



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

Meeting held on Thursday 20th October 2022 11:00am

Present:

Panel Members:

Mr William Newman (Chair)
Mr Tom Eke
Professor Andrew Lotery
Mr Jonathan Clarke
Professor Roger Anderson
Dr Lucille Southee (Lay Member)
Ms Miriam Karp (Lay Member)

OBSERVERS:

Dr Colin Graham	Occupational Health Service, Northern Ireland
Dr Ed Bebb	Head of Health and Wellbeing, Rail Safety & Standards Board
Professor Ian Pearce	Royal College of Ophthalmologists

EX-OFFICIO:

Dr Nick Jenkins	Senior DVLA Doctor
Dr James Galletly	DVLA Doctor
Dr Laura Tattersall	DVLA Doctor
Mrs Keya Nicholas	Driver Licensing Policy Lead
Mrs Claire Hughes	Driver Licensing Policy
Ms Hayley Sergeant	DVLA Service Management
Mr Richard Phillips	Drivers Medical Operational Delivery & Support
Mrs Siân Taylor	DVLA Panel Co-ordinator & PA to the Senior DVLA Doctor
Miss Kirsty-Leigh Van Staden	DVLA Panel Coordination Support

SECTION A: INTRODUCTION

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from:

Mr Jonathan Durnian	Consultant Ophthalmologist
Dr Sue Stannard	Chief Medical Advisor, Maritime, and Coastguard Agency
Dr Fiona Kearns	Consultant Ophthalmologist, Ireland

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2. CHAIR'S REMARKS

The Panel Chair welcomed attendees and advised of the meeting etiquette. The Chair advised panel members to ensure their Declaration of Interests were all up to date. The Chair announced that Mr Jonathan Durnian had resigned from the panel and thanked him for his contribution to panel work over the last few years.

3. ACTIONS FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING/MATTERS ARISING

i. Bioptics

Bioptics was discussed at Agenda item 6.

SECTION B: TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

4. DVLA Update, Mr Richard Phillips

The Drivers Medical overall operational position and customer service continues to improve. There has been a huge amount of work done across the Agency to support operational recovery.

DVLA has recruited and trained over 400 Drivers Medical colleagues across three operational sites. DVLA has delivered two new customer service centres in Swansea and Birmingham. Customer service centre colleagues are being trained in both telephony and Drivers Medical casework.

DVLA has also developed new and innovative ways of working such as introducing a simplified renewal process for those drivers who hold a short period driving licence and changing the law to allow other registered healthcare professionals as well as doctors to be authorised to complete DVLA medical questionnaires. Drivers Medical has made significant operational progress and are reducing the volume of customer cases in progress week on week.

DVLA thanked the Secretary of State Medical Advisory panels for their support and guidance as it continues to review processes to facilitate timely and safe driver licensing decisions.

Panel thanked Mr Phillips for the update. The Chair congratulated DVLA on progress.

Short Period Licence (SPL) Update, Mr Richard Phillips

DVLA advised that the quality assurance exercise regarding the SPL trial for drivers with glaucoma, renewing their driving licences had provided encouraging results.

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At the previous meeting panel advised that those customers who declared no known deterioration of their visual field and no change of treatment (including surgery) since they were last licensed, were unlikely to have experienced a significant deterioration in visual field. Customers were therefore asked these questions during the pilot study.

Out of the cases that were piloted, the quality assurance exercise showed that less than 2% of customers would have been refused a driving licence had a visual field assessment been undertaken. This figure compares favourably with the findings obtained in the pilot studies involving other medical conditions.

Panel discussed and advised that DVLA should continue with the glaucoma SPL work but recommended that on the next reapplication following the SPL process, that it would be advisable for the customer to undergo visual field testing, regardless of their self-declaration.

5. Visual Field Charts

The DVLA have received correspondence expressing concern regarding some technical aspects of the visual field tests conducted by Specsavers on the DVLA's behalf.

The points raised in the letter are:

- The light spots used in testing appear at a near distance, for which distance driving glasses may be inappropriate
- Any glasses worn to focus on the spot are likely to be inappropriate for driving.

Panel advised that the Esterman test has been set up to look for visual field defects and that drivers should be able to see the bright peripheral lights if their eyesight is good enough for driving. Drivers who meet the vision standards for driving should pass the test with whichever glasses they use. Panel discussed and agreed that customers should be advised to bring any glasses, contact lenses or corrective lenses they may require with them to their appointment.

6. Bioptics

Following a presentation at the Spring 2022 panel meeting the panel Chair and DVLA discussed the possible implications of the use of bioptic devices on fitness to drive.

Panel agreed that bioptics are only used on an average of 2% of driving time, thus resulting in the remaining 98% of driving time occurring with impaired visual acuity. Panel considered that the use of the bioptic device impinges upon the binocular visual field. Panel agreed that the current position that the use of such devices is unacceptable for driving, remains unchanged. The topic will be reviewed in the future.

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7. Diplopia

The panel Chair raised the issue that the current standard for diplopia as published in the Assessing Fitness to Drive (AFTD) guidance requires review.

The panel agreed that a working group would review the current standard.

8. Visual Fields

DVLA raised the issue that Specsavers provide a variety of different types of visual field charts (e.g., Humphrey, Henson, Medmont). Standardisation has been a challenge because of variability in the availability of the various machines throughout the country.

Most charts received by DVLA are either Humphrey or Henson 120/124 Esterman charts, although a significant number of Henson 112 charts and Medmont charts are received which can cause difficulties in applying operating instructions to analyse the charts.

Panel discussed the issue and suggested that, when DVLA tender for a future vision contract, that panel would wish to be involved in the process.

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.

No issues raised.

10. AOB

Vision Condition List

DVLA advised that concerns had been raised regarding the content of the vision condition list published on GOV.UK

Panel agreed to work with and advise DVLA on the revision of this list.

Visual Field Charts

DVLA indicated that, when multiple visual field charts have been obtained at a single sitting, they would prefer to reduce the number of charts received and to possibly receive only the chart most favourable to the customer. DVLA requested panel's view on this issue.

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Panel advised that in the majority of cases, tests are likely to be carried out to DVLA's specifications by technicians, who are unable to interpret the visual field charts. Panel advised that the matter should be considered when the contract is reviewed.

Recruitment update by Policy:

DVLA undertook a recruitment scheme for the vision panel in August and September 2022. Recommendations for appointment are due to be submitted to the Minister.

11. Date and time of next meeting

Thursday 30th March 2023.

Original draft minutes prepared by:

Siân Taylor

Note Taker

Date: 21st October 2022

Final minutes signed off by:

Mr William Newman

Panel Chair

Date: 23rd January 2023

**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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