

Minutes of the Secretary of State for Transport's Honorary Medical Advisory Panel on Driving and Visual Disorders

Meeting held on 26th September 2019

Present:

Panel Members:

Mr A Viswanathan (Panel Chair)
Mr T Eke
Professor A Lotery
Professor R Anderson
Mr J Clarke
Dr J Durnian
Mr W D Newman
Dr L Southee (Lay Member)

Observers:

Mr I Pearce	Director of Clinical Eye research Centre, St Pauls
Dr S Bell	Chief Medical Officer, Maritime and Coastguard Agency
Dr P Logan	National Programme Office for Traffic Medicine

Ex-Officio:

Dr Gareth Rees	Panel Secretary, DVLA Doctor
Dr Cathy Armstrong	Joint Panel Secretary, DVLA Doctor
Dr Nick Jenkins	Senior Doctor, DVLA
Mrs Rachael Toft	Driver Licensing Policy, DVLA
Mrs Sharon Abbott	Operational Delivery & Support, DVLA
Mrs Rachel Thomas	Complex Casework, DVLA
Mr Alun Vaughan	Service Management, DVLA
Ms Catherine Mottram	Principle Research Officer DfT

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Section A: Introduction

1. Apologies for Absence

Dr G Plant, Dr C Graham and Mrs L Jones.

2. Chair's Remarks

The Chair welcomed Dr Durnian and Dr Southee who are new members to the panel and congratulated Mr Newman who will succeed him as panel Chair.

3. Actions from Previous Meeting

The Panel was provided with an update and the current status on the actions arising.

Section B: Topics for Discussion

4. Group 2 Visual Fields

We have now clarified interpretation of standards following panel's input with reference to Group 2 Visual Field. DVLA will update their internal guidance accordingly.

Panel suggested DVLA need to have **Uninterrupted Horizontal Field** detailed in the public-facing Group 2 Visual Field guidance for clarity.

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5. Exceptional Case Criteria

Panel were asked to review the current requirements for when a driver can be considered as an exceptional case, in light of the fact that it has been six years since DVLA transposed the European requirements into domestic legislation.

Panel highlighted that it would be beneficial to understand the rationale underpinning current practice in other EU countries.

Panel also felt the term exceptional is also a misnomer. Many drivers request to be considered as exceptional case after a commonly occurring medical event such as stroke with hemianopia. Panel opinion was that in absence of more evidence then there would be no change to this standard.

There was some discussion around defining a minimum visual field to be considered as an exceptional case. Again, Panel felt there was insufficient research to support any change and drivers should continue to be assessed on a case by case basis.

Panel suggested raising awareness amongst drivers who may have a significant visual field loss, to highlight that they would not necessarily meet the criteria to be considered as an exceptional case.

Panel discussed driving simulation and recognised its potential benefits to measure visual function and performance.

Currently legislation excludes monocular drivers – previously panel thought we could potentially include monocular drivers but would need to define minimum visual acuity for ‘good’ eye. Panel would require evidence to understand the inherent risk to road safety with monocularity and a significant visual field defect. Panel considered that different conditions and causes of vision loss are likely to impose different risks.

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In order to be considered as an exceptional case, regulations stipulate that there must be no other progressive condition causing visual field loss.

Panel reiterated that Glaucoma and Retinitis Pigmentosa would generally be considered as progressive conditions.

Panel also discussed the view that visual field loss in cases of diabetic retinopathy is non-progressive. Visual field loss occurs from laser treatment (which is likely to be phased out in the next few years) but maculopathy is potentially progressive, affecting visual acuity and possibly central visual field.

Panel discussed the possibility of re-testing those drivers licensed as exceptional cases every 3 years if there is evidence of new/ progressing comorbidities or cognitive impairment.

There was further discussion around the need for there to be no other impairment of visual function including contrast/glare sensitivity, or impairment of twilight vision to be considered as an exceptional case. Panel reiterated the difficulties in assessing for these impairments. Reference was made to the Pelli Robson test for contrast sensitivity which has been around for decades. Panel considered assessments of these visual impairments may also be possible using a driving simulator. Panel agreed that currently, assessment of these impairments is a judgement call based on the clinician's view.

Panel reviewed the wording in the exceptional case reply form and suggested amendments.

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Section C: Ongoing Agenda Items

6. Road Safety Statement

Catherine Mottram gave a presentation regarding Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) into **the Impact of Visual Impairment on Road Safety**: a DfT research project to assess existing evidence around the extent to which vision problems pose a road safety risk in the UK.

Catherine asked for panel feedback on proposed research, research strategy and feasibility, and asked for any interested panel members to volunteer to get involved or suggest key recent papers which should be referenced.

Panel suggested not limiting to English language only and using cascade approach for search.

Panel considered that there were a number of conditions missing and suggested looking for the outcomes of disease as well as the disease itself.

Panel suggested including research prior to 2000.

Panel made some suggestions relating to other research activity into the issue which could be conducted alongside the REA.

Panel asked to be kept updated of any further developments.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/road-safety-statement-2019-a-lifetime-of-road-safety>

7. Panel Case for Discussion

Panel considered one case.

8. Tests, Horizon Scanning, Research and Literature

Reference was made to the ongoing DfT project.

9. AOB

Panel were reminded to update their declaration of interests.

10. Date and Time of Next Meeting

5th March 2020

Original Draft Minutes prepared by:

Dr Cathy Armstrong

Joint Panel Secretary

Date: 17 October 2019

Final Minutes signed off by:

Mr A Viswanathan

Panel Chair

Date: 06 November 2019

The DVLA will consider the advice provided by the panel and no changes to standards will take effect until the impact on individuals and road safety is fully assessed.

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