



Department  
for Transport

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From the Parliamentary  
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Dear Miss Crawford,

## **RESPONSE TO REGULATION 28 REPORT TO PREVENT FUTURE DEATHS**

Thank you for your report of 14 May 2024 made under the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 and the Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013, following the inquest you conducted into the deaths of Charlie Hopkins and William Robinson. I am responding as the Minister responsible for road safety.

It is deeply saddening to hear of the circumstances of Charlie Hopkins and William Robinson's deaths, and I would like to express my sincere condolences to their families.

The Government takes road safety with the utmost seriousness, and we are committed to maintaining our roads as some of the safest in the world. Despite that record there is always room for improvement, so I have carefully considered the factors highlighted in your report relating to young drivers, MOTs, and vehicle servicing.

I want to assure you that I am determined that we learn from tragedies like this and that we take action to reduce those killed and injured on our roads. Delivering enduring improvements in road and vehicle safety is a key priority, which is why we have already announced the development of a new Road Safety Strategy – the first in over a decade. We will be considering policies relating to young, new drivers during this development.

MOTs are a vital part of keeping people safe on our roads. Many drivers use MOT tests to determine when and how to have their vehicle serviced, and MOTs often reveal important safety-critical defects with tyres or brakes. As you correctly state, this also includes the functioning of airbag systems. If the airbag fault light is illuminated the vehicle will fail the MOT. As identified in your report, it is possible to obscure that light, but this would typically require an active effort to commit MOT fraud, which is unusual.

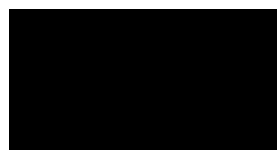
The Department and the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency launched a consultation on updating the MOT to include new technology last year. We are currently considering the results of that consultation and what additional measures could be introduced. We will consider including a visual inspection of the functioning of the airbag fault light when the vehicle is turned on in those measures. Such a consideration will have to take into account whether it can be consistently applied, the amount of time that would be added to the test, and whether changes to the law are required; further exploration of this is needed.

You also raised the possibility of using electronic diagnostics systems in the MOT to identify faults with the airbag system. We will consider this but expect it to be prohibitively expensive to require every MOT centre to purchase any such piece of equipment, particularly as we believe each car manufacturer has its own diagnostic interface equipment that a garage would be required to have. In the example from your report the service was conducted at a VW franchise which will have had equipment to specifically assess VW vehicles.

In relation to servicing I encourage all drivers to get regular services to ensure their vehicle is kept in a roadworthy condition, as legally required. However, servicing is not regulated and is a matter for each vehicle owner and mechanic. There is guidance on what should be covered by a service from road safety organisations such as the RAC and AA, while manufacturers typically provide maintenance manuals. Every driver is responsible for keeping their vehicle in a roadworthy state and it is a tragedy that on this occasion the issue with the airbag system identified during servicing was not followed up.

There is an inherent danger to driving that the Department for Transport and our partners endeavour to minimise every day, and any policy changes that have the potential to save lives deserve consideration.

Best wishes,



**LILIAN GREENWOOD MP**

**MINISTER FOR THE FUTURE OF ROADS**