

Elderly driver branded unsafe wins back licence

Graeme Paton
Transport Correspondent

More pensioners could be allowed to remain behind the wheel after a High Court judge quashed a decision to revoke an "unsafe" 78-year-old's licence.

The judge said that "age alone is not a reason to remove a licence" as she reinstated the pensioner's right to drive. The court was told that the Driver

and Vehicle Licensing Agency relied on Georgina Hitchen's poor performance in an on-road appraisal after an accident to prove she was unfit to drive. It claimed age-related problems made her a danger to herself and others.

However, Mrs Justice Simler quashed the decision at a hearing in London, saying there was no medical evidence to back the claim "age-related cognitive impairment" made her unfit

to drive. The judge said: "This was a case where bad driving could have been caused by something else, such as poor driving habits, lack of skill, anxiety or nervousness."

"In my judgment the statutory test for revocation was not made out."

The decision may be used as a test case for others to challenge attempts to revoke licences on age grounds.

Caroline Abrahams, charity director

of Age UK, said: "Ability and safety, not age, should determine whether someone should be allowed to continue driving."

"For many older people, driving is a way of maintaining independence so it's important that they should not be prevented from doing so on the arbitrary basis of birth date alone, particularly when people's fitness and health varies so dramatically."

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