NASP
National Associations Strategic Partnership

Frequently Asked Questions for DVSA on managing driving test supply

Below are some of the main questions, and suggestions, we have asked DVSA to respond to on the issues of driving test waiting times and the booking system.

These FAQs are derived from questions we have received from our members and our own questions/views as NASP associations. We expect to share DVSA's responses to these shortly, but wanted to keep members apprised (in the meantime) that their questions, challenges, viewpoints and suggestions are indeed being raised.

1. With reference to the additional measures announced by the Minister at the end of April, why weren't some of these latest measures implemented earlier?
2. What other radical measures (to tackle driving test waiting times and issues with the booking system) have you considered, and why have they not been implemented? For example, NASP has previously suggested the consideration of:
    a. No swaps (or restricting types of swap, only allowing swaps within a certain timeframe)
    b. Closing the booking system to only ADIs
    c. Could you open the booking window completely? If not, why not?
3. How many extra 1000s of tests are these latest measures expected to create?
4. What is actual Examiner recruitment currently looking like at this moment?
5. Where are the extra Examiner trainers being recruited from?
6. What total testing capacity was delivered with the last deployment of warrant card holders? And how does that measure up to what you expect this time?
7. What timeline do you have for recruitment and deployment of Examiner Trainers, and when is that expected to show an impact?
8. How will extra trainers speed up recruitment itself?
9. What moves have been made to increase the attraction of the Examiner role?
10. What measures have been taken to increase retention of recruits so they stay in the process through to deployment?
11. How many warrant cardholders do you realistically expect to volunteer this time?
12. What impact do you expect the overtime offer to have realistically?
13. What happens if you don't get the volunteers? Will you/can you press gang people into the role?
14. What impact are these extra measures (i.e. deploying more warrant card holders back to Cat B testing) going to have on the Part 2 and 3?
15. If you are depleting Part 2 and 3s testing resource, could some weekend and evening capacity be opened up for ADI testing?
16. When do you foresee Standards Checks restarting and what measures are being taken to tackle instructor performance in the meantime?
17. What are the latest measures to tackle the bots and third-party sales?
18. What progress is there on the Driver Services Platform?
19. What has been the real impact of the 7 Point Plan to date?
    a. The ten-day cancellation period?
    b. Ready to Pass (actual real metrics of impact on pupil behaviour)?

    c. Speeding up consultation – what does that mean in real terms, and when do you expect to be able to act on what the consultation tells you?
    d. What has been the impact of strengthening the T&Cs? (any action been taken against trainers on this)
20. Is there a plan to increase test fees, for both theory and practical tests?
21. Do DVSA see the continuing issue of test supply as a crisis, in terms of their service delivery and the impact it has had on pupils and trainers?
22. Do DVSA fully understand the impact of this continuing issue on trainers?
23. Why do instructors in Scotland have to have a PVG when they already have a DBS through DVSA?

Trainer Viewpoints

Adding further context to our feedback in the meeting last Thursday, below you will find a selection of comments NASP associations have received from their respective members in the last few months. These viewpoints are representative of the sentiments of many trainers at this time.

We have shared these comments with DVSA to ensure they are fully appraised of the feelings of trainers towards the test supply issue (and towards the agency itself) at this time. Further comments and insights on the subject of DVSA's efforts to tackle test delivery issues are included in the DIA Survey results which you can find here.

"I'm getting a bit tired of the lack of a strategy from the DVSA, as they either seem not to understand or simply just don't care."

"I have been lobbying my local MP's and they have been very helpful with letters of correspondence to the transport ministers. They have had various responses back, unfortunately it is the same old rhetoric from the DVSA, that I have seen for the last 5 or 6 years, blaming others, i.e. the public and driving instructors, and telling us how they are running recruitment campaigns for examiners, same old stuff. I'm now getting fed up with the propaganda I see on the BBC and from the DVSA, painting a picture of being proactive, when the opposite is clearly true."

"How do we put pressure on the government to get this massive backlog and inability of the DVSA to resolve this problem. I have heard nothing yet from the DVSA that will resolve this. The latest promise of 10,000 tests a month by next year, is not going to make any difference. Plus the interview on the BBC of Steve Gooding from the RAC foundation saying the DVSA are doing their very best, why interview an ex transport civil servant for an unbiased opinion??"

"The change to 10-day cancellation/swaps which has been bought in is actually detrimental to instructors. Our pupils are booking tests as soon as they can which means often they are not ready for that test when it comes up. Being able to swap with other pupils/instructors is a life line which we definitely don't want to lose. However, now we have to plan much further ahead to do these swaps and in reality it is more than 10 days before the test date. I have a test on 16 May which had a cancellation deadline of 2 May. So 14 days! And that isn't the only one. Test date of 14 May - last cancellation date was 30 April. Two weeks before a test we might still be thinking 'are they ready? Do they need a bit longer or perhaps one more mock test'. It would be really helpful if instructors only could still swap at least 7 days before the actual test date giving us more flexibility. I am not sure that this measure is actually going to reduce the number of no shows/late cancellations anyway in all honesty."

"As we are all aware of the problems around driving test availability I feel totally deflated concerning my ability to continue my business which I have built up over many years. I've personally been trying to book a test for over four weeks at the 06.00 am Monday routine without success - due to the DVSA's website issues."

We repeatedly hear hollow promises and absolutely useless action from the DVSA to even attempt to address the problems. Actions such as extending the period students need to cancel or retake their tests will not even scratch the surface of the problems."

"As I write this I don't know honestly why I bother as an ADI I feel totally undervalued by the DVSA. I've lost count of the numerous requests for feedback with nobody listening at the other end. Isn't it time to call the government department unfit for use?"

"DVSA communications throughout this period of uncertainty have been woeful. Do they even care about the ADI as a paying customer of their services? The majority of what they send out isn't answers to the questions and concerns we have, it's just a 'look at me, I'm doing something' emails about other initiatives which they think makes them look like they're working hard at something – whether that something is actually what's needed and necessary right now."

"DVSA show no regard for just how stressful it is for trainers at this time. Frankly when I've seen their leadership team talking about the issues at industry events, they can be quite dismissive and patronising - talking to a roomful of people, who deal with the consequences of their lack of delivery every day, about how hard they're all working at DVSA and how hard it is for them too…with their certainty of a fixed monthly salary, government pensions and the many other advantages of a being a civil servant, verses the instability we face as self -employed trainers, exacerbated by an instability of test supply."

Other activities undertaken by NASP on the issue of test waiting times and booking system access.

In addition to fielding the particular FAQs contained in this document to DVSA, throughout this period of test supply instability, NASP has continued to escalate trainer concerns to DVSA and other key stakeholders. Our activities has included:

- Current NASP Chair Carly Brookfield giving evidence at special Transport Select Committee hearing focused on test waiting times in December 2024 (a recording of which is available here)
- Undertaking and publishing surveys of trainer views
- Regular meetings with DVSA senior management where we raise member queries and discuss potential remedies to the issues, as well as interrogating progress on DVSA activities and plans to tackle test waiting times
- Writing to DVSA's Chief Executive and Ministers to reflect our concerns
- Escalating our ongoing (and increasing) concerns over the prolonged nature of the test supply and booking system issues to the Secretary of State for Transport Heidi Alexander, Under Secretary and Roads Minister Lilian Greenwood and members of the Transport Select Committee. This resulted in an additional meeting with DVSA's senior management team last week, in which these FAQs and wider concerns were discussed.

Pleased be reassured that these are matters which NASP takes extremely seriously and we are actively attempting to tackle with key stakeholders.