

## **Older drivers – staying mobile, staying safe**

### **Background**

The number of drivers over the age of 70 will double over the next 20 years and there are now over one million license holders over the age of 80. Many will be able to continue to drive safely well into old age, others will not. Enlightened policies and practical actions are needed to help them keep safe and competently mobile for as long as possible, and to help them decide when the time has come to stop driving. Giving up driving too early places a direct burden on health and other services which can no longer be independently accessed.

Older drivers are safe drivers for several reasons:

- They have many years of driving experience, which can compensate for less rapid reflexes
- They are much more cautious drivers, and so less prone to taking risks
- Most self-regulate by not driving at times and in places they do not feel comfortable, for example, at night, when the weather is bad, when traffic is heavy, and in areas that are unfamiliar
- Few older drivers drink and drive or take illegal drugs, and most don't speed

### **IAM Recommendations**

- Compulsory medicals and driving retests are a disproportionate action to take against a group who present no greater risk to themselves and others as middle-aged drivers.
- There is no case for an arbitrary age limit on driving as no two older drivers are the same and today's 70 year old is healthier and fitter than ever before
- The best way to check ability is to undergo a voluntary driving assessment designed to rate driving skills and give practical advice on coping with the effects of ageing
- These assessments need to be much more widely available and incentives put in place to encourage take up
- Better information is needed to allow older drivers and their families to continue to drive safely and ultimately to make the informed decision to give up
- New on line assessment tools have a key role to play in providing information and as a first step in the assessment process
- Training and awareness of the issues affecting older drivers must be improved among the medical profession
- Car makers and road designers should take more account of the needs of older drivers in the future
- The government should show clear leadership in implementing these changes through partnership and cross departmental working