

Be a 'Road Safety Hero' by making sure your eyesight is fit for driving

This week is [Road Safety Week](#). At DVLA, we take road safety very seriously – one of the ways we do this is by ensuring drivers meet the vision standards required by law to drive. This involves [assessing drivers with visual disorders](#) and encouraging all road users to regularly check their own eyesight.

As the dark winter months draw near, it's important to be aware that fewer daylight hours and poor weather can lead to reduced visibility when driving. Therefore, meeting the minimum eyesight standard for driving is essential for being safe on the road.



Be a 'Road Safety Hero' this winter

This year's Road Safety Week theme is '[Road Safety Hero](#)' and it's important to remember that everybody can be one this winter, including you.

Seasonal changes such as heavy rain, hail, sleet and snow, along with darker days, can all impact your vision when driving. Adverse weather is a challenge for all drivers, especially if you already have an eyesight condition.

Fog, ice on the windshield, and even glare from low sun can make driving more hazardous during the winter months. If you're planning a journey this winter, whatever the distance or time of day, then be a '[Road Safety Hero](#)' by being aware of the hazards before setting out.

Is your eyesight fit for driving?

No matter the weather or time of year, your eyesight must be fit for driving at all times. And remember – seasonal changes and poor weather aren't the only things that can affect your vision.

Eyesight can naturally worsen over time, so make sure you have regular eye tests, at least every 2 years, or more often if your optician advises this. If you're concerned about your vision, don't wait for your next eye appointment – book a test with your optician as soon as you can. If you don't meet the minimum eyesight standard, you must stop driving and [tell DVLA](#).

If you need to wear glasses or contact lenses for driving, make sure you wear them every time you drive to stay safe and reduce the risk of accident, injury or damage to others on the road. In good daylight, drivers must be able to read, with glasses or contact lenses if needed, a car number plate made after 1 September 2001 from 20 metres.

Take the 20-metre number plate test

But how far away is 20 metres? You won't have a measuring stick in the car with you! 20 metres is around the length of 5 parked cars, or the length of 2 double decker buses.



A survey by DVLA found that [less than 50% of motorists are aware that they must read a number plate from 20 metres](#). That's why we've launched a campaign to raise awareness of the 20-metre eyesight test. The number plate test is a simple and effective way to check if your eyesight meets the required standard for driving. Anyone can do the test at any time.

Visit [our page on driving eyesight rules](#) for more information, and [check if you need to tell DVLA about your eyesight problem](#). Our driving eyesight rules are also [available in Welsh on GOV.UK](#).

You can also visit [Brake's Road Safety Week campaign](#) to find out how you can take action and become a 'Road Safety Hero' this winter.

[Adblock test](#) (Why?)

[DVLA wants your views on proposals to widen the pool of medical healthcare professionals needed to fill in DVLA medical questionnaires](#)

By law, all drivers must meet [medical standards for fitness to drive](#) at all times, and there are additional checks for bus and lorry drivers.

All drivers are legally obliged to [tell DVLA about a medical condition](#) that could impair their ability to drive, such as diabetes, glaucoma and epilepsy. We use this information to [decide what further actions to take](#).

We want as many people as possible to enjoy the freedom of the open road for as long as possible, but only if they are safe to do so. Currently this means [we need to contact GPs and hospital doctors in certain instances](#), when a driver tells us about a medical condition that could affect their driving.



Dr Nick Jenkins

Impact of coronavirus (COVID-19)

The impact of COVID-19 on the NHS and GP surgeries is unparalleled. We greatly appreciate the significant support of a driver's doctor, providing vital medical reports to help us decide if it's safe to issue a driving licence. When an application involves a medical condition, we're often wholly dependent on receiving this additional information.

