



## Department for Transport

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Dear Emma,

Thank you for sending your report of 7 September 2017 following the inquest you conducted into the death of Mr Geoffrey Frank Taylor. I am sorry for the delay in responding.

First, I would like to express my sincere condolences to Mr Taylor's family. I have considered your report carefully and although our roads are some of the safest in the world, I would like to assure you that the Government is not complacent about road safety. The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) is focused on ensuring that only those who are fit to drive are granted a licence.

You asked that the Department look at the process for issuing driving licences to those with health conditions. By law, all drivers must meet the appropriate health standards for driving and a licence will only be issued to those who meet those standards. When applying for, or renewing a driving licence, applicants must declare whether they have any medical conditions. All drivers of any age also have a legal responsibility to notify the DVLA at any time of a health condition that affects safe driving. In this context, the DVLA will also investigate notifications from third parties, including concerned relatives, neighbours, police and health professionals. This recognises that there may be occasions where drivers do not notify the DVLA appropriately as they fear losing their licence or because a health condition affects their insight into their driving safety.

In regard to older drivers, it is recognised that health can deteriorate in later life. Driving licences expire at age 70 and are then renewed at least every three years. Applicants renewing a driving licence from age 70 must declare that they can meet the legal eyesight standards for driving and whether they have a medical condition which may affect their fitness to drive.

You also asked that the criteria are used for assessing driving fitness are considered. When the DVLA conducts an investigation into an individual's fitness to drive, a driver will be asked to complete a medical questionnaire allowing them to describe their condition. The driver is also asked to consent to enquiries being made to their doctors. Specially designed medical questionnaires will be sent to the driver's own doctor or consultant where appropriate, to be completed based on medical notes and their knowledge and understanding of their patient's condition. Where more information is needed to establish driving fitness, the DVLA may request a medical examination and/or driving assessment. For example, in cases of vision problems, a visual field test may be required.

Where necessary, an on-road driving assessment may be requested, to obtain a view on the impacts of certain medical conditions. Driving assessments provide information on reaction time, concentration and other features of driving that, when absent, are liable to cause the individual to be a source of danger on the road. The driving assessment report forms part of the overall evidence used by the DVLA to make a decision on whether an individual should retain their licence. If the investigation finds that a driver has a relevant disability and cannot meet the medical standards, the licence will be revoked. The DVLA also has the option of issuing a licence for a shorter period of between one and five years, allowing driving fitness to be more regularly monitored.

Drivers can also voluntarily surrender their driving licences to the DVLA for medical reasons at any time in writing or online. They may then reapply once their condition improves. If a driver has a relevant medical condition but does not wish to surrender their licence, the DVLA will fully investigate. The medical standards that must be met are set out in both European and UK law. Their practical application is supported by the expert medical opinion of the Department's Medical Panels.

The DVLA has developed its processes to renew a licence, investigate health, or facilitate the surrender of a licence so as to be as straightforward as possible. Last year, it launched an online service allowing car and motorcycle drivers to notify the DVLA of a medical condition (the existing paper channel is still available). A key message of the campaign that launched the service was the importance of drivers speaking to their GPs about their health and driving.

I recognise your concern that GPs could have a conflict of interest in notifying the DVLA of their patient's medical condition. GPs play an important role in the driver licensing process by advising their patients of the implications of their condition on driving, the effect of any treatment or medication and whether they should notify the DVLA. The DVLA published "Assessing Fitness to Drive: a Guide for Medical Professionals", in 2016.

This revised and improved guidance was developed using significant input from medical professionals. Its re-launch was publicised in medical publications as well as through the General Medical Council (GMC) and other medical organisations. This guidance is available online at: [www.gov.uk/guidance/assessing-fitness-to-drive-a-guide-for-medical-professionals](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/assessing-fitness-to-drive-a-guide-for-medical-professionals).

The GMC updated its guidance about confidentiality and reporting concerns to the DVLA in April 2017. This highlights a doctor's duty to disclose information to the DVLA where a patient has failed to do so. The guidance confirms that GPs no longer have to seek a patient's consent to contact authorities if they do not feel it is "safe and practicable to do so". Doctors should inform the DVLA if they consider that their patient is medically incapable of safe driving. The guidance also states that doctors should still try to persuade patients to contact the DVLA voluntarily. The College of Optometrists has also issued similar guidance to its members.

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA), with funding from the Department, has developed an older drivers' website: [www.olderdrivers.org.uk/](http://www.olderdrivers.org.uk/). The website contains information to help older people to continue to drive for as long as they are safe to do so. It includes details on driving assessments and refresher training. It also provides advice on making the decision to retire from driving, if an individual is no longer able to drive safely. Driver education schemes are also provided by local authorities and these are an effective way of providing support for older drivers and ensuring they remain fit and competent to drive.

*Yours sincerely,*



**JESSE NORMAN**