

Report of joint quarterly meeting with DVSA held in May 2023 by Teams.

The 2 hour online quarterly meeting was attended by 12 senior members of the DVSA and all the NASP associations, the following report is a summary. The purpose of this meeting was for:

- DVSA to review and provide updates on the previous action points.
- DVSA to provide NASP with an update on driver recovery update, driver policy update, an update from the Registrar, ADI examiner update, DVSA communications and the Ready to Pass campaign, also NASP items.

DVSA have sent NASP a contact chart since the previous meeting however NASP doesn't consider that it gave us an organogram style overview of exact roles or who heads actual departments, which we consider will help us to communicate better with our queries and members' concerns. The appointment of a relationship manager to support and work with NASP is still ongoing with no sign of a quick resolution. A DVSA blog is due at the end of May for ADIs concerning waiting times for tests. Decisions still to be made on how to share ADI certificate information on tests taken in private cars with a consistent approach needed. NASP will share suggestions on acceptable wording. Other action points are still ongoing by DVSA.

DVSA updates:

Driver recovery update:

- At the end of the last week only 6% (40k) of all test slots were available for booking. This is lower than usual due to industrial action and a seasonal increase in demand. It was slightly higher on the day of this meeting because industrial action was over so now 60k tests available. It was confirmed that slots are kept back so next available date given to those affected by industrial action, and they don't go to the back of the queue.
If there is no more industrial action this should recover and go back to where it was before but there is no certainty of no more industrial action.
- 873,500 extra tests were created from measures taken by DVSA.
- The percentage of pupils that take the test at their preferred test centre and pass is 65.9% and the fail rate is 34.1%
- The percentage at non preferred test centres is 47.9% and the fail rate is 52.1%
- Clearly candidates are more likely to fail if going to non-preferred test centres. DVSA asked what could be done to improve this. They use candidates' locations to see where the demand is. For every 1% increase in pass rate there are 35,000 more tests available per year.

A discussion followed on the need to make sure that candidates that deserve to pass do so. NASP asked if figures were affected by test centres closing but were informed that there had only been 8 closures in the last 12 months and that there were no current plans for more. DVSA are aware that there is still a lot of "test tourism" with candidates travelling many miles because of the high level of demand. DVSA are aiming to get candidates to be better prepared for any roads and not relying on local knowledge. NASP were asked what could be done to ensure candidates are well prepared and have access to all sorts of roads in different areas. A discussion took place and it was noted that parents can contribute to the challenges by

driving round roads close to test centres. It isn't surprising that there is a difference in using close test centres and travelling a long way off to take a test. NASP enquired if there is any correlation on non-preferred test centres and those taking a test in their own car? DVSA can distinguish non dual controlled cars so this could be accessed. DVSA will provide NASP with those statistics.

Work is underway by DVSA to develop a new driver model with an automatic route generation solution, which it is hoped will encourage better candidate preparation. NASP asked if anything can be done about people who are not ready to take a test but who book them anyway, e.g. immediately after passing a theory test and even before starting practical lessons with an ADI. DVSA believe that the 24 week is the correct level to have booking window at and this was discussed. If it's shortened it will drive up the waiting list further and if it's lengthened too much DVSA can't honour obligations to driving examiners for annual leave etc. The 24 weeks is constantly being kept under review. DVSA understand that the perception to the public etc of high waiting times drives wrong behaviour and encourages the proliferation of organisations swapping tests. This keeps demand artificially high and there is a need to help to try and change booking patterns. This will only be successful if DVSA works with ADIs to bring behaviour back to a normal level. DVSA want to develop a mutually beneficial and mature relationship with ADIs to achieve change in the right way.

In order to give this and other important matters more consideration it was agreed we hold a longer full day workshop style meeting and this has now been arranged.

Driver Policy Update:

- The DES update has gone well with good feedback. MOT check on vehicles still in discovery stage and due for updates in a few weeks.
- The DES app affected by a blip in TARS last week. This was sorted quickly and was back up and running early in the morning. Advice had been given to driving examiners to take whoever was in the waiting room and no tests were lost because of the issue. DVSA will be putting out advice to driving examiners on actions to be taken in the event of similar future issues. DVSA did not inform anyone externally, including stakeholders, due to time constraints, and the fact that it was sorted out quickly.
- DVSA are looking to update the question bank for Part 1 to make it more relevant to higher levels of skill and knowledge and to include questions on modern technology. There will also be a full review of the Part 2 test, to make it as relevant and effective as it can be and incorporate vehicle technology changes.
- NASP asked for an update on ADIs swapping tests between themselves because we still have to phone and it's often very slow. The registrar said it would require significant changes to the IT system, but that it has been fed into the driver services project.
- NASP reported on media coverage on the restriction of some passengers for new drivers, as they had been approached by the press for comment. DfT had given an assurance this is not imminent and DVSA are currently not aware of any other plans. If there were then the correct stakeholders would be involved.
-

It has been agreed that some of the above will be discussed at the working group meeting.

ADI Registrar updates:

- The registrar reported on the survey about the possibility of raising the standards check pass rate. 4,500 responses were received and DVSA are still working through them. A lot of respondents were against the proposal but the registrar wanted time to particularly consider the written responses.
- There have been 60% more new applications from PDIs wanting to start the process.

