



Customer Charter and Code of Practice

June 2003



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Foreword

I am pleased to have the opportunity to introduce this updated version of our Customer Charter and Code of Practice. I hope you will find it useful.

As a customer, you have a right to expect a fair, efficient and courteous service which is responsive to your needs. We have put a lot of effort into achieving these objectives and I am delighted that this has been recognized by the award of a third Charter Mark.

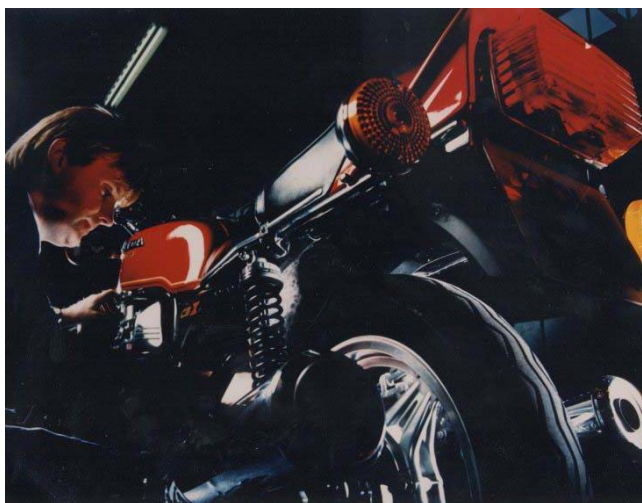
Of course we appreciate that we can always do things better, and a number of developments are under way that will improve things still further. For example, the introduction of our new telephone booking service will represent a substantial improvement for customers when they first contact us to arrange an appointment, and next year we intend to introduce MOT reminders.

This booklet tells you about the standards of service we aim to deliver. It also provides information on what to do if you think things have gone wrong.





If you feel we have done something well, or could provide a better service in any way, please let me know. I will be pleased to hear what you think.

JST DUNCAN
Chief Executive

Vehicle testing



We conduct roadworthiness checks on:

-  private cars and motorcycles from 4 years old
-  light goods vehicles from 3 years old
-  trailers, large passenger-carrying and heavy-goods vehicles (over 3,500kg gross weight) from 1 year old
-  buses and taxis from first use.

Practical driver testing

We test drivers who wish to be licensed to drive motorcycles, cars, lorries or buses. For most vehicle categories, drivers have to pass separate theory tests as well as practical driving tests.

We also conduct extended driving tests on drivers who have been disqualified from driving after being convicted of certain serious motoring offences.

There are a number of publications that will help you with your preparation for the practical test. These are detailed on the Theory Test section on the facing page.








Theory testing

<i>Category</i>	<i>Description</i>
A	Motorcycles
B	Cars
C	Large goods vehicles (LGV)
D	Passenger carrying vehicles (PCV)


The theory test is a touchscreen computerised system and the result is available when your test has finished. Candidates who have dyslexia or other reading or learning difficulties may listen to the test through a headset. Voiceovers are also available in some languages other than English. A video of the test in British sign language is available for candidates who are deaf or hard of hearing. If you need any of these facilities, just speak to the call centre when you ring to book your test.

Publications available from good bookshops and the Stationery Office to assist learner drivers prepare for the test include:

-  The Highway Code
-  Books from the 'Essential Skills' series
-  Know Your Traffic Signs
-  'The Official Theory Test' books and CD roms
-  Roadsense - 'The Official Guide to Hazard Perception for all Drivers and Riders' video.




Enforcement

What we do:

-  Check vehicles and drivers to ensure they comply with legal requirements.





This contributes to road safety, helps to ensure fair competition in the haulage industries and protects the public and the environment.

We will:

-  provide clear, professional advice and information
-  explain procedures and help you understand any difficulties that may arise
-  help you resolve any problems.

Register of Approved Driving Instructors









We keep an up-to-date register of Approved Driving Instructors (ADIs). We:

-  process applications from people who want to become ADIs
-  assess the suitability of ADIs to be on the register
-  check tuition standards for each ADI at least once every 4 years
-  take appropriate action when ADIs fail to meet the high standards expected.

‘Your Guide to Becoming an Approved Driving Instructor’ is available free from all our offices. We can post this to you if you ring 028 9054 7933.

Other activities







We also:

-  check heavy goods vehicles and trailers used internationally under the Transports Internationaux Routiers (TIR) convention
-  approve and monitor tachograph installation and calibration centres
-  prepare accident reports for the police on damaged vehicles
-  check repair work done on vehicles after defect and prohibition notices have been issued at roadside checkpoints
-  issue 'certificates of initial fitness' for new buses used in Great Britain
-  carry out seat-belt checks on non-urban buses and HGVs
-  carry out Vehicle Identity Checks (VIC) on 'written off' or scrapped vehicles prior to them being brought back on to the road
-  issue Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Certificates from 31 August 2003.

