



Huw Merriman MP
Chair – Transport Committee

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Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency

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Dear Mr Merriman,

Thank you for your letter of 8 March seeking further information about our progress in reducing the number of paper applications awaiting processing.

I am able to update the Committee that since my last letter on 3 February our staff have made good progress in further reducing the total backlog, which now stands at just under 890,000, a reduction of more than 200,000 since I last wrote to the Committee and a significant reduction from the peak of 1.6 million in September last year. Given that we normally have around 400,000 paper applications being processed at any one time, and we continue to receive around 60,000 new items of mail every day, this is significant progress in a short space of time. For vehicles paper applications the backlog has already been eliminated. We are on track to return to normal turnaround times on drivers' paper applications by the end of May and drivers' medical applications by the end of September. Most straightforward paper applications are now being turned around in under eight weeks. Information on processing times for key DVLA workstreams is published online [here](#).

Turning to your specific questions:

1. Of the 254,396 paper applications that are older than 10 weeks, how many of those applications involve processing conducted by a DVLA employee or contractor working from home?

Since I last wrote to the Committee, the number of cases that are older than 10 weeks has reduced by 47,300 and is now 207,096. Most of those are drivers' medical cases. More than 91% of staff who are working on drivers and drivers medical applications are working on site. It is worth noting that drivers medical was especially affected by both the demands on the NHS during the pandemic and also PCS strike action targeted particularly at the drivers medical division. We have recruited additional staff in new offices in Swansea and Birmingham to address drivers medical workloads and we are also introducing a change to the law to widen the pool of medical professionals who can complete DVLA medical questionnaires for driving licence purposes. This will take effect later this year, subject to Parliamentary approval. I can confirm that there are no contractors working on processing paper applications or casework either on site or at home.

2. Of the 254,396 outstanding paper applications that are older than 10 weeks, how many of those applications cannot be processed at home due to a. technology limitations, b. data protection or c. other reasons?

It is not possible to provide a breakdown by category as there are combined constraints to processing paper applications at home, rather than single reasons. These include technical security and data protection and the logistical difficulties around distributing paper applications to people's homes. Staff need to be on site (as they have throughout the pandemic) to handle paper and/or important original documentation, for example sensitive medical information, birth certificates and passports.

3. What percentage of DVLA employees working on tackling the backlog are working from home a. full-time or b. part-time?

Around 91% of staff who are working on drivers and drivers medical paper applications and casework, which makes up the backlog, are based entirely in the workplace. As DVLA is a flexible employer with family friendly policies, 1,872 members of our operational staff work part-time.

4. What steps are you taking to ensure that DVLA employees return to the workplace to process the backlog of paper applications?

As outlined above, most operational staff working on the remaining drivers and drivers medical paper application backlogs have returned to the workplace or have worked on site throughout the pandemic. In line with civil service policy, we will be adopting a hybrid working model, where staff work partly in the workplace and partly at home, for those in roles that are able to do so.

5. What changes to working practices introduced in DVLA offices due to the Covid pandemic are still being implemented?

As restrictions have eased, we have eased restrictions on site in line with advice from Public Health Wales, the Health and Safety Executive and Swansea City Council Environmental health teams and have increased the number of staff on site, focusing on utilising additional space for new recruits and for training purposes. Restrictions in Wales are easing at a different rate to other parts of the UK. There is still a legal obligation on employers in Wales to carry out risk assessments that requires us to have mitigating measures in place to reduce the spread of Covid-19. Wales has also retained the legal requirement for those with the infection to isolate for five days. A further announcement on the removal of remaining restrictions in Wales is expected on 28 March 2022 and we will adapt our processes accordingly.

6. Does the DVLA has sufficient office space to return to pre-Covid working practices?

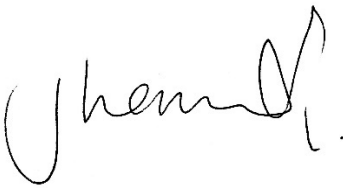
Yes. In addition to our existing sites in Swansea, we have leased two additional buildings for our new customer service centres in Swansea and Birmingham to house 300 new staff. These will help reduce waiting times while providing future resilience and business continuity. In line with civil service policy, we will be adopting a hybrid working model for those in roles that are able to do so.

7. By what date does the DVLA plan to eliminate the backlog and return to processing approximately 400,000 paper applications at any one time?

For vehicles paper applications the backlog has already been eliminated. Vocational licences excluding medical conditions are being turned around within five days with no backlog. We are on track to return to normal turnaround times on drivers' paper applications by the end of May and drivers' medical applications by the end of September.

I hope this information is helpful to the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julie Lennard', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Julie Lennard
DVLA Chief Executive