



Department
for Transport

From the Parliamentary
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Ruth Cadbury MP
Chair, Transport Committee
House of Commons
London
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20 May 2025

Dear Ruth,

In your letter of 4 February 2025, following my appearance before the Committee back in December last year, you asked for regular updates on car driving test waiting times, the progress DVSA is making on improving its driving test booking platform's bot mitigations, and progress with driving examiner (DE) recruitment.

Practical car driving test waiting times

As anticipated, practical car driving test waiting times continued to rise throughout Q4 of 2024/25. This is because:

- demand for car driving tests remained high owing to the usual seasonal peak seen at this time of year and the ongoing practice of customers booking their driving test at the earliest opportunity
- planning and implementation of DVSA's requirement to increase the number of training specialists available to train new entrant DEs. These new training specialists are drawn from the existing pool of DEs but are key to the agency being able to train and develop the large number of DEs needed in the required timeframe.

The average national car waiting time during April 2025 was 22.3 weeks. DVSA calculates the waiting time as being when there are 10% of the test slots still available for sale across a full week. As such, it is worth noting there are often tests still available earlier than the waiting time might suggest, although those volumes are low. DVSA has always been clear there are no quick fixes to the current high waiting times.

DVSA provided just over 1.95m car driving tests in 2024/25, meeting its 1.95m business plan target. This near-record number of tests is a significant uplift in the volume of car tests provided compared to the three years before the pandemic.

However, we recognise that the record high demand is likely the new normal, and we are putting plans in place to clear the backlog and continue to meet it.

Improving the rules for booking practical driving tests

DVSA received 26,921 responses to the call for evidence that ran between 18 December 2024 and 11 February 2025. Most responses (69%) were from learners, with those from approved driving instructors (ADI) accounting for 18%. Those responses have helped DVSA to create proposals that will make sure learner drivers can book their driving test easily and efficiently. DVSA is fast tracking the consultation for launch in May 2025.

Recruiting 450 DEs

In June 2024, DVSA's workforce planning team indicated it would need to recruit significant numbers of DEs to bring car waiting times down consistently across the country. DVSA therefore set a target of recruiting 450 DEs and have made significant progress towards achieving this.

Since that date, the agency has recruited and trained 165 DEs who are now in post and delivering driving tests.

There are currently 49 trainees in training. There are 116 more who are booked to a future course and 68 who are waiting for a course start date. Seventy three failed or resigned.

On 31 March this year, DVSA launched its latest national recruitment campaign, aiming to fill 189 posts. The agency has around 2,300 individuals now in the assessment process to fill these DE roles.

As you know, on 23 April 2025 at her appearance at the Committee, the Secretary of State for Transport, Heidi Alexander MP, confirmed that waiting times continue to rise owing to a permanent change in customer behaviour that is challenging to address. To mitigate the continued rise in demand, she has asked DVSA to take action on four additional measures. The first was to fast track the consultation I mentioned above. The other three are as follows:

1. Reintroduce the additional testing allowance (ATA) incentive scheme for Des

To recognise the additional effort of DEs, DVSA will reintroduce the ATA scheme, as it previously resulted in a significant increase in test availability and in turn had a positive impact on waiting times. The incentive will start on 1 June 2025.

2. **Double the number of permanent trainers to help get more new DEs testing sooner**

DVSA has been seeing a positive response to all the DE recruitment campaigns, working towards recruiting the 450 DEs in the seven-point plan. Doubling the number of trainers for DEs will help the agency to speed up the process to get successful candidates trained and into driving test centres, providing tests. DVSA hopes to have the additional trainers in place in July 2025.

3. **Ask for volunteers from colleagues who can test but are currently doing other roles to return to provide practical driving tests**

In November 2023, DVSA asked all colleagues qualified to conduct driving tests (warrant card holders) to do so for six months. That created just under 150,000 additional tests but had a severe impact on a number of other DVSA services, which had to be put on hold, including policy initiatives such as Connected and Automated Mobility Services, third party booking consultation, work on the Motorcycle Regulatory package and stakeholder engagement. DVSA also had to put on hold the driving and instructional ability tests of trainee approved driving instructors and regular standards checks for qualified instructors. This time, DVSA is asking for volunteers, rather than mandating warrant card holders to test.

DVSA progress on the seven-point plan

I am pleased to be able to tell you DVSA has made significant progress with the seven-point plan announced in December last year and delivery of all the measures is on track. Achievement of these measures is important to ensure DVSA is set up to deliver an efficient and consistent service in the future. But as I have already said, DVSA has always been clear there is no quick fix to this issue. I have already set out above the efforts DVSA has made with the recruitment of DEs and consulting on reviewing and improving the rules on booking driving tests. Progress on the other measures is as follows:

Introduce tougher terms and conditions for the service driving instructors use to book and manage car driving tests for their pupils

A set of tougher terms and conditions for the service driving instructors use to book and manage driving tests for their pupils came into force on 6 January 2025. The new terms and conditions make it clear that driving instructors must not book driving tests on behalf of learner drivers they are not teaching. Since this change DVSA has closed 270 business accounts, made 120 suspensions and issued 44 warnings. Driving out abuse of the system will make more tests available for those who need them, when they need them.

Consult on increasing the amount of time people have to wait to take another test in certain situations

DVSA has committed to run a public consultation on proposals to change the law so people have to wait longer to take another driving test if they:

- commit multiple serious faults or dangerous faults during their driving test
- physically or verbally assault their DE
- fail to attend their driving test without telling us and will consider charging a penalty.

Learner drivers currently have to wait 10 working days before being able to book another test. The consultation, which will launch at a later date, will set out the full details of the potential options. Such measures could act as a disincentive to abusive behaviour, taking a test before properly prepared and lead to more tests being available within the short-notice period.

Increase the amount of notice customers need to give to change or cancel a car driving test without losing the fee

From 8 April 2025, the number of clear working days' notice customers need to give to change or cancel their test without losing their fee increased from three to 10 days. This measure aims to encourage those with a test booked who are not ready to take it to cancel earlier than had previously been the case.

Explore changing the current 24 week limit on how far ahead car driving tests can be booked

While DVSA encourages customers to book a test only when ready to pass, the agency is running a pilot to explore ways of changing how far ahead car driving tests can be booked, recognising the change in customer behaviour. Customers can currently book a test up to 24 weeks ahead.

Encourage learner drivers to be better prepared for their driving test through the 'Ready to Pass?' campaign

The new actions will also see DVSA's ['Ready to Pass?' campaign](#) expand to help learners throughout the whole process of learning to drive, and help them to be better prepared before taking their test. It continues to support customers to be sure they are ready to take their test and encourage them to reschedule it if they are not. This will increase their likelihood of passing their test the first time, reducing overall demand on the system.

I acknowledge your intention to keep a watching brief on this issue and will provide an update on DVSA's progress every two months, in line with your request. I shall write to you again by 30 June 2025.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Lilian', followed by a long, sweeping horizontal line that extends to the right.

LILIAN GREENWOOD MP

MINISTER FOR THE FUTURE OF ROADS