



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 13th October 2021 10:00am

Present:

Panel Members:

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

OBSERVERS:

Professor Denis Cusack	Director, Irish Medical Bureau of Road Safety
Dr Sally Bell	Maritime and Coastguard Agency
Dr Stuart Mitchell	Civil Aviation Authority
Mr David Snelling	Policy Team Leader, Road Policing Team, DfT
Dr John McVicker	Occupational Health Service

EX-OFFICIO:

Dr Nick Jenkins	Senior DVLA Doctor
Dr Karen Davies	DVLA Doctor
Dr Lindsey Elliot	DVLA Doctor
Mrs Keya Nicholas	Driver Licensing Policy Lead
Miss Gwen Owen	Driver Licensing Policy
Mr Andrew Harper	Driver Licensing Policy
Miss Kim Brannigan	Operational Delivery & Support DM
Mrs Sharon Abbott	Operational Delivery & Support DM
Mrs Suzanne Richards	Service Management
Miss Kirsty-Leigh Van Staden	DVLA Panel Co-ordination support
Miss Sarah Anthony	DVLA Panel Co-ordination support

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SECTION A: INTRODUCTION

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from,

Dr Michael Trudgill
Dr Colin Graham
Mr Ahmer Azim
Miss Sarah Oldham
Mrs Sian Taylor

Chief Medical Officer Civil Aviation Authority
Occupational Health Service
Policy Advisor DfT
Lay member
DVLA Panel Co-ordinator & PA to Senior DVLA Doctor

2. CHAIR'S REMARKS

The Chair welcomed panel members and advised attendees regarding the etiquette of digital meetings. Dr Nick Jenkins provided an update on the recent panel recruitment scheme. The Chair provided an update to panel on the working group which is being set up to discuss Comorbidities and driving, a meeting is due to be held in November.

3. Actions of the previous meeting

i. Medicinal Cannabis - Yearly discussion

Department for Transport (DfT) update. DfT intend to clarify and gain a better understanding of the use of medicinal cannabis, due to the complexities relating to prescribed drugs and driving. Further discussions will be held with the panel Chair and the Senior DVLA doctor in due course.

SECTION B: TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

4. COVID 19 Recovery, DVLA Update

DVLA provided panel with an update on the current backlog situation at the Agency because of the pandemic. DVLA confirmed that they have implemented several changes to support their recovery including:

- 13 Month driving licence entitlement extension
- D4 Waiver Scheme
- Online consultations specific to Group 2 drivers with diabetes
- New accommodation

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- Web-chat System to enable staff working from home to answer simple queries, reducing further calls to the contact centre
- Changes to GOV.UK to direct drivers to the online Fitness to Drive channel

DVLA explained that the focus is to reduce the current backlogs and the burden on NHS doctors. To do this DVLA has piloted a simplified renewal process for car and motorcycle drivers with epilepsy, Multiple Sclerosis and have more recently some mental health conditions. In addition to this, DVLA have also been working on:

- An electronic facility for secure email addresses to allow doctors to email medical questionnaires
- Extending the “Notify” function for drivers on receipt of a medical notification/renewal to let them know their application/notification has been received
- New modernised casework system
- Recruitment of 116 additional caseworkers to process medical cases

Panel thanked DVLA for the update.

5. Persistent Alcohol Misuse Definition

DVLA requested that Panel consider the principles underpinning driver licensing in cases of persistent misuse of alcohol. Panel were particularly asked to consider the relationship between the medical condition and driving.

It was considered important that Panel should advise DVLA of a definition of persistent alcohol misuse that is sufficiently clear to allow both clinicians and DVLA caseworkers to apply the medical standard consistently.

Panel suggested an extraordinary panel meeting to be arranged in the next few months to discuss this further.

6. Nitrous Oxide

DVLA are receiving an increasing amount of enquiries/Police notifications regarding Nitrous Oxide abuse. DVLA asked panel, should Nitrous Oxide be included in the medical standards?

Panel discussed the indications for Nitrous Oxide use in clinical practice. Panel advised that currently it did not consider that specific guidance was required for inclusion in Assessing Fitness to Drive and suggested that cases should be dealt with on an individual basis. Panel noted that data regarding the incidence of such reporting would help inform future decisions.

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7. Anabolic Steroids

DVLA asked Panel to consider whether there was any new evidence available regarding the impact of anabolic steroids upon driving.

Panel discussed and advised that there is currently insufficient research or evidence available to support a specific time off driving. Panel will review the subject again in a future meeting.

8. Department for Transport (DfT) Update

DfT updated panel on the commissioned Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety (PACTS) (as part of the Road Safety Statement) to conduct a review of drink driving. In addition to this DfT have also commissioned a review on drug driving. DfT provided an update on the report asking panel and DVLA for their comments on the High-Risk Offenders (HRO) scheme, but also wished to gain valuable insights into the other parts of the report including issues on alcohol dependency and treatment.

In Spring 2021, panel members were asked to comment on the draft PACTS report. DfT welcomed valuable insights and thoughts on the report, including the HRO scheme and the issues on alcohol dependency and treatment.

Panel thanked DfT for the update.

SECTION C: ONGOING AGENDA ITEMS

9. Appeals Data

Between 1st March and 13th August 2021, the number of appeals received is 127. Of those, 67 were alcohol and drug related. 1 case was upheld.

10. Tests, Horizon Scanning, Research and Literature

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

Dr Stephen Morley and Professor Wolff are supervising a student at Kings Hospital who is involved in researching potential changes in drug toxicology testing. They will feedback to panel once the report is completed to discuss if any further work is required.

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11. AOB

Business Support Operational Manager provided an update on processes and thanked Professor Kim Wolff for all her hard work, support, and invaluable assistance in making the roads safer.

12. Time and Date of next meeting

Wednesday 2nd March 2022

Original draft minutes prepared by:

Sian Taylor

Note Taker

Date: 26TH October 2021

Final minutes signed off by:

Professor E Gilvarry

Panel Chair

Date: 8th November 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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