

DRAFT

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT'S HONORARY MEDICAL ADVISORY PANEL ON DRIVING AND VISUAL DISORDERS HELD ON THURSDAY, 2ND APRIL 2009.

Present: Mr M H Miller Chairman
Mr G Duguid
Mr A Elliott
Dr C Fowler
Mr F Ghanchi
Mr G McIlwaine
Dr G Plant Departed from meeting at 13.00 hrs
Mr A C Viswanathan

Lay Members: Mrs M Cornwell
Mr D Edmunds

Ex Officio: Dr J McCaughan DVA (formerly DVLNI)
Mr A Chorley Civil Aviation Authority
Dr H Major Senior Medical Adviser and Head of
Medical Policy, DVLA
Mr M Stephenson Policy Casework and Advice, DVLA
Dr G B Rees Panel Secretary, Medical Adviser,
DVLA
Professor A Lotery Professor of Ophthalmology,
Southampton General Hospital
(attended to give presentation)

1. Apologies for Absence

1.1 Apologies received from Dr T Crayford and from Professor C Dickinson.

2. Chairman's Remarks

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3. Minutes of Panel Meeting of 4th December 2008

3.1 No amendments were made to the draft minutes of the Panel meeting of 4th December 2008.

4. Minutes of Panel Chairmen's Meeting of February 2009

- 4.1 Panel noted the minutes of the Panel Chairmen's meeting of 4th February 2009.
- 4.2 In particular Panel discussed the matter of "blue light driving", for example, by Police and Ambulance crew and the medical standards relevant to these occupations. Panel was reminded that these issues are beyond DVLA's licensing remit but that discussions are taking place with the Faculty of Occupational Medicine of the Royal College of Physicians to take forward development of the relevant standards.
- 4.3 Dr Major's forthcoming retirement was noted and the Chairman thanked her for her contribution to the Panel over the years.

5. Matters Arising not covered in the main Agenda

(i) Item

- 5.1 Panel noted that a letter of thanks had been sent to Mr Andrew Milliken, Senior Optometrist at Moorfields Eye Hospital, for his help with visual field testing for DVLA.

(ii) Item 5.2 (Minutes of Meeting of May 2008)

- 5.2 Panel noted that a letter had been sent to Roche Pharmaceuticals on the matter of Isotretinoin and driving.

(iii) Item 9.1

- 5.3 Panel discussed the wording of a proposed advisory note for the DVLA website on the matter of pre-perimetric glaucoma (glaucomatous optic disc damage without associated visual field loss). Panel considered that further discussion on this matter is required.

(iv) Item 15.1

- 5.4 Panel discussed the issue of customers who make inappropriate allegations about individual Panel members. It was considered that further advice and discussion on this matter is required.

6. Replacement Panel Member

- 6.1 Panel is seeking to recruit a new non-lay member to replace Mr John Elston who retired from Panel membership last year. It was pointed out that Panel members are generally expected to be in active, normally NHS, clinical practice, although it may be acceptable for a member to retire from active clinical work towards the end of their term

as a Panel member providing they remain active in relevant academic work.

- 6.2 The Panel representative of the Royal College of Ophthalmologists presented details of applications received from four interested candidates. A recommendation for appointment will be forwarded to the Secretary of State for Transport.

7. First applications for a provisional ordinary driving licence from those with a stable debarring binocular visual field defect

- 7.1 Panel was provided with a number of examples of these applications to illustrate the medical conditions involved and the resultant binocular visual field defect. All examples considered were cases of acquired (rather than of congenital) neurological damage. There was no case in which the stable binocular visual field defect was due to primary retinal disease.

- 7.2 Panel again indicated its wish to pursue the possibility of a (suitably anonymised) prospective research study of the future driving record of those with a stable debarring binocular visual field defect issued with a driving licence under the 'exceptionality clause' in Annex III of the 2nd EC Directive. It was pointed out that exceptionality had been a change in policy and it would be appropriate that this change be monitored to ensure that road safety was not being compromised. There was discussion about the implications for motor insurance companies with regard to these drivers. Panel was also reminded that Courts have the power under Section 22 of the Road Traffic Offenders Act to refer cases to DVLA if a driver's medical condition is considered to be implicated in a driving matter before the courts.

