



# The Impact of an Initial Remote Appointment on the Assessment of Medical Fitness to Drive



## Scottish Driving Assessment Service (SDAS)

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### BACKGROUND



SDAS is an NHS service which has been carrying out assessment of medical fitness to drive since 1983. Referrals are accepted from NHS doctors in all Scottish NHS Board areas and DVLA Medical Advisers. Medical fitness to drive assessments are important as we recognise the health and social benefits of independent mobility, but also the value of supporting stopping driving at an appropriate point. Providing assessments free at point of delivery enables all individuals to access this equally.



### AIM

The aim was to safely remobilise the service during the COVID-19 pandemic, minimising face-to-face contact, and maximising the number of appointments that could be offered.

### METHODOLOGY

Prior to this project, all individuals referred for driving assessment were invited to attend the centre for a three hour appointment, based on information provided by referring doctor. This included eyesight checks, medical history taking, cognitive tests, and static rig assessment, followed by an on-road assessment (where appropriate) in one of the service's vehicles. A new assessment model was piloted, with all referred individuals receiving an NHS 'Near Me' video / telephone consultation with their allocated driving assessment clinician prior to attendance at the centre to complete a shorter face-to-face assessment. This includes history taking, licence checks, visual acuity screening and some cognitive testing.

### RESULTS

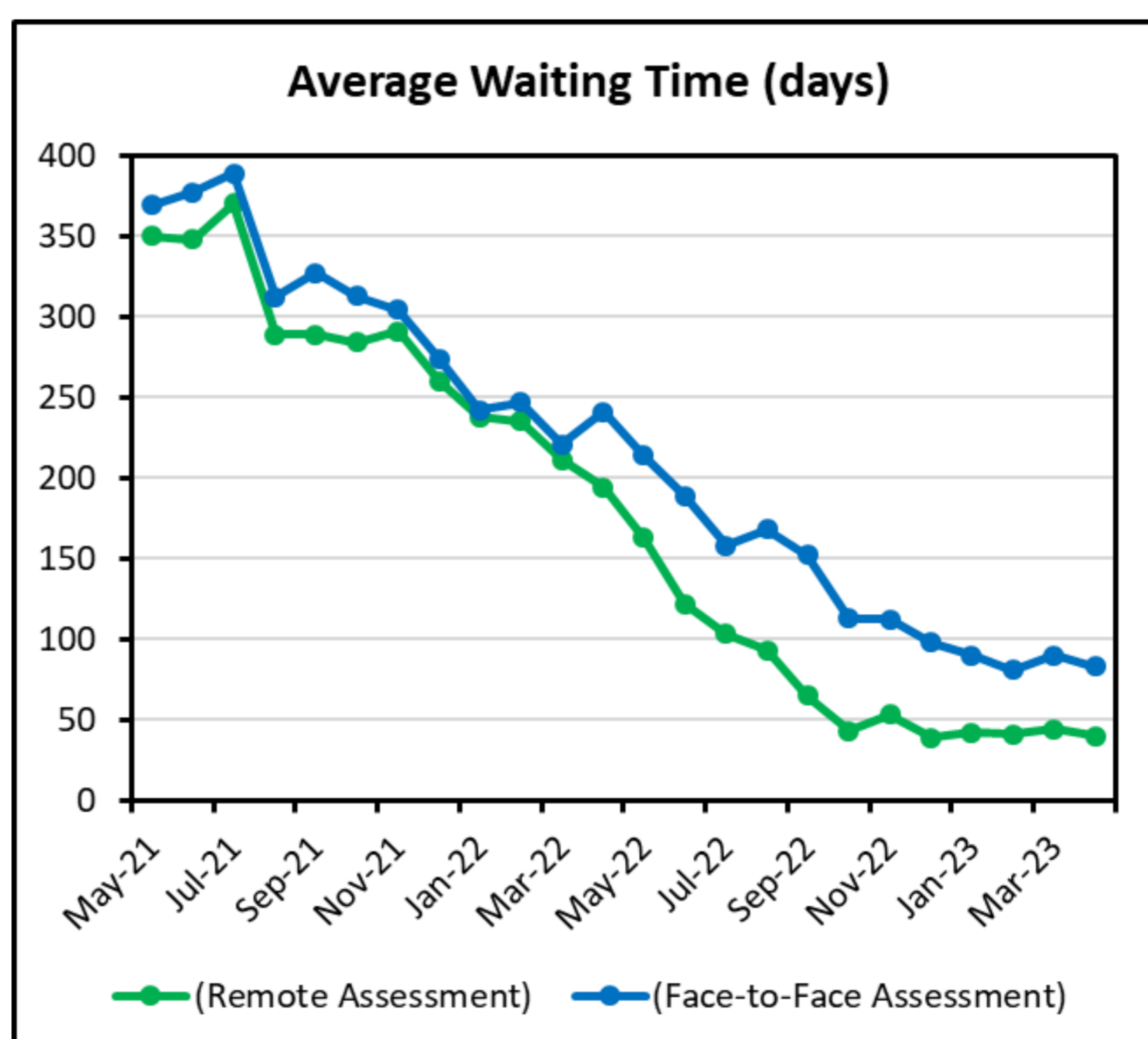
- In the two years following re-mobilisation in May 2021, waiting times were reduced from around twelve to two months.
- Face-to-face appointment times have been reduced from typically three to two hours.
- During 2023/24, 823 patients were seen by the service, 21% of whom were post stroke.
- In the same period, just under 17% of remote consultations did not proceed to a face-to-face assessment (e.g. because patients were found to be unlicensed, medically barred from driving or decided they no longer wished to proceed)
- This resulted in approximately 12,500 saved travel miles, with a simple calculation of carbon footprint emissions found total savings of 6,700 kg CO<sub>2</sub>e.
- Clinicians have found that they can better prepare for face-to-face appointment, including assessment vehicle selection.
- Patients have reported a reduction in anxiety due to remote interaction with clinician prior to in-car assessment.

### DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Waiting times have reduced, as individuals are engaged in the process at the outset and more likely to attend face-to-face appointment. In the last year before COVID lockdowns, there were 48 DNAs, whereas during 2023/24, only 18 people failed to attend their face-to-face appointment. Despite the practical nature of driving assessment, this new two-stage process has demonstrated significant benefits to both the service and patients, and has now been adopted as standard practice.

*"Your assessment merely confirmed what the family had been telling me for some time! Nevertheless it was good to get it confirmed by an expert".*

*"Thank you for your advice, wisdom and kindness - and your helpful, thorough report. The whole assessment process could have been quite upsetting but you and your colleague put me at my ease".*



*"I think the Driving Assessment Centre in Edinburgh are to be commended for the way they have devised their online test that manages to include both eyesight and drawing tests using pre-supplied materials. Brilliant use of online. Full marks."*

[www.smart.scot.nhs.uk/service/driving-assessment](http://www.smart.scot.nhs.uk/service/driving-assessment)

