

Loveday Ryder's letter to all vocational instructors – Restart and recovery

I'm Loveday Ryder, and I became the Chief Executive of the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) in January 2021.

Before I tell you a bit more about myself, I wanted to give you an update.

I'm pleased we were able to share the proposed restart dates for services in England and Wales. We want to give you as much information as we can, as soon as we can, so we can help you plan to reopen your businesses and start teaching again.

We could have not done this without the support and input of industry stakeholders and vocational training associations. They helped us plan for vocational training and testing to restart on the same day.

In Scotland, the First Minister Nicola Sturgeon announced details of the updated Strategic Framework for COVID-19 on 16 March. This included a timetable of when restrictions can start to be lifted in Scotland.

As part of this, the First Minister of Scotland confirmed driving lessons could potentially restart on 26 April. We are working closely with the Scottish Government to agree on restart dates for our services including vocational tests and will share these dates as soon as we can.

I now want to tell you a little bit about me, my background and career, to reflect on the impact of the pandemic on the driver training industry and update you on how we've learned throughout the situation and how that feeds into our recovery plans.

About me I'm a Civil Engineer by background, so I've spent time designing and building roads in the past.

Most recently, I was the Chief Executive of an organisation providing specialist digital technology services to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). I'm really delighted to be moving up in scale again, joining DVSA.

Our mission of helping everyone stay safe on Britain's roads is so important.

I'm looking forward to spending the coming months learning about the industry and working with you and DVSA colleagues to help recover our services and rebuild and strengthen our relationships with you and the rest of our customers.

Impact of on vocational training industry

The last 12 months have been extremely hard for everyone. And I know that many of you, your families and the wider vocational training community have been hit particularly hard. Some of you may have lost colleagues, be facing financial hardship or feeling isolated.

In DVSA, we've also lost colleagues. So it's vital we make sure that the measures we put in place to restart testing will help keep you, your pupils and our examiners safe.

I appreciate how difficult the past 12 months have been for you and your pupils. We're incredibly aware of how the pandemic has impacted your businesses, lessons and pupils' tests, and we know how frustrated and disappointed your pupils feel.

Our communications

We know many of you felt unhappy with the way we communicated with you during the pandemic.

We have tried hard, but it has not always been possible to engage and communicate with you in the way we would want to. As part of our restart and recovery plan, we will try and improve the way we do this.

We'll do everything within our power to share clear information with you, as soon as we can, to keep you up-to-date on anything that will affect you, your businesses and pupils.

I'm also really keen to give you the opportunity to:

- get involved in conversations with us
- help us develop and shape our recovery plan and our future products and services

We will work with the vocational training associations and share more information on how you can get involved at a later date.

We are also working on developing a new approach for communication and engagement with trainer bookers to gain a better insight into your business needs.

Recovery plan

After the last lockdown we were conducting between 2,800 and 3,000 vocational tests each week. There are currently 18,776 vocational tests in the backlog, but we know from our discussions with stakeholders that demand will be higher.

We'll safely reduce the backlog as quickly as possible to help the vocational training industry recover. We plan to do this by testing as many people as we can, as soon as we can.

We plan to deploy all available vocational examiners and trial new working patterns with a focus on test availability and productivity.

We've started to share our outline plans with the vocational training industry to get their feedback and views.

Keeping you updated

There are challenging times ahead for all of us. By working together, we can help to reduce the backlog, help your industry recover and help people stay safe on Britain's roads.

We'll share your feedback on our full recovery plan with you as soon as we're able to.

Thank you for your patience and understanding.

I hope that you, your family and your friends remain safe and well.

Yours sincerely,

Loveday Ryder

Chief Executive
Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency