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Mr Clive Bennett
Chief Executive
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22nd August 2002

Your ref: M715888

Dear Mr Bennett

I write to express my anger at the ludicrously slow response times of your medical branch. Presumably you have access to my records so you can read the sad saga without me going into it in detail but in summary:

- 03/02 I have a minor stroke and, on the following day, a seizure
- 15/02 I write to you telling you what had happened. After a couple of weeks you respond with the forms I need to fill in which I return promptly.
- 06/03 You receive the forms back and send a letter to my consultant asking him for his comments.
- 10/04 You receive his reply. But nothing is actually done with it so ...
- 15/04 ... you write to me apologising for the delay stating it's because my consultant hasn't replied, even though he has.
- 19/04 Someone actually looks at my consultant's reply and logs it against my file.
- 22/04 I phone you to see if I can do anything to speed things up with my consultant, only to be told that you already have his reply but that it will take some time for you to consider it. I explain to the woman I speak to that we are intending to go on a long planned driving tour of Scotland on 1st June which we now only intend to do if we can both drive. We need to know for certain one way or the other soon as, if I'm not able to drive, we need to make other plans. She sympathises and says she will mark my case as "priority" but that it would still take "one to two weeks".
- 07/05 Having waited over two weeks I phone again only to be told that it will take "at least one to two weeks" before you will reach a decision and I am also led up the garden path about whether or not I can drive in the interim which results in me wasting my GP's time.

- 09/05 Having seen my GP I write to Mr Brock to complain:
1. *That it took two months for you to tell me that the consultant was being slow. If you had told me sooner I would have chased him up myself.*
 2. *That the person I spoke to during my first phone call claimed my case was being marked as priority when the subsequent phone call made it clear it was not.*
 3. *That the person I spoke to during my second phone call led me on a wild goose chase wasting both my and, more importantly, my GP's time.*
 4. *That almost three months after I first wrote to you I still can't drive, despite being perfectly capable of doing so, and have had to cancel a holiday I've been looking forward to for ages which I may, or may not, have had to do if you'd have sorted this case out by now.*
- 14/05 Three months after I first wrote to you Dr Prasad writes telling me you are withdrawing my licence for a year.
- 15/05 Mr Theophilus replies to my complaint to Mr Brock. He fails to respond to point 1 above, he claims in relation to point 2 that my case was marked as priority but says you have a high volume of case work, and he fails to adequately explain why, in relation to point 3, I was told I could drive if my GP said I could when the rules for GPs, according to my GP, say that they can't decide.

This seems like a good point to pause and consider how this seems to me. Despite my case being allegedly marked as priority on 22/04 it still took another three weeks for you to consider my case. Cynically I have to say that it appears to me that the only reason you responded then was because I had issued a formal complaint. I was left with the impression that the only way to get anything out of DVLA was to make a fuss and that you are prioritising people who complain over those who let you treat them badly without complaint. Not good.

Meanwhile I now have had my licence withdrawn. Something I'm not too happy about especially as my GP has said he expected you to let me keep it, given that the seizure could be treated as "provoked".

Your letter of 14/05 withdrawing my licence said I could appeal through the magistrates court but also offers an informal method of appealing. I decided to proceed down the latter route.

- 16/05 I write to Dr Prasad querying the decision that has been made.
- 05/07 Not having had a response, even an acknowledgement of the letter, I write again, enclosing a copy of my original letter.
- 15/07 Ten days later Mrs Gunter writes a holding letter to me saying that a reply would be with me "soon".
- 12/08 This is obviously some other definition the word "soon" because by 12/08 I have still not had a reply so I phone and speak to Colin Rees. He tells me that my case was escalated after my letter of 05/07 was received and he can't understand why I've not had a reply but he will chase it.

- 12/08 Annoyed that three months after I wrote to Dr Prasad I'm still without a reply I raise a second formal complaint with Mr Brock. I receive an acknowledgement that my complaint has been received.
- 13/08 Dr Lyne replies to my letter of 16/05 on behalf of Dr Prasad. I receive it on 15/08. He explains that Dr Prasad had noted that I had a fit in 1993 (which, by the way, my consultant said would have been entirely unrelated to the stroke and seizure) and that this was the grounds on which my licence was withdrawn. Curiously this wasn't mentioned at all in Dr Prasad's original letter withdrawing my licence. It instead concentrated on the visual field loss that I allegedly have.

This second round has a real feeling of *deja vu* about it: it's again taken three months to get a response, and only after I kick and shout does anything happen. If I hadn't escalated it I think I would still be waiting as Dr Lyne told me in his letter that Dr Prasad was on holiday.

Meanwhile, as of today, ten days after complaining for the second time to Mr Brock, I have not had a reply from him or one of his managers, which I suppose shouldn't surprise me given the response times I've seen from the DVLA thus far. I'm therefore escalating my complaint to you as per the procedure outlined on your web site.

I would like to know what is going on. I don't honestly regard "we have high volumes of casework" as an explanation. If you have more work than you can cope with then you need more staff. Why can't you employ more? If you've not got the budget what are you doing to ensure that you do get a bigger budget?

The service you are giving is completely unsatisfactory at the moment. For you to take three months to respond to letters when the person you are dealing with is in a situation through no fault of their own really isn't on. What if your medical advisors had decided in the light of my letter that I could drive? That would have meant I'd been unable to drive for six months because of your ludicrous response times.

Yours sincerely

Paul Oldham