

Keep an eye on your vision for driving

New Vision Panel Secretary Dr Cathy Armstrong shares her professional advice on getting your eyesight checked for driving, and the extra challenges of driving in winter.



I was recently appointed joint DVLA Vision Panel Secretary alongside [Dr Gareth Rees](#), and I've worked at DVLA for 2 and a half years. As it's Road Safety Week, I thought it would be a good time to blog about eyesight and driving.

As drivers we often forget just how complex driving is, and being able to meet the vision standards for this complex activity is extremely important for road safety. It's particularly important that if someone has been prescribed glasses or contact lenses for driving, they must wear them every time they drive to stay legal on the road.

Many of us wear glasses; maybe just for reading, maybe for all aspects of daily life – or a bit of both. However many people are prescribed glasses to make sure their eyesight meets the vision standards required by law for driving. Unfortunately, forgetfulness, vanity and difficulty tolerating glasses can result in unloved spectacles cluttering up car gloveboxes and handbags. But if they're not worn, drivers are risking their own and other road users' safety.

All drivers must be able to meet these [eyesight standards](#) as a legal requirement. They test both visual field and acuity – that is, the area your sight covers and how clearly you can see. A defect in your visual field may mean you struggle to see approaching hazards without having to look away from the road ahead. A reduction in your visual acuity could give you difficulty in reading road signs and signals. It's also important to remember that those who drive for a living and have a group 2 (vocational) licence must meet higher standards for vision. This is because of the size and type of vehicles they drive, and the longer time spent behind the wheel.



Driving during the winter months can be particularly challenging, since weather conditions can make it difficult to see clearly. There are the darker mornings, glare from the low setting winter sun, reduced visibility in rain and fog, as well as wet and icy weather and shorter daylight hours... All of these factors can make driving conditions more hazardous at this time of year, particularly if you have any problems with your eyesight.

Eyesight deteriorates over time and this can happen at any age. Some drivers may be noticing some of the tell-tale signs that their eyesight is not as good as it used to be. You might be finding it harder to judge distances, struggling to read a newspaper, or maybe it's getting more difficult for you to drive at night. That's why we recommend that all drivers have their vision tested at least every 2 years. If you notice any change in your eyesight, go and see your optician straightaway – don't wait until your next check-up or when your driving licence is due for renewal.

If you don't meet the eyesight standards, stop driving immediately and [tell DVLA](#). It's better to be safe than sorry.

[Check the eyesight rules for driving](#)

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A diverse and inclusive workplace

Uche Williams has been working in DVLA's Contact Centre for 2 years. Here, Uche shares her experiences of working at DVLA.



My background...

I was raised in Lagos, Nigeria. My educational background is in Law, having completed my undergraduate degree in Nigeria. I moved to Swansea as an international student, doing my postgraduate degree and masters in International Maritime and Commercial Law.

I have now been living in Wales for just over 9 years. I am married and have a wonderful 3 year old daughter.

How I came to work at DVLA

After my studies I worked with the African Community Centre in Swansea. While I was working there DVLA's HR department invited myself and my colleagues to exchange some ideas on how to increase the number of Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) representation in the Civil Service. We looked at what we could do to make working at DVLA more appealing, and to help others understand what roles were on offer at DVLA.

Time for a change

This meeting was also an opportunity for me to find out a little more about DVLA. I decided it was somewhere I was interested in working and as soon as I saw a vacancy advertised I applied. My application was successful, which is how I came to work in DVLA's Contact Centre.

I really enjoy my job!

The Contact Centre is a great starting point because it's the core of the business. Once you have this background knowledge you can progress and use this information to build a career and branch off in different directions. DVLA is so much more than a Contact Centre; there's actually a huge variety of other departments.

Approachable and supportive workplace

Working in a fast paced, contact centre environment can be demanding with customers having high expectations. We have to know a lot about a diverse range of topics and if we can't give customers everything they want this can be difficult. My accent has, on occasions, caused a negative reaction from customers but my line manager has been amazing throughout and his support has really helped me to develop.

Opening up opportunities

DVLA's Staff Networking Group, Unity, is an open supportive networking group, committed to upholding equality and diversity of race throughout the whole organisation.