What to expect at our centres







We aim to offer our customers:

-  clean, comfortable, smoke-free reception areas
-  toilet facilities
-  public telephone facilities
-  disabled access
-  support by recognising and responding to individual needs
-  clear, straightforward information about our services.






Standards of service






General

When you contact us, our staff will:

-  be courteous and considerate
-  be businesslike and efficient
-  normally, wear name badges
-  give their names on the telephone and in letters.



For all our services, we aim to:

-  provide a high-quality independent testing service
-  reply within 2 weeks to letters and applications for test appointments
-  see you within 10 minutes of any appointment time
-  keep queueing times in our reception areas to under 20 minutes
-  respond promptly to any e-mail enquiries we receive.



-  avoid cancelling your test without giving you adequate notice
-  pay compensation for reasonable costs that you incur, when we are at fault
-  recognize and support difference in individuals
-  consult customers regularly
-  carefully consider what customers tell us through surveys, comments and complaints, and respond to their views.

Vehicle testing

We aim to:





-  book your test appointment within our published target for waiting times
-  assess your vehicle fairly to set standards

Standards of service

-  provide you with a vehicle test certificate as soon as your test has finished, or tell you immediately in writing why your vehicle has failed
-  give you the option of having your vehicle tested on Saturdays, and at any time up to 8.00pm, at no extra charge, at those centres which operate 'extended day working'.



Driver testing

We aim to:




-  book your test appointment within our published target for waiting times
-  allow a friend or your driving instructor to accompany you on your test, provided he or she does not participate in the test
-  give you the option of taking your test on a Saturday, at an additional cost, throughout the year. Evening tests (after 4.30pm) are also available between May and September, again at additional cost
-  give you a written assessment of your driving standard at the end of your test.

Telephone booking

A new telephone booking service is being introduced during 2003. The following test categories may be booked by telephone:

-  vehicle tests for private cars, motorcycles and light goods vehicles (under 3,500kg)
-  driving tests for private cars and motorcycles.








We aim to:

-  answer the telephone within 20 seconds
-  offer you a choice of appointment
-  issue written notification of your test appointment within 5 days.

Standards of service







Theory testing

We aim to:

-  answer the telephone within 20 seconds
-  book your test appointment within 2 weeks at the test centre of your choice
-  give you the option of an evening or Saturday test at no extra charge
-  issue written notification of your test appointment within 5 days
-  recognize and respond to your individual needs
-  mark your test accurately
-  let you know the result at the end of your test.

Approved Driving Instructors

We aim to:

-  issue the result of your theory test within 30 minutes
-  arrange your practical driving test within 25 days and your instructional ability test within an average of 24 days from receiving your application
-  give you the result of your practical driving test immediately
-  issue the result of your instructional ability test within 5 days
-  check your tuition standard at least once every 4 years
-  provide an immediate oral explanation if you fail a check test, and follow this up within 2 weeks with a full written report.

Other standards

More information about our targets and our performance against them is also displayed at all test centres. Details are also published in our annual report, which is available from our headquarters at a nominal charge, and on the Agency's internet site.

If you need help or information

Help and information about our services is available from any test centre. A full list of test centres is on page 26. You may also contact our Enquiry Line during office hours (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday) on 0845 6014094. Information is also provided on test application forms. You can collect a form from any test centre or telephone any centre or the Enquiry Line and ask for a form to be posted to you.

Up-to-date information on test fees is available on a 24-hour phone line. The number is 08457 581416, and all calls are charged at local rate.







Waiting times for appointments may vary slightly from centre to centre, but you can get the latest information by ringing any of our centres or by contacting our Enquiry Line.

If you have any queries about theory tests, you can ring 0845 600 6700. Again charges are at local rate.

You can also get information about our services on the internet. The address of the DVTA internet site is on the back cover. If you require further information you may e-mail your enquiry to the address given on the back page.



How you can help us

You are our customer, and it is our responsibility to provide you with the best service we can. However, you can help us do that by:




-  arriving on time for your appointment
-  ensuring that you bring with you any documents you may need
-  telling us as soon as possible if you cannot keep an appointment. For vehicle tests you must give one clear day's notice and for driver tests three clear day's notice. This excludes weekends, holidays, the day notice of cancellation is received and the date of the test.
-  letting us know if our service has not been as good as you expected
-  telling us how you think our service could be improved
-  completing and returning any customer survey questionnaire that we send you.

Listening to you

We regularly try to find out:

-  what you think about our services
-  how we can improve them.

