

DSA ezine for road safety professionals

## Plans to take driving tests closer to candidates

**Driving test candidates could benefit from a more local service as the Driving Standards Agency (DSA) carries out trials exploring a new approach to test delivery.**

As well as using conventional driving test centres, DSA is looking at whether tests could also be delivered from other venues such as local authority buildings, hotels or leisure centres.

The trials will provide practical car tests in selected areas that no longer have a local test centre, but still have a significant demand for tests. The aim is to provide a service for the local community and ensure that candidates are able to take their test at convenient locations.

Road Safety Minister Mike Penning said:

“I want us to be more flexible and innovative in delivering driving tests to make sure that we



are offering people the best service possible wherever they live.

“Our aim is to provide a more local service that is both convenient for candidates and cost effective.”

The trials are due to take place in seven locations across Britain: Ashford, Ayrshire, Dumfries, Louth, Warrington, Wiltshire and Wales (location to be agreed). The trials will be monitored to assess any impact on levels of customer service and the cost of delivery, as well as making sure the integrity of the test is maintained.

DSA will then decide whether the trials can be rolled out to other areas without a test centre where there is a significant demand, and where suitable routes and venues can be identified.

The trials will involve only practical car tests; theory test centres will not be affected.

- Subject to identifying suitable routes and venues, DSA expects to complete its evaluation of the trials before the end of 2011-12.
- The trials will be assessed on various factors including the level of customer service, efficiency, costs, and feedback from staff and candidates.
- All tests will still be conducted by DSA examiners, to exactly the same high, fair and consistent standard as they are now.

## Motorcycle test availability

In some areas of the country, motorcycle trainers have reported that they are having problems getting enough test slots when and where they want them. DSA accepts there have been issues, and is now taking action to provide additional tests to cover the increased seasonal demand.

Geoff Morgan, DSA's head of central operations, said: "DSA has developed an action

Some of these improvements will take longer than others to implement. However, DSA is keeping in close contact with motorcycle trainers and trainer bookers via email throughout this process. As proposals are developed with the motorcycle working group, DSA will continue to listen to feedback from trainers.

plan to quickly improve the availability of both examiner resource and motorcycle test slots.

This started with identifying which test centres are most popular with trainers, so that resources can be targeted where they are most needed."

Other actions the agency is taking include:

### Late afternoon slots

Motorcycle trainers asked the agency to continue to provide test slots later in the day to allow for travel time. DSA is

For more information on the trainer booking facility, visit [Businesslink](#)

offering overtime to all motorcycle examiners to make this possible.

### Freeing up examiners and other qualified staff from other duties

DSA is looking to increase the proportion of examiners' time spent on motorcycle tests, to identify other qualified examiners to conduct Module 1 tests and to use Cardington staff trainers and some CBT manager resource where required.

### Monitoring short notice cancellations

When training companies cancel tests at short notice it means that other businesses lose the opportunity to use those slots. The agency is monitoring these cancellations, and will take action against trainers who consistently cancel tests at short notice.

### Trainer booking facility

DSA has formed a working group with training industry representatives to look at how the trainer booking facility could be improved. The group's main objective is to give better access to available slots and make the booking process fairer for all trainer bookers. DSA proposes to improve access to available tests by reducing overbooking and late cancellations.



## Compensation scheme for ADI suspensions

**In March last year, DSA launched a consultation about the compensation scheme which will operate alongside the new power to suspend driving instructors.**

At present, the process of removing approved driving instructors (ADIs) from DSA's register takes a minimum of 42 days, during which time the instructor can continue to give tuition, even if they have been convicted of an offence.

Under the Driving Instruction (Suspension and Exemption Powers) Act 2009, DSA will be able to immediately suspend instructors who have committed a serious offence or whose driving tuition is considered dangerous.

The 2009 Act also requires a compensation scheme to be available for ADIs in cases where their registration has been suspended, but is not consequently revoked. This could occur either because the Registrar decides that removal or revocation is inappropriate, or because the ADI successfully appeals the decision.

For the consultation, DSA wrote to over 950 individuals and associations. The Consultation Paper was posted on the DSA website, an email alert was sent to 'DSA Direct' subscribers and a poster was placed in driving test centres.

DSA would like to thank all those who responded to the consultation. Ministers have now considered the responses, and DSA has published a response to consultation report on its website. To read the full report, go to <http://assets.dft.gov.uk/consultations/dsa-2010-01/dsa-2010-01-response.pdf>. DSA plans to introduce the scheme from April 2012.



## Annual report and accounts

DSA's annual report and accounts (ARA) has been published.

Some of our key achievements include:

- achieving all eight of our Secretary of State targets
- delivering around 1.6m practical car driving tests and 1.6m theory tests
- successfully introducing independent driving into all categories of test. This included
  - reducing the number of reversing manoeuvres on car tests
  - stopping the publication of driving test routes
- retaining Customer Service Excellence
- increasing take up of services through electronic channels to 78 percent
- achieving around £11m of efficiency savings
- receiving the prestigious Prince Michael International Road Safety Award for the 'safe road user award'

These are available to view or download at [dft.gov.uk/publications/dsa-annual-report-accounts-2010-11](http://dft.gov.uk/publications/dsa-annual-report-accounts-2010-11)

## DSA working with industry

The new Strategic Framework for road safety, published last month, sets out the Government's proposed actions and approach to continuing to reduce death and injuries on our roads.

One of the strategy's main themes is to make it easier for people to do the right thing when they are using roads. This means improving the education and training that is available at all points to develop skills and teach safe attitudes.