As the secretary of Unity I have been able to look into issues that need to be tackled and make sure resolutions are reached. I am proud to perform this role at DVLA to try and make things better.

Check out the latest vacancies at DVLA right now. <http://bit.ly/dvla-jobs>

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Cars, collaboration and co-op service

It's been a while since we wrote about our new vehicle registration service and the [transformation](#) of our services.



We've been working with the industry to improve our services

Register a Vehicle (RaV) is the replacement service for AFRL (Automated First Registration and Licensing), used by all manufacturers and retailers registering new vehicles.

The AFRL service was developed in the 1990s and needed to be updated due to the changing requirements of both the industry and DVLA.

We've spent a lot of time working with the industry and trade bodies to make sure that the service is fit for purpose and meets their requirements. The service is more flexible, giving us the ability to make changes easily and quickly to meet new legislation and needs in the future.

Major manufacturers are using the new service

In June, we saw the first integrated registration using APIs, resulting in a vehicle registered in the cloud. Fiat Chrysler is the first large manufacturer to adopt the new service and has already been joined by Mazda. With both added to the service, there are a total of 201 retailers using RaV to register around 4,000 vehicles already. They will be followed over the coming months by fellow co-op manufacturers into early 2019. The AFRL system will be decommissioned in February 2019.

Fiat Chrysler's Alan Napier said: "DVLA's technical redevelopment provided us with an opportunity to build in enhancements of our own, to arrive at an even more user-friendly system that fulfils everyone's needs. Working closely with the DVLA and key retailer partners, we were delighted to deliver the project on time and to have the DVLA's support with a phased migration strategy that ensured system continuity for our network. This was undoubtedly only possible

because of the regular communication throughout the development period and the commitment on both sides to the deployment of the required migration support resources.”

Even more developments are planned!

Alongside this, the web service is currently being redesigned for current users and will be rolled out later this year.

The V55 series of forms, used to register vehicles where the electronic service cannot, are also being renewed to incorporate new fields based on new legislation introduced and made easier to access.

These forms will be available from September 2018 with future versions already being developed, based on customer insight, and will be introduced in line with other changes in February 2019.

We will keep you updated here with developments between now and spring 2019.

If you have any questions, please get in touch with us at ved.reform@dvla.gsi.gov.uk.

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[Leading the way on driver safety at DVLA](#)



I'm Emma Melrose and I've had the privilege of being Head of [Drivers Medical](#) at DVLA since February. And I don't use the word privilege lightly. It's an extremely important role, at the heart of ensuring driver safety in Great

Britain. I head up a large team of people making [decisions](#) about people's fitness to drive every single day.

My career spans lots of different leadership positions in retail, contact centre telecoms, media and IT outsourcing, before moving to the public sector and DVLA in 2015. I'm passionate about providing excellent customer service and coming back into an operational environment has been energising. I enjoy leading people, and this role allows me the pleasure of doing this as well as playing an important role in supporting the mobility of the UK population.

A fresh pair of eyes

My first 6 months in Drivers Medical have been a steep learning curve, but I'm lucky enough to have been supported by a fantastic team of knowledgeable and enthusiastic colleagues. I was immediately struck by the importance of being the only group of people in GB doing what we do. Around 600 colleagues handled about 750,000 customer cases last year. Getting out and about to understand the important roles that my team do has allowed me to understand what we do well and identify areas for improvement.

Meeting experts in the field

Two months in, I attended the [Secretary of State's Honorary Medical Advisory Panels](#) where I sat amongst leaders in the field of medicine. I was humbled as I listened to the medical experts taking time to consider any impacts on the driving population and the complexities that we need to consider. I've also had the pleasure to meet with a number of our medical charity stakeholders, which has given me the opportunity to consider and understand the challenges their members and our customers face.

It's a balancing act

We in the Drivers Medical team are responsible for road safety while ensuring the wellbeing of those affected. Our purpose is to make efficient, accurate and timely decisions for drivers who have contacted us about a medical condition that may impact on their ability to drive.

Each one of these customers has their own story to tell, a situation that presents difficulties in their lives. It is so important that we treat them with compassion and empathy.

What's next

Over the coming months, I will be working with my colleagues in other areas of DVLA to review our existing services. This will tell us where we are doing well but will also tell us where we need to make improvements that benefit us and our customers.

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