Each year we:



-  arrange an independent customer survey and publish the results
-  meet customer associations to tell them about our performance and listen to their views
-  tell our staff what customers think.

We welcome all comments, whether they are critical or complimentary. You can comment by telephone, letter, e-mail or through the internet. Customer comment forms are available at every centre, or you can ask for one by calling our Enquiry Line - the contact details are on the back cover. The Agency welcomes comments in the Irish language and also in Cantonese.




*We will take your views into account
in our planning for the future.*

Keeping our customers informed

We tell customers in advance through press notices and public information bulletins about:

-  changes in test procedures that may affect them
-  increases in fees.

We also publish:

-  an Annual Report & Accounts, which provides information on a range of issues affecting the Agency, full information about our performance against agreed service standards, and detailed accounts
-  a yearly business and corporate plan showing objectives, targets and future plans for the next year and the following 3 years
-  press announcements about new developments.

If you think things have gone wrong

The section on pages 23 and 24 tells you what to do if you disagree with a decision about your vehicle or driving test or about your ADI registration. But if any other aspect of our service has not been as good as you expected, we want to know, so that we can do something about it and get it right next time. Our leaflet, 'Complaints Procedure', which you can get from any of our centres, explains what to do.

If you are not happy about any aspect of our service, speak or write to the person you have been dealing with, or take the matter up with the manager of the test centre or headquarters section involved. You can do this by telephone, letter, fax, e-mail or through the internet, as shown on the back cover. If you are not satisfied with the response, you may complain to the Chief Executive. If necessary, we will seek independent advice.

Whenever you write to the Agency, we will reply in full within 2 weeks, unless exceptional circumstances prevent a full reply in that time. In such cases we will send you an interim reply. This will explain the circumstances and let you know when you will get a full reply.

In every case, whether you complain to the manager at the test centre, to the Section Manager at Headquarters or to the Chief Executive, we will carry out a full and fair investigation without delay, and do everything we can to put the matter right.



Our complaints procedure does not remove your right to complain through your Assembly Member to the Assembly Ombudsman for Northern Ireland. However, the Ombudsman will normally expect you to have used the Agency's complaints procedure first. The Ombudsman is completely independent of the Driver & Vehicle Testing Agency and of the Government, and the service is free.

The Ombudsman's address is:

*Progressive House
33 Wellington Place
Belfast BT1 6HN
Telephone: 028 9023 3821
Freefone: 0800 343424
Fax: 028 9023 4912*

We will co-operate with any individuals or organisations who act for you.



We:

-  regularly check that complaints are dealt with promptly
-  examine trends in case we need to make any changes.

Compensation

We are committed to providing a high quality of service to our customers. If things go wrong you may be entitled to compensation. Our leaflet, 'Compensation Procedure', which you can get from any of our centres, explains the procedure in detail.

We will consider compensation when:

-  we cancel a test for any reason within our control and do not give you at least 1 days notice for vehicle tests or 3 days notice for driving tests. In these circumstances the Agency automatically pays 50% of your fee as compensation.
-  damage is caused to a customer's vehicle or a person is injured on Agency property and the Agency is found to be negligent.



We cannot pay compensation where the reason for the cancellation of the test was outside the Agency's control, for example bad weather or a power failure. In these instances every effort will be made to get you another test date.

If you disagree with a decision about your vehicle or driving test or ADI registration



Vehicle test

If you think your vehicle should not have failed its test, speak to the manager of the test centre before you leave. He or she may agree with you. If not, you can appeal against the decision. Appeals must be put in writing.

You must:

-  appeal within 14 days
-  enclose another test fee.

When we get your appeal, we will re-test your vehicle within a week. The test will be conducted by staff from the Agency's headquarters. If we find that the original decision was wrong, we will:

-  issue a test certificate
-  refund the fee.

Driving test

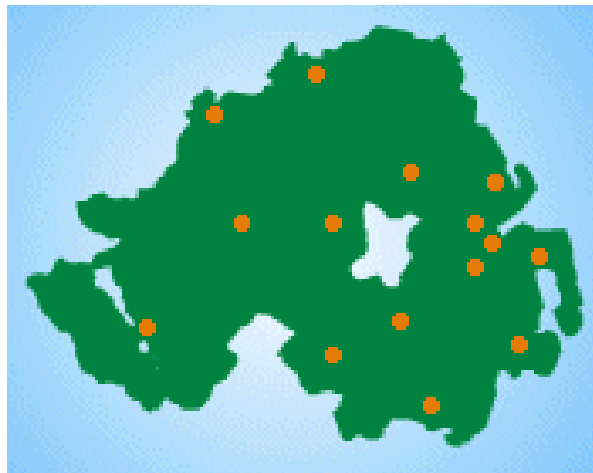
If you fail your test and you think it was not conducted properly, you may appeal to the magistrates' court. Advice on how to appeal is available from any citizens advice bureau. Addresses and telephone numbers are in the phone book. You may also want to think about consulting a solicitor.