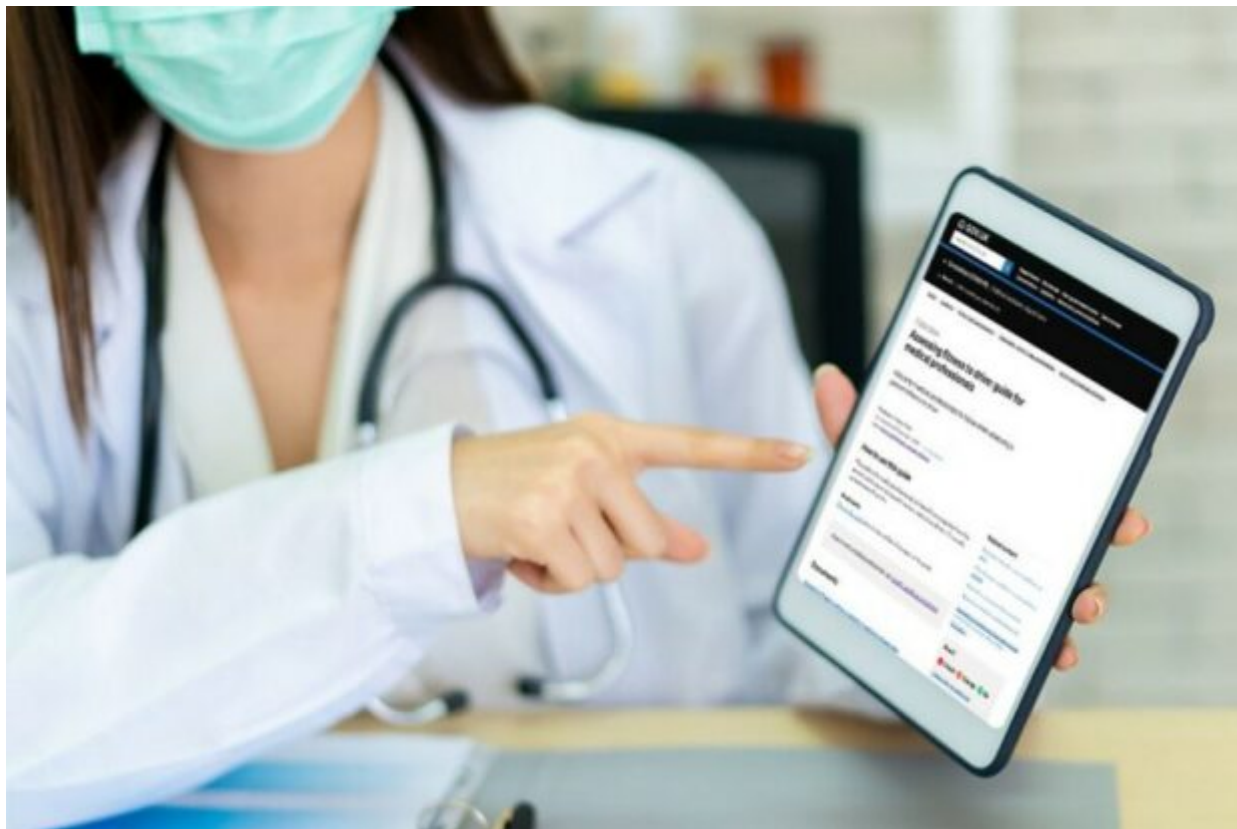
We know that the ability of NHS doctors and GPs to respond to our queries was impacted by the pandemic. And while the provision of such reports may not be clinically urgent, receiving a driving licence in a timely manner can be vitally important to an individual's wellbeing and livelihood.

In addition to helping the ordinary motorist, [making sure bus and lorry drivers stay safe and legal on the road](#) is of particular importance for us. This will help drivers delivering essential goods and transporting passengers throughout the UK.

New proposals

We're very much aware of the need for GP practices and hospital teams to prioritise and manage their resources in such times. With the support of the Department for Transport and Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) we propose amending current legislation to increase the pool of healthcare professionals authorised to fill in medical questionnaires and we want your views on doing so.

Only registered medical professionals – doctors with full general medical council (GMC) registration [are currently authorised to provide medical reports to DVLA](#).



Changing the law to allow an appropriate registered healthcare professional, other than a doctor, to fill in a medical questionnaire, will give surgeries greater flexibility and improve turnaround times. This proposal also supports DHSC's aim to reduce bureaucracy in general practice.

We're seeking your views

We want to involve you in decisions that affect you and welcome your views, thoughts, and insights on [this proposal](#).

The consultation will run between 8 November and 6 December 2021 and will only take you 25 minutes to read and provide feedback. After the consultation the results will be analysed and details of the [outcome of the consultation will also be published](#).

