

**DRAFT MINUTES OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT'S
HONORARY MEDICAL ADVISORY PANEL ON DRIVING AND VISUAL
DISORDERS**

Thursday, 15 October 2015

Attendees

Mr A Viswanathan	Chairman
Ms I Coe	
Dr G Plant	
Mr W D Newman	
Professor A Lotery	
Mr J Clarke	

Lay Members

Mr T Smart

Observers

Dr C Graham	Occupational Physician, Belfast
Ms P Logan	National Programme Office for Traffic Medicine, Dublin 2
Ms A Moynaghan	Office of Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman

Ex-Officio

Dr W Parry	Senior Medical Adviser, DVLA
Dr G Rees	Panel Secretary/Medical Adviser, DVLA
Dr J Morgan	Medical Adviser, DVLA
Dr N Jenkins	Medical Adviser, DVLA
Mrs J Leach	Medical Licensing Policy, DVLA
Mr Bryan Jones	SEO Business Change/Support Medical, DVLA
Mr D Thomas	Senior Contract Manager, DVLA
Mr N Wilson	Product Manager for Drivers, DVSA, Nottingham
Mr A Burrows	Business Analyst, DVLA
Mr L Croucher	Common Services, DVLA
Mrs A Rook	Drivers' Services, DVLA

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Mr T Eke, Mr D Edmunds, Dr A Chorley and from Mr S Fraser.

2. Draft Minutes of Panel Meeting 26th March 2015

The draft Panel minutes of the previous meeting were agreed without amendment.

3. Minutes of Panel Chairmen's Meeting of 18th June 2015

Panel discussed the minutes of the meeting of Panel Chairmen that took place in June 2015.

4. Chairman's Remarks

The Panel Chairman thanked Mrs Jan Leach, who is retiring in the near future, for all her help and advice to Panel over the years.

5. Update on cases discussed at previous Panel meeting

Panel was given an up-date on the five cases discussed at the previous Panel meeting of March 2015

6. Eyesight – the 'number plate test'

Mr Neil Wilson, Product Manager for Drivers at the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA), gave an outline of the operational issues with regard to administering the number plate test. It was noted that vehicle number plates have changed over the years and that there are now more letters and numbers than there were some years ago – a 'crowding phenomenon' may be evident when reading the sequence of letters and numbers. It was noted the test must be carried out in good daylight, and Panel re-affirmed that the test should not be carried out using street lighting during the hours of darkness. Panel re-affirmed that the number plate test could be carried out at the time of the theory part of the DVSA driving test. There was discussion on whether the number plate test could be replicated indoors – it was pointed out that any simulated number plate test indoors would need standard illumination. Panel judged it would be difficult to replicate the number plate test by way of a computer generated image on a 'tablet' device, and the cost of these devices would also need to be considered. There was discussion about having a requirement for an optician's certificate, perhaps up-dated every two years, to document a driver's visual acuity, but it was pointed out that there may be operational and costing issues with this. It was evident that training may be needed to interpret an optician's certificate, while number plate testing, for example by the Police at the road side, is very well established and straight forward. Panel confirmed its view that the number plate test should be retained, that if needs be DVSA could arrange for this to be carried out at the time of the theory test and that if the test were to be carried out indoors an agreed standard of illumination would be needed. Any changes to current legal eyesight standards would require a change in legislation.

7. Driving after the use of Mydriatics and Cycloplegics

DVLA has received a query from a Consultant Ophthalmologist regarding the duration of time during which an individual should not drive after receiving topical treatment to dilate the pupil(s). Panel considered that the advice may depend on which ‘eye-drops’ have been used and the dose used for the person concerned. However, the individual may be given advice as to the likely duration of action of the topical treatment used and should also be told not drive until able to meet the legal eyesight standards.

8. Exceptional Cases

Panel was provided with an up-date on the progress of the Panel ‘working group’ on how to assess functional adaptation to hemianopia. One of the working group had written a report for Panel on screening for functional adaptation, and this report was considered at the Panel meeting. Panel was also provided with some preliminary findings about follow-up for a number of drivers licensed in this way – Panel requested further details about this before a final report is prepared.

9. Goldmann testing for DVLA

Panel confirmed that kinetic testing of the binocular visual field using an Octopus 900 perimeter or similar would be acceptable to DVLA providing the test is carried out according to the agreed DVLA protocol.

Panel stressed the importance of static as well as of kinetic testing and that the accuracy of the test, for example by recording the number of false positive and false negative errors, should be documented.

10. ‘Grandfather Rights’ for Monocularity

‘Grandfather rights’ for visual acuity are applicable to some Group 2 drivers, and one of these ‘grandfather rights’ applies to those who were issued with a Group 2 licence prior to 1st January 1991 in the knowledge of monocularity. For Group 2 driving, those with a corrected visual acuity of less than 3/60 in one eye are considered to be (functionally) monocular. Panel discussed whether the few drivers concerned would meet the visual field standards required for Group 2 driving. Panel considered that further information was needed about the legal situation of these drivers.

There is a similar exemption for drivers applying to renew previously held (implied) C1 entitlement – this would have been included in the licence of those who passed the driving test prior to 1st January 1997. All drivers who obtained this entitlement retain it until their licence expires or is medically revoked, but on subsequent renewal the medical standards applicable to Group 2 entitlement will apply with the one exception of visual acuity. Panel confirmed that this exemption is obsolete for monocular drivers (i.e. for those with no light perception in the

poorer eye) applying to renew previously held (implied) C1 entitlement because they could not meet the (Group 2) visual field standards required.

11. Fitness to drive project – online notifications

Panel was provided with a presentation on the ‘fitness to drive’ project. This project is building an electronic prototype to demonstrate how customers can notify DVLA of a medical condition via an online channel. The prototype initially involves two medical conditions (diabetes mellitus and glaucoma). The project aims to allow customers to access the service via a digital channel and it could re-shape DVLA’s Drivers’ Medical Group in the future.

12. Cases for Discussion

Panel discussed a total of six cases. One case involved a person with a visual field defect and a history of head injury and of bilateral optic disc drusen. Another case involved a person with a visual field defect and an intra-cranial arteriovenous malformation. Another case involved an applicant for Group 2 entitlement with a history of bilateral cataract surgery – there was uncertainty as to whether or not he met the visual field standards. A fourth case involved a person with a significant visual field defect due to cerebral infarction – there was uncertainty whether or not he also had glaucoma. A fifth case involved a person with a visual field defect due to retinitis pigmentosa. The sixth case was of a person with a visual field defect due to likely bilateral anterior ischaemic optic neuropathy but who also had a sphenoid wing meningioma.

13. Other up-dates

Panel was informed that since its previous meeting in March 2015, DVLA had received notice of 90 cases in which a customer was appealing against a licensing decision made by DVLA. Of these 90 cases, 15 were appeals regarding failure to meet the vision standards.

14. Any Other Business

The Panel Chairman has received a query regarding visual field testing and why DVLA offered some customers re-testing subsequently. Panel was provided with an explanation.

15. Date of Next Meeting

To be confirmed

Dr Gareth B Rees
Secretary to the Honorary Medical Advisory Panel on Driving and Visual Disorders
Medical Adviser

19th October 2015