

My name is Jean O'Dowd and I am a Regional Officer with Unite the Union. I am accompanied today by Dominic Brophy, Chair of Unite's Approved Driving Instructors' Branch, as well as Branch Secretary Darragh Dunne and Branch Learning Representative Aidan Jordan.

As the pandemic resulted in ever-longer driving test waiting lists, Unite pointed out that driving instructors will be critical to clearing the backlog and the knowledge and experience of our members who are key stakeholders is essential in this. Their focus has always been and continues to be on improvement and progress to ensure the best possible standards for all concerned. The demand by driving instructors for basic hygiene facilities during this pandemic is as much to keep the general public safe as to keep driving instructors safe. By the same token, since the pandemic struck it has become clear that workers have been key in keeping us all safe.

The events of the past 12 months have proven extremely difficult for all workers including our driving instructors who have tirelessly endeavoured to constructively engage with the Road Safety Authority and the Department of Transport.

I will now hand over to our Approved Driving Instructors' Branch chair Dominic Brophy: