

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

Meeting held on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> October 2023

**Present:**

**Panel Members:**

Mr William Newman (Chair)  
Professor Roger Anderson  
Mrs Catherine Butcher  
Dr Claire Howard  
Mr Ian Rodrigues  
Dr Lauren Hepworth  
Dr Lucille Southee (Lay Member)

**EX-OFFICIO:**

Dr Nick Jenkins	Senior DVLA Doctor
Dr Amanda Edgeworth	Deputy Senior DVLA Doctor
Dr Andrew Holman	DVLA Doctor
Mrs Keya Nicholas	Driver Licensing Policy Lead
Mr Leigh A Bromfield	Driver Licensing Policy
Mr Dewi Richards	Driver Licensing Policy
Ms Emma Lewis	Driver Licensing Policy
Mr Michael Jones	Driver Licensing Policy
Mrs Claire Hughes	Driver Licensing Policy
Mr Richard Davies	DVLA Service Management
Mrs Suzanne Richards	DVLA Service Management
Miss Danielle Theophilus	DVLA Service Management
Mr Andrew Turner	Drivers Medical Contracts Team
Mrs Katy Adams	DVLA Panel Co-ordination Team
Mrs Siân Taylor	DVLA Panel Co-ordinator & PA to the Senior DVLA Doctor

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## SECTION A: INTRODUCTION

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

Apologies were received from:

Mrs Allison Avo	Senior Lead Business & Customer Support
Dr Cathy Armstrong	DVLA Doctor
Ms Miriam Karp	Lay Member
Professor Ian Pearce	Royal College of Ophthalmologists
Dr Sue Stannard	Chief Medical Advisor, Maritime and Coastguard Agency
Dr Ed Bebb	Head of Health and Wellbeing, Rail Safety & Standards Board

### **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. Panel chair welcomed members and asked everyone in attendance to introduce themselves and advise of their clinical interests.

The Panel Chair advised that this would be his final panel meeting and detailed the changes observed and topics advised upon during his fourteen year association with the panel.

### **3. ACTIONS FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING/MATTERS ARISING**

#### **i. Visual Field Assessments**

##### **a) Interpretation of width of visual field**

In Spring 2023 DVLA requested panel guidance on assessing the horizontal width of the visual field (i.e., whether it should be measured to the first missed point or the last seen point). Panel confirmed their previous advice that the width should be measured to the first point missed i.e., the interpretation most favourable to the customer.

The Panel Chair advised that this approach has implications for the assessment of the visual field for the purpose of group 2 licensing. The four most peripheral spots on a Group 2 visual field chart are situated at 81.6 degrees from the midline. Therefore, in a scenario whereby all four peripheral spots are missed (unseen) but there is no other significant defect crossing the horizontal meridian, the visual field will be considered to extend to 81.6 degrees bilaterally, thus achieving the legislative requires of 160 degrees in the horizontal plane. This therefore supersedes the advice detailed in the minutes of the October 2017 panel meeting which stated “*With regard to the four points tested most laterally on either side of fixation at around 80 degrees, then if the two are missed on one side and one or both are missed on the other side this would not meet Group 2 standards. If only one of these four most lateral points is missed on either side, this is acceptable for Group 2 driving.*”

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#### **b) The interpretation of connectivity of diagonal points**

Panel considered a DVLA proposal to ‘consider all neighbouring points tested within 30 degrees above and below the horizontal as being adjoining, whether horizontally, diagonally or vertically neighbouring’.

Panel approved the proposal.

DVLA thanked panel.

### **SECTION B: TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION**

#### **4. Exceptional Case Process**

Panel discussed the exceptional case process. The process deals with the situation whereby a static visual field defect results in the Group 1 visual field standard not being met. The Motor Vehicle regulations 1999 section 72 (1E) makes reference to Road Traffic act section 92 (2) regarding relevant disability. In here there can be found set criteria for what would define an exceptional vision case. One of the stipulated legislative requirements is that of “full functional adaptation”.

