



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

Meeting held on Wednesday 6th October 2021 10:00am

Present:

Panel Members:

Professor Peter J Connelly (Chair)
Professor Robert Howard
Dr Andrew Byrne
Dr Abrar Ibrahim
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 Maria Morgan	National Programme Office for Traffic Medicine, Ireland
Dr Tania Jagathesan	Senior Medical Assessor, Civil Aviation Authority

EX-OFFICIO:

Dr Nick Jenkins	Senior DVLA Doctor
Dr Loraine Haslam	DVLA Doctor
Dr Kathryn Saunderson	DVLA Doctor
Miss Keya Nicholas	Driver Licensing Policy Lead
Mr Michael Jones	Driver Licensing Policy
Mr Andrew Harper	Driver Licensing Policy
Mr Dewi Richards	Driver Licensing Policy
Mr Richard Phillips	Operational Leader in Complex Casework
Mrs Suzanne Richards	Drivers Service Management
Miss Kimberley Brannigan	Operational Delivery & Support, Drivers Medical
Miss Kirsty-Leigh Van Staden	DVLA Panel Coordinator Support
Miss Sarah Anthony	DVLA Panel Coordinator Support
Mrs Siân Taylor	DVLA Panel Coordinator/ PA to Senior DVLA Doctor

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SECTION A: INTRODUCTION

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from:

Dr Mary Fisher-Morris	Chartered Psychologist with expertise in Mental Health and Dementia
Dr Sarah Hewitt	Forensic Consultant
Dr Daniel Dalton	Consultant Forensic Psychiatrist
Dr Katherine Jefferies	Consultant Old Age Psychiatrist

2. CHAIR'S REMARKS

The panel chair welcomed all attendees. 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 is considering possible changes to medical questionnaires. This is currently ongoing.
- iii. Personality Disorder**
DVLA is considering possible changes to medical questionnaires.
- iv. Specialist Reports**
DVLA have been in discussions with Chairs of the RCPsych Special Interest Groups regarding Private Practice and Occupational Medicine. DVLA is benchmarking costs against those associated with reports for similar agencies.
- v. Severe Anxiety or Depression**
Panel reviewed the proposed new wording for the Assessing Fitness to Drive (AFTD) guidance and were supportive of the changes.

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vi. Behavioural Disorder and Personality Disorder

Panel reviewed the proposed new wording for the AFTD guidance and were supportive of the changes.

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
- 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 comprehensive update.

5. Comorbid Psychiatric Diagnosis of Substance Misuse

DVLA advised that a letter had been received from a psychiatrist, seeking clarification on a number of issues in relation to comorbid psychiatric diagnoses and alcohol and/or substance misuse.

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DVLA asked panel to consider the wording of the medical standards and whether a different standard should apply when a brief period of misuse was associated with psychiatric illness, rather than the medical condition of alcohol and/or drug misuse in its own right.

Panel discussed and advised, that the definition of persistence misuse requires clarification before advice can be provided. The definition of persistent misuse is due for discussion at the forthcoming Alcohol and Drugs panel meeting.

DVLA were asked to consider the wording in relation to alcohol and drug misuse provided on the M2 questionnaire. Panel advised that the current M2 form is satisfactory in addressing this issue.

6. Renewal Process for short period licences

DVLA advised that they have recently introduced a simplified renewal process for drivers who have the medical conditions of epilepsy and multiple sclerosis. This was considered to be successful, and a meeting was held with some members of the Psychiatry panel to discuss the feasibility of introducing mental health conditions into this new medical licensing process. DVLA have since refined the specific questions asked of drivers, and the telephone renewal process is now live. Following panel agreement DVLA agreed to extend the pilot to incorporate certain mental health conditions. DVLA will monitor by seeking evidence from clinicians and comparing the decisions made from self-declaration with those that would follow clinician evidence. DVLA will provide panel with feedback on progress

Panel members agreed that most mental health conditions were potentially within scope for the pilot. Panel advised DVLA could include the medical condition of Bipolar Affective Disorder within the pilot for Group 1 licensing.

7. Psychotic Disorders – including isolated acute episode

DVLA advised that there is currently a single medical standard in the AFTD guidance which includes advice for episodes of acute and chronic psychotic disorder. DVLA asked whether there should be different standards to differentiate between the two. Queries have been raised following isolated episode, for example a drug related psychosis or associated with childbirth.

Currently DVLA's operating instructions advise to issue:

- A one-year licence if the driver has been stable for between 3 months and one year
- A full long-term licence if the driver has been stable for three years or longer

DVLA queried whether it is correct to only be licensing drivers for three years, when they may have been stable for two years? DVLA asked panel members to consider if the existing medical standards are clear enough, and also asked Panel members whether the name of the medical

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standard should be changed from ‘Acute Psychotic Disorder’ to ‘Psychotic Disorders - including acute episode’?

Panel advised that the current wording of the standard and its application in DVLA is appropriate. Panel advised that the proposed change in title of the standard would add clarity.

8. Panel Member Reports

As part of the Terms and Conditions, expert panel members are required to provide DVLA with reports for contentious and complex cases. Panel were asked to have a general discussion around some of the issues they experience when writing these reports.

Panel are also asked to clarify whether DVLA should not licence an individual until a specialist report is completed.

Panel discussed two cases and agreed that looking at the criteria that the DVLA consider only a medical practitioner can comment in an informed way, and that can add to the information needed to make a decision.

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 the requirement to update panel about any information/tests/research that could impact on standards or existing processes.

There were no updates.

10. AOB

A case was discussed.

11. Date and time of next meeting

Wednesday 16th March 2022

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Original draft minutes prepared by:

**Siân Taylor
Note Taker
Date: 06/10/21**

Final minutes signed off by:

**Dr P J Connelly
Panel Chair
Date:**

**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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