

## DVLA MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS AND ASSESSMENTS OF FITNESS TO DRIVE

### Purpose

1. The purpose of the report is to discuss with JCC the proposed changes to DVLA medical examinations and assessments of fitness to drive.
2. It is proposed to introduce a mandatory health screening every two years of all employees who are contractually designated as required drivers and whose role includes driving vehicles that carry passengers and/or work equipment/materials other than in a pool car or privately owned motor car. In effect therefore, the affected cohort are drivers of council vehicles such as gritters, mobile libraries, minibuses and vans.

### Background

3. Drivers having a medical episode whilst operating a large or passenger-carrying vehicle have resulted in several serious or fatal accidents in the UK.
  - [M53 coach crashed after driver 'slumped' at wheel, coroner says | North of England | The Guardian](#)
  - [Three hurt as bus driver suffers suspected heart attack while driving - Birmingham Live \(birminghammail.co.uk\)](#)
  - [Miracle escape for 34 pupils after coach driver has fatal heart attack on school trip | Daily Mail Online](#)
  - [Updates: 'School bus' collides with tree in major crash – A367 closed in both directions - Bristol Live \(bristolpost.co.uk\)](#)
4. There are approximately 140 employees designated as required drivers who would be included in this proposal if adopted. These include the drivers of any council vehicle including Passenger Transport Unit minibus drivers, FM Officers, ICT couriers, Civil Enforcement Officers, Highways Officers etc.
5. The driving licence required for most of these this role does not require any DVLA medical examination in the way that a HGV licence holder does. The only requirement is for the employee to report any relevant health issue to the DVLA. As such there is the possibility for an employee to fail to do so or to be unaware of having a relevant health condition. In either instance, the outcome is the possibility of that person driving for Wiltshire Council whilst not fit to do so.

6. It is possible through occupational health screening to identify health issues that may be indicative of an increased risk of a medical episode whilst driving. It is also possible to do simple vision tests to highlight any possible need for corrective lenses. This would enable the OH service to identify any driver whose health may give rise to the need for work restrictions or reasonable adjustments.
7. The proposal to introduce this simple health screening would fall into what might be considered to be reasonably practicable measures available to the employer given the scale of the usage and the severity of possible outcomes.
8. Health screening procedures are already in place for other groups of employees who are exposed to other common workplace risks including working at height, working in confined spaces, night working and exposure to blood borne viruses.
9. There is no intention to introduce or require health screening of required drivers (such as some social workers) or other staff who use their own cars or pool cars to occasionally drive for work purposes.
10. The council has an existing procedure in place to provide DVLA medical examinations for employees who are required to hold an HGV licence to fulfil their role e.g. gritter drivers, mobile library drivers etc. This part of the policy would continue unaltered but in addition, HGV licence holders will be included within the health screening programme.

### **Main considerations**

11. It is proposed that health screening of drivers within the defined cohort of required drivers as set out above will be at commencement of employment and at two-yearly intervals thereafter. Existing employees will join the programme with effect from its inception and follow the two-yearly interval timetable.
12. Health screening clinics would be held at council locations across the county to minimise travelling and service disruptions. Each health assessment will be with an occupational health specialist nurse and should take no more than 60 minutes per driver.
13. Where health screening indicates that there may be a health issue to address, then other existing occupational health and HR processes such as sickness absence management will apply to ensure that the matter is resolved fairly and in line with the existing policy.
14. The Oracle new starter journey requires recruiting managers to identify any post that is designated as a 'required driver' and these individuals will undergo health screening as part of the onboarding process.

15. Existing staff will be notified of the introduction of driver health screening via their manager. Information about the procedure including its purpose, methodology and potential outcomes will be posted onto HR Direct and be cascaded via Heads of Service.

### **Environmental impact of the proposal**

16. N/A

### **Equalities impact of the proposal**

17. The proposed changes to the policy were discussed at the equality impact assessment panel on 22nd February 2024. All comments and feedback regarding the changes were considered.

### **Risk Assessment**

18. If driver health screening is not introduced, then an opportunity is missed to make early interventions into health issues that may subsequently have very serious personal safety and corporate liability implications.
19. It may be that any scrutiny of a relevant accident identifies that the council has fallen short of what may have been considered to be a reasonably practicable mitigation measure.
20. Failure to take reasonably practicable measures to protect the health and safety of employees and others affected by the work undertaking is a criminal offence under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. Individual officers and the local authority could be held accountable under any such litigation.

### **Financial Implications of the proposal**

21. N/A

### **Recommendations**

22. It is recommended that the SPC approve the proposed changes to the policy.

**Tamsin Kielb**  
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