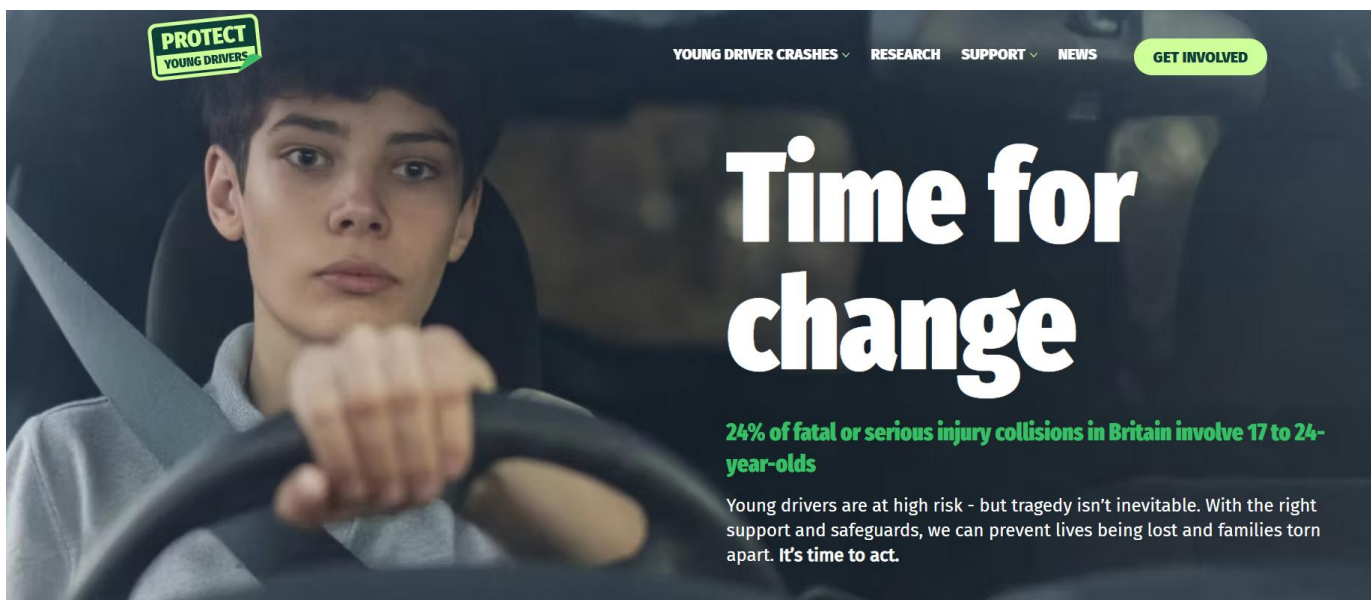
Extended supervision

OTHER EFFECTIVE APPROACHES

- Structured parental involvement
- Extensive supervised practice
- Hazard perception training
- Behavioural science-informed education
- Safe System approaches

Fear-based education alone has limited evidence of long-term behaviour change

THE UK DEBATE AROUND GRADUATED DRIVER LICENSING



PROTECT YOUNG DRIVERS

YOUNG DRIVER CRASHES ▾ RESEARCH SUPPORT ▾ NEWS **GET INVOLVED**

Time for change

24% of fatal or serious injury collisions in Britain involve 17 to 24-year-olds

Young drivers are at high risk - but tragedy isn't inevitable. With the right support and safeguards, we can prevent lives being lost and families torn apart. **It's time to act.**



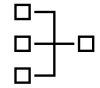
Department for Transport

Road Safety Strategy

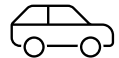
January 2026

WHAT SHOULD THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE?

A modern safe system approach



Safer systems



Better support for new drivers



Safer vehicles and roads



Stronger post-test guidance



Family involvement



Positive use of technology



Behavioural science-informed interventions

Safety should be designed into the system



FINAL REFLECTIONS

- Young people remain disproportionately at risk
- Risk is shaped by experience, development and system design
- Evidence-based solutions already exist
- Safer systems can support young people more effectively

Safety should be designed into the system



DriveFit 2.0

Trial evaluation report

Dr Elizabeth Box
RAC Foundation
January 2026



THANK YOU

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