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MAKING OLDER DRIVERS SAFER FOR LONGER: TASK FORCE CALLS FOR

- **DVLA TO SEEK EVIDENCE OF EYESIGHT TESTS**
- **RAISE LICENCE RENEWAL AGE TO 75**

Leading road safety experts have today recommended raising the mandatory fitness to drive self-declaration for licence renewal from 70 to 75 years old - if proof of an eye sight test is made compulsory.

The recommendations are made by the Older Drivers Task Force which today publishes *Supporting Safe Driving into Old Age*, a report setting out a national older driver strategy. The Task Force, welcomed by Government, was managed by the Road Safety Foundation and supported by Ageas, the third largest motor insurer in the UK and a leading insurer of older drivers.

More than 25 experts and organisations in transport, health, policing, licensing, car manufacturing and insurance collaborated to produce the report, led by Chairman John Plowman. Analysing the latest international evidence, available technology and road safety schemes, the Task Force makes seven key recommendations for government and other stakeholders.

The emphasis is for government and industry to work together to ensure older drivers can stay on the road and enjoy independent lives for as long as it is safe to do so.

Recommendations include:

1. Raising the automatic requirement for drivers to notify the DVLA at age 70 of any medical condition affecting driving to 75 - if the requirement for an eye sight test is made compulsory
2. Requiring the DVLA to get evidence of an eyesight test at licence renewal
3. Asking a consumer body to prepare specific advice on modern car safety features that are of special significance for older drivers – and consider “silver” NCAP-style assessment
4. Improving road design, signs and markings to meet the highest international standards specifically to aid older drivers but bringing benefits for all drivers
5. Evaluating existing driving appraisal courses and improving information provided to older drivers, their families, and medical professionals
6. Piloting new products which offer an alternative to driving for older people.

7. Pooling insurer data and research into major claims involving older drivers to understand the detailed causes.

The full recommendations can be found in the executive summary of the [Supporting Safe Driving into Old Age](#) report.

The Older Drivers Task Force looked at academic evidence base, the latest in vehicle, road and information technology, and reviewed best practice examples of support and self-help schemes. It is ready to work with the Government in the future on how best to implement these proposals.

John Plowman, Chairman of the Older Drivers Task Force, said: "Our aim is to help older people drive safely for longer by changing our culture. A key precondition is that older motorists should be medically fit to drive and seek advice when a limiting condition develops or gets worse, but age itself should not be a barrier to safe driving. We need to be open about offering advice and support and look at fresh ways of doing this. Encouraging voluntary, confidential driving appraisals so that they become the norm not a stigma and helping older drivers understand and use the latest safety-driven vehicle technology will make a big difference.

"People are living longer, healthier, more active lives, and driving longer. The number of drivers over 85 will double to 1 million by 2025, many without access to public transport. This influx of older drivers has important economic and social value but it also presents road safety risks if we don't adapt. Getting to grips with these risks, without limiting the independence and freedoms of the elderly is an important policy challenge – one to be tackled by the appointment of a minister with responsibility for older drivers."

John Plowman added: "Police data suggests that older drivers are less likely to be involved in crashes than young drivers. They are, however, more fragile and four times more likely to die or be seriously injured in a road accident. For every mile, those aged 80 and over are ten times more at risk of being killed than people half their age."

Andy Watson, CEO of Ageas UK, said: "As a leading insurer of older drivers, we are keen to ensure the right measures are put in place for them to stay safe on our roads and would urge the Government to consider all the recommendations in this report. We know only too well the devastating effect of crashes and it is right to show a greater interest in preventing accidents among the over 75s. This does more than merely protect their safety: it also helps vulnerable road users such as pedestrians and cyclists of all ages whom we fear, based on our own claims data, are more likely to be seriously injured by an older driver. We welcome the recommendations in this report and in particular the introduction of a mandatory eye sight test."

Andrew Jones MP, Minister for Road Safety, said: "Any death on the road is a tragedy and we are committed to improving road safety including exploring issues faced by older drivers.

"Britain's roads are among the safest in the world and we must strike the right balance between safety and personal mobility and we will carefully consider the recommendations.

"Age on its own is not a barrier to safe driving. We keep the current rules under review which make clear all drivers must report any medical conditions which might affect their driving."

Notes to editors

- The full report is available at <http://roadsafetyfoundation.org/media/33073/modsfl-single-page-printable-version.pdf> and will be on the Road Safety Foundation's website from 4 July.

- The automatic requirement for drivers to notify DVLA at age 70 of any medical condition that may affect safe driving should be raised to 75. This recommendation should only be introduced with the next recommendation on eyesight which should prove more relevant in practice than the current self-notification requirement. The medical condition notification requirement was introduced more than 50 years ago when life spans were a decade shorter.

There is no convincing evidence today that drivers in the 70-75 age group present a general risk justifying this requirement. There is evidence that the risk rate to drivers per mile driven rises more steeply after age 75.

- The DVLA should require evidence of an eyesight test at age 75. DVLA, insurers and others should encourage vision checks every two years, particularly from age 60.

There is as yet no general "marker" providing warning that an individual may not be fit to drive. Poor eyesight is a high risk medical condition associated with driving. Eyesight deteriorates with age and the government offers free eyesight tests to those over 60. There is evidence that when the Police offer driving assessments as an alternative to prosecution nearly 70% of those assessed require eyesight correction. More frequent eye tests would have significant wider health benefits for older people.

- The recommendation for the development of an older drivers strategy was published in the Road Safety Foundation's November 2014 *Making Road Safety Pay* report also commissioned by Ageas. The Government welcomed the recommendation and, in its December 2015 Road Safety Statement, said it would carefully consider any recommendations.

- **Members of the Older Drivers Task Force**

- AA
- ABI
- Age Platform Europe
- Age UK
- Ageas UK
- Aioi Nissay Dowa
- Association of British Insurers (ABI)
- Association of Chief Police officers (ACPO)
- British Insurers Brokers Association (BIBA)
- Coventry University
- Department for Transport
- DVLA
- Hadstrong PR
- Hampshire Constabulary
- Honda
- IAMRoadSmart
- Leeds University
- Oakhill Communications
- Older Driver Program, National Highways Transport Safety Administration (NHTSA), USA
- Parliamentary Advisory Committee on Transport Safety (PACTS)
- Plymouth University
- Professor Patrick Rabbitt, Emeritus Professor, Applied Cognitive Research, University of Manchester
- RAC Foundation
- Road Safety Foundation
- Road Safety GB
- RoadSafe
- Road Safety Markings Association
- Thatcham Research
- Transport Research Laboratory (TRL)
- University of Warwick

- **The Road Safety Foundation**

The Road Safety Foundation is a UK charity advocating road casualty reduction through simultaneous action on all three components of the safe road system: roads, vehicles and behaviour.

The charity has enabled work across each of these components and several of its published reports have provided the basis of new legislation or government policy.

The Road Safety Foundation is a founder member of the FIA Foundation and frequently works with other FIA members in Britain and abroad. It also works closely with other road safety organisations including the RAC Foundation, The Automobile Association (AA), the Institute of Advanced Motorists

(IAM), RoadSafe, the Parliamentary Advisory Council For Transport Safety (PACTS) and professional bodies such as Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport (ADEPT). For more information, visit: <http://www.roadsafetyfoundation.org/>

- **Ageas UK**

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Insuring around seven million customers and working with a range of partners, Ageas UK is recognised for delivering consistent and high-quality customer experiences. It employs around 5,000 people with offices based across the UK.

Media contacts

For comment and interviews, Task Force Chairman, John Plowman:
0798 970 7107 – johnplowman@john-plowman.com

Road Safety Foundation

Richard Rhydderch on 01256 345598 or +44 7746592977 - richard.rhydderch@irap.org

Ageas UK

Press Office: 023 8035 2754 or 07748 841874 press.uk@ageas.co.uk

Hadstrong

Becky Hadley 020 7808 7997 – becky.hadley@hadstrong.com