Static visual field defects – new process

Details of a new process for applications for a provisional driving licence in those with a static visual field defect.
New arrangements have been agreed for issuing a provisional Group 1 (car) driving entitlement to applicants with a static debarring visual field defect.

In 2002 provision was made, subject to strict criteria being met, for the re-issue of Group 1 (car) driving licences to applicants who had lost their entitlement because of a debarring static visual field defect. Until now, however, this concession could not be applied to people who wished to apply for, or were holders of, a provisional driving licence.

A process has now been established whereby an application can be considered under agreed ‘exceptionality’ criteria. This will involve DVLA making medical enquiries to confirm that the visual field defect is not caused by a condition considered to be progressive in nature, and that the applicant has fully adapted to the presence of the defect. Of course, DVLA will also need to enquire about any other medical conditions that may be of relevance.

If an applicant meets the criteria, DVLA will issue a provisional licence, valid for three years, restricted to driving in a dual-controlled vehicle only. This will allow the applicant to have driving lessons. At any time during the three years, once the instructor can provide a supportive letter stating that the driver has sufficient basic driving competence, the driver can contact DVLA to arrange an on-road assessment at an approved driving assessment centre.

This is not a driving test. It is an assessment designed to demonstrate whether or not the field defect is affecting the person’s ability to drive safely. If the assessment is favourable, the restriction to dual-controlled cars will be lifted and the driver will be re-issued with an unrestricted provisional licence to enable them to complete their driving instruction and take the theory and practical driving tests in the normal way.

However, if the driving assessment indicates that the field defect is affecting their ability to drive safely, the entitlement will be revoked. Normally no further application would be accepted unless exceptional new clinical support can be provided. However the driver would of course have the right to appeal such a revocation.

If you have any queries about this process please contact the Panel Secretary of the Secretary of State’s Honorary Advisory Medical Panel on Driving and Visual Disorders at medadviser@dvla.gsi.gov.uk