As part of this work, DSA and the Department for Transport will be holding a series of events with key stakeholders. On 8 June, an initial meeting was held with representatives of the insurance industry. Options were explored for providing the insurance industry with more confidence in the ability of young drivers so that both the incentives and take up of driver training initiatives can be maximised.

This was followed on 9 June by a meeting with Mike Penning, the Minister for Road Safety, representatives from the driver training industry and other road safety stakeholders. This explored how we can best ensure that

"I think that everyone who attended would agree that the event was a very positive step,"

"There was a general consensus on the package of measures that should be further developed. Our priority now is to continue to work with the industry and other stakeholders ensuring we can adequately set out the supporting evidence and economic costs and benefits ahead of formal consultation."

**Rosemary Thew**  
DSA Chief Executive

people are encouraged and properly trained to be lifelong, safe and responsible drivers. A wide range of possible measures were tabled covering the way that people learn to drive through to how to raise standards of training provision within the industry.

Further information on the outcomes of these industry and stakeholder events will be published in future issues of Despatch.



## Unofficial driving test booking websites

Directgov is the only official driving test booking website. Other websites offer driving test booking services, but might charge extra administrative fees on top of the test fee. Those websites are not run by or connected to DSA or Directgov.

We recommend that all learner drivers book their driving test through the official booking service on Directgov by visiting [direct.gov.uk/drivingtest](http://direct.gov.uk/drivingtest)

### If you have used an unofficial booking website

We occasionally get complaints from customers who have used unofficial booking websites. In most cases these websites are doing nothing illegal. This means that our power to respond may be limited.

If you have used an unofficial booking website, you might have seven working days to cancel your order and get all your money back. However, this will depend on the terms and conditions of the website you used.

You can find more information about your consumer rights on Directgov. You can also use

template letters to complain to businesses. Each letter includes details of the law that you want the trader to follow.

- Internet, mail order and telephone shopping
- Making a complaint - what to do first
- Create a complaint letter from a template



### What approved driving instructors (ADIs) can do:

ADIs can remind their pupils to use the official booking service by visiting [direct.gov.uk/drivingtest](http://direct.gov.uk/drivingtest)

If you run your own website, you can also link to the official booking service.

### What DSA is doing about unofficial booking websites:

1. Protecting the 'DSA' trademark to make sure it is not:
  - used in adverts for unofficial booking websites in search engine results like Google
  - used as part of website addresses for third-party booking websites
2. Asking the Advertising Standards Authority to make sure unofficial booking websites are following the rules in the UK Code of Non-broadcast Advertising, Sales Promotion and Direct Marketing
3. Asking local Trading Standards to investigate those unofficial websites that appear to be misleading consumers.

## A round up of this month's news

### Criminal record checks for Scottish ADIs and PDIs

Since the introduction of the Protection of Vulnerable Groups scheme in February 2011, Disclosure Scotland no longer issue enhanced level criminal record disclosures for most occupations, including driving instructors. Disclosures for ADIs and PDIs resident in Scotland are now being provided by the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB).

### Apply for your CRB check online

DSA are trialling with their contractor TMG CRB the facility for ADIs to apply online for their CRB check.

By applying online disclosures are, in most instances, completed more quickly, with common form completion errors that can cause delays being avoided, such as illegible handwriting or incomplete information.

The system uses a secure accredited link to the Criminal Records Bureau.

Details of how to apply online will be given to ADIs with their renewal reminder letter, or by phone to those who ring up to arrange a CRB prior to re-registering.

ADIs will still need to send in ID verification.

### DSA searches for casual hire sites for the module 1 motorcycle test

To improve access for those candidates who have to travel long distances to take the Module 1 test, DSA is looking for additional casual hire sites in the following areas:

- Mid Wales
- East and West Yorkshire
- Cumbria
- Stoke-on-Trent

DSA may also consider other areas for casual hire sites, but this will depend on location and demand. If you're a driver or rider trainer who knows of any suitable sites ready to use, then DSA would like to hear from you.

For more information on the specification for casual hire sites, [read the full article on DSA's corporate website](#).

### Correction

In the last issue of Despatch we reported on the fact that DSA had consulted with Julia Malkin MBE, and Mac McDade, director of Ideas4ADIs Ltd, to help ensure that new theory test questions don't disadvantage autism sufferers. We described Julia and Mac as 'experts on Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC)'. Mac's son has Asperger's syndrome, but he asked us to point out that he did not profess to being, and does not regard himself as an expert on ASC. This reference should have been removed from the final article. We apologise for the error.

## Get in touch

For the latest DSA news and information visit [dft.gov.uk/dsa](http://dft.gov.uk/dsa)

Information for candidates is available on [direct.gov.uk/motoring](http://direct.gov.uk/motoring) and driver and rider trainers can visit [businesslink.gov.uk/transport](http://businesslink.gov.uk/transport)

Book and manage your test appointments at [direct.gov.uk/drivingtest](http://direct.gov.uk/drivingtest) or [businesslink.gov.uk/transport](http://businesslink.gov.uk/transport)

A list of useful contact details can be found at [dft.gov.uk/dsa](http://dft.gov.uk/dsa)

What do you think of this issue of Despatch ezine? Email your comments to [pressoffice@dsa.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:pressoffice@dsa.gsi.gov.uk)



Follow us on twitter:  
[twitter.com/DSAgovuk](http://twitter.com/DSAgovuk)



Follow us on Facebook  
[facebook.com/trevorwedge](http://facebook.com/trevorwedge)



View DSA videos on YouTube:  
[youtube.com/dsagov](http://youtube.com/dsagov)