8. Update on seven cases previously discussed

- 8.1 Panel was provided with an updated summary of each of the seven cases discussed at its meeting of December 2008.

9. Presentation on the subject of Retinitis Pigmentosa

- 9.1 Panel was provided with a presentation on the subjects of retinitis pigmentosa and sectorial retinitis pigmentosa.

10. Proposed changes to Annex III of the 2nd EC Directive on Vision and Driving

- 10.1 An amendment to the minimum health standard set out in the second Directive on driving licences (91/439/EC) is currently progressing through the EC legislative process, following a vote at the meeting of the Committee on 5th February.

A detailed discussion by the Panel considered possible options for change to the national eyesight standards for driving, once any new EC legislation comes into force. DVLA will consider Panel's advice and recommendations before seeking ministerial views.

11. Driver notification of medical conditions to motor insurers

- 11.1 Panel was informed that individual motor insurance companies may have difficulty capturing data to determine the specific risks for individual drivers. The majority of the motor insurance industry does not request extensive medical information from its customers but relies on the fact that if DVLA has had disclosed to it a medical condition that should have been disclosed and has subsequently issued a driving licence, the person concerned would meet the medical standards of fitness to drive.

12. Journal article for 'Optometry Today' on new eyesight standards

- 12.1 A Panel member has been approached to write an article for the journal 'Optometry Today' on the matter of the proposed amendments to the eyesight section of Annex III of the 2nd EC Directive on the Driving Licence. However, Panel considered that such an article should await ratification of any changes by the EC legislative process together with details of how the United Kingdom will apply any new standards.

13. Cases for discussion

- 13.1 Panel discussed three cases. One case involved a driver with a visual condition who was involved in a fatal road traffic accident; this case had been the subject of a Coroner's Inquest. Another case was of a person with a debarring binocular visual field defect due to a pigmentary retinopathy. The third case was one of a long-standing stable debarring binocular visual field defect due to laser treatment to both eyes for proliferative diabetic retinopathy.

14. Research

- (i) There was discussion about the current DfT research programme and about the Medical Research Proposal forms for submission of research suggestions to the DfT. It is planned that research ideas will be discussed by Panels at their meetings in the autumn and that the proposals will be submitted to DVLA by the end of the year. The different proposals will then be considered at the subsequent meeting of Panel Chairmen.
- (ii) Panel wishes to make a Medical Research Proposal to carry out a literature search and to set up a working group or workshop to consider functional adaptation to debarring stable visual field defects of different aetiology and extent.

- (iii) Panel also wishes to make a Medical Research Proposal (a) to evaluate the driving record of those with a stable and ordinarily debarring binocular visual field defect who have been licensed under the 'exceptionality clause' of Annex III of the 2nd EC Directive and (b) to evaluate the driving record of those whose licence was previously refused or revoked because of a visual field defect but who were subsequently re-licensed because of a change in the standards ('vision trawl' cases).
- (iv) Publication of a consultation on a "Review of Health and Driving Licensing" is awaited.
- (v) Publication of the study on 'Attitudes of Health Professionals to giving fitness to drive advice' is awaited.

15. Updates

- 15.1 Panel was provided with an up-date of the number of Appeals against unfavourable licensing decisions made because of visual disorders. Since 1st April 2008 DVLA has received 168 summonses, of which 18 were vision-related appeals. Of these 11 were withdrawn, 1 was upheld in Court, 1 was dismissed in Court and 5 are currently on-going.
- 15.2 Three cases have been referred to individual Panel members since the last meeting on 4th December 2008.

16. Any Other Business

- 16.1 Panel discussed the importance of the requirement that all licence-holders must notify DVLA of any condition that may affect safe driving. Panel also discussed the importance of doctors advising their patients to do so in these circumstances. It was suggested that a journal such as 'Eye' would welcome a review article or an editorial on the role of Ophthalmologists in this process.
- 16.2 Panel discussed succession planning for members nearing the end of their term of office. It was pointed out that the Chairman may be appointed either from outside the Panel or from within the Panel. The term of office for the Chairman would be five years with the option of a further five years to a total of ten years. If appointed from within the Panel this period may be in addition to the time already served as Panel member.

17. Date of next meeting

17.1 Thursday, 5th November 2009.

There being no further business the meeting closed at approximately 5.00 p.m.

Dr Gareth B Rees
Secretary to the Vision Panel