- 1,300 per month in the last 3 months
- Trainee licences: There has been a 122% more increase in applications with no sign of slowing down. This causes challenges with response times and there are often unrealistic expectations of the DVSA team.
- PDIs are booking early for part 2 once they pass part 1. There are around 3,200 trainee licences at any one time. The average number of trainee licence applications has gone up from 219 in 2019 to 627 per month.
- ORDIT, the intention is still to increase inspections and get them moving again. Comms went out several weeks ago to people who are registered and who need to re-register to find out their intentions; these are now being worked through.
- NASP asked about what help was available to people with additional needs making a tribunal appeal. DVSA don't own the process for appeal it is owned by DRC and the Home Office. It was suggested the instructor needs to make them aware when they start the appeal. NASP suggested there is a lack of information across the whole area: it needs to include information on what to expect and what to do if they need an interpreter etc. DVSA said the investigations policy is ready but not published. NASP suggested there could be a simplified version on the gov.uk website.

NASP have previously suggested that there needs to be a review of ADI training and development. DVSA recognise that the current ADI qualification route is not the best it could be, but it is starting to be reviewed by the team. This is starting by improving the Part 2 and other parts to follow. NASP asked if DVSA were considering a short commentary drive in the Part 2. NASP said we need to commit to talk about ADI training more fully as it needs to be fit for purpose or the pass rates will never rise and PDIs will continue to lose vast sums of money. Pass rates currently are around 55% part 2 and 35% for part 3.

ADI Examiner update

- DVSA said to date in 2023 there are 5 new ADI examiners, with more courses planned for another 11/12 within the financial year.
- The Book to Hold facility is now being used more. The PDIs should now be offered a test within 11-12 days. Communications on book to hold and how to use it will be sent out regularly so new PDIs are made aware. DVSA consider it works well but more PDIs need to use it and it helps DVSA to find out where the need for tests is. Hot spots are nationwide currently. Pt 2-k within booking window – 382. Outside booking window – 65.

Parameters and TIPs review:

- The parameters DVSA use to assess an ADIs test analysis have now undergone a full review, which is welcomed by NASP as we had always been assured they would be reviewed regularly. (Whilst DVSA now call them parameters they are still currently called "triggers" on the gov.uk website).
- TIPs review has been undertaken now full testing is resumed with 2 main changes.
- There is a change from 5 driver faults to 6 driver faults.
- Serious faults are up from 0.5 to 0.55%
- The other 2 parameters remain the same.
- This takes those ADIs in 4 parameters from 10,000 to 4,489. DVSA consider this is more realistic than before and comms will be sent out shortly by DVSA.
- TIPs were designed as a tool to help target resources. Changes will take some people into 0 parameters.
- There are still just under 5,000 ADIs with no data.

NASP welcomed these changes as this is the first review since its introduction. DVSA said there is a weekly meeting with deployment so that trends can be identified and it needed a certain amount of data before changes could be considered.

DVSA communications and Ready to Pass campaign

- Mock Test Survey results were shared with NASP and discussed. The results of the survey will be sent out from DVSA.
- DVSA intend to run more mock test webinars and possibly using some case studies from learners and ADIs
- Ready to Pass: the paid for media activity ended on 31st March. Higher engagement levels were experienced from adverts in parent publications. DVSA will evaluate and work out a plan for the next stage. Also to consider events like Carfest where there are parents and teenagers to drive people to respond.

NASP items and AOB:

- The recent lesson records that DVSA had sent out received member feedback which was discussed. Feedback to NASP was mixed and included that the forms are poor, not updated enough, not CCL focussed to reflect all the work from industry leaders on this, and there was no allowance for any score on the GDE matrix. The lesson plans were purely skills based. Feedback to NASP from members was that there should also be a digital version.
- As open days at practical test centres seem to have gone well, NASP asked if there could also be open days for theory test centres, especially for special needs candidates so they would know what to expect. Alternatively, could there be a video for people to view before taking their theory? DVSA said they would take away the idea and discuss it with a view to making the experience better.
- NASP asked about the cancellation letters that are sent out to inform a candidate that their test is cancelled. Members have enquired as to whether instead of just saying the examiner is not available, could it give a reason for example that the examiner was ill, or on strike. DVSA said this was not possible as there would be a data protection issue.
- NASP asked about the 2 options for trainee licences. As decisions about whether to take option 1 or 2 can't be changed once the decision is made, could trainers be told which option the PDI had chosen so if they made the wrong decision there would at least be time to do the relevant paperwork. The registrar said they can be flexible if a change is requested in the first few days. He felt that telling trainers seemed a reasonable idea, but would be difficult to do, given the high volumes of PDIs. He said it could be a positive addition if a new system is brought in and he could see the benefits. He said they would look at making it clearer to the PDI by highlighting that they need to inform their trainer which option they had chosen in the letters they send out.
- The part 3 marking was discussed briefly as members who are trainers from NASP associations were finding the marking becoming less client centred and focussing more on fault finding which seems to be a backwards move. DVSA and NASP agreed this would need a longer discussion with specific examples. This is a potential item for the longer planned workshop type meeting.
- NASP asked about the engagement call and how many ADIs are getting a call and can a proactive ADI request to have one? They are offered to everyone who is invited to a 1st standards check, but only invited once. If they refuse it then it is not offered again. If unsuccessful on a standards check ADIs won't get another one. 4,300 engagement calls have been made since it was introduced and feedback to the DVSA has been positive. If ADI's details have not been updated they may not get a call, so important to emphasise that people need to keep their details up to date.
- NASP asked about the release of test slots. A member had said that she had been informed by the helpline that tests were now being released at any time on Mondays and Tuesdays. DVSA said that this is not the case, that tests continue to be released at 6am on Mondays, with exceptions if a driver examiner returns after sickness and cancellations etc.

The date for the next meeting which will be held virtually via Teams has been decided and a date also set for a longer workshop type meeting.

20.5.2023