If you need more information about this, our Customer Services Manager, based at Headquarters, will help you in any way possible.

ADI registration

If we decide to refuse registration or to remove your name from the register, and you think we are wrong, you must appeal in writing within 28 days of the refusal letter. You should address your appeal to the ADI Registrar, based at DVTA headquarters.

Where to find us



We have 15 test centres for vehicle tests and practical driving tests, located throughout Northern Ireland; two centres, at Dill Road, Castlereagh, and Waterside House, Londonderry, for driving tests only; and 6 theory test centres. Vehicle Identity checks are conducted at Lisburn and Londonderry test centres. First time bus inspections are carried out at Ballymena test centre.

Our headquarters is located beside the Belfast test centre. Any enquiries about our specialised driving test centres at Dill Road or Waterside House should go to the main Belfast or Londonderry centres.

You can choose which centre to use for your test.

Here are the addresses and telephone numbers of our headquarters and test centres.

Vehicle and driving test centres

Centre	Address	Telephone No
Belfast & HQ	Balmoral Road, BT12 6QL	028 9068 1831
Armagh	47 Hamiltownsbawn Road, BT60 1HW	028 3752 2699
Ballymena	Pennybridge Ind Est, Larne Road, BT42 3ER	028 2565 6801
Coleraine	2 Loughan Hill Ind Est, Gateside Road, BT52 2NJ	028 7034 3819
Cookstown	Sandholes Road, BT80 9AR	028 8676 4809
Craigavon	3 Diviny Drive, Carn Ind Est, BT63 5RY	028 3833 6188
Downpatrick	Cloonagh Road, Flying Horse Road, BT30 6DU	028 4461 4565
Enniskillen	Chanterhill, BT74 6DE	028 6632 2871
Larne	Ballyboley Road, Ballyloran, BT40 2SY	028 2827 8808
Lisburn	Ballinderry Ind Est, Ballinderry Road, BT28 2SA	028 9266 3151
Londonderry	New Buildings Ind Est, Victoria Road, BT47 2SX	028 7134 3674
Mallusk	Commercial Way, Hydepark Ind Est, BT36 8YY	028 9084 2111
Newry	51 Rathfriland Road, BT34 1LD	028 3026 2853
Newtownards	Jubilee Road, BT23 4XP	028 9181 3064
Omagh	Gortrush Ind Est, Great Northern Road, BT78 5EJ	028 8224 2540

Telephone booking*

Type of test	Telephone No
Vehicle test bookings	0845 247 2471
Driving test bookings	0845 247 2472
Booking enquiries	0845 247 2473

*this service is being introduced during 2003 and may not yet be available for all centres.

Enforcement

Centre	Address	Enquiries
Belfast	148-158 Corporation Street, BT1 3DH	028 9025 4100 Fax 028 9025 4111
Craigavon	Diviny Drive, Carn Industrial Estate, BT63 5RY	028 3839 1856 Fax 028 3833 6731

Self Weigh Facilities

Belfast	Garmoyle Street
Larne	Highway Harbour
Lisburn	Sprucefield, Hillsborough Road
Newry	A1 Newry Road, Loughbrickland
Nutts Corner	Moirá Road

Theory test centres

Centre	Address	Enquiries
Ballymena	15 Greenvale Street, BT43 6AR	0845 600 6700
Belfast	Howard House, 1 Brunswick St, BT2 7GE	0845 600 6700
Londonderry	44a Waterloo Street, BT48 6HF	0845 600 6700
Newry	Granite House, 33 Mary Street, BT 34 2AA	0845 600 6700
Omagh	32 Market Street, BT78 1EH	0845 600 6700
Portadown	Magowan House, West Street, BT62 3PQ	0845 600 6700

How to contact us

BY TELEPHONE

Enquiry Line:	0845 601 4094
General enquiries:	ring any centre listed on page 26
Fees information line:	0845 758 1416
Theory test bookings:	0845 600 6700
Minicom:	028 9066 5453

BY LETTER

Write to: Driver & Vehicle Testing Agency
Customer Services Manager
FREEPOST BEL 4363
Belfast, BT12 6BR

BY FAX

Our customer services fax: 028 9054 7955

BY E-MAIL

Our e-mail address: dvta@nicos.gov.uk

BY OUR WEBSITE

Our web site: www.doeni.gov.uk/dvta