[Follow DVLA on Twitter](#), [follow us on Facebook](#) and [connect with us on LinkedIn](#). You can also [subscribe to the DVLA digital services blog](#).

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Celebrating 5 years of Unity at DVLA

We are Unity, one of several Staff Network Groups (SNGs) at DVLA that aim to support and connect staff throughout the agency. We celebrate the ethnic and

cultural diversity within DVLA, while providing a safe and supportive environment for members to talk about race, religion, and culture.

Unity was founded on 21 March 2016, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, to provide a strong voice for DVLA's minority ethnic staff.

As the co-chairs of Unity, we're both passionate about diversity and inclusion, and we've always been interested in different cultures. To us, Unity provides a space not only to meet new people, but to support them. We are, after all, one community at DVLA.

And it's been a great journey for us so far! We want to share with you some highlights from the past 5 years.

5 years of Unity

Our story began with a staff poll to see how many people would join an SNG to support and encourage inclusivity and diversity at DVLA. The response was incredibly positive and, following discussions with DVLA's Diversity team, Unity was born!

Since then, we've helped make sure DVLA is an inclusive and diverse place to work. From 'Time to Talk' days to coffee-time discussions, we aim to change perceptions around race inequality through conversations. After all, the smallest things can sometimes have the biggest impact.



Unity team in 2016.

With the support of the agency's Diversity team and our Human Resources (HR) colleagues, we've successfully raised awareness of vital issues with senior management. Last year saw the launch of race awareness training for DVLA staff, along with workshops to highlight unconscious biases. To support this, we developed a toolkit and etiquette guide for managers and colleagues, with information about different cultures and religions.

As a group, we've worked with departments across the agency to improve policies and practices. This includes promoting facilities on site to support those who need them, such as a multi-faith prayer room.

We've also tapped into DVLA's strong learning and development culture by signposting staff to mentoring schemes, both within the Civil Service and in the wider community. This includes supporting staff in attending events like the [BAME Into Leadership](#) conference, which is a key event for individuals interested in improving and enhancing leadership opportunities for minority ethnic individuals within the Civil Service.

Building community

At Unity, we build relationships through education and discussion. That's how change happens – by supporting those who wish to become allies. Perhaps one of our most visible advocates is our director champion, Andrew Falvey, DVLA's Commercial Director.

Andrew spoke about the importance of having a diverse workforce at DVLA:

We live in a multicultural society and it's important that our services are built to reflect that. It's also important that we promote DVLA as an employer of choice amongst all communities.

We're proud of the diversity and inclusivity of our workforce, but we're always seeking new ways to provide equal opportunities for all. Drawing from a wider pool of experience and talent benefits our customers and the community at large.

We couldn't agree more. At Unity, we want people to feel included and supported at work. One of the ways we do this is by organising events and activities for staff to get involved in.

Events and activities

Unity is run by a steering group, made up of colleagues from different business areas who are passionate and dedicated to championing our cause. As co-chairs, we oversee the steering group and aim to meet up at least every 6 weeks to plan our events and campaigns.

Over the past year, the pandemic has made it difficult for us to run our usual activities and we've had to adapt. We've used video conferencing to stay in contact with our members and emails to keep them up to date with our

activities. Despite working remotely, we've still managed to recruit new members – this was a big achievement for us and shows how valued the group is at DVLA!

Over the years, we've organised a variety of events, from food tasting sessions to dancing classes. One of our proudest achievements was working with the Swansea Humanitarian Aid Response Project (SHARP) for staff to donate items for homeless people and refugees. We managed to collect over 10 cages full of donations!

Another highlight was welcoming Farhana Ali, Swansea's award-winning make-up artist, to DVLA to speak about how she overcame barriers to establish her successful career. Thanks to the success of these events, we now have around 50 members from across the agency actively engaged in the group.



Unity celebrating DVLA's 50th anniversary in 2019.

We run as many diversity and charity events as we can. Our fifth anniversary occurred during lockdown and we held 2 virtual photo competitions for staff to share their favourite cultural experience and recipes. It was heartening to see so many staff members from across the agency get involved and celebrate different cultures.

