

DRAFT

**MINUTES OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT'S
HONORARY MEDICAL ADVISORY PANEL ON DRIVING AND
PSYCHIATRIC DISORDERS
MONDAY 10th NOVEMBER 2008
GREAT MINSTER HOUSE**

Present: Professor M Lader Chairman
Professor D G Cunningham Owens Acting Chairman
Professor P Howlin
Miss P Steel
Mrs J Gall

Ex-Officio: Dr H G Major Senior Medical Adviser, DMDG, DVLA
Dr C Campbell Medical Adviser, DVLNI
Dr Aditi Kumar Medical Adviser, DVLA
Dr A M White Panel Secretary, DVLA

Invited speaker: Dr Carol Hawley Principal Research Fellow
Health Science Research Institute

The meeting commenced at 13.30 hours.

Item 1. Apologies for Absence.

Apologies were received from:

Dr P Collins Howgill CAA.
Dr P Divall, Consultant Psychiatrist.
Dr T Crayford, Chief Medical Adviser DfT

Professor Lader informed the Panel that due to a recent unexpected change to his schedule he would be unable to attend for the entire meeting and that Professor Cunningham Owens had very kindly agreed to act as Chairman for the duration of this meeting.

The Chairman welcomed Dr Carol Hawley from Warwick Medical School to the meeting.

Item 2. Minutes of the last meeting held on 12th May 2008.

The minutes were accepted as a true record of the proceedings on the 12th May 2008, and were signed by the Chairman.

Item 3. Matters arising from the minutes.

3.1 Attendance at a FORUM mobility centre.

Lay Members, Miss Steel and Mrs Gall, had availed themselves of the offer from the Forum of Mobility Centres to view their operations. Both reported they were extremely impressed with the work of the centres visited, at Birmingham and Edinburgh respectively, and felt the visit provided a valuable insight into their operation. The Panel was asked about the possibility of the Lay Members attending as observers at other Panel meetings; Dr Major confirmed that this would be acceptable in principle and could serve to broaden the experience of the Lay Members of the various Panels. Attendance would be subject to agreement with the Chairman of the other Panels. The members of the Psychiatry Panel extended an invitation to the Lay Members of the other advisory Panels to attend as observers.

3.2 Formation of sub-committee.

At the meeting in May 2008 the formation of a sub-committee to consider the implications of the increasing elderly driving population was discussed. Dr Major informed the Panel that discussions on these issues were already taking place across the Department and that it would be appropriate for the Panel to provide input and advice to these discussions.

3.3 Mental capacity to appeal against a licensing decision.

Concerns had been expressed previously over the ability of drivers with certain medical conditions, in particular cognitive impairment, to give meaningful informed consent to the investigative process and to be able to conduct an appeal against a decision. Dr Major reminded the Panel that legislation allows for a licence holder to be considered fit unless satisfactory evidence indicates otherwise; consent by licence holders is therefore deemed to be given freely and in an informed manner. In the situation when a licence had been revoked on the grounds of significant cognitive impairment concerns had been expressed as to whether the licence holder would possess the ability to fully comprehend and conduct an appeal process in the Courts. The advice had been received that such cases should be examined on an individual basis; the role of the Court of Protection was highlighted.

Professor Cunningham Owens explained that such a scenario may be catered for in Scotland by the provision of the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000.

Item 4. Presentation by Dr Carol Hawley.

- 4.1 The Panel received a presentation from Dr Carol Hawley, Principal Research Fellow at the Health Sciences Research Institute, University of Warwick, on the study of “The attitudes of health professionals to advising patients on medical aspects of fitness to drive”. The Panel found the presentation extremely informative and thought provoking and expressed their gratitude to Dr Hawley for producing such an important study.
- 4.2 However, the Panel expressed its concerns over the delay in publication of this research report by DfT, and the impact that this may have on the research team and on future DfT sponsored research.

Item 5. Update on health and driver licensing review.

5.1 Dr Major provided an update on the review of Health and Driver Licensing and of progress towards a consultation date.

Item 6. Update on appointment of Psychiatrist with special interest in epidemiology.

The Panel was informed that four names had been received and that confirmation of interest and receipt of curricula vitae was awaited. Discussion also ensued as to whether it would be appropriate to expand the experience of the Panel by the inclusion of a Psychiatrist with Forensic experience in addition to the current expertise.

Item 7. Cognitive impairment associated with Electro Convulsive Therapy.

This Panel reiterated its previous advice that the main area of concern surrounding ECT and driver licensing was the severity of the depression that gave rise to the need for ECT rather than any post-treatment cognitive impairment. Licensing would be determined by the ability to meet the medical standards for the underlying condition.

Item 8. Cases for discussion.

No cases were discussed in detail. The Panel was made aware of a possible forthcoming television programme on driving and autism and members were provided with an update on a previously discussed case involving anti-social personality disorder.

Item 9. Research update.

- 9.1 No papers were received for formal review or discussion. The Panel briefly discussed a paper on “Dementia and Driving” which had been submitted to a leading medical journal by a medical practitioner, for consideration for publication.
- 9.2 Dr Major provided an update to the Panel following the recent departure of Dr Lily Read from the department and the plans for recruitment of her replacement. The Panel expressed their gratitude to Dr Read and wished her well in her new post.

Item 10. Any other business.

Dr White provided a brief summary of the proceedings of the National Dementia Conference held at Bournemouth.

Item 11. Dates and times of next meeting.

The next meeting is provisionally scheduled for 11th May 2009. Confirmation, subject to agenda imperatives, will be made closer to the date.

DR A M WHITE MB BCh
PANEL SECRETARY

12th November 2008

