

opinion



'It feels as if I just threw over £60 down the drain'

Learning to drive can be a stressful time - even more so when your theory test is about to run out
Picture: GETTY IMAGES

Coronavirus and its subsequent lockdown has caused immense uncertainty for many people with regards to their future. Millions have been put on furlough or laid off.

Momentous life events such as weddings have had to be postponed. And students who were due to take life-changing exams have had them cancelled – and then there's us learner drivers.

Lockdown has meant that between the months of March and July, I, like many across the UK, have been unable to take driving lessons.

I was completely off the roads and in that time, no matter who you are and how skilled you are at something, if you're not doing it regularly, you start lose that skill that you'd worked so hard to build up. That's nearly four

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months of lost lesson time, and all of that confidence I had built up slowly started to slip away.

Of course, I haven't forgotten how to drive, but I do need to get back up to exam standard with the hopes of passing before my theory test runs out this year. At the time of writing the government has no plans to extend soon-to-expire pass certificates.

An extension would allow people some leeway as they play

catch-up and book in their test amidst a frustrating backlog of not only those who had their test postponed, but also learners trying to book in new tests.

Looking back, I wouldn't have taken my theory test when I did had I known that sometime down the line, I'd be unable to have lessons and take my test for a good third of the year.

I'm in my mid-20s and ashamedly, never bothered to learn to drive back when I was 17, as I was too focused on studying for my A-Levels. Once I got to uni, there was no point learning to drive, as I was based in a city and didn't have had the money for lessons anyway.

Since graduating, I've always relied on public transport or walking to get to work, which has served me just fine. Plus, it's great for the environment and does save me a lot of money.

But once I hit my 20s, I thought I really should get my licence, as once I have it, it's there for life and something I won't need to worry about again. It was only once I overcame my anxiety of driving that I started to feel somewhat comfortable behind the wheel of a car. Now that all seems wasted, as who knows how long it will be before I pass?

Many centres, including my local one, aren't even open yet to book a test, so that just adds to the mounting frustration that tens of thousands of us up and down the country are feeling as we rush to pass before our theories expire.

Still £62 out of pocket, I don't particularly fancy paying an extra £23 if I need to retake my theory, which as the days go on, looks increasingly likely.

Simply search 'theory test' or

'driving test' on Twitter and you'll see hundreds of tweets from a number of equally frustrated learners, instructors and parents of learners who are all asking the same question – 'why won't they extend theory test certificates?' To paraphrase one tweet, 'There's no practical driving tests available for four months, but you won't move our theory test expiry dates back by four months? It just doesn't make sense.'

With both MOTs and photocard renewals granted lengthy extensions – why aren't theory tests being given that same treatment? It's not as if we chose not to have lessons – we, like the rest of the country, have had to stay inside to help prevent the spread of Covid-19.

Now we're all playing catch up and working hard to get our driving back up to scratch again!