



Updated Briefing Note on Road Safety Authority (RSA) Services Impacted by Covid-19

The following briefing summarises the situation regarding RSA services and the ongoing impact that the Covid-19 pandemic is having on these services.

Driver Theory Test.

The extension of Covid19 level 5 restrictions by Government, until at least the 5 April, means that the Driver Theory Test continues to be suspended.

Currently over 80,000 driver theory test appointments are in place over the coming months, this includes appointments already in place from 5 March that are now being rescheduled because the suspension of the service is being extended.

We recognise that it will take considerable time to meet demand and restore pre-COVID-19 waiting times when the service does reopen.

In response to this, we have plans to significantly increase capacity within the service when it can re-open. A plan is being progressed to increase this capacity from an average pre Covid19 capacity of 15,000 up to 50,000 per calendar month when the service resumes, to manage the backlog of customers and shorten waiting times. Assuming a resumption in early April the higher capacity will start to take effect by the end of April.

In addition to the increased capacity initiative, we are working on a plan to rollout an online driver theory test service called Pro Proctor. Pro Proctor has been trialled, during the months of December and January, on a pilot basis for those taking a theory test for trucks and buses. The pilot is now being evaluated and the RSA is committed to extending the service for all theory test types during 2021. There will be a limit on the number of customers that can avail of the service during the initial rollout phase, but the objective is that it should be an option for all theory test customers during later phases of the rollout.

The National Driver Licence Service (NDLS)

Minister of State Hildegard Naughton TD recently announced details of a further extension to the expiry dates of driving licences on 24 February 2021. The extension comes as the EU and national Governments take steps in response to the disruption caused by Covid-19 to driver licensing services across the EU. The extension will apply to different groups of licence holders including those who benefited from previous extensions in 2020.

Drivers can see if they qualify for the extension by using the expiry date calculator on www.ndls.ie. Enter the expiry date printed on your driving licence into the calculator and it will tell you the new expiry date. The RSA has also told Insurance Ireland and An Garda Síochána about the new expiry date of driving licences. More details on the extension and

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who qualifies can be found [here](#). No decision on a learner permit extension has been made. If there is a development the details will be posted on [ndls.ie](#) and [rsa.ie](#).

Processing times for driving licences were taking longer than usual, but considerable progress has been made during the last few weeks and we expect processing times to be restored to the normal 3 – 5 day average within a fortnight.

For those who do need to apply for a licence or learner permit NDLS centres remain open for essential workers. In addition, our online application service [www.ndls.ie](#) has been successfully rolled out and those with a Public Services Card (PSC) and verified MyGovID account, can apply for their licence/permit online. To date in 2021 over 40% of customers have applied online.

Driver Testing Service

The extension of Covid19 level 5 restrictions by Government until at least the 5 April means that the driver testing service may only deliver driving tests to essential workers. Because we can only test essential workers, we are not able to fill all our available capacity at this time with typically 25% of driving test slots going unused. We expect this to persist during level 5 restrictions.

It is not possible to provide waiting times for the driving test because the service is not operating as normal. As tests are only available to essential workers and we have surplus capacity we are able to offer test slots to essential workers almost on demand.

Anyone who is not an essential worker and is offered a driving test is being asked to cancel their test appointment. They can do this by logging on to [www.myroadsafety.ie](#). These customers won't lose their fee or their place in the queue when normal testing resumes. It is important to note that customers will be asked to confirm they are an essential worker when they attend a driving test.

As of 9 March 2021, there were 6,068 booked in for a test in the coming weeks, and a further 62,193 waiting for a driving test. A further 31,272 are ineligible to sit a test, generally because they have not completed their Essential Driver Training (EDT).

If all customers who are eligible to be tested at present (i.e., no restrictions) were offered a test appointment in chronological order, we estimate that average waiting times would be more than 20 weeks.

We are communicating directly with each customer who is on the waiting list for a driving test appointment to provide an update on the status of their application.

When restrictions are lifted, and the driving test is allowed to operate normally again we hope to have a new online tool that will allow every customer on our waiting list to see a timeframe on which they can expect to receive their invitation for a test appointment. This should help give some certainty to customers about their status on the waiting list.

The RSA also plans to publish the broad principles that will describe the approach by which driving test appointments will be allocated so that customers and the public generally will see that a fair and transparent process is in place to test customers.

In addition, we are proactively communicating with Approved Driving Instructors (ADIs) to make them aware of the above approach so that they can reinforce this messaging with customer and to ensure all stakeholders involved in driver testing services are fully aligned.

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The RSA is making good progress in recruiting an additional 40 driver testers, that were sanctioned by the Minister, and our expectation is that they will be available to conduct tests

By the end of June 2021. In addition to the existing complement of 138 driver testers, this will add much needed capacity to the service. However, this will not be enough to get waiting times down to the service level commitment of an average of 10 weeks. The RSA is submitting further proposals to the Department of Transport seeking approval for an additional number of driver testers, on a temporary basis, to tackle the backlog.

Essential Driver Training Lessons

The extension of Level 5 government restrictions until at least the 5 April means that Approved Driving Instructors (ADIs) may only continue to provide lessons to those who have a driving test appointment.

They are not permitted to provide Essential Driver Training (EDT) lessons regardless of their status i.e., even if they are an essential worker.

The RSA had no role or input into setting these restrictions. Nor can the RSA remove or relax these restrictions. They have been put in place by Government and the relevant health authorities.

While the RSA did allow its EDT online portal to remain open for a period during the initial period after the introduction of Level 5 restrictions. This was done only to facilitate ADIs who needed to upload customer lessons that were conducted BEFORE level 5 restrictions came into force. This has now been closed and will remain closed until restrictions are lifted. It is important to note that any individuals who received EDT lessons during Level 5 restrictions did so in breach of Government restrictions, therefore we will not enter into any correspondence seeking such lessons to be uploaded to the portal. Nor can we provide customers with correspondence to complete their EDT.

MyRoadSafety.ie & RSA Call Centre

We launched a new RSA customer portal MyRoadSafety.ie on 30 November 2020. MyRoadSafety.ie is a one stop shop for all RSA services. As would be typical with any new system we have had our teething problems and acknowledge that this led to issues for our driving test customers.

These have in the main been resolved but we do acknowledge that our customers have faced long wait times to contact our Customer Care Centre (CCC). This has been compounded by the fact that large numbers of customers have been contacting us looking for a driving test date.

We have assigned additional resources to our customer call centre, and reduced call wait times by circa 50%. However, volumes are continuing at high levels with driver testing wait times being the main query.

We are reminding our customers that we are simply not able to provide waiting times while normal testing is suspended during Level 5 restrictions. If a customer has applied for a driving test, we will be in touch with them to invite them to book their test, when restrictions are lifted. Customers who are essential workers should go to our on-line services where they can request an urgent test. This will ensure that their request is prioritised and that they receive an invitation to make a booking as quickly as possible. Otherwise, we ask that customers do not contact us for a driving test date or waiting times, as our customer service

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agents cannot make a booking over the phone or advise customers of waiting times at this time.

Overall, in a national effort to support our public customers and our service delivery staff, RSA would welcome consideration by Ministers and Government to resume Driver Theory Testing as quickly as possible, given the impact it is having on essential workers, jobseekers and young people in particular. In addition, RSA requests the acceleration of Covid19 vaccination of RSA frontline staff already delivering essential services, in particular Driver Testers and Enforcement officers. Such interventions will have multiple benefits and help address operational and service challenges outlined within this brief.

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