



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

Meeting held on Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2021 10:00am

### Present:

### Panel Members:

Professor Peter J Connelly (Chair)  
Professor Robert Howard  
Dr Mary Fisher-Morris  
Dr Andrew Byrne  
Dr Katherine Jefferies  
Mr Nikhil Gokani (Lay Member)  
Mr Anthony Arcari (Lay Member)

### OBSERVERS:

Dr Sally Bell	Chief Medical Advisor, Maritime and Coastguard Agency
Dr John McVicker	Occupational Health Service, Northern Ireland
Dr Chris Schenk	Civil Aviation Authority

### EX-OFFICIO:

Dr Nick Jenkins	Senior DVLA Doctor
Dr Alun Hemington-Gorse	DVLA Doctor
Dr Aditi Kumar	DVLA Doctor
Dr Jeannette Lynch	DVLA Doctor
Miss Keya Nicholas	Driver Licensing Policy Lead
Mr Michael Jones	Driver Licensing Policy
Mr Andrew Harper	Driver Licensing Policy
Ms Andrea Williams	Complex Casework Leader
Ms Sandra Thomas	Lead for Drivers Medical Service Management
Mrs Suzanne Richards	Drivers Service Management
Mrs Sharon Abbott	Operational Delivery & Support, Drivers Medical
Mrs. Siân Taylor	DVLA Panel Coordinator & Note Taker
Miss Kirsty-Leigh Van Staden	DVLA Panel Coordinator Support
Miss Katy Richards	DVLA Panel Coordinator Support
Mrs Jemma Avo	DVLA Panel Coordinator Support

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## SECTION A: INTRODUCTION

### **1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from;

Dr Tania Jagathesan  
Professor Paul Fearon  
Dr Colin Graham  
Dr Sarah Hewitt  
Dr Daniel Dalton  
Dr Abrar Abraham

### **2. CHAIR'S REMARKS**

The panel Chair welcomed all attendees. Panel chair invited all attendees to introduce themselves. The panel Chair introduced one new panel member, Mr Anthony Arcari who provided details of his professional background. The Chair advised attendees regarding the etiquette of digital meetings.

### **3. ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**

DVLA provided an update on the actions from the last meeting:

#### **i. Learning Disability**

The Assessing Fitness To Drive (AFTD) guidance has been updated to clarify the standards in relation to Learning Disabilities. DVLA will be reviewing the medical forms.

#### **ii. Mental Health Act**

DVLA are considering changes to medical questionnaires, this is currently ongoing.

#### **iii. Personality Disorder**

DVLA are considering changes to medical questionnaires, this is currently ongoing.

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iv. **Specialist Reports**

Dr Jenkins confirmed that he has had discussions with the Chairs of the RCPsych Special Interest Groups regarding Private Practice and Occupational Medicine. DVLA has benchmarked costs against those associated with reports for similar agencies. Discussions are ongoing.

v. **Clozapine**

DVLA confirmed that they were awaiting further discussions and advice from the Neurology Panel regarding the seizure risks associated with this medication.

vi. **Dementia**

The Chair explained that he had discussed the clinical responsibilities regarding the notification of dementia to DVLA with various clinician groups. The groups acknowledged the issues associated with lack of patient insight but considered that the current GMC guidance for clinicians (Confidentiality: patients' fitness to drive and reporting concerns to the DVLA or DVA) provides a satisfactory framework with regard to notification of DVLA.

## SECTION B: TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

### **4. Psychotropic medication and licensing**

DVLA advised that currently individuals taking Clozapine (and similar medications) are restricted to a one-year licence, even if their condition has been stable for several years.

DVLA requested that panel consider psychotropic medications and their possible impact on driving, particularly with a view to advising whether the period of driver licensing needs to be restricted purely as a result of the type of medication prescribed.

Panel advised that those prescribed Clozapine for their psychiatric condition are normally well managed after a year. Panel advised that the licence duration should reflect the underlying medical condition rather than a restriction being placed purely on the basis of prescribed medication. It was noted that the standards may need to be cross-referenced with the seizure standards.

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## 5. Medical standard for anxiety and/or depression

DVLA asked if panel could review the Group 1 standard for severe anxiety or depression regarding the period of stability required for licensing, and also review the Group 2 standard for mild-moderate anxiety or depression.

Panel advised that the medical standard for severe anxiety or depression should require a period of three months' stability. Panel advised that mild/moderate depression does not require notification to DVLA, regardless of the condition's duration.

## 6. Cognitive Function and Driving assessments

Dr Mary Fisher gave a presentation on "Decision driver effect of cognitive impairment on spatial orientation and navigation".

Panel were asked to provide clarification regarding the weight to be afforded to tabletop cognitive testing assessments in isolation.

Panel thanked Dr Mary Fisher for a very helpful presentation and after much discussion, concluded that ongoing work with regard to modern technology, may help to determine future directions in this field. Until that work is completed the driving assessment will remain as the gold standard. Panel advised that tabletop cognitive scores are not designed to be diagnostic tests and do not measure driving ability. The results of such tests should be considered in conjunction with other assessments of cognitive functions and licensing decisions should not be made on the basis of isolated test results, whether the scores are high or low.

Panel discussed whether improvements to the current DVLA forms would allow for improved DVLA decision making. DVLA agreed to explore this further.

## SECTION C: ONGOING AGENDA ITEMS

### 7. Tests, horizon scanning, research, and literature

DVLA reminded all panel members as part of the terms and conditions of the requirement to update panel about any information/tests/research that could impact on standards or existing processes.

### 8. AOB

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Panel reviewed the wording of the medical standards for Personality Disorder and for Behavioural Disorder and agreed changes that would allow for consistency of wording between the Group 1 and Group 2 standards.

**9. Date and time of next meeting**

Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> October 2021

**Original draft minutes prepared by:**

**Siân Taylor  
Note Taker  
Date: 19<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

**Final minutes signed off by:**

**Dr P J Connelly  
Panel Chair  
Date: 20<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

**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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