



Department
for Transport

From the Secretary of State
The Rt Hon Mark Harper MP

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27 April 2023

Dear Ms Schofield,

Thank you for your letter of 2 March 2023 and your report made under the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 and Regulations 28 and 29 of the Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013, following the inquest you conducted into the death of Mrs Kathleen Grace Fancourt. I understand that this report has also been sent to [REDACTED], Chief Executive of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) and this reply covers both approaches.

I was very sorry to read of the tragic circumstances of this case and would like to express my sincere condolences to the family of Mrs Fancourt.

I have considered your report and its recommendations very carefully. The report suggests that more medical checks should be carried out when drivers renew their licence at the age of 70 and over.

The current driver licensing arrangements are underpinned by a legal requirement that all drivers, of any age, must inform the DVLA if at any time they develop a medical condition that may affect safe driving. 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, by law, declare whether they have any medical conditions. The DVLA will investigate drivers who notify a relevant medical condition by obtaining information from them and, where appropriate, from the relevant medical professionals.

The DVLA will also investigate notifications from third parties, including concerned family, friends, neighbours, or health care professionals. This is in recognition of the fact there may be times when an individual may fail to notify

the DVLA appropriately or where a health condition affects their insight into their driving ability.

Doctors and other medical professionals can also notify the DVLA if they have concerns about the fitness to drive of their patients. Although there is no legal obligation on medical professionals to notify the DVLA about a patient who may be medically unfit to drive, they do have a duty of care to their patient and to the general public when they have concerns and their patient is unwilling or unable to notify the DVLA. Guidelines issued by the General Medical Council and General Optical Council highlight a doctor's duty to disclose information to the DVLA where the patient has failed to do so.

It is recognised that health can deteriorate in later life and for this reason, driving licences expire at the age of 70 and must then be renewed at least every three years. Everyone renewing a licence from age 70 and over must declare that they meet the legal eyesight standards for safe driving and confirm whether they have any relevant medical conditions which may affect safe driving. These regular renewals provide a timely reminder for drivers to consider their health in the context of driving, and such declarations are a legal obligation.

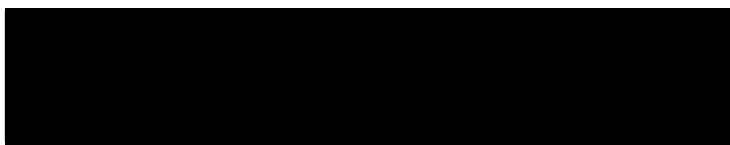
These arrangements are designed to be balanced and proportionate for all drivers, while balancing road safety and the mobility of individuals.

As your report highlights, the 2020 reported road traffic casualty figures do show 174 fatal accidents but it should be noted that these are accidents "involving" individuals over the age of 70 rather than those caused by an older driver.

However, we are not complacent and the Department for Transport recognises that older people must be able to maintain the skills and confidence required to remain safe and effective drivers. With funding from my department, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents has developed an older drivers' website www.olderdrivers.org.uk which 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 and 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 supporting older drivers and help to ensure that they remain fit and competent to drive.

I am very grateful to you for bringing your concerns to my attention. I can assure you that we take road safety very seriously and we are focused on ensuring that only those who are fit to drive are granted a licence to do so.

Yours sincerely,



The Rt Hon Mark Harper MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT