

Report of Joint NASP/DVSA meeting – 15th October 2019

In attendance:

NASP - representatives from the three ADI associations, which NASP is composed of (those being ADINJC, DIA and MSA)

DVSA – Senior personnel from the Driver Policy Strategy and Policy Directorate, External Affairs, Public Relations and the Registrar

In the middle of October, NASP met with representatives from key DVSA operational and policy areas to discuss key issues, initiatives and challenges within the industry, as well as consult with DVSA on new areas of policy or service development. NASP is the only ADI stakeholder group to have such meetings and regular dialogue with DVSA and is considered by the regulator to be the key consultative stakeholder for the driver training industry.

Minutes and actions were discussed from previous meetings before moving onto the agenda of items raised by both NASP (responding to concerns, queries or challenges received from the respective memberships of each NASP group member) and DVSA.

Test Centre Closures

NASP raised concerns on how test centre closures were decided upon and what procedures could be put in place to have clearer lines of communications.

A representative from External Communications joined the meeting via a voice call and updated the group on the procedure for closing/moving test centres:

- Consult staff
- Consider logistics
- Communicate through DVSA's direct route to local media.

They stated the impact on staff travel time had to be taken into consideration.

It was stated that more time could be given for proper consultation, either formally or informally, and that currently insufficient time for the views of local stakeholders was being given, and they were aware of the need to improve this. Bournemouth was proving unable to be resolved sustainably, and the landlords at Reading had still not decided on the future. Circumstances are often specific to the local site, and as soon as notification is received staff are told before communications with ADIs.

NASP pointed out that it seems as if, no-one knows when a lease is up for renewal and actions seem quite last minute, and we felt it must be possible to flag renewals up earlier. DVSA are looking at longer notifications and planning time and a better way to work, with earlier communications.

DVSA Suggested it would be useful to have a more robust consultation and earlier

communication after staff consultation. Local knowledge via ADIs could be utilised to consider alternatives. It was felt that local stakeholders could be better engaged before decisions are made. DVSA want to provide access to tests where and when needed. NASP supported the response for good engagement at ground level and asked that NASP be involved when announcements are made on any new processes.

DVSA stated that LDTMs understand local stakeholders, and there should be more discussion around test centre closures. Each situation has a different reason, but SOPs should include local stakeholders.

NASP Suggested that often the first ADIs know about a closure is when they hear it from local examiner. There are around 340 in test centres in operation across the country, and few are owned by DVSA, so the likelihood of lease expiry is more frequent. NASP had been involved with local ADIs over the proposed closure of Cannock TC, and it would have helped to know what is needed for a TC, and an idea of why it takes so long to find new suitable premises.

DVSA stated these were all valid questions and would shortly be taking up with Estates –

- Criteria for relocation
- Criteria for closure
- How many TCs owned/leased
- Why not informally engage earlier
- Involve local stakeholders earlier in the process

They agreed to report back with some clarity on these points by the end of the week after the meeting if possible. It was pointed out that applications were not always supported by the local authority who had to approve planning applications, which often caused delays.

Follow up from previous meeting

- Organisational chart – the Registrar said that for anything to do with registration matters people should use padi@dvsa.gov.uk. This would be seen by the whole team and would get a quicker reply, and not have to wait for someone to return from leave. Complaints about instructors should go to the complaints section in Newcastle instructorconduct@dvsa.gov.uk, and everything else should go to customer services customerservices@dvsa.gov.uk
- Blog on what Enforcement Team does – outstanding.
- Copies of letters & questions – JT meeting Andy Rice and will bring up.
- ADI form to be updated – layout to be changed with legislation.

External Affairs

A Member from the new External Affairs team joined the meeting and explained there is a desire to inject consistency nationwide for engagement with stakeholders, and a toolkit of good practice. There was a desire for a standardised role across all government departments.

These would be to –

- Respect relationships, NASP's role is already well established.
- Make new relationships, eg DEFRA
- Involve local government associations
- Add value where possible.

There are 3 people in the department

- Mike Warner with responsibility for Lifetime of Safe Driving
- David Morgan, Vehicles Safe to Drive
- Adam Poulson, Unsafe Vehicles and drivers (mainly haulage).

All communications can be addressed to, this email address externalaffairs@dvsa.gov.uk it is

checked every 2 hours and will achieve a quick response. NASP asked if there are plans for more social media engagement.

NASP expressed concern about the process is for a press release and what holds it back. DVSA stated there is a pipeline plan and a need to plan ahead with a timescale as the approval process is difficult. A grid slot has to be booked in advance, but this can change and although things are drafted early, sometimes there are last minute problems.

Mock Test Survey

NASP enquired about the recent mock test survey, there had been 7,000 responses, with around 2,000 people happy to take part in further research. DVSA said that the research team were currently going through the responses and would be using insights from the survey and publish in due course.

NASP asked how the questions were decided on, noting that the removal of ADI certificates were not relevant to mock tests and asked whether it would be possible to have sight of future survey questionnaires before they are published, with the aim of making a contribution and improving them. DVSA agreed that notification could be made sooner, and this should include the research team. NASP asked for at least a week's notice where possible, and DVSA agreed and undertook to co-ordinate this.

Logbooks

NASP asked about the progress on Drivers Records, DVSA noted there was a commitment in the Road Safety Statement (due for release on 21 October) for a new Learning to Drive publication from TSO. The publications team are currently re-writing the Statement to make it more accessible and should be complete ready to publication early in the New Year. NASP asked to receive an advance copy.