DVLA requested that panel review the advice provided to clinicians with regard to the assessment of an individual’s adaptation to the deficit in their field of vision.

Panel advised that the assessment as to whether the legislative requirement for full functional adaptation (with regard to driving) has been achieved is provided by the on-road driving assessment. Panel advised that the information required by DVLA to allow consideration of an application for licensing as an “exceptional vision case” is the clinician’s confirmation that the individual appears to have fully adapted in their daily life so as to allow for an on-road driving assessment to be undertaken. The clinician’s opinion may be based upon their assessment of the individual and include the individual’s self-declaration.

DVLA agreed to consider the advice currently provided to customers, and also the accessibility of such information and application forms.

#### **5. Alternatives to Goldmann Testing**

The DVLA Contracts Team advised panel of the practicalities of commissioning Goldmann machine testing.

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The Team advised that there are currently 31 facilities providing Goldmann testing. On average 3 providers become unavailable each calendar year. The shortage of facilities has resulted in some customers having to travel over 100 miles for an appointment.

DVLA emphasised the need for an equitable service and advised that the situation is currently manageable. However, as access to Goldmann testing becomes increasingly limited DVLA will require a suitable alternative to the Goldmann assessment in order to allow delivery of an effective service. DVLA requested that the panel advise as to suitable alternatives.

The panel advised that the Octopus 900 would be a suitable alternative and agreed to work with DVLA to produce an appropriate protocol for DVLA's use of this assessment.

The panel confirmed that the indication for requesting Goldmann assessment were primarily in relation to customer inability to use the Esterman assessment, usually manifesting as a high false-positive rate. The panel suggested that DVLA may wish to investigate the causes underlying such customer difficulties with a view to decreasing the number of alternative assessments required.

## SECTION C: ONGOING AGENDA ITEMS

### **6. Tests, horizon scanning, research, and literature**

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

The panel discussed a recent study in Binocular visual field in adults with horizontal strabismus and driving requirements<sup>1</sup>. The panel advised they would not recommend a change in process based upon the results of the study, however if further evidence was provided the panel would be happy to review.

### **7. AOB**

#### **Panel Recruitment**

The Driver Licensing Policy provided an update on the recruitment process and advised that DVLA policy advised that the recruitment across the panels has now been completed and are awaiting ministerial approval. Unfortunately, no current candidate for the Vision Panel Chair role, however a new advert has been submitted and we are looking forward to receiving submissions.

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<sup>1</sup> Alfaqawi, F., Young, J. & Kaye, S.B. Binocular visual field in adults with horizontal strabismus and driving requirements. Eye 37, 2220–2225 (2023).

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Panel advised further recruitment was required for additional members with expertise in.

- Glaucoma
- Macular Degeneration
- Paediatrics and Strabismus (Neurological paediatrician)
- Optometrist
- Orthoptist

DVLA thanked panel and noted requirements, DVLA advised with regards to co-opting Neurological Paediatrician.

Thanks were given to the panel members attending by the Chair. DVLA and Panel extended their gratitude to the outgoing Chair for all the hard work and commitment provided during his tenure as panel member and subsequently as panel Chair.

### **Feedback on GOV.UK A-Z vision list of conditions**

Driver Licensing Policy provided an update on the amended A-Z vision list of conditions. Panel thanked Driver Licensing Policy.

### **DVSA Update**

DVSA ran a consultation on the 28<sup>th</sup> January to the 8<sup>th</sup> March 2022 regarding views on eyesight tests, this will be published at the end of March 2024. The prototype shared with panel will be explored further.

## **8. Date and time of next meeting**

Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> March 2024

**Original draft minutes prepared by:**

**Siân Taylor**  
**Note Taker**  
**Date: 27/10/23**

**Final minutes signed off by:**

**Mr William Newman**  
**Panel Chair**  
**Date: 30/10/23**

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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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