



MINUTES OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT'S
HONORARY MEDICAL ADVISORY PANEL ON ALCOHOL, DRUGS AND
SUBSTANCE MISUSE AND DRIVING
Meeting held on Wednesday 24th March 2021 10:00am

Present:

Panel Members:

Professor Eilish Gilvarry (Chair)
Professor Kim Wolff
Dr Stephen Morley
Dr Jane Marshall
Dr Edward Day
Dr Robert Searle
Dr Richard J Aspinall

OBSERVERS:

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| Professor Denis Cusack | Director, Irish Medical Bureau of Road Safety |
| Dr Sally Bell | Maritime and Coastguard Agency |
| Dr Chris Schenk | Civil Aviation Authority |
| Mr David Snelling | Policy Team Leader, Road Policing Team, DfT |

EX-OFFICIO:

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| Dr Nick Jenkins | Senior DVLA Doctor |
| Dr Sarah Brown | DVLA Doctor |
| Dr Kirsty Harrison | DVLA Doctor |
| Mr Jason Donovan | Head of Driver Licensing Policy |
| Mrs Keya Nicholas | Driver Licensing Policy Lead |
| Miss Gwen Owen | Driver Licensing Policy |
| Mr Andrew Harper | Driver Licensing Policy |
| Mrs Sharon Abbott | Operational Delivery & Support DM |
| Mrs Suzanne Richards | Service Management |
| Mrs Claire Johns | Head of Operational Delivery & Support DM |
| Mrs Sian Taylor | DVLA Panel Co-ordinator & Panel Note Taker |
| Miss Katy Richards | DVLA Panel Co-ordination support |

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SECTION A: INTRODUCTION

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from,
Miss Sarah Oldham
Mr Ahmer Azim
Mr Abdul Elghedafi
Dr Colin Graham

2. CHAIR'S REMARKS

The Chair welcomed panel members and advised attendees regarding the etiquette of digital meetings. All of the attendees introduced themselves and the Chair welcomed a new panel member, Dr Richard Aspinall to his first panel meeting.

Matters Arising

New Reported Drugs

An extraordinary meeting was held in December 2020. DVLA presented a list of new substances included in the toxicological reporting where panel had advised the required periods of time off driving for the various substances. DVLA confirmed that this advice had been incorporated into the recent edition of the Assessing Fitness to Drive (AFTD) guidance.

DVLA advised that the previously issued advice regarding subcutaneous buprenorphine, has also been included in the AFTD guidance

3. Actions of the previous meeting

a) Alcohol dependence

The Panel had previously discussed DVLA's internal processes for dealing with alcohol dependence cases in the October 2019 meeting. The Senior DVLA Doctor confirmed that the published medical standard for Alcohol Dependence has been amended to explicitly state the need for drivers to be abstinent to hold, regain and to retain a driving licence.

b) Carbohydrate Deficient Transferrin (CDT) reporting to DVLA

Dr Jenkins stated that DVLA had requested that all CDT results should be reported by the "classic CDT" method. As a consequence, the cut off value to be used for the alcohol dependence standard

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has reverted to a CDT level of 1.6%, rather than the 1.7% value which was associated with the IFCC reported value. This is now complete.

c) Provoked seizures

In the Autumn 2020 panel, agreement had been reached that it would be appropriate to reduce the time off Group 2 driving to two years for those provoked seizures of non-Central Nervous System origin. DVLA advised this is currently being made operational.

d) Subcutaneous Buprenorphine

Panel agreed in the Autumn 2020 panel meeting that the medical standard should be reworded to allow for the consideration of subcutaneous long acting buprenorphine preparations. This action has now been completed.

e) Polysubstance misuse – DVLA to identify suitable cases

It was agreed that DVLA would continue to collate suitable cases of polysubstance misuse to bring back to panel for discussion. The medical standards will be discussed when such cases have been identified. This action is ongoing.

f) Medicinal Cannabis - Yearly discussion

Panel noted that a yearly discussion of this topic has been agreed and medicinal cannabis will be reviewed as and when cases come to light.

SECTION B: TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

4. Update from Department for Transport (DfT)

DfT advised that following the Road Safety Statement in 2019 they had commissioned a PACTS review of drink driving. An additional report has also been commissioned regarding drug driving which was published last month. DfT presented the draft report and agreed to circulate it to panel members and DVLA for comments.

5. Cozart Testing

The DVLA receives notifications from the police regarding possible drug dependency or misuse some of which include positive Cozart test results. DVLA asked panel for advice on the level of assurance that should be placed on these tests.

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Panel advised that these tests were developed for the purpose of drug screening rather than for diagnostic purposes. A positive test should be considered to be a possible indicator of drug use only and will not confirm dependence or misuse. Panel advised that the results of these tests should not be used in isolation when making licensing decisions.

6. Review period for drugs misuse cases

In cases of misuse and/or dependence of the group of drugs which require a period of 12 months off Group 1 driving (e.g. opiates, opioids, cocaine), it is standard practice for DVLA to issue a one year driving licence until the misuse/dependence has been controlled for three years. Following that period, a full-term driving licence is issued.

Panel were asked to advise whether this process was appropriate and, in particular, whether a full-term licence could be issued sooner. Panel advised that misuse and/or dependence of this group of drugs was associated with a significant rate of relapse. Panel advised that the above process is appropriate and should remain the same.

7. Failure to collect a blood sample

Blood samples are required as part of DVLA's medical enquiries into alcohol-related disorders. On occasions the examining doctor is unable to obtain a blood sample. Panel were asked to advise whether there were any alternatives to CDT analysis requiring venepuncture.

Panel discussed the issue of alternative indicators of alcohol use, particularly with regard to phosphatidylethanol testing on finger prick samples. Panel noted that the use of phosphatidylethanol testing in the drink driving population had not yet been validated. Panel advised that there are currently no suitable alternatives to CDT testing in this population.

8. Pain control medication

DVLA have an increasing number of licence holders that are taking pain control medication, with the potential for misuse of medication. DVLA requested guidance on the use of pain medication as it relates to driver licensing and asked if such advice should be included in AFTD.

Panel discussed the practical issues associated with licensing considerations in such cases and advised that there should be no change to the published medical standards.

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SECTION C: ONGOING AGENDA ITEMS

9. Tests, Horizon, Scanning, research and literature

DVLA reminded all panel members as part of the Terms and Conditions, of their obligation to update panel about any information/tests/research that could impact on the medical standards or existing processes.

10. Appeals data

60.1% of the total appeal summons received at DVLA were for alcohol and drug cases. Between 2 July 2020 and 31 December 2020, 128 drivers appealed against the licensing decision made by DVLA and only two case appeals were upheld.

11. A.O.B

Medical Cannabis and Road Safety Rapid Evidence Assessment, NATCEN will be approaching panel members for interviews on this.

12. Time & date of next meeting

Wednesday 13th October 2021

Original draft minutes prepared by:

Sian Taylor

Note Taker

Date: 29th March 2021

Final minutes signed off by:

Professor E Gilvarry

Panel Chair

Date: 23rd April 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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