The new Drivers Record will be produced to go along with the updated publication. NASP asked if it would be possible to have sight on this with a view to using their expertise to make comments to help and asked how it was foreseen it would be used. DVSA hoped it would encourage learners to record the number of hours driving at night, on different types of road, independently and encourage reflection after lessons. NASP asked what formats would be available and it was important that it was available for download to allow ADIs to view and use if they so wished. DVSA agreed it would be a downloadable pdf and there will be national publicity within the industry and publicly.

Complaints

DVSA Public Relations team member, introduced himself as being responsible for complaints and the process of their implementation. There had been a recent survey among ADIs which had produced some responses that were hard to hear but had helped with understanding views. Some comments had been –

- Why do communications have to be by email, and not phone
- Process takes so long – 10 day working turnaround, if complex can take longer.
- Responses not managing expectations
- Education and learning can't find information as quickly as people want.

As a result, DVSA are making some recommendations–

- Flattened 2 stage structure to manage expectations quicker
- Trial taking place in London & SE are (highest number of complaints) using 1st and 2nd stage
- Trial will finish around Christmas, going well so far.
- Workshops for Examiners and ADI industry
- Methods of correspondence
- Improve other areas of gov.uk

- Escalation to other parts of the country
- Disputes between ADI and customer to JT, separate from DVSA's service
- Manage from the beginning what can be done and what can't

If complaint is financial, the Registrars team needs to know, however as this is a civil matter, they can't help getting money back. If there are 3 or more complaints in 2 years, the Registrar may consider Fit & Proper. Complainant has to give permission for DVSA to take up with ADI and pass complaint on. If they don't there is no further action, and it's not logged on ADI record.

Digital Marking

NASP delegates were shown an update of where the examiners app is at the moment. Currently there are 20 users doing 7 tests a day on the system. Emails are getting to the candidates within a few minutes. Examiner day journal shows any special needs etc. Candidates need to make sure their DVLA address is up to date when booking the test, the onus is on them.

Email address can be changed at the point of testing in the waiting room, eg if the ADI had made the booking. NASP asked if there was any chance of 2 addresses being used in future, although it is the candidate's decision to share. Not at this time, maybe in the future. De-brief is now listing faults in order of severity at the end of the test.

NASP enquired, what happens if the screen freezes – there is a built-in auto save and it will go back to the last action when re-booted. They will have paper copies of the digital test form as back-up. It is anticipated that the number of tests that have to be terminated will be very few over a year, and the candidate will have a free re-test. The app keeps a running total of faults, a paper pass certificate is still issued.

Roll-out will be to more car tests, then B+E (end of year), then vocational, motorcycle and finally ADI. Level of interest among examiners is high, and new entrants are going straight to digital. There is a lock-down mode on the iPad, which is employed before examiners go to the waiting room, it is quicker to record faults than on the paper DL25 and the system requires the examiner to record that the legal requirements have been conducted before allowing them to move on to the next screen.

Update on Sat Nav Replacement

NASP asked if there were any plans to replace the existing Sat-Navs as they were nearing the two-year suggested change period. DVSA said we were correct and that the current units were reaching the end of their 2-year shelf life. DVSA are still in the early stage of tendering and have set out their specific requirements. NASP noted that examiners have been mentioning this around the country and ADIs are concerned as they would like to keep the same type of device to avoid confusion on test. JDVSA stated it has been made clear to staff that it's not known which one it will be or indeed if the model will change at all. NASP asked that the list of how the sat nav should be set up be re-released into the public domain.

Retiring ADIs

NASP suggested it may be nice for an ADI to hear from the DVSA on retiring after long service and having made a contribution to road safety. DVSA informed that LDTMs already do this at a local level if they are made aware, and that it was to be encouraged.

Part 3 Update

3,500 Part 3 tests per year. DVSA emphasised that If an ADI turns up for a test, but is unwell, they should not go ahead with the test, and it will not count as an attempt. The examiner asks if they are fit and well, especially on the last attempt, so the advice is not to

proceed if they are unwell. 3rd attempts on SC are always a different examiner. If people have a valid reason, they are asked to cancel rather than perform badly.

The main issue on Part 3 tests is lesson planning, not adapting. The Registrar is concerned that the message on this is still not getting out.

Statistics

Pass rate for Part 3 is 35.7% and the Part 2 60.6%.

PDI's 1,691 at 12 September (1528 previous 6 months)

ADIs on Register 39,706 at 12 September

1st applications to be an ADI, average 637 a month, 3,828 to 12 September.

Standards Check Update

Pass rate for SCs is dropping – 78% (was 82%). DVSA feel this is because the booking team is now able to concentrate on those who have not had SCs, as a result of ADIs being able to make their own bookings. DVSA are concerned people continue to come for a 2nd SC, not having had training since failing their first. DVSA emphasised that a SC booking will be moved if evidence is produced that training has been booked. Trainee licences have increased, from 60% to most PDIs.

AOCB

DVSA suggested that external affairs will now be the point of contact for the NASP Chair to liaise and co-ordinate the DVSA aspect of meetings.

DVSA announced they will be reviewing the deaf candidate pack at a future meeting and there will be 4 national deaf associations and an ADI from the Disability Driving Instructors group in attendance.

NASP enquired as to how many new examiners were being trained. DVSA stated, this was fairly continuous but there is currently a recruitment drive in the South East and South West.

NASP asked for confirmation that an ADI certificate lapses after a year, and an ADI has a year to re-apply. The Registrar confirmed this is the current position and said that when the Registration Act can be switched on this will increase to 4 years. This Act includes the splitting of the ADI fee, for which permission was originally sought in 2017. This has been held up but will shortly be going before the Fees and Charges Board to approve the new format of charges which will mirror the fees for Parts 2 and 3.

NASP agreed to co-ordinate some suggested dates for 2020 for spring and autumn.

The chair closed the meeting at 2pm