This month, we're promoting [Black History Month 2021](#) via our staff intranet. In the spirit of this year's ['Proud To Be' theme](#), we'll be recognising the achievements and contributions that Black communities and individuals make, and have made, to our society.

Unity outside DVLA

While Unity exists to support staff at DVLA, we also actively support our local community.

We've worked with many local groups to support people with job applications and recruitment advice, including the [Ethnic Minorities & Youth Support Team \(EYST\)](#), [African Community Centre \(ACC\)](#), and [Swansea Council for Voluntary Service \(SCVS\)](#). By supporting our local community, we aim to inspire support from local businesses with our activities.

But learning from others is just as important. We visited the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency's (DVSA) staff group, Embrace, at their Nottingham branch to share best practice and see how their organisation works. We're always keen to learn – after all, that's how we grow!

Making DVLA a great place to work

It's important that DVLA reflects the society in which we live. Seeing the positive impact Unity has had on DVLA, and [the people who work here](#), makes us incredibly proud to be a part of it. But we're not doing it alone – we're just one of 6 SNGs helping to ensure DVLA is a supportive and inclusive environment.

We've been lucky enough to watch Unity grow and evolve over the past 5 years, thanks to the dedication of our members and the support of our colleagues. But of course, there's always more work to be done!

Our future plans will see us commemorating Holocaust Memorial Day in January 2022, and we're also looking to increase our steering group membership.

Visit [DVLA's 3-year strategic plan](#) to see what the agency is doing to make sure we're a great place to work.

[Adblock test \(Why?\)](#)

[DVLA working with local authorities and police services to take action on unlicensed vehicles](#)

Vehicle tax evasion is against the law and while over 98% of vehicles are taxed correctly, a small minority of vehicle keepers continue to break the law. It costs [HM Treasury](#) £94 million every year, vital funds which would otherwise go towards public services so it's important to catch tax evaders.

We work closely with our devolved power local authority partners and the police to enforce against tax evaders and have recently been on the streets in Manchester, Walsall, Dudley and Nottingham carrying out targeted enforcement against untaxed vehicles.

I'm a National Enforcement Manager at DVLA, which means I'm the contract manager for the Wheelclamping & Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) enforcement contracts and the ANPR vehicle contract. I'm also the senior leader for Wheelclamping and ANPR staff both on site and remotely.



There are always new challenges in this line of work, but my role is to encourage and educate people to comply with the law by taxing their vehicles. [The last Roadside Survey](#), which has been carried out at 256 sites across the UK every 2 years since 2011, showed 98.4% of people were doing the right thing. We're so pleased this was higher than the previous survey, but that still means that 1.6% of keepers across the UK are not taxing their vehicles.

Taxing is not taxing! It is really simple to do and it can be done online in just a few clicks, so why would anyone risk losing their vehicle and paying fines? There are also options to [pay for your tax monthly by Direct Debit](#) so there really is no excuse.

What are devolved powers?

Devolved powers are given to local authorities who have chosen to take on DVLA's legal responsibility to take enforcement action on untaxed vehicles on the road in their area. This power is devolved from [the Secretary of State for Transport](#) and I'm responsible for working with current and future partners to support them to conduct enforcement activity in their area. This means that in these areas we have additional enforcement capability to support the national enforcement contract.

Police services can also be given devolved powers, including the ability to remove untaxed vehicles from the road under the same process as local authorities.



We have 84 Devolved Power Partners (DPPs) across England and Wales, and our national contractor, NSL, works alongside them to provide full geographical coverage across the UK.

We know from speaking to our DPPs how important having this responsibility to enforce is to them. They work hard to remove and disrupt criminal behaviour in their area, and I'm really proud that we are a part of that important work. DVLA staff also support police services in conducting targeted operations as they have the power to stop vehicles in transit which we do not – another way to encourage people to tax their vehicle.

What's been happening in Manchester, Walsall, Dudley and Nottingham?

These 4 areas are already committed DPPs but we wanted to give our help, advice and support to encourage increased activity whilst learning more about how they work. This has helped me to build a 12-month plan of working closer with our DPPs.

The support we provided was in the form of our own DVLA ANPR fleet who helped the DPPs to identify vehicle tax evasion hotspots, share intelligence and tackle untaxed vehicles by either clamping, impounding or issuing warning notices to the keepers.

