

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

Thursday, 17 March 2016

Attendees

Mr A Viswanathan Chairman
Mr J Clarke

Lay Members

Mr D Edmunds
Mr T Smart

Guest Speaker

Professor D Crabb

Observers

Dr P Logan National Programme Office for Traffic Medicine, Dublin 2
Mr I A Pearce Director of Clinical Eye Research Centre, Liverpool
Dr S Bell Chief Medical Adviser, Maritime and Coastguard Agency

Ex-Officio

Dr W Parry Senior Medical Adviser, DVLA
Dr G Rees Panel Secretary/Medical Adviser, DVLA
Mr J Donovan Medical Licensing Policy, DVLA
Mr D Bastin Strategy and Policy, DVLA
Mr D Thomas Senior Contract Manager, DVLA
Mrs J A Thomas Business Change and Support, DVLA
Mr A Burrows Business Analyst, DVLA

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Dr G Plant, Professor A Lotery, Mr T Eke, Mr W Newman, Ms Isabel Coe, Dr A Chorley and from the representative from Northern Ireland.

2. Minutes of Panel Meeting 15 October 2015

Panel approved the draft minutes of the meeting of 15 October 2015. It was pointed out that in agenda item 6 the word 'indoors' should have been written rather than 'in doors'.

3. Panel Chairman's Remarks

The Panel Chairman mentioned that recruitment of additional members to Panel would be helpful.

The Panel Chairman was informed that an internal draft report had been prepared on the interaction between DVLA and Panels. Any changes and/or additions to Panel membership would await full consideration of the draft report.

4. Update on cases discussed at previous meeting

Panel was provided with an up-date on the five cases discussed at the previous meeting in October 2015.

5. Update on DVLA vision-testing contract

Approximately 110,000 vision-test reports have been received from Specsavers since commencement of the vision testing services contract in June 2014.

Specsavers are now returning an average of 5,297 reports to DVLA each month.

Some 90% of these reports are now received within 30 days of the request being made by DVLA, and the average for this 'turn-around' time has improved to less than 15 days. Further new processes are being introduced to improve this 'turn-around' time further, to no more than 10 days and possibly to as little as 6 days. This means that a customer could be referred for a vision test by DVLA and have a decision on their licence within 7 working days. This represents a very significant improvement compared with the 'turn-around' time before the contract with Specsavers was introduced in June 2014.

Some 370 stores in Great Britain are carrying out this work for DVLA, up from 300 in July 2014.

The level of customer complaints about vision testing received by DVLA remains very low at 0.38%.

6. Update on electronic ‘fitness to drive’ project

Panel was provided with a presentation on the ‘fitness to drive’ project. This project is building an electronic service for customers to notify DVLA of a medical condition or renew their medical licence via an on-line channel. The project has built a working prototype which now includes over 100 conditions including diabetes, vision, epilepsy, Parkinson’s, an array of heart conditions and many more. The project is now in the process of building the working screens (for diabetes mellitus and glaucoma initially) and the underpinning IT infrastructure which will allow customers to access the service via a digital channel. Diabetes and glaucoma will be released in a private beta state in mid May, moving into public beta in August. The project team has also identified the roll-out plans for adding the other notifiable conditions and the activities required to reshape the paper processes soon after. This work and subsequent phases could significantly re-shape the Drivers’ Medical Group at DVLA in the near future.

7. Power of prisms to correct diplopia allowable for Group 2 driving

Prisms used to correct diplopia would not be expected to produce a scotoma even if their power exceeds +8 Dioptres.

8. Visual field testing using 112-point Henson perimeter

Panel clarified how visual field charts derived from testing with the 112-point Henson perimeter would be interpreted for the purposes of driver licensing.

9. Presentation by Professor David Crabb

Professor David Crabb from City University, London, gave a presentation on visual field defects and driving. The presentation focussed on glaucomatous visual field loss and the usefulness of the ‘integrated visual field’ in predicting whether or not an individual would pass or fail a binocular Humphrey Esterman test. The integrated visual field combines the central 24-2 charts for each eye separately to produce a binocular picture – it is not an additional test, but is an ‘overlay’ of the central charts for each eye tested separately. A systematic review of the research evidence available would be helpful, but the integrated visual field may confer additional benefits to visual field testing for the purposes of driver licensing. There was discussion about the binocular Esterman grid and whether this might be improved for driver licensing, and about analysis of eye movements. Also there was discussion about the role of the ‘hazard perception test’ (currently part of the DVSA theory test) and of on-road driving tests.

10. Cases for discussion

Important: These advisory notes represent the balanced judgement of the Secretary of State’s Honorary Medical Advisory Panel as a whole. If they are quoted, they should be reproduced as such and not as the views of individual Panel members.

Three cases were discussed. Two of these referred to individuals with an ordinarily debarring binocular visual field defect as a result of stroke, but who may or may not also have glaucoma. The third case discussed was of an individual with sight in one eye only.

11. Appeal cases since last panel meeting

Since the last Panel meeting DVLA has received 9 summonses against unfavourable licensing decisions made on the basis of a visual disorder. Of these, one appeal was successful and was upheld in Court, one has been dismissed in Court and the others are pending or have been withdrawn.

12. Any other business

No matters were discussed

13. Date of next meeting

To be arranged.

Dr Gareth B. Rees
Panel Secretary

21 March 2016