

April 2019

Diabetes UK position on driving and diabetes

Why have we produced this position statement

Diabetes UK advises people with diabetes on driving safely, in line with DVLA advice and we have always campaigned to ensure that people with diabetes are assessed fairly for their fitness to drive. We recognise that some people with diabetes are at greater risk when driving. However, we are concerned that people with diabetes more generally should not be unreasonably restricted from driving because of their condition. This document sets out our current position and recommendations on this issue.

How did we develop this position?

We talk to people with diabetes to understand their concerns about driving, through our Council of People with Diabetes, and regularly hear what people are saying through our Helpline, forums and our advocacy service.

We also talk to health care professionals through our Council of Healthcare Professionals and with professional associations such as ABCD and TREND.

Diabetes UK also talks regularly to the DVLA, and those who support the Secretary of State's Honorary Medical Advisory Panel on Driving and Diabetes, to monitor developments in policy on driving and diabetes and to raise our concerns with them.

What we say about driving and diabetes

Diabetes UK is keen to ensure that people with diabetes who drive do not experience unfair discrimination in the licensing process and that rules on diabetes and driving are reasonable, safe, efficient and transparent. We believe that all people with diabetes should be able to hold a driving licence if they meet medical fitness criteria as defined by the DVLA – see [guide on assessing fitness to drive](#)¹.

Restrictions on driving licences mostly only apply to people with diabetes who are treated with insulin and are usually because of problems with hypoglycaemia or eyesight.

We have worked with the DVLA over recent years to address a large number of concerns that have been raised with us by people with diabetes and health care professionals.

Current concerns and calls to action are:

- That the licence application and assessment process for people who drive for a living and require a Group 2 licence can be too long and onerous and in some cases means that a diagnosis of diabetes or change of treatment could lead to someone losing their job.

- It is important that healthcare professionals take into account the impact of diabetes medication on people's ability to drive (and in some cases their occupation) and that people with diabetes understand this impact and are fully engaged in treatment decisions.
- We want the DVLA to review whether the licensing process for Group 2 drivers on insulin is too onerous.
- The three year licence given to people treated with insulin is too restrictive. We want the DVLA, and Secretary of State's Honorary Medical Advisory Panel on diabetes, to allow licences for longer than three years for people with diabetes who are treated with insulin.

Background

Group 2 vehicle licences

- From November 2011 people treated by insulin are now allowed to apply for a Group 2 driving licence (which includes lorries - LGVs - and passenger carrying vehicles - PCVs), providing they meet strict medical criteria and can demonstrate that they have adequate control of their condition. There was a ban in place before 2011.
- People with Group 2 vehicle licences who are treated with insulin have to undergo annual independent medical assessments (with a doctor who is not their usual doctor) and show three months' worth of blood glucose test results recorded on a memory blood glucose meter to demonstrate that their diabetes is adequately controlled. They also need to check blood glucose levels at least twice daily, including on days when they are not driving.
- We believe that people treated with insulin should be subject to rigorous individual medical assessment to prove their medical fitness to drive lorries and buses and welcomed the changes that removed a blanket ban for people on insulin driving these vehicles.
- However, Diabetes UK is concerned that people who are newly diagnosed with Type 1 or people with Type 2 who have been prescribed insulin may have to take a break of up to six months from driving Group 2 vehicles in order to go through the licensing procedure. This is difficult for some vocational drivers and has implications for their employment tenure.
- It is important that healthcare professionals take into account the impact of diabetes medication on people's ability to drive (and in some cases their occupation) and that people with diabetes understand this impact and are fully engaged in treatment decisions.
- We want the DVLA to review whether the licensing process for Group 2 drivers on insulin is too onerous.

Length of Group 1 medically restricted licences

- Currently insulin users are issued licences for cars and motorcycles (Group 1) for one, two or three years, depending on the individual person's medical condition. Usually they are issued for three years and have to be renewed by application to the DVLA, accompanied by a self-declaration form (paper copy or available online) to demonstrate fitness-to-drive criteria agreed by the Secretary of State's Honorary Medical Advisory Panel on Driving and Diabetes². Information from the person's doctor may be sought by DVLA to process the application.
- The EU Directive (introduced in the UK in 2011), set a minimum of five years for licence holders treated with insulin to have a medical review to assess their fitness to drive. Currently people treated with insulin in the UK are issued licences for no longer than three years (which are renewable after that time).
- In 2014, the DVLA consulted on extending the licence period for Group 1 vehicles to "up to ten years" for people with diabetes and a range of conditions. Diabetes UK supported this proposal and viewed this as an opportunity to introduce a more robust system of medical review for people with diabetes who drive, whilst removing the unnecessary anxiety of having to reapply for a licence every three years.
- Currently the Secretary of State's Honorary Medical Advisory Panel have not recommended any changes to the licence period for people with insulin treated diabetes, but are exploring whether an extension for some people might be appropriate.

Further information

Information on driving with diabetes: http://www.diabetes.org.uk/Guide-to-diabetes/Living_with_diabetes/Driving/

Information on what and how to report to the DVLA: www.gov.uk/diabetes-driving

Information about hypoglycaemia: <https://www.diabetes.org.uk/guide-to-diabetes/complications/hypos>

¹ Assessing Fitness to Drive – a Guide for medical professionals has the most up to date guidance and a section on diabetes and driving: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/assessing-fitness-to-drive-a-guide-for-medical-professionals>

²<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/assessing-fitness-to-drive-a-guide-for-medical-professionals>