Across the operations, we identified over 450 vehicles which were not taxed correctly so our DPP enforcement team took action either by clamping or impounding the vehicle – taking it to a local pound.



There are a few stand-out experiences for me. In Nottingham we found an untaxed car that the keeper had tried to hide behind a hedge, whilst in Dudley there were 7 untaxed cars parked in a row at the bottom of a road leading to an industrial estate – they resulted in a warning notice and 6 clamps.

In Walsall we put a warning notice on a large van that had not been taxed which had no rear tyres but was on bricks. When we were passing by later on, we found it had been moved onto a private driveway – we do not know how they moved it but we were pleased the notice had the desired effect for the keeper to take action.

We covered a really large area in Manchester where I witnessed an instant lift, where a car was lifted away from a main road and taken to the pound and, unfortunately, some of the abuse that the street team regularly gets from individuals who have not taxed their car.



What's next?

The last few months of working more closely with our DPPs has given us lots of insight into how they work and what more we can do to support them. If we can understand the different challenges that they face, then we will know more about how we can help them.

We all share the same goal – to remove untaxed vehicles from the road – this is only fair for those vehicle keepers who have done the right thing and taxed correctly. Anything that we can do to help, I absolutely believe we have a duty to do so.

I'm really proud of my teams, both those who work behind the scenes in Swansea and members who work remotely, for the hard work and challenging contact that they deal with every day.

Action is still ongoing by many of our DPPs and we've recently launched a new communications campaign reminding vehicle keepers to tax. You can listen out for the adverts on radio or you may see it on digital channels.

To avoid the risk of losing your vehicle, make sure it's taxed – you can [check online to see if your vehicle is taxed](#) in just a few steps. And if you need to tax your vehicle, [it's quick and easy to do online](#) and you can [spread the cost of vehicle tax by setting up a Direct Debit](#).

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Shaping the future of our facilities management

There will be big changes made by DVLA as we come to the end of our Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract in 2025 and with this there are opportunities to learn and grow. This exciting programme of change means we've been recruiting people to help us, with more new roles emerging over the life of the programme. These roles are critical in helping us shape the way we'll manage our site and services as we exit the current PFI contract.

Back in 2005, DVLA awarded the integrated PFI contract to Telereal Trillium. Their goal was to refurbish our main site, provide a full range of facility management (FM) services and conduct some additional building work around our estates.

We're now in the final 4 years of the contract, so we're looking at our next steps.

How our services are currently managed

There are many different facilities, vital to DVLA's everyday operations, which are split into soft and hard services. Soft services are cleaning, bus services and catering with hard services covering building maintenance and the provision of furniture.



Why our services are changing

In the 2018 autumn budget, the [Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that government would no longer use the current model of PFI](#) for new government projects. DVLA will be one of the first to exit a PFI contract following closely behind DWP and HMRC, the first two central government bodies to go through the expiry process. We'll be working with the [Infrastructure and Projects Authority](#), the government's centre of expertise for infrastructure and major projects, to take forward any lessons learned from the exit of the PFI contracts.

Our facilities management team has started to look at ending some of our soft services contracts early, by March 2023. This includes cleaning, waste management, pest control, catering and transport services. One of the first changes has been the removal of the lease of our staff minibuses which happened in March 2021.

Next steps

My team's role will be to ensure a seamless transition from old to new service providers. We'll make sure the services are tendered and procured correctly and continue the safe, secure running of the agency.

When the PFI contract expires, we can manage our services differently. We'll look for improvements in value for money and quality through a more distributed approach. It allows us to look at smaller contracts, enabling us to work with a varied range of smaller businesses, specialist suppliers and service providers.

We are currently working with some expert consultants to review our current practices and consider in detail all the potential options. We're exploring all possibilities available from a fully in-house service provision managed by DVLA, to a total facility managed service through a new supplier contract.



Roles and recruitment

The programme will involve multiple projects to manage the exit and expiry of current service provisions. This will include the development of a new operating model and finding suitable new service providers.

If you have a background in facilities management, we're currently looking for [senior FM governance and project managers](#) and would love to hear from you. You can register for vacancy alerts through [Civil Service Jobs](#).

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