



Committee: LICENSING COMMITTEE
Date: THURSDAY, 10 SEPTEMBER 2026
Venue: MORECAMBE TOWN HALL
Time: 1.00 P.M.

A G E N D A

1. **Apologies for Absence**

2. **Minutes**

To receive as a correct record the Minutes of meeting held on 30th July 2026 (previously circulated).

3. **Items of Urgent Business authorised by the Chair**

4. **Declarations of Interest**

To receive declarations by Councillors of interests in respect of items on this Agenda.

Councillors are reminded that, in accordance with the Localism Act 2011, they are required to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests which have not already been declared in the Council's Register of Interests. (It is a criminal offence not to declare a disclosable pecuniary interest either in the Register or at the meeting).

Whilst not a legal requirement, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 9 and in the interests of clarity and transparency, Councillors should declare any disclosable pecuniary interests which they have already declared in the Register, at this point in the meeting.

In accordance with Part B Section 2 of the Code Of Conduct, Councillors are required to declare the existence and nature of any other interests as defined in paragraphs 8(1) or 9(2) of the Code of Conduct.

Matters for Decision

Exclusion of the Press and Public

5. **Exempt Item**

The Committee is recommended to pass the following recommendation in relation to the following item:

"That, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business, on the ground that it could involve the possible disclosure of exempt information, as defined in paragraph 1 of Schedule 12A of that Act."

Councillors are reminded that, whilst the following item has been marked as exempt, it is for the Committee to decide whether or not to consider it in private or in public. In making the decision, Councillors should consider the relevant paragraph of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, and also whether the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information. In considering their discretion, Councillors should also be mindful of the advice of Council officers.

6. **EXISTING DUAL DRIVER'S LICENCE HOLDER (HACKNEY CARRIAGE/
PRIVATE HIRE)**

Report of the Senior Licensing Officer

The press and public will be re-admitted to the meeting at this point.

7. **Limiting Hackney Carriage Numbers**

Report of the Licensing Manager

8. **Vehicle Licensing – Feedback**

Report of the Licensing Manager

ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

(i) **Membership**

Councillors Sally Maddocks (Chair), Margaret Pattison (Vice-Chair), Louise Belcher, Gerry Blaikie, Martin Bottoms, Roger Cleet, Maria Deery, John Hanson, Paul Tynan and John Wild

(ii) **Queries regarding this Agenda**

Please contact Sarah Moorghen, Democratic Support - email smoorghen@lancaster.gov.uk.

(iii) **Changes to Membership, or apologies**

Please contact Democratic Support, telephone 582000, or alternatively email democracy@lancaster.gov.uk.

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By virtue of Paragraph 1 of Part 1
Schedule 12A of Local
Government Act 1972

Document is Restricted

LICENSING COMMITTEE

Limiting Hackney Carriage Numbers

10 September 2026

Report of Licensing Manager

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To highlight considerations in respect of reviewing the limit on Hackney Carriage numbers and determine the scope of a public and trade consultation.

This report is public.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That members note the contents of the report, and;
- (2) Determine the scope of a public and trade consultation.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 As members will be aware, Lancaster City Council currently cap the number of Hackney Carriage licences at 108. Since the decision was taken to cap the number of licences (2022), 4 additional, new licences have been granted to wheelchair accessible vehicles. As a result, there are currently 112 active Hackney Carriage vehicle licences.
- 1.2 The present legal provision on quantity restrictions outside London is set out in section 16 of the Transport Act 1985. This provides that the grant of a taxi (hackney carriage) licence may be refused, for the purpose of limiting the numbers of licensed taxis 'if, but only if, the [local licensing authority] is satisfied that there is no significant demand for the services of hackney carriages (within the area to which the licence would apply) which is unmet'.
- 1.3 As a result, Lancaster City Council commission an independent survey to assess the level of demand for Hackney Carriage services. Such surveys have been completed and cap maintained for over 20 years. The last survey was undertaken in November 2022 and the next scheduled for November 2027. The cost of the unmet demand survey is met by the Hackney Carriage Proprietors via Licence fees.

The report relating to the unmet demand survey undertaken in November 2022 can be found at **Appendix 1**.

2.0 Proposal Details

- 2.1 As members of Licensing Committee have considered and subsequently granted new applications for Hackney Carriages against the policy to cap numbers (as

permitted) and in favour of said vehicles being wheelchair accessible it is necessary to review the arrangements for limiting numbers of Hackney Carriages and determine whether to consult the public/trade regarding contributing factors and viable options.

- 2.2 It was agreed at a recent taxi and private hire liaison group that a report be brought before members of Licensing Committee setting out key information for consideration prior to any public and trade consultation or decision taken.

3.0 Details of Consultation

- 3.1 It is proposed that any consultation should be hosted digitally via an online survey, with the majority of questions being multiple choice, with an option for comments (where necessary). This is the most efficient and cost-effective way to gather information, analyse responses and present findings to members.

3.2 Department for Transport (DfT) Best Practice Guidance

Section 9 of the DfT best practice guidance deals with quantity restrictions of taxi licences (Hackney Carriages) outside London, including the impacts of such restrictions, demand surveys, consultation and reviewing existing quantity restrictions.

Section 9 of the guidance is attached at **Appendix 2**

The guidance highlights that most licensing authorities do not impose quantity restrictions, and this is considered best practice. The competition and markets authority has stated that quantity restrictions are not necessary for passenger safety or fare control, and can actually harm passengers by reducing availability, increasing waiting times, and limiting competition. Where restrictions are in place, they should be regularly reviewed, focusing on the interests of the travelling public and considering whether alternative measures could achieve the same goals without limiting the number of taxis.

Consultation with user groups, the taxi trade, and other stakeholders is also required when considering or reviewing quantity restrictions. All evidence and conclusions should be published, to ensure transparency and accountability. Licensing Authorities are encouraged to review policies regularly and ensure that any restrictions are genuinely in the consumers interest, do not reduce availability or choice, and are not simply benefiting existing licence-holders.

Points 9.4/9.5 of the DfT Best Practice guidance sets out consultation guidance and relevant questions to consider when reviewing quantity restrictions.

It is suggested that variations of the questions in the best practice guidance should form the basis of the online survey with the local trade, public and stakeholders.

4.0 Options

Members are asked to note the content of the report and; instruct the Licensing Manager to undertake a public, licensed trade and stakeholder consultation via an online survey.

Further direction may be provided by members on the scope of the questions and timeframe for consultation.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 Lancaster City Council has limited the number of Hackney Carriages operating within the district for over 20 years. In line with legal requirements, an independent unmet demand survey has been undertaken every three years to assess whether there is any significant unmet demand for local Hackney Carriage services.
- 5.2 In recent months, Members of the Licensing Committee have granted four additional Hackney Carriage licences. These decisions were made in favour of increasing the availability of wheelchair accessible vehicles, including where those vehicles are replaced or re-licensed.
- 5.3 Any decision to retain, amend or remove the current limit should be considered alongside the Department for Transport best practice guidance. It should also be informed by consultation with the public, the licensed trade and relevant stakeholders.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Health & Safety, Equality & Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing):

Any consultation undertaken will have regard to government guidance in relation how a consultation should be carried out.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The Department for Transport has issued guidance on taxi and private hire vehicle licensing since 2006 to assist local authorities that have responsibility for the regulation of the taxi and private hire vehicle trades.

Licensing authorities must give due regard to the Statutory Standards when setting their taxi and private hire vehicle licensing policies and procedures.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The cost of demand surveys is recovered directly from Hackney Carriage Licence fees.

Any decision to remove the limit, would be subject to legal challenge.

OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS, such as Human Resources, Information Services, Property, Open Spaces

None identified.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

None.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

None.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

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Lancaster City Council
Unmet demand survey
March 2023

Executive Summary

This survey of unmet demand for hackney carriages has been undertaken on behalf of Lancaster City Council following the guidance of the April 2010 DfT Best Practice Guidance document, and all relevant case history with reference to unmet demand. This Executive Summary draws together key points from the main report that are needed to allow a committee to determine from the facts presented their current position with respect to the policy of limiting hackney carriage vehicle licences according to Section 16 of the 1985 Transport Act. It is a summary of the main report which follows and should not be relied upon solely to justify any decisions of a committee but must be read in conjunction with the full report below.

Rank usage in the area has halved since the last survey which occurred just in advance of the pandemic (but was not impacted by it). Despite reduced usage of hackney carriages at ranks, unmet demand has increased but not to a great extent, and the level of significance of unmet demand value is just under 9, a long way from the level of 80. Even if the private station rank performance is added in the level only rises to just under 42. The permit requirement at the station is clearly leading to worse service than would otherwise occur, but that issue is outside the influence of the Council.

The level of usage by people travelling in wheel chairs in the area is exactly the same now as in the last survey – an important and valuable benefit. Latent demand both in terms of asking people and in terms of measuring those walking away is actually reduced, showing improved passenger confidence that a hackney carriage will arrive if you wait. Passenger surveys show a big shift to use of apps, and in some cases app usage may be considered to be hailing, which is a public safety concern. The level of paid journeys per vehicle per day was very low in the last survey – 4.9; that value is now 2.7 and it is clear that no hackney carriage can survive on rank passengers alone.

The present survey found a very changed picture of a strong decline in use of hackney carriages across the authority area. Both volume and extent of ranks used has reduced. The current limit on vehicle licences appears to be the last vestige of any stability for the hackney carriage fleet. It does appear to provide public benefit to the area – without it there would have been much more significant reduction in hackney carriage vehicle numbers.

The situation is at the point that the limit could now be amended to be a moratorium on issue of new hackney carriage plates, which would mean there might end up some reduction in plates although often setting such a policy can perversely lead to some holding on to licences due to their perceived value.

If hackney carriages remain an important feature of the licensed vehicle and public transport service of Lancaster City, urgent action is needed to keep them viable. Actions are needed regarding protecting ranks for hackney carriage usage – particularly at North Road. If Penny Street is to be retained it needs revision and encouragement for use by both passengers and trade. Serious discussion is needed about if night rank provision is needed in Morecambe or not. The big issue is that provision and revision of ranks requires co-operation with the County and these changes are not within the direct gift of the authority. However, the action is important because abuse of active hackney carriage ranks is a strong matter of public safety.

Further, promotion is needed to confirm to the travelling public in the City and those visiting the differences between hackney carriage and private hire and in particular when you are insured for your journey and not. Exactly what and how you can use an app is also an important matter of education as the blurring between app use and hailing is not as trivial as it might appear.

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1 General introduction and background

Licensed Vehicle Surveys and Assessment (LVSA) is a joint venture between CTS Traffic and Transportation Ltd (CTS) and Vector Transport Consultancy. These two companies have hitherto been the two leading practitioners of hackney carriage unmet demand surveys in recent years and who joined forces in early 2017. The combined experience of this joint venture covers in the order of 250 similar studies undertaken since 1999. The contracting company for this survey, CTS, also undertook the previous four surveys for this authority, in 2019, 2016, 2013 and 2010.

Lancaster City Council is responsible for the licensing of hackney carriage and private hire vehicles operating within the Council area and is the licensing authority for this complete area. Further details of the local application of Section 16 of the 1985 Transport Act with regard to limiting hackney carriage vehicle numbers is provided in further Chapters of this report. Hackney carriage vehicle licences are the only part of licensing where such a stipulation occurs and there is no legal means by which either private hire vehicle numbers, private hire or hackney carriage driver numbers, or the number of private hire operators can be limited.

The Best Practice Guidance

This review of current policy is based on the Best Practice Guidance produced by the Department for Transport in April 2010 (BPG). It seeks to provide information to the licensing authority to meet section 16 of the Transport Act 1985 “that the grant of a hackney carriage vehicle licence may be refused if, but only if, the licensing authority is satisfied that there is no significant demand for the services of hackney carriages within its local area, which is unmet.” This terminology is typically shortened to “no SUD”.

Several sections of the BPG were revised by the introduction of the “Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards” (STPHVS) document on 23rd July 2020 (see further detail below). None of these resulted in any material change to the elements regarding unmet demand and its review. At the end of March 2022, consultation began on a fully revised version of the BPG, with responses due back by 20th June 2022 but no final date for acceptance of the revised document. An initial review suggested again no material change in the elements regarding unmet demand and its review.

Legal Background

Current hackney carriage, private hire and operator licensing is undertaken within the legal frameworks first set by the Town Police Clauses Act 1847 (TPCA), amended and supplemented by various following legislation including the Transport Act 1985, Section 16 in regard to hackney carriage vehicle limits, and by the Local Government Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1976 with reference to private hire vehicles and operations. This latter Act saw application of regulation to the then growing private hire sector which had not been previously part of the TPCA. Many of the aspects of these laws have been tested and refined by other more recent legislation and more importantly through case law.

Public Experience

Beyond legislation, the experience of the person in the street tends to see both hackney carriage and private hire vehicles both as 'taxis' – a term we will try for the sake of clarity to use only in its generic sense within the report. We will use the term 'licensed vehicle' to refer to both hackney carriage and private hire.

Legislative Developments

The legislation around licensed vehicles and their drivers has been the subject of many attempts at review. The limiting of hackney carriage vehicle numbers has been a particular concern as it is often considered to be a restrictive practice and against natural economic trends.

The five most recent reviews were by the Office of Fair Trading in 2003, through the production of the Best Practice Guidance in 2010 (BPG 2010), the Law Commission review which published its results in 2014, the All-Party Parliamentary Task and Finish Group which reported in September 2018, the Government Response in February 2019 leading to a part revision of BPG 2010, and the 2022 consultation on a more comprehensive BPG 2010 review (BG 22). None of these resulted in any material change to the legislation involved in licensing.

Legislative Additions

There have been some actual changes to legislation (not guidance) put in place over recent years.

The Deregulation Act 2015 had two clauses relevant to taxi licensing – relating to length of period covered by licences (Section 10) and allowance of operators to transfer work across borders (Section 11) (both enacted October 2015).

In November 2016, the Department of Transport (DfT) undertook its consultation regarding enacting Sections 165 and 167 of the Equality Act 2010. These allowed for all vehicles capable of carrying a wheel chair being placed on a list by the Council (Section 167) leading to any driver that uses a vehicle on this list having a duty under Section 165 to:

- Carry the passenger while in the wheel chair
- Not make any additional charge for doing so
- If the passenger so chooses to travel in a seat to make provision for proper and safe carriage of the wheel chair
- To take such steps as are necessary to ensure the passenger is carried in safety and reasonable comfort
- To give the passenger such mobility assistance as is reasonably required

Since enactment in April 2017 issues with discrimination have not reduced as much as expected and further change occurred with one of two 2022 Acts put in place (see below).

The two 2022 Acts make small but significant changes. The 2022 Acts are the "Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Safeguarding and Road Safety Act) (31 March 2022)" and the "Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Disabled Persons) (28 June 2022)".

The first makes it mandatory for any licensing authority in England that has information about a taxi (hackney carriage) or private hire vehicle (phv) driver licensed by another authority that is relevant to safeguarding or road safety concerns in its area to share that information with the authority that issued that drivers licence.

The second amends the Equality Act 2010 to place duties on taxi and phv drivers and operators such that any disabled person has specific rights and protections to be transported and receive assistance when using a taxi or phv without being charged extra for doing so.

Regard has also been had to the Statutory Taxi and Private Standards July 2020 which were published on 21 July 2020 and represented a milestone in transportation regulation, because for the first time the safeguarding of children and vulnerable people were put right at the heart of the taxi licensing system. This publication also noted that a more complete review of all sections of the 2010 Best Practice Guidance would occur in due course and consultation on a draft of this new document ran from March to June 2022.

At the time of writing of this report, no date had still been given for formal publication of the new DfT Best Practice Guidance following the close of the consultation period.

