Dear Julie

Guidance for drivers with an autism spectrum disorder

I am aware that on 15 February the DVLA recently changed its guidance for drivers with autism spectrum disorders.

In doing so it created confusion and concern among drivers with these conditions and other conditions and on 4 March the DVLA changed its guidance again.

I am writing to you to seek a full explanation of what happened and answers to several specific questions. It would aid the Committee if you could set out a clear chronology of events from the decision to change the guidance, explaining at each point what changes were made and how the changes were communicated.

In addition, please can you answer the following questions:

1. How many and what proportion of licence holders have an autism spectrum disorder that affects their ability to drive?
2. How many drivers have been fined for not telling DVLA about (a) a medical condition and (b) an autism spectrum disorder that affects their driving?
3. In how many road traffic accidents a driver’s autism spectrum disorder was found to be a contributory factor?
4. What guidance was changed? And why did the DVLA decide it was necessary to change the guidance?
5. What was the process for, and who was involved in, approving changes to the guidance?
6. Did the DVLA consult anyone about the proposed changes?
7. Does the DVLA seek any advice on its communications with groups of people that have particular needs?

8. Has the DVLA conducted an equality impact assessment of either its guidance or its communications relating to its guidance?

9. How does the DVLA justify describing the changes to its guidance as having 'muddied the waters'? And was any assessment made of the difficulty people with autism spectrum disorders may have had understanding the meaning of this idiom?

10. How many people or groups have contacted the DVLA about this issue since the guidance was first changed? How is the DVLA dealing with this correspondence and what account is being taken of people's communication needs when responding to the guidance? When does the DVLA expect to have dealt with all outstanding correspondence?

11. What other disorders of this kind are covered by DVLA guidance and are there any plans to change such guidance?

12. Does the DVLA now hold any information about drivers with an autism spectrum disorder or related disorders for drivers where the disorder does not affect the person's ability to drive? Does the DVLA hold consent to obtain medical records for any driver whose disorder does not affect their ability to drive? And what does the DVLA plan to do with such information?

I would like to receive your reply by Thursday 4th April 2019.

Lilian Greenwood MP
Chair of the Transport Committee