Recent Research and Reviews

With respect to the principal subject of this survey, local authorities retain the right to restrict the number of hackney carriage vehicle licenses. The Law Commission conclusion (Law Commission, Taxi and Private Hire Services, Law Com No 347, May 2014, ref CM8864) included retention of the power to limit hackney carriage vehicle numbers but utilizing a public interest test determined by the Secretary of State. It also suggested the three- year horizon also be used for rank reviews and accessibility reviews. In the end, no comprehensive legislative review occurred and the focus is now on the expected updated BPG22.

During the pandemic, the DfT formally advised authorities to delay unmet demand reviews beyond this three-year interval as they advised any review in the midst of the pandemic was not sufficiently typical to be of value. Most authorities accepted this review.

Alternatives to limiting vehicle numbers

A more recent restriction, often applied to areas where there is no 'quantity' control felt to exist per-se, is that of 'quality control'. This is often a pseudonym for a restriction that any new hackney carriage vehicle licence must be for a wheel chair accessible vehicle, of various kinds as determined locally. In many places this implies a restricted number of saloon style hackney carriage licences are available, which often are given 'grandfather' rights to remain as saloon style.

Within this quality restriction, there are various levels of strength of the types of vehicles allowed. The tightest restriction, now only retained by a few authorities only allows 'London' style wheel chair accessible vehicles, restricted to those with a 25-foot turning circle, and at the present time principally the LTI Tx, the Mercedes Vito special edition with steerable rear axle, and the Metrocab (no longer produced).

Others allow a wider range of van style conversions in their wheel chair accessible fleet, whilst some go as far as also allowing rear-loading conversions. Given the additional price of these vehicles, this often implies a restriction on entry to the hackney carriage trade.

Some authorities do not allow vehicles which appear to be hackney carriage, i.e. mainly the London style vehicles, to be within the private hire fleet, whilst others do allow wheel chair vehicles. The most usual method of distinguishing between hackney carriages and private hire is a 'Taxi' roof sign on the vehicle, although again some areas do allow roof signs on private hire as long as they do not say 'Taxi', some turn those signs at right angles, whilst others apply liveries, mainly to hackney carriage fleets, but sometimes also to private hire fleets.

More recent considerations have added how greater and speedier introduction of more sustainable vehicle propulsion might be encouraged in the licensed vehicle fleets. Air quality zones have also had significant impacts, and in many areas more recently agglomeration of councils has modified overall policies towards licensed vehicles.

Further, the plans to introduce Section 161, and the determination of a proportion of WAV that any fleet must have by the Secretary of State (a quota), are a long way from even any consultation being undertaken. This issue was considered by the Law Commission but they stated 'we did not consider quotas of wheel chair accessible vehicles to be a suitable issue for treatment within a national licensing framework' (Law Commission Final Report para 12.60), nonetheless they reiterated that any such quotas should be decided by individual licensing authorities in response to local needs. They also quoted DPTAC suggestion the quota should be over 30% and that the Joint Committee on Mobility for Disabled People had suggested a minimum of 50% (Law Commission Final Report para 12.61). The often quoted 35% quota was from an earlier European Research document.

The Index of Significant Unmet Demand (ISUD) Tool

After introduction of the 1985 Transport Act, Leeds University Institute for Transport Studies developed a tool by which unmet demand could be evaluated and a determination made if this was significant or not. The tool was taken forward and developed as more studies were undertaken. Over time this 'index of significance of unmet demand' (ISUD) became accepted as an industry standard tool to be used for this purpose.

Some revisions have been made following the few but specific court cases where various parties have challenged the policy of retaining a limit.

Some of the application has differed between Scottish and English authorities. This is mainly due to some court cases in Scotland taking interpretation of the duty of the licensing authority further than is usual in England and Wales, requiring current knowledge of the status of unmet demand at all times, rather than just at the snap-shot taken every three years. However, the three-year survey horizon has become generally accepted given the advice of the BPG and most locations that review regularly do within that timescale.

The DfT asked in writing in 2004 for all licensing authorities with quantity restrictions to review them, publish their justification by March 2005, and then review at least every three years since then. In due course, this led to a summary of the government guidance which was last updated in England and Wales in 2010 (but more recently in Scotland).

The BPG in 2010 also provided additional suggestions of how these surveys should be undertaken, albeit in general but fairly extensive terms. A key encouragement within the BPG is that “an interval of three years is commonly regarded as the maximum reasonable period between surveys”. BPG suggests key points in consideration are passenger waiting times at ranks, for street hailings and telephone bookings, latent and peaked demand, wide consultation and publication of “all the evidence gathered”.

Unmet Demand Case History

In respect to case law impinging on unmet demand, the two most recent cases were in 1987 and 2002. The first case (*R v Great Yarmouth*) concluded authorities must consider the view of significant unmet demand as a whole, not condescending to detailed consideration of the position in every limited area, i.e. to consider significance of unmet demand over the area as a whole.

R v Castle Point considered the issue of latent, or preferably termed, suppressed demand consideration. This clarified that this element relates only to the element which is measurable. Measurable suppressed demand includes inappropriately met demand (taken by private hire vehicles in situations legally hackney carriage opportunities) or those forced to use less satisfactory methods to get home (principally walking, i.e. those observed to walk away from rank locations).

2019 saw three challenges with respect to surveys of unmet demand. All three found in favour of the current methodology being undertaken. A key focus was the need for a robust and up to date independent survey report being available.

In one case it was made clear the current guidance is based on the 2010 BPG, which supercedes previous notes and DfT advice, whilst in another case having a valid survey meant those challenging had no case for their proposed challenge, and in the final case an authority was clearly told they could not rely on a very old survey which itself could not be produced. In the end a fresh survey was undertaken, finding no unmet demand, but undertaken on the established standards only.

In general, industry standards suggest (but specifically do not mandate in any way) that the determination of conclusions about significance of unmet demand should take into account the practicability of improving the standard of service through the increase of supply of vehicles.

It is also important to have consistent treatment of authorities as well as for the same authority over time, although apart from the general guidance of the BPG there is no clear stipulations as to what this means in reality, and certainly no mandatory nor significant court guidance in this regard.

The 2010 Best Practice Guidance stated “Most local licensing authorities do not impose quantity restrictions; the Department regards that as best practice.” This is restated in the currently draft new Best Practice Guidance.

This new draft Best Practice Guidance also adds para 9.3 quoting “The Competition and Markets Authority was clear in its 2017 guidance “Regulation of taxis and private hire vehicles: understanding the impact of competition” that “Quantity restrictions are not necessary to ensure the safety of passengers, or to ensure that fares are reasonable.”

To summarise, the Department for Transport Best Practice Guidance only references ‘quantity restrictions’ and that not imposing them is regarded by the Department as ‘best practice’. There are only minor changes proposed to this in the new BPG.

Cross Border and Sub Contracting Implications

Recent legislation needing clarification has some operators believing they can use vehicles from any authority as long as they are legally licensed as private hire. At first, under the ‘Stockton’ case, this was hackney carriages operating as private hire in other areas (cross-border hiring). More recently, under the Deregulation Act, private hire companies are able to subcontract bookings to other companies in other areas if they are unable to fulfil their booking, but the interpretation of this has become quite wide.

The ‘triple lock’ licensing rule has also become accepted. A vehicle, driver and operator must all be under the same licensing authority to provide full protection to the passenger. However, it is also accepted that a customer can call any private hire company anywhere to provide their transport although many would not realise that if there was an issue it would be hard for a local authority to follow this up unless the triple lock was in place by the vehicle used and was for the area the customer contacted licensing.

Further, introduction of recent methods of obtaining vehicles, principally using ‘apps’ on mobile phones have also led to confusion as to how ‘apps’ usage sits with present legislation.

All these matters can impact on hackney carriage services, their usage, and therefore on unmet demand and its significance.

During September 2018 the All-Party Parliamentary Group on taxis produced its long-awaited Final Report. There was a generally accepted call for revision to taxi licensing legislation and practice, including encouragement for local authorities to move towards some of the practical suggestions made within the Report. The Government has broadly supported the recommendations of this Task and Finish Group.

Despite some opposition from members of the group, the right to retain limits on hackney carriage vehicle numbers was supported, with many also supporting adding a tool which would allow private hire numbers to be limited where appropriate, given reasonable explanation of the expected public interest gains. This latter option is now being taken forward in Scotland, with two studies published and the Scottish Government preparing guidance, although the Government response did not support this option.

As already stated, other groups have provided comments giving their views about licensing matters but the upshot remains no change in legislation from that already stated above. The Scottish Government are moving forward in terms of their application of the potential limiting of private hire vehicle numbers but this is specific to Scottish law and not presently relevant to the English licensing authorities.

The “Protecting Users Statutory Guidance” (now the “Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards” (STPHVS) was issued in July 2020 for application and advice of such application to DfT by the end of January 2021. Whilst again the taking forward of the wider BPG review is mentioned in terms of a further consultation, exact times for this nor the likely implementation date for this are not given. The April 2010 BPG therefore remains valid for our review.

For completeness, STPHVS seems to require by the end of January 2021 (subject to the continued impact on time resources of the COVID-19 pandemic) the following:

- Making publicly available a cohesive taxi licensing policy document
- Clearly documented ways the licensing authority will share information between relevant stakeholders
- Provision of a robust system for recording complaints that is clearly made known to passengers
- Sufficient training for those making decisions about licence issue
- Clear assessment of option of mandating CCTV in vehicles
- Specific requirements for private hire company records

Coronavirus

The serious Covid-19 virus took hold in the UK during March 2020. Whilst life carried on almost as normal until mid-March of the same year, formal lockdown was applied from Tuesday 24th March 2020 until 24th February 2022 when final restrictions were removed. Significant reductions in movement had begun to bite from the previous week. The last dates in 2020 when on-street and rank surveys occurred in other areas were effectively Sunday 16th March 2020. Up to that point regular review on the three-year timetable had begun to be much more widely accepted.

The licensed vehicle trade was one of a few industries permitted to continue to operate throughout the pandemic and various lockdowns, albeit in a range of different ways due to reduced demand.

The lockdown began to be eased on 13th May 2020 in some sectors, with people encouraged to return to work if they were not able to work from home. Restrictions on outdoor exercise, golf courses, tennis courses and socialising at distance, with restart of construction also allowed. From 15th June 2020, bars, restaurants and hairdressers were allowed to return to a 'new normal'. The next wave of easement occurred on 4th July 2020.

However, a range of different re-restrictions were applied in various locations as cases began to rise again. Schools were re-opened in September, but a new 'rule of six' was introduced shortly after reducing the ability of people to socialise as rates of infection rose again, together with a 22:00 hours close time for all hospitality venues. In general, new restrictions tended to be introduced with a few days lead in but this ended with a new lockdown from Thursday 5th November 2020 ending on Wednesday 2nd December 2020 that year.

After that, new Tiers were introduced (to try to minimise restrictions in parts of the country where the virus was less dominant) and then again another national lockdown was applied from early January 2021 but with the start of vaccinations providing some hope of an eventual overcoming of the impacts of the virus.

As levels of vaccination increased and infection / hospitalisations and deaths reduced, a new road out of lockdown was announced and implemented. The final stage, removal of most English restrictions, was delayed about a month but was finally instigated towards the end of July 2021. The Government focus has since then been on 'coping with the virus' although as Winter 2021 progressed infection levels tended to move upwards.

Later in Winter 2021 appearance of a new variant led to further concern and encouragement to partake in a booster vaccination programme as well as taking further care about interaction. Mask wearing was returned to being a legal requirement at the start of December 2021 in many, but not all of the previous circumstances. The situation around Christmas 2021 was very tense. Working from home was reinstated towards the end of 2021.

Early 2022 saw more confidence that the 'omicron wave' could be survived although in early January 2022 there was pressure on many industries arising from staff isolating. Various methods were being considered to minimise the impact of need to self-isolate. On 24th February 2022 all legal restrictions in England were removed with the focus clearly moving to 'living with the virus' although unintended consequences of rising fuel and other prices from the reopening of the economy were also exacerbated by the current issue of the Ukraine occupation.

During Autumn 2022 there was a high level of COVID infection but the link between infection and serious illness appeared to have been broken, although the need to keep levels of immunity to severe disease may well lead to further immunisation as time proceeds. Another booster injection was starting to be rolled out as part of the vaccination strategy.

Overall, the pandemic led to a significant period of lack of business for both hackney carriage and private hire vehicles, in various ways as the pandemic developed. Some of the impacts of this are discussed in public and driver attitude chapters below, as well as review of impact on demand in the rank chapter. More significant was the reappraisal of many as to their involvement with the taxi industry, and the general job market churn that was instigated not just in the taxi arena. In many areas there is clear knowledge that many who planned to retire brought that date forward whilst others found that the certainty of income from delivery driving was preferable to the vagaries of taxi passenger demand.

Various contract work appears to have remained a constant during the pandemic however (school transport, health transport and so on). However, airports were particularly badly hit resulting in many private hire vehicles being unusable, whilst rail patronage remains reduced with patterns of travel strongly revised towards off-peak travel.

Yet others found the shortage of private hire drivers meant more requirement on hackney carriages in the daytime, in turn meaning they could earn more in the week, and not be reliant on servicing less-preferable customers in the early hours of Saturday and Sunday morning.

A further issue we have observed is that even pubs, restaurants and night venues are now reducing their opening hours or days in reaction to rising costs and staff shortages. This can lead to taxi demand in an area becoming peaky or peakier with such change. This means spikes in passenger demand for licensed vehicles, which is always harder to meet in a timely manner for a given level of vehicles particularly in the later and night-time economy hours?

Further, the impacts of the developing war in Ukraine and other economic changes partly arising from Brexit is again putting pressure on costs of providing licensed vehicle services. Rising fuel prices have also added to the issues, albeit counter-balanced with an increase in fare charges for some authorities. A further knock-on has been change to how those involved in the trade interact with their licensing authorities, with most face-to-face contact effectively removed.

The days when the main aim of a demand survey was checking if passenger demand had changed to see if supply remained sufficient have now been replaced by a much wider research need to identify both demand and supply side changes (such as drivers working shorter weeks, more time by drivers undertaking contracts or diversifying as delivery drivers, changed passenger use of ranks and locations arising from matters such as reduced rail travel, etc).

Even long-standing areas with limited hackney carriage vehicle numbers have been impacted by having spare hackney carriage vehicle licences available for the first time in decades. However, our experience suggests that even spare plates and reduced demand can still result in unmet demand increasing as a result of change in the range of elements that need to balance to provide better public service.

Conclusions to this Chapter

In conclusion, the present legislation in England and Wales sees public fare-paying passenger carrying vehicles firstly split by passenger capacity. All vehicles able to carry nine or more passengers are dealt with under national public service vehicle licensing. Local licensing authorities only have jurisdiction over vehicles carrying eight or less passengers. Further, the jurisdiction focusses on the vehicles, drivers and operators but rarely extends to the physical infrastructure these use, principally ranks.

The vehicles are split between hackney carriages which are alone able to wait at ranks or pick up people in the streets without a booking, and private hire who can only be used with a booking made through an operator. If any passenger uses a private hire vehicle without such a properly made booking, they are not generally considered to be insured for their journey.

2 Local background and context

Key dates for this survey of demand for hackney carriages for Lancaster City Council are:

- appointed Licensed Vehicle Surveys and Assessment (LVSA) on 8 November 2022
- in accordance with our proposal of November 2022
- as confirmed during the inception meeting for the survey held by telephone on 14 November 2022
- this survey was carried out between November 2022 and February 2023
- On street pedestrian survey work occurred in early November 2022 (split between Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday)
- the video rank observations occurred in mid-November 2019
- Licensed vehicle driver opinions and operating practices were canvassed using an electronically available and posted out survey during November 2022 for return by mid-January 2023 (with some time extension and chasing undertaken)
- Key stakeholders were consulted throughout the period of the survey
- A draft of this Final Report was reviewed by the client and reported to the appropriate Council committee following acceptance by the client.

Lancaster City Council is one of twelve districts within the higher tier Lancashire County authority, with two further authorities in the formerly larger area that are now unitaries. Both those two authorities, plus seven further authorities within Lancashire, retain limits on vehicle numbers and review this regularly although there is one further district that retains the limit but has not recently reviewed this formally. This current survey is occurring at the same time as that for five other Lancashire authorities (all at different stages of completion).

The authority has a current population of 142,900 from the initial results of the 2021 census (a very similar number to the estimated population for 2019 at the time of that survey).

The area has four main population centres, Lancaster, Morecambe, Heysham and Carnforth. Most of the population is in the first two locations, with about a third of population in Carnforth and the rural parts of the council area. The area lies just off the principal M6 route between the Midlands, North West and Scotland, and has the only station on the West Coast main line within the area at Lancaster. Both highway and public transport link Morecambe, Heysham and Carnforth using secondary routes, albeit routes now included in the considerations of the 'Northern Powerhouse'.

Highway and transport powers are mainly at the higher tier County authority level. Until 2000, ranks were under the control of the local authority, but in

2000 the County took these powers over such that any rank is now provided by and maintained by the County. However, the County works in conjunction with the district on establishing ranks as part of an overall parking strategy or review, but the local district is also able to provide taxi bays under their special provisions which allow such to be provided under local authority auspices with consent from the County. Typical options use bays with limited daytime waiting for ranks at night, very helpful when new night venues open and need urgent action on rank provision.

A further matter which impacts on the hackney carriage licensing for the area is that the school and social services transport function is also undertaken at County level, providing contracts to both the hackney carriage and private hire industry of the area, some of which go beyond the district boundary, and some of which can be provided cross-county rather than at district level. This can provide places where local policy ends up superseded by County policy, further discussion of which follows.

For Lancaster the Local Plan evidence base stems from the Local Transport Plan 2011 to 2021 which established the overarching strategy for the county. This remains a statutory document but transport policy has changed since that time. It led to the Lancaster Highway and Transport Masterplan approved in October 2016. The key aims of the Masterplan are improving access from the area to the M6. An upgraded M6 junction to the north of the City sought to provide better access to the University by relieving pressure on the Lancaster central gyratory. In 2018 the latest Local Plan document was published covering 2011-2031 and the fourth LTP is being developed in line with that structure and narrative.

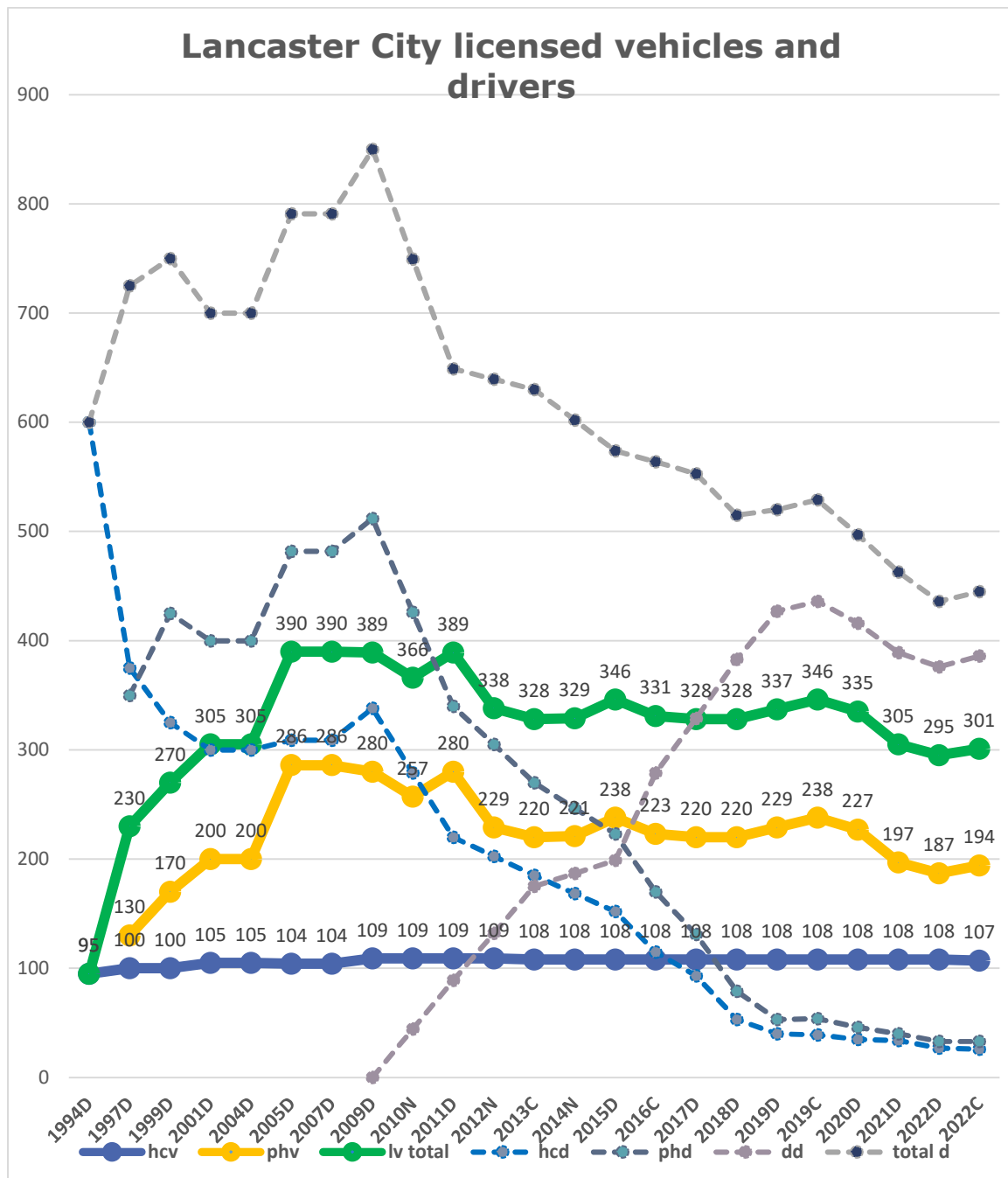
Local Plan Topic Paper 3 'Strategic Transport Consideration of Alternative Policy Approaches' (May 2021) considers alternative options considered in the Climate Emergency Local Plan Review. Its focus is on encouraging increased sustainable transport usage.

With reference to licensed vehicles, the principal mention across the transport policy inputs is their use as part of the third hierarchy of choice after ultra-low emission buses and other buses. The suggestion is to seek ultra-low emission licensed vehicles with policies seeking to favour them over other non low-emission vehicles.

The Local Transport Plan encourages taxi operators to work with transport authorities to ensure staff respect the needs of all travellers. However, being a strategic and County-led document, the focus is less on local taxi operating principles and more on higher level national strategy. Transport interchanges are likewise seen to be important, but again the higher-level focus leaves them not mentioning specifics of local taxi operation.

Lancaster City Council has chosen to utilize its power to limit hackney carriage vehicle numbers, and as far as we are aware has done so since at least 1994. The authority has held very regular reviews of this limit and its level (see further below). This resulted in plate issues of five in both 1996 and 2001 and four in 2005, all of which were required to be wheel chair accessible style and which must remain in this style. Current saloon owners have no such requirement and can choose to use WAV style or otherwise, and revert to saloon if they so wish.

By drawing together published statistics from both the Department for Transport (D) and the National Private Hire Association (N), supplemented by private information from the licensing authority records (C), recent trends in vehicle, driver and operator numbers can be observed. The detailed numbers supporting the picture below are provided in Appendix 1. Due to the comparative size, the operator figures are shown in the second picture.



Licensing Statistics from 1994 to date

The graph above shows the two small additions made to hackney carriage vehicle numbers around 2000 and 2008 and marginal reductions in the total numbers in 2004, 2012 and 2022 (although the latter only represents the fleet available at the time of the survey, with one plate not on issue at that time). There are now 12% more hackney carriage vehicles than in 1994 but 49% more private hire.

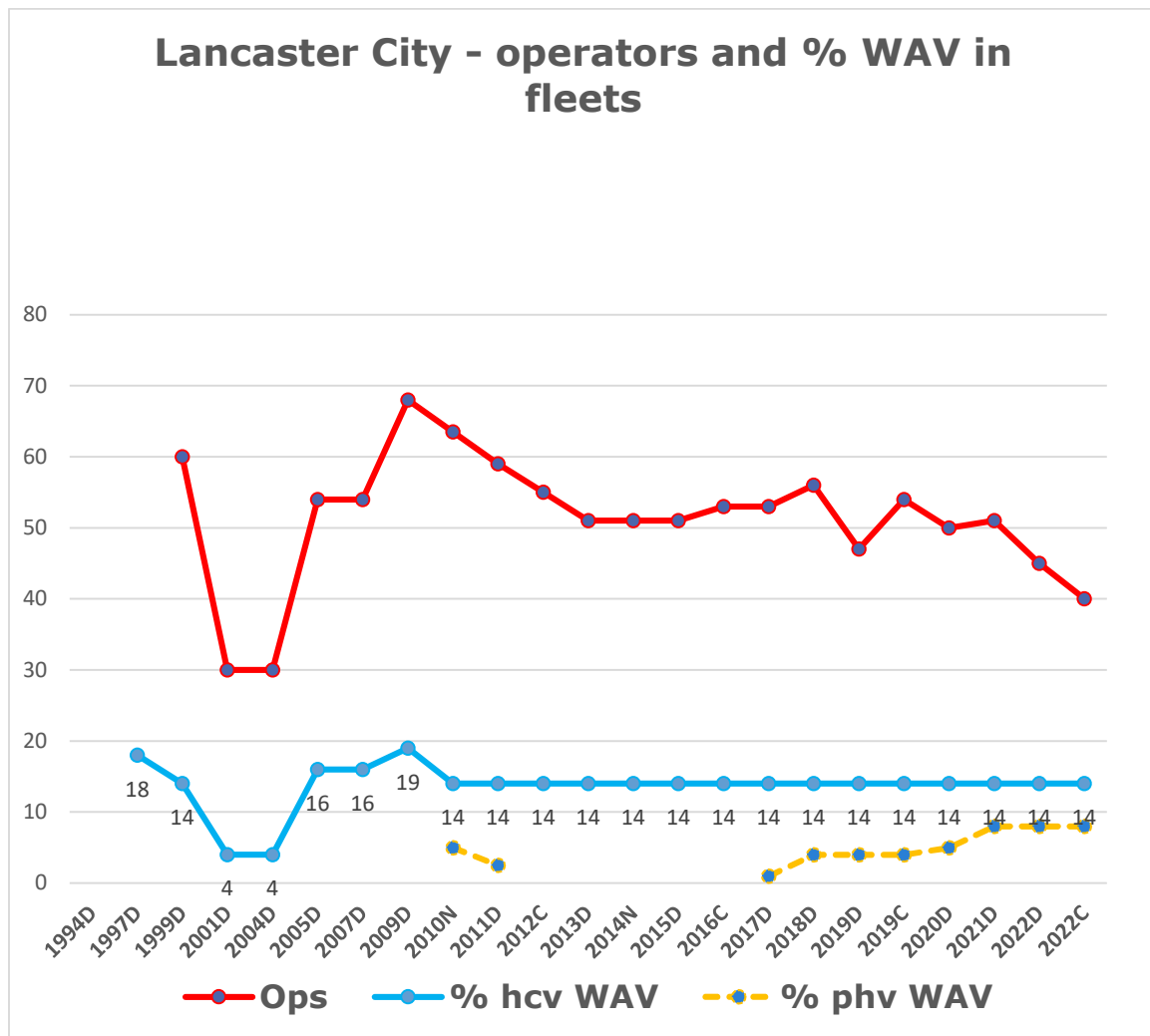
However, private hire vehicle numbers, not limited, and directly theoretically responsive to market levels of need, saw their maximum growth between 1997 and their peak in 2005. Since that time, there has been a general trend of reducing numbers although they saw 8% growth just before the last survey but then declined by 21% (a decline already starting pre-pandemic but worsened by it) before finally seeing some growth again from the time of the DfT review in March 2022 to the time of the rank survey in November 2022.

This means the proportion the hackney carriage vehicles are of the fleet has dropped from 43% in 1997 to 36% at the current time (was 31% in 2019), although this remains a high proportion for an area with long term hackney carriage vehicle limits. The local fleets have a number of private hire companies for whom hackney carriages regularly work which means the two fleets are far from distinct. In this case it appears that many private hire vehicles have been supplanted by hackney carriages that also spend a significant proportion of their time on private hire operating circuits due to low rank demand levels.

With respect to drivers, there has been a switch towards dual driver licences although this transfer is not complete and it appears the level of those retaining vehicle type specific licences seems to have stabilised. Although this generally led to a reduction in overall apparent driver numbers until 2017 (reflecting the removal of duplicate holdings) there was some growth just before the last survey although after that decline returned, again with the low point occurring at the time of the 2022 DfT data collection, with a slight upturn since.

In fact the whole trend of the graph at this time is suggesting the low point has been reached in driver and vehicle numbers and that an upturn has begun.

Information is also available from these sources to show how the level of wheel chair accessible vehicles (WAV) has varied. It must be noted that in most cases the values for the private hire side tend to be much more approximate than those on the hackney carriage side, as there is no option to mandate for private hire being wheel chair accessible. In some areas, to strengthen the ability of the public to differentiate between the two parts of the licensed vehicle trade, licensing authorities might not allow any WAV in the private hire fleet at all.



Operator numbers and levels of WAV provision in the fleet

This graph shows a very similar profile for operator numbers compared to overall private hire vehicle numbers. The slight evidence of stability around the last survey did not last, and recent information suggests a general decline in operator numbers.

With reference to WAV style vehicles, the number of formal WAV in both fleets has remained stable at 15 vehicles each since the 2021 DfT survey. However, the private hire level rose from none in 2016 to the current 8% now (a level stable over the last 18 months).

Considering the overall level of WAV in the licensed vehicle fleet using the March 2022 DfT statistics, Lancaster has around 10% of its total vehicle fleet (hackney carriage and private hire) that are WAV style. This is very similar to four other authorities with limited hackney carriage vehicle numbers, North East Lincolnshire, North Tyneside, Wigan and Mid Sussex (for the last two of whom there are recent demand surveys), and eight other authorities without limits (including one recently having lost its limit due to becoming part of a unitary authority).

National averages are 40% hcv WAV, 4% phv WAV and a net 13% WAV overall. Lancaster is 130th equal out of the 280 English licensing authorities in the all-vehicle comparison although many of those authorities which are above Lancaster in the table are the fully WAV authorities. It should also be pointed out that when authorities with 100% WAV hcv and no WAV hcv are removed from the total in 2022, 206 authorities remain with an average hcv WAV % of 22%, private hire 5% and overall 11%, putting the Lancaster 14% 8% and 10% in a much better light than otherwise.

Limit review policy

Lancaster undertakes very regular review of its policy to limit hackney carriage vehicle numbers in line with the BPG. The previous surveys were in 2019, 2016, 2013, 2010, 2007, 2005, 2000 and 1996, giving a very regular and BPG-compliant level of review of the limitation policy. Comparison of results and the latest evaluation are provided in later chapters. Lancaster was also one of the authorities fortuitously having undertaken its last survey in advance of the pandemic, and therefore able to keep to the recommended three year interval precisely.

Other public transport

National statistics are published for all 2,629 rail stations in Great Britain, with the latest information relating to the year ending March 2019 published in January 2020.

There are seven stations in the Lancaster licensing area. Lancaster is the busiest, being 232nd highest (was 282nd in 2019) in terms of total entries and exits estimated – some 1,659,362 (2,122,814, 2019) in the latest figures. Carnforth is now second busiest, at 1,284th with 151,484, with Morecambe (which was second busiest, being 1,308th (was 1418th) in the UK table with 147,004 (195,956 in 2019). Bare Lane, Silverdale, Heysham Port and Wennington follow, with the latter being the smallest and 2,402nd (2,408th) with 3,604 (4,768) in the latest year.

The pandemic continues to affect rail patronage – Lancaster’s latest totals are 76% of the level at the peak (which happened to be the period ending March 2020 immediately ahead of the pandemic). Comparison of the observed rank weekly patronage from our survey to the rail estimates is provided below in the rank chapter.

3 Patent demand measurement (rank surveys)

As already recorded in Chapter 2, control of provision of on-street ranks in Lancaster City Council's licensing area is under the control of Lancashire County Council. They are held within the context of other highway legislation across the County with enforcement against abuse by private vehicles also at County level. The City, however, has direct powers to ensure the ranks are properly used by hackney carriage vehicles and can enforce against abuse of them by private hire vehicles.

There have been no major changes since the last survey with respect to ranks and in this respect the background to demand has seen a period of continued consolidation since the major changes that occurred between the 2013 and 2016 surveys.

Our methodology involves a current review both in advance of submitting our proposal to undertake this unmet demand survey and at the study inception meeting, together with site visits where considered necessary. This provides a valid and appropriate sample of rank coverage which is important to feed the numeric evaluation of the level of unmet demand, and its significance (see discussion in Chapter 7).

2022 Observations

The 2022 rank observations covered a very similar sample to that undertaken for the 2019 survey. Two little used ranks were observed by quick-watch methods and found to see no hackney carriage usage during the course of our survey (Penny Street Lancaster and Tunstall Street Morecambe).

In order of 287 hours of detailed rank observations were therefore included in the sample. This provided some 1,660 (3,261 in 2019) passengers leaving in 1,022 (1,966) hackney carriage departures from ranks across the licensing area.

The observations recorded some 6,502 (10,315) different activities at the ranks over the survey period. 79% (74%) of these activities were vehicles arriving or departing (with or without passengers). The remainder were passengers arriving, walking away, or a range of other general comments about activities noted affecting the rank such as nearby demand generators closing or opening, etc.

Of all the vehicles observed at the ranks, 67% (73% last time) were hackney carriage arrivals and departures. A further 1.2% (14% last time) were private hire vehicles, 285 (11%) private cars, 3.6% (1.3%) goods vehicles, and 0.4% (0.1%) emergency vehicles. In terms of all vehicle activity levels, the most activity, some 27% (36%) occurred at or near the North Road, Diggles rank. 22% were at the bus station (15% last time). 18% each were at Common Garden St and Market St (10% and 15% respectively in 2019). 12% (20%) of vehicle movements were at the station. 2% were at Marine Road Central in Morecambe, a rank now hardly used by hackney carriages.

With respect to issues with ranks being used by private cars, Marine Road Central remained the worst (and was actually much worse) with 83% of all movements being private cars (61% last time). However, the observation of hackney carriages moving other vehicles on observed last time has now ceased with very few using this location.

Market Street Morecambe saw 50% (35%) private cars, principally arising from people needing to pick up or set down near to the shopping centre entrance, but also again at times the rank was not in use. The next highest issue was 31% at North Road, Diggles. The situation here has not improved with the extension of the rank, and abuse by goods vehicles also continues there. 30% (14%) of vehicles at Common Garden Street were private cars. These figures confirm that Lancaster is suffering as many other authorities nationally from cars, having assumed ranks were a good place to park when less hackney carriages were active during the pandemic, have continued to assume this parking is now legitimate, and is a clear issue of public safety that needs to be addressed.

Overall rank usage estimates

The sample of rank hours observed was used to produce an estimate of the typical level of patronage at each rank. The table below shows the resulting average weekly estimates of rank usage by passengers, and compares this to results available from previous surveys.

Rank	2022	2019	2016	2013	2010
Lancaster Station (private)	1,089 (34%)	2,539 (40%)	1,687 (27%)	1,538 (20%)	2,113 (20%)
North Road, Diggles	944 (30%)	1,910 (30%)	1,848 (29%)	3,482 (47%)	332 (3%)
Damside Bus Station	645 (20%)	1,046 (16%)	1,791 (28%)	Closed	5,161 (48.5%)
(total of two above)	(1,589)	(2,956)	(3,639)	(3,482)	(5,493)
Market St/feeder, Morecambe	291 (9%)	545 (9%)	600 (9%)	1,110 (15%)	1,668 (16%)
Common Gdn and Brock St	220 (7%)	286 (5%)	50 (1%)	209 (3%)	Not avail
Marine Road, Morecambe	7 (0.0%)	11 (0.0%)	280 (4%)	284 (4%)	512 (4%)
North Road, Toast	Club gone	Club gone	Club gone	478 (6%)	684 (7%)
Tunstall Street, Morecambe	Unused	4 (0.0%)	29 (0.0%)	Not there	Not there
Penny St KFC	Unused	2 (0.0%)	25 (0.0%)	93 (1%)	42 (0.5%)
Sun Hotel	Gone	Gone	20 (0.0%)	204 (3%)	Not in place
Dalton Square	Gone	Gone	Gone	107 (1%)	Not in place
Gage St	Not observed	Not observed	Not observed	Not observed	0 (0%)
Total	3,195	6,343	6,330	7,505	10,512
Difference from previous survey	-50%	Same	-16%	-29%	n/a
Difference from 2010	-70%	-40%	-40%	n/a	n/a

The headline from the above table is that total weekly estimated demand for the service of hackney carriages from ranks in the Lancaster licensing area has halved since the last survey. This estimated level is some 70% less than the peak value observed in 2010. Whilst there had been decline from 2010 through the next two surveys, the level of demand between the 2016 and 2019 surveys had remained stable giving signs of hope that the rank stability had led to passenger stability. The pandemic – or other factors – have clearly seen hackney carriage rank demand reduce significantly.

The table shows that the highest passenger volumes in 2022 estimated remain those at the private Lancaster Station rank. This took some 34% (was 40%) of the total estimated passenger numbers observed. The North Road, Diggles rank saw a remarkably similar 30% of patronage to the previous survey followed by 20% (16%) (an increased share) at the Damside Bus Station rank

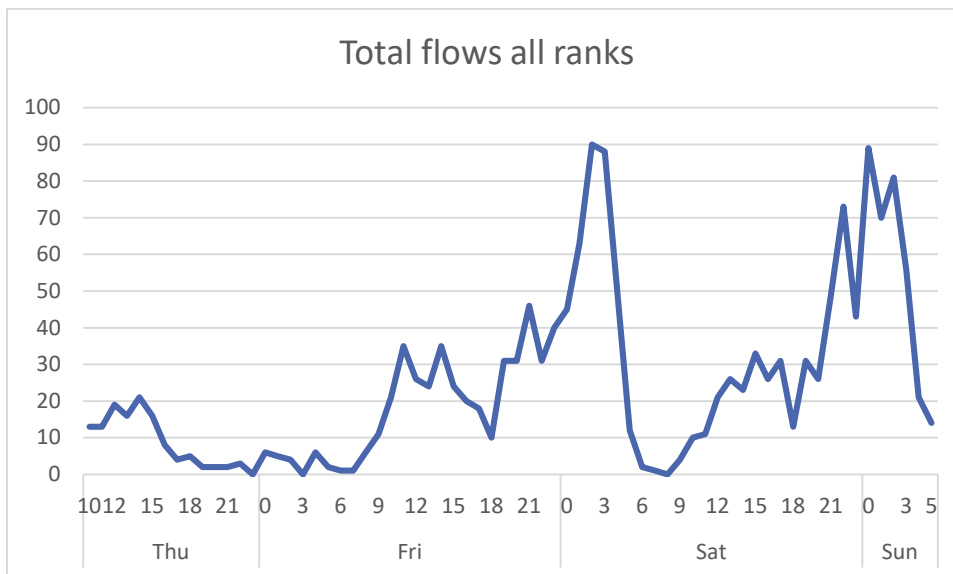
in Lancaster. The Market Street rank in Morecambe saw 9% of passengers – again the same share as in 2019 – with Common Garden Street seeing 7% – again an increase from the 5% of 2019. Marine Road, Morecambe did see a very small (and smaller than 2019) level of usage, but for this survey Tunstall Street Morecambe and Penny Street, Lancaster were unused during our survey period.

The changes in share terms have to be tempered by the fact of a halving of overall total estimated demand. However, this does mask some differences as already noted above. Worst hit was the station rank with 57% reduction in flows. Passenger flows through the station were 24% down for the latest estimates compared to the peak flow there which ironically was just ahead of the pandemic suggesting the station hackney carriage losses exceed the impact from the pandemic. The current station rank estimates were compared to the estimated total exits from the station from national statistics. This comparison suggests that 6.6% of all passengers leaving Lancaster station do so in a hackney carriage vehicle from the rank. This will be an underestimate of total licensed vehicle patronage as only hackney carriage-based rank usage was recorded and it is known many will also book a private hire vehicle to leave the station.

Against national trends, the relatively lightly used Common Garden Street rank fared best only seeing a 23% overall estimated reduction, followed by Damside Bus Station with just 38%. Market Street Morecambe saw 47% reduction whilst North Road, Diggles was just marginally more than the average reduction at 51%.

Detailed rank usage by location and time

The graph below provides the profile of total passenger demand across all ranks operating in Lancaster over the survey period. For this survey the station rank was only observed on Friday and Saturday so the Thursday flows are underestimated. This was done given that the station rank requires a supplementary permit and is on private land and is therefore not as relevant to estimates of unmet demand.



The graph shows that Thursday flows tend to be significantly lower than Friday, with flows generally peaking during the morning and then decreasing (as in 2019), with very little overnight demand. Friday has higher flows and a morning peak and a larger late-night peak, which for this survey was the actual peak of some 90 passengers in the 02:00 hour in the early hours of Saturday. Saturday flows begin lower, with a pre-lunch peak, further growth to an early evening peak, and then final growth to the overall peak flow of some 89 passengers in the 01:00 hour in the early hours of Sunday. The current peak flow is significantly less than the 161 observed in the early hours of Sunday in the last survey, and notably for this survey there are no hours at all with flows greater than 90 passengers in total across the area.

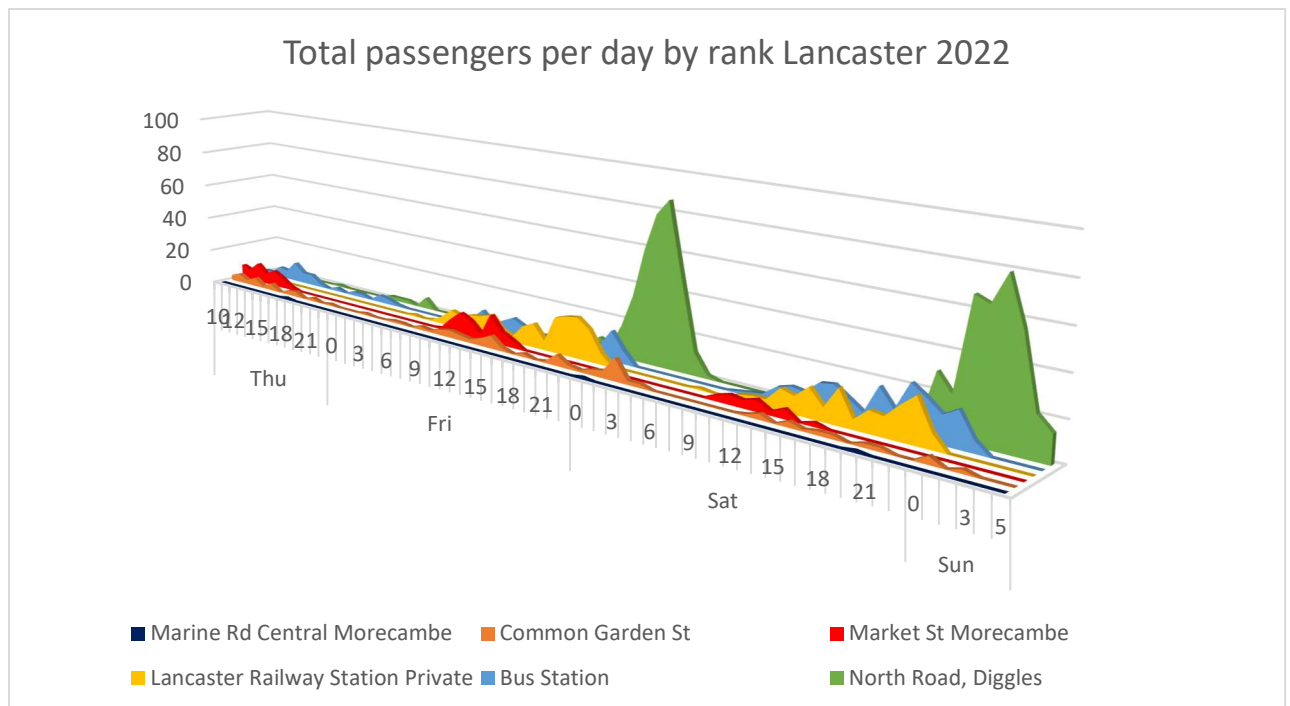
Overall, however, the general profile of passenger demand is very similar in shape to the previous survey, but just with further reduced levels of total passengers.

Interestingly in both peak hours the flow is combined between North Road and one other rank (Common Garden St on the Saturday early hours and the Bus Station on the Sunday early hours) whilst North Road flow peaks are an hour later early Saturday morning and two hours later in the early hours of Sunday.

Inspection of the information feeding this graph shows the peak flow is some 3.7 (was 3.4, i.e. now peakier) times the average flow per hour which is just 24 (47) passengers. The profile sees three hours (23:00 Thursday, 03:00 Friday and 08:00 Saturday) (compared to one hour, 05:00 on Friday morning last time) with no passengers anywhere in the licensing area at ranks, with every other observed hour having at least one passenger using a rank somewhere in the area.

For this survey, average Thursday flows are just seven passengers (although this did exclude any observations at the station, so is an underestimate), Fridays 32 and Saturdays 31, with as already noted, the overall of 24 for the full survey period. It must be remembered that the pan-survey average occupancy is 1.6 passengers per vehicle so the actual number of hires represented by these figures is even lower.

The graph below presents passenger flows by hour for each of the separate ranks over the survey period.



The graph shows the extreme and peaky demand at the North Road, Diggles rank in Lancaster. This is as it was in the previous survey apart from the suppressed overall total levels. This rank, although available for 24-hours, only tends to operate in evenings and into the early hours but is used on every night, but much more so on Friday into Saturday and even more from Saturday into Sunday. On both Friday and Saturday nights this is very clearly the busiest rank and the only location with more than 25 (60 last time) passengers in any hour in the area. The facts above apply equally to the previous and this survey apart from the reduced numbers.

For this survey, the level of flows on Thursday evening is almost zero, with the peak hour being the midnight hour with just six passengers. This is a major change from the previous survey where Thursday evening did see moderate flow levels.

Operation of the bus station rank in Lancaster is now all day and into the early hours (last time it tended to be daytime only). Whilst Thursday sees the main peak in the late morning, there are late evening peaks on both Friday and Saturday. The general level of demand at that location is generally lower on Saturdays, but with a higher peak (all statements true both for the previous survey and this survey).

Market Street in Morecambe remains very tied to the operating hours of the nearby shopping centre, servicing this demand only. Common Garden Street in Lancaster is similar to this on the Thursday but does see later and more extended operating hours on the Friday and Saturday, albeit at lower levels. For this survey, the focus at Common Garden Street is more towards Friday-Saturday than Saturday-Sunday.

Marine Road Central Morecambe for this survey only saw a single passenger in each of the three nights, at different times, and is effectively no longer really used.

Unmet demand – surveyed hours with observed unmet demand

Each hour of rank data was sorted to identify the highest level of average passenger delay. Of the 287 hours of data included in our sample, 8% (6% in last survey) had average hourly passenger delay values of a minute or more, with a further 10% (9% last time) with values of 59 seconds or less. These figures include all ranks including the private station rank. These values are only marginally worse than the previous survey, but high given the fact that passenger flows have halved, which you might expect would lead to significantly reduced levels of unmet demand.

Considering passengers in total, 8.1% (9.4% last time) actually experienced a wait of a minute or more. This can be broken down into 0.7% (0.4%) of passengers who waited for 11 minutes or more, 1.5% (2%) who waited between six and 10 minutes, and 5.9% (7%) that waited between one and five minutes.

The longest average passenger wait experienced was just under 22.5 minutes – higher than the 16 minutes from the last survey. This wait also produced the second highest average passenger delay (APD) in any hour, and one of only two APD over ten minutes. This particular instance occurred at a time of generally low demand, known as 'thin' demand which is notoriously hard to service well at the Station rank. The other high waiting time of just under 16 minutes had a similar APD and was again a very quiet hour at Common Garden Street.

There were four examples where the APD was between five and 6.5 minutes (with none others longer than that other than the two above). Two were at Lancaster station on Friday late afternoons and two at the bus station. One of these had a passenger delay of just under 22 minutes, and another a delay to one passenger of just under 19 minutes.

All three hours that saw delay on the Thursday were at the Lancaster Bus Station (Damside) rank, in three consecutive hours in the afternoon (14:00 to 16:00). Friday saw 20 instances of non-zero APD and Saturday 24, with four on the Sunday. The focus of Friday waiting were the hours between 12:00 and 18:00 with only four of the hours outside that period. Four different locations saw passenger waiting in the 13:00 hour including the Morecambe active rank. Saturday waiting focussed on 10:00 to 13:00 again including the Morecambe rank and examples at all the active Lancaster ranks.

The busiest hour, 02:00 Saturday morning, did see passengers wait but the busiest rank only saw one second APD, and the other rank active at that time saw 34 seconds delay. The midnight Saturday secondary peak hour saw 49 seconds delay at North Road, Diggles, rank. These statistics suggest the fleet is able to cope with peak demands, but has bigger issues ensuring sufficient vehicles at relatively quieter times.

There were no occurrences of persistent passenger queues forming for lengthy periods, at any locations.

The delay data was inspected by day and hour to see if there was any systematic shortage of hackney carriage vehicles. The profile suggested no particular hours with notable shortages but also showed most delay tended to occur more with lower flows than higher. There were very few significant delays observed in the hours with highest flows – proving there are sufficient vehicles to meet high levels of demand, but also demonstrating that the potential focus of many hackney carriages on peaks or on phone demand at lower demand times can impact rank service levels. Further discussion of this occurs in the chapter considering significance of observed unmet demand. This is similar to the results in the previous survey, however again it must be remembered demand has halved yet performance appears generally similar.

Unmet demand – persons walking away from ranks

The number of people arriving at ranks and then walking away without using a hackney carriage or other vehicles was noted. This occurred most at the Diggles location, with 43 (63 last survey) different occasions recorded, none

with more than two people walking away (last time there were some with up to five people in the group). There were other walk-aways noted at Lancaster Bus Station, Lancaster Railway Station, Lancaster Common Garden Street, Marine Road Central Morecambe and Morecambe Market Street, but none were significant (the maximum was a total of seven people in all at Lancaster station).

Plate observations

Observations were undertaken on the Thursday and Saturday of the rank observations to identify the licensed vehicles operating at the time of what was expected to be the busiest day of the survey. An hour was observed at the Market Street rank and a further hour and a half at the Marine Road Central rank both in Morecambe on each day. Observations were undertaken for all licensed vehicles passing by the Bus Station rank in Lancaster for an hour-and-a-half sessions and a 2-hour session, one early afternoon and one over midnight. A total of 194 (247 last time) vehicle movements were observed.

All observations were reviewed to identify current Lancaster licensed hackney carriages and private hire vehicles from those observed, using the list of vehicles licensed by the council at the time of the survey. Three records were incomplete and a further 14 (10 last time) were not current local licensed vehicles. The remaining records were then evaluated to understand the activity level of the fleet observed. It did prove relatively difficult to differentiate private hire and hackney carriage during the observations undertaken.

110 (146 last time) different hackney carriage movements were observed. These accounted for 51% (54% last time) of the plates on issue at the time of the survey. The observations at Morecambe Market Street accounted for 4% (5% Saturday last time) of the fleet on both days whilst those at Marine Road Central later saw 1% on the Thursday and 7% (6% last time) of the fleet on the Saturday.

In Lancaster, the afternoon observations saw 9% Thursday and 20% Saturday (12% last time) of the fleet with 7% Thursday and 21% Saturday (39% last time) in the over-midnight observations.

Whilst the overall reduction in level of observed plates is only marginally reduced (even allowing for adding an extra day this time), the pattern in Lancaster suggests more vehicles active in the daytime and less at night, a national pattern observed whereby less preferable times of working see less activity, with drivers able to earn sufficient during preferred working hours.

21% of the fleet was seen on the Thursday rising to 44% on the Saturday with the highest proportions seen in Lancaster as might be expected.

For Market Street, Morecambe four different plates were seen on each day observed. However, just two plates were observed on both days, with the other two comprising different plates meaning a total of six different plates were observed there. Two of these were also observed at Lancaster locations. None of the seven plates seen near the Marine Road Central rank were seen at any other location over the two survey days. However the single plate seen on the Thursday near there was also observed two days later in Lancaster.

Comparing the afternoon and night information on the Thursday for Lancaster found 9% of plates in the daytime sample and 7% in the late evening. None were seen in both periods. On the Saturday, the afternoon sample saw 20% of plates but the late night one marginally more at 21%. Just five – around a quarter – were seen in both samples.

Of all the hackney carriage plates seen, 45% were seen just once. 33% were seen twice, 9% three times, 2% four times and 11% five times.

67 different private hire vehicle movements were noted. Some were seen at Marine Road Central but the bulk were seen in central Lancaster.

Disability use of ranks

Four people were observed during the course of the survey accessing hackney carriages at ranks in wheel chairs – the same number as in the last survey. However, the spread was different with two at Damside Bus Station rank and two at Market Street, Morecambe. In the previous survey, three of these were at the railway station rank in Lancaster (none seen there this time) with one at Morecambe Market Street.

A further 28 (44 last time) people were observed at ranks needing assistance into vehicles, often having visual disabilities such as walking with a stick. 20 (31) of these were at Market Street, Morecambe, three (seven) at Lancaster Bus Station, 2 (4) at Lancaster Common Garden Street, and one (two) at Diggles, Lancaster.

4 General public views

It is very important that the views of people within the area are obtained about the service provided by hackney carriage and private hire. A key element which these surveys seek to discover is specifically if people have given up waiting for hackney carriages at ranks (the most readily available measure of latent demand). However, the opportunity is also taken with these surveys to identify the overall usage and views of hackney carriage and private hire vehicles within the study area, and to give chance for people to identify current issues and factors which may encourage them to use licensed vehicles more.

Such surveys can also be key in identifying variation of demand for licensed vehicles across an area, particularly if there are significant areas of potential demand without ranks, albeit in the context that many areas do not have places apart from their central area with sufficient demand to justify hackney carriages waiting at ranks.

These surveys tend to be undertaken during the daytime period when more people are available, and when survey staff safety can be guaranteed. Further, interviews with groups of people or with those affected by alcohol consumption may not necessarily provide accurate responses, despite the potential value in speaking with people more likely to use hackney carriages at times of higher demand and then more likely unmet demand. Where possible, extension of interviews to the early evening may capture some of this group, as well as some studies where careful choice of night samples can be undertaken.

Our basic methodology requires a sample size of at least 200 to ensure stable responses. Trained and experienced interviewers are also important as this ensures respondents are guided through the questions carefully and consistently. A minimum sample of 50 interviews is generally possible by a trained interviewer in a day meaning that sample sizes are best incremented by 50, usually if there is targeting of a specific area or group (e.g. of students, or a sub-centre), although conclusions from these separate samples can only be indicative taken alone. For some authorities with multiple centres this can imply value in using a higher sample size, such as 250 if there are two large and one moderate sized centre.

It is normal practice to compare the resulting gender and age structure to the latest available local and national census proportions to identify if the sample has become biased in any way.

More recently, general public views have been enlisted from the use of council citizens' panels although the issue with these is that return numbers cannot be guaranteed. The other issue is that the structure of the sample responding cannot be guaranteed either, and it is also true that those on the panel have chosen to be there such that they may tend to be people willing to have stronger opinions than the general public randomly approached.

Finally, some recent surveys have placed an electronic copy of the questionnaire on their web site to allow interested persons to respond, although again there needs to be an element of care with such results as people choosing to take part may have a vested interest. This can be improved by using paid advertising for such questionnaires, but it does still restrict responses to those with an interest, rather than the entirely random selection applied when on-street.

This survey considers the full Lancaster licensing area. However, on street interviews were undertaken only in the main two centres taking on board the need to obtain reasonable sample numbers within fair timescales. A total of 90 (98 last time) interviews were obtained in Lancaster and 89 (94) in Morecambe, a robust sample for the purposes of this data collection exercise.

The proportions of key population statistics were compared to the estimates for the area from the latest 2021 estimates from the new 2021 census. This time the overall responses saw 5% more female respondents than the census might otherwise suggest; with a worse imbalance in Morecambe (8.5 % more). A similar pattern applied in the previous survey although the Lancaster sample was much closer last time.

For this survey overall, the under 30's group was under-represented by 5% - similar for both separate areas with the mid and upper age groups both over-represented by equal amounts (about 2.4% each). For Morecambe the mid group was also well-matched with the over-representation entirely for the upper group; whilst the reverse was true for Lancaster with the upper group there well-matched. Compared to the previous survey, this profile is much better balanced.

All of those interviewed in Morecambe claimed to be from the area whilst just one Lancaster interviewee said they were not from the area – suggesting the views obtained represent those of people locally. This was exactly the same as the result from the previous survey.

A very high 90% (93% last time) of those interviewed in Lancaster and 85% (99%) of those interviewed in Morecambe said they had used a local licensed vehicle in the last three months in the area. This retains the high values compared to earlier surveys as noted last time.

For this survey, a more detailed breakdown was provided. Across the area, 70% said they had made one or more trips, but by private hire vehicle only. 12% had used both hackney carriage and private hire and just 5% hackney carriage only. The share by private hire only was slightly higher in Morecambe with usage of hackney carriage only in Morecambe very low – just 2% said they had recently used hackney carriage only (8% in Lancaster).

All respondents provided an estimate of how often they used a licensed vehicle in the area. In both areas, the highest proportion, 37% said they used licensed vehicles once or twice a month. This was significantly different to the previous survey where 21% in Lancaster and 24% in Morecambe, said they used them once or twice weekly. For this survey, 11% in Lancaster and 6% in Morecambe said they never used licensed vehicles.

The resulting estimate of trips per person per month is 1.5 (was 4) for Lancaster and 1.8 (was 5.9) for Morecambe. The previous slightly higher usage in Morecambe remains.

When a similar question was asked, but directed at specific use of hackney carriages only, the main level of usage for Lancaster was 12% (23%) saying once or twice monthly whilst for Morecambe just 5% (was a third) of respondents gave that answer, providing 0.2 (2.3) trips per month by hackney carriage for Lancaster and 0.14 (4.8) for Morecambe.

The share of licensed vehicle trips made by hackney carriage in the area is now low – 14% (58%) in Lancaster and 8% (82%) in Morecambe. However, it remains the response that no-one in Morecambe and just 2% (1%) of people in Lancaster cannot remember when they last saw a hackney carriage in the area. However, this time 73% in Lancaster and 69% in Morecambe told us they could not remember when they last used a hackney carriage, a large increase in this value from the previous survey.

Respondents told us their normal method of getting a licensed vehicle in the area. Many gave multiple responses. For this survey, 53% in Lancaster and 56% in Morecambe said they used an app (last time this was 4% Lancaster and zero in Morecambe). The main loss was phone usage which is now 4% Lancaster and 3% Morecambe – reduced from 51% and 56% respectively.

Hail in the street had also risen significantly from 2% to 23% in Lancaster and zero to 21% in Morecambe, though this could be use of an app. Freephones were 9% and 7% respectively.

The quoted level of getting licensed vehicles from a rank was now 11% (41% last time) in Lancaster and 14% (37%) Morecambe). These are in accord with the overall usage shares albeit opposing ways round.

When asked regarding companies contacted, 87% of Lancaster and 90% of Morecambe respondents gave at least one company name. 8% of the Lancaster and 10% of the Morecambe responses gave three names, 60% and 50% two and 32% and 40% one respectively. The two sets of responses gave very similar numbers of total mentions. Total mentions were about the same as in the previous survey (273 now, 291 last time).

There were nine companies named, plus three supermarkets plus a search engine. This is more than the main three quoted last time suggesting higher levels of competition now. However, the top three companies of the last survey remain the top three now although their combined share has dropped from 99% then to two thirds now. In the previous survey the top company got equal shares in both areas, whereas now it was more dominant in Morecambe. The second largest company did gain more quotes in Morecambe in the last survey but now has equal share across the area. The third quoted company was mainly only quoted in Lancaster and lost most share (23% overall to 9% overall now).

The fourth most quoted company obtained 8% of the quotes overall, but was mainly quoted in Morecambe where it obtained 13% of the quotes. The next three level of quotes, gaining 8%, 6% and 4% in total, were actually supermarket names. Two were named in Lancaster and one in Morecambe. The other companies gained 3% or less overall including seven people in total shared over the area naming a search engine.

These responses suggest a significant increase in the competitiveness of the private hire market in the City since the last survey, including widespread introduction of apps. This seems to have taken demand from the hackney carriage trade but has also shifted emphasis away from direct phone calls to use of the apps.

60% of Lancaster and 52% of Morecambe respondents told us ranks they were aware of and if they used them or not. 2% of the Lancaster respondents named three ranks, 50% two and 48% one. In Morecambe, a third named two ranks and the remained just one rank. None named three ranks. This resulted in 144 different quotes of ranks, 61 in Morecambe and 83 in Lancaster.

Across the area, 43% (54% last time) of those naming ranks said that they used them.

23 (28 last survey) different names were given for ranks, some of which were different names for the same rank, with some being general locations that were not easily traced.

For the whole area, the highest level of mention for a rank was for the Market Street rank in Morecambe, with 29% overall and 38% in Morecambe, and 24% saying they used it (13% and 25% last time, 66% saying they used it then).

Next was Penny Street Lancaster with 19% overall and 59% using it, but 27% in Lancaster (17% last time, 47% using). Our observations found this location was not actually used.

Dalton Square / Town Hall Gardens gained 9% with 54% saying they used it - although this is no longer used.

Lancaster Station was third with 8% overall (12% for Lancaster respondents), with 18% saying they used it (10% and 20% respectively last time, 42% using).

Marine Road Morecambe also obtained 8% overall with several calling it "Gerry's fishing shop" with 50% saying they used it (was 15% of the overall and 29% of Morecambe quotes last time, but as the Promenade rank, with 45% using).

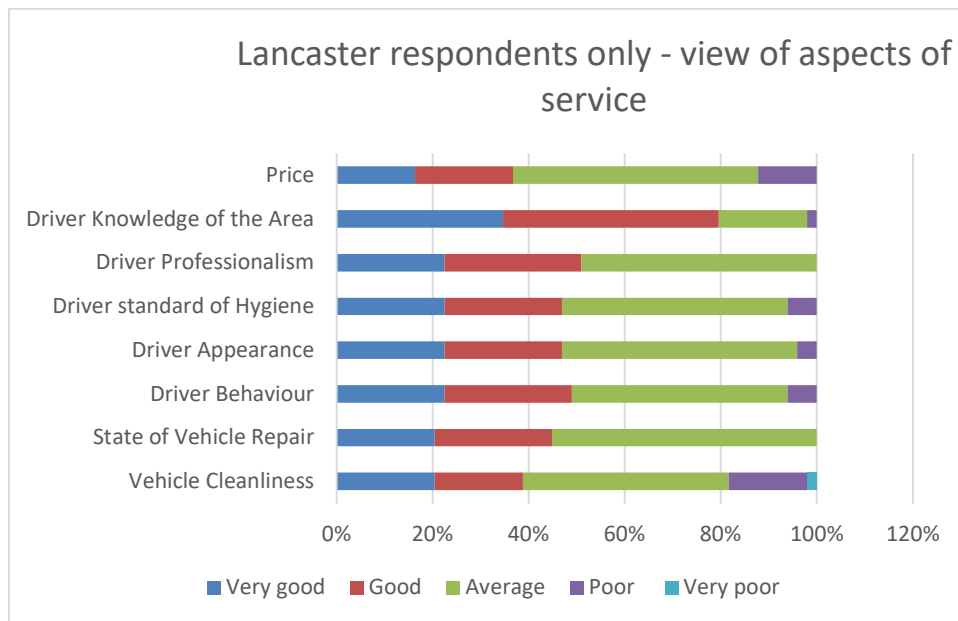
Common Garden St obtained 4% overall with 17% saying they used it.

North Road gained just 1%, with both respondents saying they used it (7% last time, 64% using). Gage Street saw 1% of mentions with the person saying they used it. Morecambe Station also gained 1%, but unused, as did Lancaster Bus Station, also stated as unused (20% overall last time, 56% saying they used it, and 38% in Lancaster).

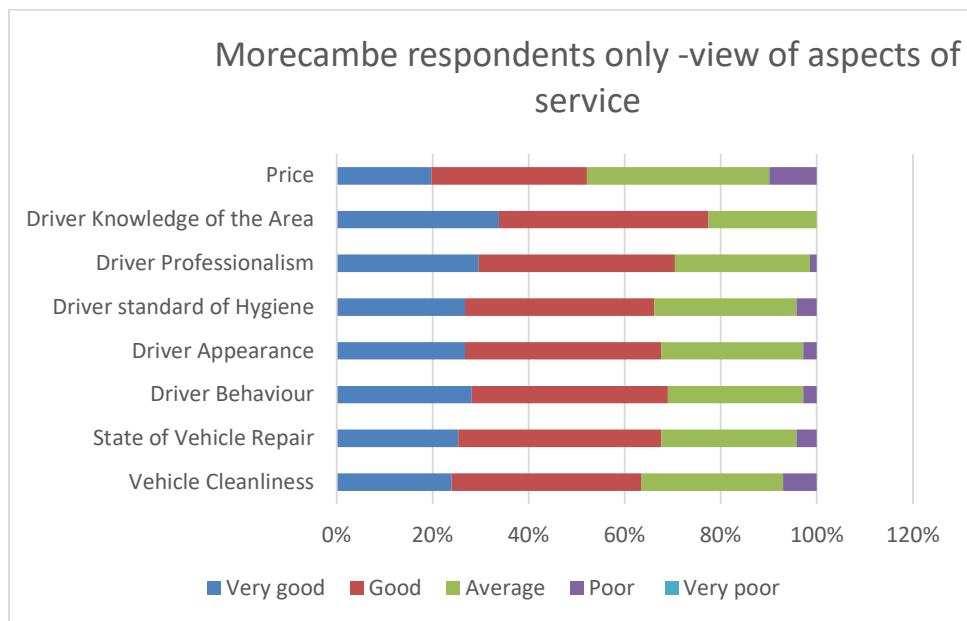
These changes suggest further evidence that usage of hackney carriages appears to have been supplanted by private hire obtained by app.

54% of Lancaster and 80% of Morecambe respondents provided views on various aspects of the service provided on their most recent licensed vehicle trip. For this survey, there was a clear difference between the Lancaster and Morecambe responses. For this reason, we have not presented the general summary adding both together.

For Lancaster:



There was one 'very poor' score for vehicle cleanliness, but no others. The typical score for all but driver knowledge was 'average'. Driver knowledge however performed the best, with 45% scoring this good. This is a change from the last survey where there was largest response for 'very good'. For Morecambe this time:



This shows a generally better performance with the highest scores being good for all but price. There are no very poor scores and very few poor. Again driver knowledge is the best performer overall with 34% scoring this very good. Even for this area, however, this is a downward change since the previous survey when the focus had been on very good scores.

Interestingly the score for price was marginally worse than other scores but not as significantly as for last time, or indeed as is typical around the country. This could be another symptom of high levels of competition, which often focusses on price.

There were some 232 votes given for matters that might encourage people to use hackney carriages or to use them more. For both areas the top item that would encourage or increase hackney carriage usage were more hackney carriages available by phone (34% with 40%, as last time, in Lancaster and 29% in Morecambe). Next was if they were more affordable, 22% Lancaster (was 11%), 32% Morecambe and 27% overall. There is a clear wish for lower costs in Morecambe compared to Lancaster, although even there the level has increased from the last time.

In Lancaster 14% (16% last time) said nothing would increase or encourage them to use hackney carriages with 18% in Morecambe. Vehicle quality saw 8% of votes uniformly across the area, with 5% still preferring a screen (again consistent across the area).

Respondents were asked if they, or anyone they knew, needed an adapted licensed vehicle to travel. Those saying 'no' accounted for 77% (66% last time) in Lancaster and 70% (74%) in Morecambe, suggesting a higher need for adapted vehicles in this area than in many other places (but actually reduced from the previous survey). Of those saying an adapted vehicle was required, the bulk required a WAV style rather than any other adaptation.

People were then asked regarding latent demand by a request to tell us if they had ever given up waiting or made other arrangements to get hackney carriages either at a rank or by hailing. 8% (reduced from 14% last time) said they had issues at ranks in the Lancaster sample whilst 9% (8%) had similar issues in the Morecambe sample. This was investigated further to confirm if the locations were at active ranks or not. For the Lancaster respondents 14% (11%) had given up at a Morecambe rank, for Morecambe respondents, 38% (2% at specific Morecambe ranks). However, these only give a total of four people across the area. This suggests an overall area latent demand factor of 1.02 for all ranks (was 1.08 for council ranks with 1.01 for the private station rank, and a combined value of 1.09 last time).

However, there was concern given that some also mentioned giving up waiting at ranks we know to be little used (Penny Street and Gage Street).

For all those giving up, 60% made a booking instead, 27% walked away or hailed and the remaining 13% (two people) phoned a friend or relative.

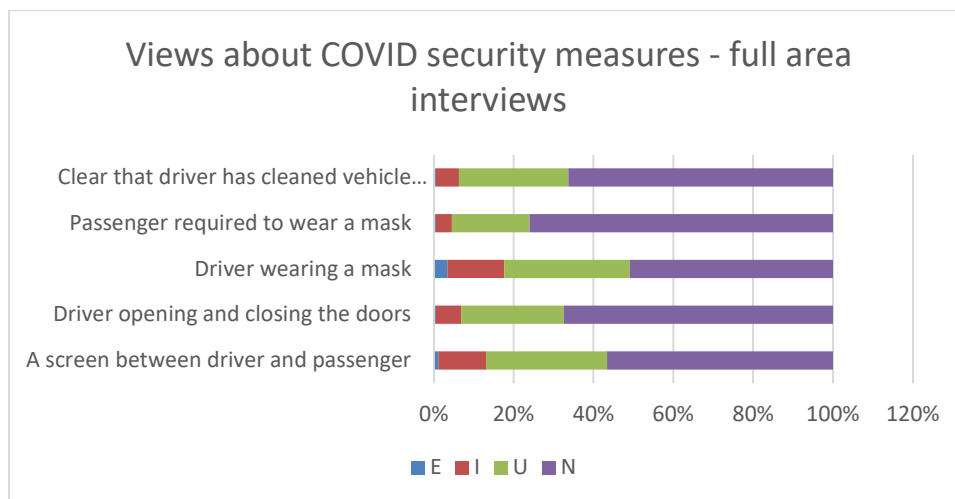
71% (77%) of Lancaster respondents and 64% (78%) of Morecambe respondents felt there were enough hackney carriages in the area – both reduced values since the last survey suggesting provision has worsened.

With respect to comparing the time of the survey to pre-pandemic, 71% said they used private hire more (consistent between both areas) with 12% saying they used hackney carriage more (15% Lancaster and 8% Morecambe). Surprisingly none said they used them less.

Looking to the future, 55% said they expected to use both kinds of vehicles about the same amount. Again the level saying they would use private hire more was higher at 37% compared to 7% for hackney carriages.

These last two questions are generally against the national picture and again hint that the level of competition that appears to have occurred has benefitted both sides of the trade and perhaps increased demand from what it might otherwise have been.

Questions were asked about COVID security measures but it was generally clear that people were generally not anywhere near as concerned as they had been previously:



There was a small amount of encouragement for screen provision and a slightly higher level for drivers wearing masks, but in general the dominant view was now that none of these options remained of much importance to travellers in the Lancaster area, although many still felt that each measure was useful, with a few still considering each matter important.

5 Key stakeholder consultation

The following key stakeholders were contacted in line with the recommendations of the BPG:

- Supermarkets
- Hotels
- Pubwatch / individual pubs / night clubs
- Other entertainment venues
- Restaurants
- Hospitals
- Police
- Disability representatives
- Rail operators
- Other council contacts within all relevant local councils

Comments received have been aggregated below to provide an overall appreciation of the situation at the time of this survey. In some cases, there are very specific comments from given stakeholders, but we try to maintain their confidentiality as far as is possible. The comments provided in the remainder of this Chapter are the views of those consulted, and not that of the authors of this report.

Our information was obtained by telephone, email, letter or face to face meeting as appropriate. The list contacted includes those suggested by the Council, those drawn from previous similar surveys, and from general internet trawls for information. Our target stakeholders are as far as possible drawn from across the entire licensing area to ensure the review covers the full area and not just specific parts or areas.

For the sake of clarity, we cover key stakeholders from the public side separately to those from the licensed vehicle trade element, whose views are summarized separately in the following Chapter.

Supermarkets

Checks with most supermarket phone lines received messages that people should obtain information from net-based sources given that most staff were focussing on keeping stores stocked and customers safe. No response was received from any supermarket.

Hotels, Public houses, Night clubs, Other entertainment venues, Restaurants

Some emails were acknowledged but no response was forthcoming.

Health Service

A response was received from the local hospital. They said patients did use local licensed vehicles, usually asking staff to get them an appropriate vehicle when needed. They told us they have a contract with one private hire company who generally provide a good service. The hospital had no nearby rank provision.

The council licensing section are not aware of any other issues about availability of licensed vehicles being raised, which again suggests there are no significant issues since people would tend to make their views known were there any such issues.

6 Trade stakeholder views

The BPG encourages all studies to include 'all those involved in the trade'. There are a number of different ways felt to be valid in meeting this requirement, partly dependent on what the licensing authority feel is reasonable and possible given the specifics of those involved in the trade in their area.

The most direct and least costly route is to obtain comment from trade representatives. This can be undertaken by email, phone call or face to face meeting by the consultant undertaking the study. In some cases to ensure validity of the work being undertaken it may be best for the consultation to occur after the main work has been undertaken. This avoids anyone being able to claim that the survey work was influenced by any change in behaviour.

Most current studies tend to issue a letter and questionnaire to all hackney carriage and private hire owners, drivers and operators. This is best issued by the council on behalf of the independent consultant. Usual return is now using an on-line form of the questionnaire, with the option of postal return still being provided, albeit in some cases without use of a freepost return. Returns can be encouraged by email or direct contact via representatives.

Some authorities cover private hire by issuing the letter and questionnaire to operators seeking they pass them on when drivers book on or off, or via vehicle data head communications.

In all cases, we believe it is essential we document the method used clearly and measure response levels. However, it is also rare for there to be high levels of response, with 5% typically felt to be good and reasonable. Values below in brackets () are from the 2019 survey for comparison and to identify trends in change.

There were only 12 (five last time) responses received, 50% (40%) from hackney carriage, 33% (40%) from private hire and 17% (20%) from those that drove both kinds of vehicle. Of these, two thirds said the licensed vehicle trade was their only or main source of income. 25% were part of the trade but not presently working although intending to return when demand had increased again, with one person (8%) being a part time trade person who had other sources of income. None of those responding said they did not plan to return.

The drivers responding had an average of 14 (16) years' experience but ranging from recent starters to 30 years (eight to 28).

58% (20%) of the sample worked five days, 8% each six or seven days (60% for six last time) with the other two persons (17%) not having worked (one person last time). The average hours worked were 35 (38) with a maximum of 60 (same). This suggests less hours are being worked now.

91% (80%) owned their own vehicle. 17% (40%) said someone else also drove the vehicle they used – both in evenings. For those not sharing their vehicle, 10% said this had changed since COVID, i.e. a very small reduction in sharing.

Of those responding, two thirds said they were getting less fare paying trips from ranks than pre-COVID with the remainder thinking levels were about the same. For bookings, two thirds thought they were now getting more bookings than pre-COVID, with the remainder saying about the same.

In terms of stated impacts, three said they had taken alternative employment and one said they may not renew their licence when the current one expired – they had only just renewed immediately before the pandemic. Most others said the impact had been severe. Moving forward most were more hopeful although one had now chosen just to undertake school contracts. One said the fare rise had helped. One felt that until more drivers returned or joined there would continually be times that the fleet could not meet demand peaks.

Two of the seven that responded said they worked to suit family commitments, the other five said to suit their health or well being. None said there were times they avoided although one did say they preferred to work daytimes.

Of total responses, 44% said they normally undertook immediate hire from bookings, 38% immediate hire from ranks and 19% advanced hire work. There were some providing more than one response – 25% saying both immediate hire ranks and bookings and one saying immediate hire ranks, bookings and advanced hire work. None responded that they undertook chauffeur or corporate work.

When asked directly if they accepted pre-bookings, half said they did, and half again said this was via an operator, with another saying by phone and another that this was school contracts.

In terms of ranks, one gave three ranks and another two stated two. Of the total mentions of ranks, 50% were for the Bus Station, with one mention each for Brock Street, Common Garden Street, Penny Street, the railway station and 'Morecambe'.

Considering the share of work people obtained from different methods, one hackney carriage said they got 95% of work from the ranks. Two others said a quarter of work, two 20% and one just 5% of their work. For all but one of these the remainder of work came from bookings. One said three quarters of their work came from school contracts. Two private hire respondents got all their work from school contracts.

58% felt there were enough hackney carriages in Lancaster at this point in time.

With respect to frequency respondents got customers either needing to travel in wheel chairs, or transferring, none obtained such fares from any contract. 75% never got either kind of fare from a rank. 38% did not get wheel chair work from bookings with 33% not getting transfer from chair bookings.

13% said they obtained wheel chair or transfer passengers from ranks weekly. Such jobs came for 13% daily for bookings and 11% for transfers. 13% also said they obtained monthly jobs for passengers in wheel chairs. Overall, these are very low numbers.

64% were aware of drivers that had given up due to COVID, with numbers trade members were aware of ranging from one to ten.

When asked if respondents felt the limit benefitted the public, one said it ensured the quality of drivers and vehicles, another said safety and another said they agreed it did but did not say why. One felt it was now irrelevant as most made bookings.

Five of the twelve made other comments. One asked for the return of the taxi forum. One felt passengers were not aware of the difference between hackney carriage and private hire and also stated that Penny Street and North Road ranks both saw significant issues with private cars parking on them and preventing hackney carriages using them. Another pointed out the low level of rank work and the low morale, which was leading to potential customers picking up the negative mood of the trade. They felt that adding any more hackney carriages would probably lead to more leaving the trade than joined.



7 Evaluation of unmet demand and its significance

It is first important to define our specific view about what constitutes unmet demand. Our definition is when a person turns up at a hackney carriage rank and finds there is no vehicle there available for immediate hire. This normally leads to a queue of people building up, some of who may walk off (taken to be latent demand), whilst others will wait till a vehicle collects them. Later passengers may well arrive when there are vehicles there, but because of the queue will not obtain a vehicle immediately.

There are other instances where queues of passengers can be observed at hackney carriage ranks. This can occur when the level of demand is such that it takes longer for vehicles to move up to waiting passengers than passengers can board and move away. This often occurs at railway stations but can also occur at other ranks where high levels of passenger arrivals occur. We do not consider this is unmet demand, but geometric delay and although we note this, it is not counted towards unmet demand being significant.

The industry standard index of the significance of unmet demand (ISUD) was initiated at the time of the introduction of section 16 of the 1985 Transport Act as a numeric and consistent way of evaluating unmet demand and its significance. The ISUD methodology was initially developed by a university and then adopted by one of the leading consultant groups undertaking the surveys made necessary to enable authorities to retain their limit on hackney carriage vehicle numbers. The index has been developed and deepened over time to take into account various court challenges. It has now become accepted as the industry standard test of if identified unmet demand is significant.

The index is a statistical guide derived to evaluate if observed unmet demand is in fact significant. However, its basis is that early tests using first principles identified based on a moderate sample suggested that the level of index of 80 was the cut-off above which the index was in fact significant, and that unmet demand therefore was such that action was needed in terms of additional issue of plates to reduce the demand below this level, or a complete change of policy if it was felt appropriate. This level has been accepted as part of the industry standard. However, the index is not a strict determinant and care is needed in providing the input samples as well as interpreting the result provided. However, the index has various components which can also be used to understand what is happening in the rank-based and overall licensed vehicle market.

ISUD draws from several different parts of the study data. Each separate component of the index is designed to capture a part of the operation of the demand for hackney carriages and reflect this numerically. Whilst the principal inputs are from the rank surveys, the measure of latent demand comes from the public on-street surveys, and any final decision about if identified unmet demand is significant, or in fact about the value of continuing the current policy of restricting vehicle numbers, must be taken fully in the context of a careful balance of all the evidence gathered during the survey process.

The present ISUD calculation has two components which both could be zero. In the case that either are zero, the overall index result is zero, which means they clearly demonstrate there is no unmet demand which is significant, even if other values are high.

The first component which can be zero is the proportion of daytime hours where people are observed to have to wait for a hackney carriage to arrive. The level of wait used is ANY average wait at all within any hour. The industry definition of these hours varies, the main index user counts from 10:00 to 18:00 (i.e. eight hours ending at 17:59). The present index is clear that unmet demand cannot be significant if there are no such hours. The only rider on this component is that the sample of hours collected must include a fair element of such hours, and that if the value is non-zero, review of the potential effect of a wider sample needs to be considered.

The other component which could be zero is the test identifying the proportion of passengers which are travelling in any hour when the average passenger wait in that hour is greater than one minute.

If both of these components are non-zero, then the remaining components of the index come into play. These are the peakiness factor, the seasonality factor, average passenger delay, and the latent demand factor.

Average passenger delay is the total amount of time waited by all passengers in the sample, divided by the total number of passengers observed who entered hackney carriages.

The seasonality factor allows for the undertaking of rank survey work in periods which are not typical, although guidance is that such periods should normally be avoided if possible particularly as the impact of seasons may not just be on the level of passenger demand, but may also impact on the level of supply. This is particularly true in regard to if surveys are undertaken when schools are active or not.

Periods when schools are not active can lead to more hackney carriage vehicles being available whilst they are not required for school contract work. Such periods can also reduce hackney carriage demand with people away on holiday from the area. Generally, use of hackney carriages is higher in December in the run-up to Christmas, but much lower in January, February and the parts of July and August when more people are likely to be on holiday. The factor tends to range from 0.8 for December (factoring high demand level impacts down) to 1.2 for January / February (inflating the values from low demand levels upwards).

There can be special cases where summer demand needs to be covered, although high peaks for tourist traffic use of hackney carriages tend not to be so dominant at the current time, apart from in a few key tourist authorities.

The peakiness factor is generally either 1 (level demand generally) or 0.5 (demand has a high peak at one point during the week). This is used to allow for the difficulty of any transport system being able to meet high levels of peaking. It is rarely possible or practicable for example for any public transport system, or any road capacity, to be provided to cover a few hours a week.

The latent demand factor was added following a court case. It comes from asking people in the on-street questionnaires if they have ever given up waiting for a hackney carriage at a rank in any part of the area. This factor generally only affects the level of the index as it only ranges from 1.0 (no-one has given up) to 2.0 (everyone says they have). It is also important to check that people are quoting legitimate hackney carriage rank waits as some, despite careful questioning, quote giving up waiting at home, which must be for a private hire vehicle (even if in hackney carriage guise as there are few private homes with taxi ranks outside).

The ISUD index is the result of multiplying each of the components together and benchmarking this against the cut-off value of 80. Changes in the individual components of the index can also be illustrative. For example, the growth of daytime hour queueing can be an earlier sign of unmet demand developing than might be apparent from the proportion of people experiencing a queue particularly as the former element is based on any wait and not just that averaging over a minute. The change to a peaky demand profile can tend towards reducing the potential for unmet demand to be significant.

Finally, any ISUD value must be interpreted in the light of the sample used to feed it, as well as completely in the context of all other information gathered. Generally, the guide of the index will tend not to be overturned in regard to significant unmet demand being identified, but this cannot be assumed to be the case – the index is a guide and a part of the evidence and needs to be taken fully in context.

Results from the latest survey, and from all other available reviews of demand for Lancaster are provided below in the table below:

	2022 less rail	2022 With station	2019	2016	2013	2010	2007	2005	2000	1996
APD	0.25	0.4	0.18	0.48	0.12	0.31	0.35	1.32	0.97	0.61
OP	15.38	21.92	13.73	37.5	10	43.75	3.7	7.55	11	13
GID	4.55	9.34	3.4	14.3	4.3	32.7	16.7	34.27	26.1	24
Seas	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Peak	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	1	1
Latent	1.02	1.02	1.12	1.015	1.04					
ISUD	8.93	41.75	4.8	131.5	2.7	222	11	171	278	190

The figures in the table above exclude statistics for the private Lancaster station rank from the 2010 survey onwards. The additional restriction on vehicles that can service that location, plus issues arising from train frequency impacts on demand requirements makes providing good service there much more onerous and difficult. Further, any influence from the Council in terms of being able to add extra vehicles to remove unmet demand is simply not possible.

Since 2016, most statistics have seen improvement away from unmet demand being significant. Only latent demand has increased. The next result is that the index of significance of unmet demand is now 4.8, much lower than in 2016 although still higher than in 2013. This means there is no unmet demand in the area that can be counted as significant at this point in time.

For the sake of completeness, the station performance was reviewed using the industry standard ISUD tool. The result was a high index of 1,005 that suggests the unmet demand observed at the station is significant. However, as already discussed this arises from the moderate frequency of trains which provides spikes in demand that are difficult for any fleet to meet. Further discussion occurs in the conclusions. The value in 2016 was much higher, although the sample at the station at that time was lower and the result less robust for the station.

8 Summary, synthesis and study conclusions

This unmet demand survey on behalf of Lancaster City Council has been undertaken following the guidance of the BPG and other recent case history regarding unmet demand and its significance. This chapter draws the key points from each chapter, provides a synthesis drawing these together and then provides conclusions from the database. The following chapter provides specific recommendations based on our understanding of the database of information.

Background and context

This latest unmet demand survey for Lancaster saw the principal information gathered between November 2022 and February 2023. Rank observations were undertaken in mid-November, on-street interviews in late November, and driver views obtained by mid-February 2023. Key stakeholders were approached through the period of the survey.

Lancashire remains an area where all but four of the authorities retain their limit on hackney carriage vehicle numbers. Five other authorities held their review at the same time as this survey. The area has not seen much population growth since the time of the previous survey.

The area sees most population in the two largest of the four centres, Lancaster and Morecambe. Local Transport Planning is focussed at the County tier level but also tailored through the Lancaster Highway and Transport Masterplan of 2016. Licensed vehicles are stated to be the third hierarchy of choice after ultra-low emission buses and other buses, with a stated aim to seek ultra-low emission licensed vehicles where possible (unchanged from the time of the previous survey). In terms of rank provision, there are some local powers allowing limited introduction of new ranks, used in some other areas but not Lancaster.

The Council has limited hackney carriage vehicle numbers since at least 1994 and very regularly reviews this policy by a full independent survey. Three plate issues have occurred in this period, all in favour of wheel chair accessible style vehicles (WAV) (with a stipulation that these vehicles must remain WAV). The area has a history of owners providing further WAV by choice although these can, and often do, revert to saloon as the owners consider necessary.

The level of hackney carriages in the area is now 12% above the level in 1994 whilst private hire are 49% higher (although the latter had begun to decrease before the pandemic and continued to decline until the 2022 March DfT survey, after which there has been some marginal resurgence).

This means at the time of the survey the hackney carriage fleet is 36% of the total licensed fleet, high for an area with limited numbers. At the last survey, this share was lower at 31%, having been at maximum at 43% in 1997. This is partly because the long-standing tradition in Lancaster is for a lot of private hire bookings to be undertaken by hackney carriages. The level of independent vehicles only getting their living from ranks is negligible.

The licensed vehicle fleet sees many hackney carriages operating for private hire companies blurring the distinction between the two vehicle styles. This seems to have reduced the overall pressure on private hire vehicle growth although most hackney carriages need to work on private hire as the level of rank work available continues to reduce.

Driver numbers declined since the last survey to a low point in the March 2022 DfT statistics after which some growth has occurred. The focus remains on dual driver licences meaning drivers can choose the appropriate vehicle at the time.

Operator numbers show a general decline since the last survey. This is a trend accelerated in the pandemic of company agglomeration and cessation of smaller companies in favour of larger ones.

The hackney carriage WAV proportion has been stable at 14% since 2010 (below the average of 22% across similar authorities with WAV but not with fully WAV fleets). Phv WAV have been stable at 8% (5% nationally) of the fleet for the last 18 months. Of note is the fact there are 15 WAV in both parts of the fleet, the difference in proportion purely due to the different total numbers of vehicles in each part of the fleet.

The proportion of the total licensed fleet that is WAV is now 10%, similar to four other authorities with limited numbers of hackney carriages and eight other authorities. This is only marginally less than the 11% of similar authorities.

Records are available of the results of all surveys including those for 1996, 2000, 2005, 2007, 2010, 2013, 2016 and 2019, providing a very regular and DfT guidance compliant level of information about demand in the area.

There are seven rail stations in the Lancaster area, with Lancaster the busiest, being 232nd highest out of the just over 2,600 Great Britain stations (having moved up from 282nd in 2019). It saw over 1.66 million passenger entries and exits in the latest available data (to end of March 2022) (was 2.1 million). Morecambe is second busiest, but patronage there is just over 147,000. The

Lancaster rail passenger flows have gone down 24% in a similar period to that between the last survey and this one.

Rank observations

The 2022 survey found two lightly used 2019 ranks now with no hackney carriage activity at all – Penny Street and Tunstall Street. Further, Marine Road Central in Morecambe was hardly used at all by hackney carriages.

67% (73% last survey) of the vehicles observed at or near ranks were local hackney carriages. 1.2% (14%) were private hire vehicles and 11% (same) private cars. In terms of total all vehicle movements, 27% (36%) were at or near the North Road Diggles location in Lancaster, reflecting its location in the heart of the Lancaster shopping area. Shares of the numbers of total vehicles observed increased at Common Garden St, Market St and Bus Station for this survey whilst movements at the station were reduced.

Morecambe ranks saw the worst impact of abuse by private cars, although many of these incidents were when the two ranks in question were not actually in use by hackney carriages. With the almost lack of use of Marine Road Central it has almost become a normal parking place.

Despite the extension of the Diggles rank since the last survey, abuse by private vehicles has worsened, with 31% of the vehicles seen here being private cars. 30% of vehicles at Common Garden Street were private cars. Whilst this is a national issue that has developed essentially due to the pandemic (when ranks were less used and private cars searching more for places to park given their rise in use against other public transport), nonetheless this is an issue that Lancashire enforcement need to take seriously as such use leads to public safety issues.

The headline of the 2022 rank observations is that estimated weekly usage of hackney carriage ranks by passengers has halved since the last survey. This is strongly against the previous trend of stable levels of usage between the last two surveys following reductions in the level of decline over the previous two surveys.

For the 2022 observations, the private Lancaster Station rank remained busiest, but seeing some 34% (40% last time) of the total estimated 3,195 passengers in a typical week. North Road, Diggles remained second with 30% (same as last survey) followed by the Damside Bus Station with 20% (actually increase from 16% last time). Market Street Morecambe again saw 9% of total passenger demand. Common Garden Street saw increased usage in share terms, up from 5% to 7%.

In absolute terms the Lancaster Station rank saw a 57% reduction in passenger numbers (although rail passenger flows were only down 24%). Even with this reduction, the rank still takes away an estimated 6.6% of all passengers leaving the station from trains.

For 2022 the peak hour passenger flow was 90 in the 02:00 hour early Saturday morning. 01:00 Sunday saw 89 passengers. These values are significantly less than the peak of 161 for the last survey. For both peak hours the total is made up from North Road and one other rank (Common Garden Street, Saturday early hours and Bus Station Sunday early hours). The actual peaks at North Road are later than the main peak by an hour early Saturday and two hours early Sunday.

The level of peakiness of demand is now higher (3.7 compared to 3.4). During the survey period there were three hours without passengers using any rank – increased from the single hour in 2019.

Friday average passenger flows per hour were 32 and Saturdays 31, with Thursday seeing just seven (but excluding station flows). When taken with the average passenger occupancy of 1.6 persons per vehicle this suggests at best 20 rank-based hires per hour on average – or just 0.2 hires per hour per hackney carriage vehicle.

The busiest rank when operating is far and away the Diggles rank. It is now the only location that sees more than 25 passengers in any hour in the area – last time this value was 60 passengers. The Bus Station rank appears to have changed from a mainly daytime rank to a location used for all hours.

Across the rank observations, just 8% (6% last time) of hours had average passenger delay (APD) in that hour a minute or more, with a further 10% (9%) having APD of lower levels. Only 8.1% (9.4% last time) of passengers actually experienced a wait of a minute or more. Some occurrences of unmet demand related more to 'thin demand' (passengers waiting when rank demand was generally low) than to any need for more vehicles. However, the key message is that, despite half the passengers, levels of unmet demand are marginally increased, which is not what people would expect.

The issues of poorer service at the station did not seem to exist as much in 2022 although the ISUD index is still worse when the station operation is included. This confirms the added restriction and payment for a permit to the rail company acts against the level of service provided to its customers. To reiterate, this is a rail company decision and the Council has little influence on this.

Review of the delay profile found the focus of Friday waits between 12:00 and 18:00 that day, covering most active ranks in those hours. Saturday waiting was focussed on 10:00 to 13:00.

While waiting did occur in the busiest hours, this was at a much lower level than in other hours, suggesting the fleet has sufficient vehicles to meet peak demand but struggles to provide sufficient vehicles when demand is much lower (almost certainly relating to vehicles moving to private hire operations). The level of passengers observed to walk away from ranks was reduced from 63 last time to 43 now.

Review of plates active found 51% (54% last time, not much different) of the fleet were observed on the Saturday of the survey. The Lancaster patterns in usage suggest more vehicles active in the daytime and less at night, a nationally similar picture given that it appears drivers now prefer to work times they prefer, and an apparent ability to earn sufficient to avoid less preferable hours.

Our Morecambe observations at the main rank there identified around six vehicles servicing the location in our sample hours. It is possible that this rank might be the only one that could provide sufficient remuneration for a small fleet dedicated to its service.

The same number - four people - were observed accessing hackney carriages at ranks in wheel chairs, although the locations used were different, split equally between Lancaster Bus Station and the Morecambe rank. This was supplemented by a further 28 (44 last time) who were assisted into vehicles due to apparent disabilities. Although a small number, this choice for these travellers would be of significant benefit and importance to them. They could have made bookings but appear to have chosen the rank option.

On street public views

A representative sample of local people were interviewed about their views regarding local licensed vehicles. 90% of those interviewed in Lancaster and 85% in Morecambe said they had used a local licensed vehicle in the last three months, slightly lower than the 93% and 99% of the last surveys. However, only 5% said they travelled by only hackney carriage, 12% had used both hackney carriage and private hire and 70% said private hire only. For Morecambe the hackney carriage share was just 2%.

The estimated trips per person per month was reduced to 1.5 Lancaster and 1.8 Morecambe for all licensed vehicles. 14% of the Lancaster and 8% of the Morecambe trips were quoted as being by hackney carriage. However, people were aware of hackney carriages but with an increased share not being able to remember when they last used a hackney carriage.

A telling statistic is that the highest used method of getting a licensed vehicle now was using an app (53% Lancaster and 56% Morecambe) with a strong reduction in phone bookings. Hailing also increased to 23% and 21% respectively. Ranks were down to 11% and 14% (were 41% and 37%) for the respective areas.

The number of quoted private hire companies used increased from four last time to nine now. However, the top three companies remained the same although their share of mentions was down from almost 100% to two thirds now. This seems to confirm increased private hire competition across the area with a particular emphasis on use of apps, although the overall level of companies has reduced in physical numbers, those that are publicly active seem to have put effort into being active.

Respondents displayed a good knowledge of ranks with 43% (54% last time) of those named also being used. The most known rank this time was Market Street Morecambe (29%), Penny Street (19%, with 59% saying they used it), with North Road gaining just 1% across the area of mentions, and no mention of the Bus Station at all. Lancaster station gained 8% of mentions.

In terms of how people felt about various aspects of the service provided across the licensed vehicle fleet, people in Morecambe tended to vote 'good' whilst those in Lancaster only said 'average' although the level of very poor or poor scores was minimal. Reduced levels of customer satisfaction often result when competition occurs – the fact that price is not an issue suggests the competition may have been in place.

In terms of factors that might increase hackney carriage usage, the key one was more hackney carriages people could book by phone followed by them being more affordable.

The question about need for an adapted vehicle identified reduced but still high need in the area, mainly for WAV style vehicles.

Latent demand for ranks was estimated at 1.02 (reduced from 1.09 last time).

The level of those feeling there were enough hackney carriages was reduced (71% compared to 77% for Lancaster and 64% compared to 78% for Morecambe).

Key stakeholder views

No views were provided apart from one from the local hospital who had an account with a private hire company who generally provided a good service.

Trade views

For the 2022 survey, the level of driver response was increased from last time, but only from five to twelve, a very low response. Half these were from those saying they drove hackney carriage, 17% from drivers of both kinds of vehicles and the remaining third from private hire drivers. Two thirds of these said the licensed vehicle trade was their only or main source of income. 25% were not working at the time of the survey but planned to return when demand increased further.

Experience levels were around 14 years with the maximum quoted 30 years. The highest proportion of people worked five days (58%) with an average of 35 hours per week and 60 hours maximum, the average slightly less than that quoted last time. This time almost all owned their own vehicle with demonstration of a small reduction in vehicle sharing since COVID.

There were a lot of pessimistic responses about impact of the pandemic although quite a few were more hopeful looking forward. Several were clear they had taken other jobs and one was not sure if they would renew their licence when it ended. Of those responding, 44% took immediate hire from bookings, 38% immediate hire from ranks and 19% advanced hire work.

Half of the small number of rank mentions were the bus station. Brock Street, Common Garden Street, Penny Street, Lancaster station and 'Morecambe' obtained one mention each. The highest quoted level of work from ranks was 95% by one person – the next most was 25%. Three mentioned school contracts with two getting all their work from them.

58% felt there were enough hackney carriages in Lancaster at the time of the survey.

Mention was made of the issues caused by private cars parking in ranks – affecting both Penny Street and North Road.

There were two responses about how the limit benefitted the public – saying it ensured the quality of drivers and vehicles the other saying it kept vehicles safer. One felt a limit was irrelevant as they thought most people now booked their vehicles.

The overall tone of the responses was relative concern for the future. One suggested the limit was one of the few positive points at the present time.

Formal evaluation of significance of unmet demand

The 2023 evaluation using the industry standard index of significance of unmet demand (ISUD) provided a value of 8.93, a long way from the level of 80 that is counted to show unmet demand to be significant. The value is higher than the previous value of 4.8. However, latent demand has reduced whilst other elements have only increased marginally.

However, evaluation of the station rank, and of all ranks including that location, suggests much poorer service occurs at that location. As already noted, this results both from the nature of train arrivals as well as from the further limitation on numbers of vehicles able to service this site. The index for all ranks including the station rises to 41.75. However, this value was much lower than the value of 1005 for ISUD obtained last time for the station alone.

The general incidence of delay – the level of passengers travelling in hours with an average passenger demand level a minute or more – is double that of the Council only ranks. The average passenger delay rises from 0.25 to 0.4 seconds. The off peak delay parameter increases albeit less than the general delay factor.

Synthesis

The headline of this survey is that rank usage in the area has halved since the last survey, just three years ago (but across the pandemic). Despite this, levels of unmet demand have increased, but not greatly. Not only has the overall level of rank usage declined, the number of active ranks has seen its biggest ever reduction, with three ranks that saw some activity last time now seeing no or very little activity at all.

There were some positive points – the number of people observed travelling in wheel chairs was exactly the same for this survey as for the last. Latent demand and levels of people walking away from ranks were reduced.

People's views of the service was worse than in the previous survey – more so in Lancaster than in Morecambe. Public responses suggested a big shift to usage of apps since the last survey mainly against private hire bookings but also reducing rank usage. Strangely hailing is quoted as increasing, but some of this could be further app usage.

The profile of rank usage is similar to the last survey but just at an overall half level. In the last survey peak passenger flows in an hour were 161 – this time they were 90 (and it must be remembered that is passengers, not fare-paying journeys which will be less by the level of average vehicle occupancy).

It appears that there has been strong competition in the private hire sector, much using introduction of apps, which appears to have reduced the hackney carriage rank-based sector severely. This has led to many hackney carriage drivers becoming despondent. The lack of driver response (albeit better than last time) is unfortunate. Many have found other sources of work either from school contracts or other sources but in any event rank-based demand has been severely hit.

One of the most active ranks suffers from abuse by private vehicles despite having been improved since the last survey in terms of having extra space. This has seen a benefit in reduction of issues with private hire vehicles, but the private vehicle issue has worsened.

In the last survey, it was estimated that there were just 4.9 paid journeys per vehicle per day. That value is now 2.7. The encouragement to obtain work from private hire bookings is even stronger now.

The hackney carriage vehicle trade cannot stand any further reduction in passenger numbers if it is to remain viable. This is more critical to visitors to the area who may not readily be aware of local apps and who are more dependent on rank provision, unless they visit regularly.

Conclusions

Our independent collation of evidence of demand for hackney carriages in the Lancaster licensing area found a very disturbing picture of a strong decline in use of hackney carriages across the authority area. This covers reductions in both volume and extent of ranks used. Morecambe now effectively only has one, daytime only, rank. Lancaster has two ranks, one more attuned to night demand, plus the private rank whose patronage has naturally reduced with decline in rail patronage not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels. Ironically the peak usage of the rail station matched the last survey period almost exactly, making the differences observed worse.

The overall evidence is that the current limit on hackney carriage vehicle licences is providing the last vestiges of stability, but is providing public benefit to those using licensed vehicles in the area. Without the limit the decline in usage may well have been much worse. However, if hackney carriages are to remain a key part of public transport provision in Lancaster, urgent action is needed to keep them.

It is essential to make sure that the North Road rank is strongly protected from private vehicle usage. Zero tolerance of abuse at all times is needed. To ensure this is possible, it may be necessary to extend the rank even further. This could be achieved by giving up the many unused rank spaces within the town. The all-day space needs to be for two vehicles, perhaps moving partly backwards into the heavily abused double yellow line section. The night section needs to begin operation at 20:00 or even 18:00 once the use for loading ceases, not leaving a gap in between where other vehicles can get established.

A decision is needed if Penny Street needs to be retained or not. The present location has around six spaces. It might be more appropriate to reduce this to two spaces, but design them to be much more clearly a rank, and then ensure they are enforced. However, this should only be undertaken if the trade commit to using the rank. The public strangely said they used it.

Discussion is needed with the trade, and perhaps with the night trade in Morecambe if a better night rank provision is needed there. The former rank there which was much more easily enforceable and obvious was always much more highly used. It may be, however, that this demand has now moved to private hire and app-based (almost certainly using the same vehicles but not rank-based).

If the Council wish to retain an active hackney carriage rank-based operation in the authority, the limit should be retained although it is possible that the number could be set as a moratorium on new plates rather than a fixed limit, allowing the level of plates to reduce. The actual rank-based demand element of the hackney carriage trade clearly cannot support anywhere near as many vehicles.

The previous survey concerns and thoughts about attempting to increase the level of wheel chair or other adapted hackney carriages would no longer find many if any willing to invest extra in new or revised vehicles. There is also unlikely to be much spare investment moneys around in the hackney carriage trade to see move to more sustainable vehicles either.

9 Recommendations

On the basis of the evidence gathered in this unmet demand survey for Lancaster, our key conclusion is that there is no evidence of any unmet demand for the services of hackney carriages either patent or latent which is significant at the point in time this survey was undertaken in the Lancaster licensing area. The committee is therefore able to retain the current limit, and do so at its present level. There is specifically no need to add any further licences. In fact there could be a clear case for not renewing any spare licences that might appear.

The committee has to determine if it considers retention of a rank-based hackney carriage operation important to the area. If so, significant action needs to be encouraged some of which is beyond the remit of licensing. In essence, current used ranks need strong and zero tolerance enforcement at all times, and up to three ranks need to see significant development, which requires action and agreement from Lancashire highways.

The principal action within the gift of licensing is public education of the different kinds of licensed vehicle and how the public can engage them. This covers education of both local and visiting users.

Appendix 1 – List of ranks

Rank / operating hours	Spaces (approx)	Comments
Lancaster City		
24-hour ranks		
Damside Bus Station	11	Back in use as main rank
Penny Street, KFC	4	Now little used
Common Garden Street	2	
North Road, Diggles	1	Three additional spaces at night (see below)
Night only ranks		
North Road	11	Operates 2200 to 0400. Main night club now gone, limited use
Gage Street	3	Operates 2000 – 0600
North Road, Diggles	3	Operates 2200 - 0600
Penny Street	5	Operates 2200 - 0600
Brock Street	5	Operates 1800 - 0800
Sun Hotel	2	New rank operating 1800 to 0600
Lower St, Leonardsgate Car Park	8	Operates 0100 – 0330 1 Sept to 30 June
Non-central rank locations (Radio)		
Ash Grove	1	All to meet condition that vehicles should proceed to rank to wait
Torrisholme road	1	
Coulston Road	1	
Hala Square	1	
St Martin’s Road	1	
Green Lane Halton Road	1	
Quernmore Road	1	
Private Ranks		
Lancaster railway station, County side	6	Single space near exit with further spaces within forecourt. Supplementary payment to Avanti Trains via an agency
Lancaster University, Bowland Ave	3	
Lancaster University, South West Drive	2	
Morecambe		
24 hour ranks		
Market Street, Arndale and feeder	8+4	Main daytime rank directly outside shopping centre and supermarket
Tunstall Street, rear of Arndale shopping centre	3	New during 2015
Morecambe rail station car park	5	Purpose built area on council land

Broadway	4	
Marine Road East / Elm Grove	2	
Marine Rd W / Lancashire St	3	See below for night extension
Marine Road opp Midland Hotel	2	
Marine Road E opp Town Hall	4	
Night time ranks		
Marine Road West / Lancashire Street	2	2000 to 0600 additional spaces
Tunstall St	2	1800 to 0800 additional spaces
Marine Road Central opposite War Memorial	5	2000 to 0600
Victoria Street	2	2200 to 0400
Marine Road West near Aldi	6	2000 to 0600
Marine Road Central (Costa)	5	1800 to 0800

Appendix 2 – details of rail patronage at local stations

Rail year (ends March in last year noted)	Entries / exits	Growth / decline
Lancaster (232 nd) (was 282 nd last survey)(Avanti)		
1997 / 1998	1,051,133	n/a
1998 / 1999	1,098,475	+5%
1999 / 2000	1,154,174	+5%
2000 / 2001	1,131,960	-2%
2001 / 2002	1,150,536	+2%
2002 / 2003	1,115,448	-3%
2003 / 2004	Not collected	
2004 / 2005	1,270,227	+14%
2005 / 2006	1,317,299	+4%
2006 / 2007	1,395,832	+6%
2007 / 2008	1,498,353	+7%
2008 / 2009	1,559,994	+%
2009 / 2010	1,656,070	+6%
2010 / 2011	1,787,698	+8%
2011 / 2012	1,835,462	+3%
2012 / 2013	1,850,772	+1%
2013 / 2014	1,915,446	+3%
2014 / 2015	2,004,122	+5%
2015 / 2016	2,033,538	+1%
2016 / 2017	2,146,796	+6%
2017 / 2018	2,142,868	-0.2%
2018 / 2019	2,122,814	-1%
2019 / 2020	2,193,066	+3%
2020 / 2021	521,432	-76%
2021 / 2022	1,659,362	+218%
Growth since last survey (2018/9 to 2021/2) (and from 97/98)		-22% (+58%)

Rail year (ends March in last year noted)	Entries / exits	Growth / decline
Morecambe (1,308 th) (was 1,418 th) Northern		
1997 / 1998	195,573	n/a
1998 / 1999	202,754	+4%
1999 / 2000	202,239	-0.3%
2000 / 2001	194,329	-4%
2001 / 2002	185,476	-5%
2002 / 2003	167,592	-10%
2003 / 2004	Not collected	
2004 / 2005	195,316	+17%
2005 / 2006	185,405	-5%
2006 / 2007	188,789	+2%
2007 / 2008	205,495	+9%
2008 / 2009	204,100	+0.3%
2009 / 2010	204,858	+0.3
2010 / 2011	221,142	+8%
2011 / 2012	220,296	-0.4%
2012 / 2013	209,108	-5%
2013 / 2014	217,280	+4%
2014 / 2015	245,548	+13%
2015 / 2016	235,198	-4% (+20% overall)
2016 / 2017	237,976	+1%
2017 / 2018	225,632	-5%
2018 / 2019	195,956	-13%
2019 / 2020	207,976	+6%
2020 / 2021	44,778	-78%
2021 / 2022	147,004	+228%
Growth since last survey (2018/9 to 2021/2) (and from 97/98)		-25% (-25%)

Rail year (ends March in last year noted)	Entries / exits	Growth / decline
Carnforth (1,284 th) (was 1,497 th) Trans Pennine Express		
1997 / 1998	110,164	n/a
1998 / 1999	107,814	-2%
1999 / 2000	112,957	+5%
2000 / 2001	123,624	+9%
2001 / 2002	98,461	-20%
2002 / 2003	105,046	+7%
2003 / 2004	Not collected	
2004 / 2005	149,649	+42%
2005 / 2006	157,240	+5%
2006 / 2007	150,824	-4%
2007 / 2008	174,644	+16%
2008 / 2009	176,918	+1%
2009 / 2010	179,602	+2%
2010 / 2011	196,972	+10%
2011 / 2012	191,306	-3%
2012 / 2013	196,470	+3%
2013 / 2014	206,590	+5%
2014 / 2015	204,196	-1%
2015 / 2016	206,572	+1% (88% overall)
2016 / 2017	198,270	-4%
2017 / 2018	175,384	-12%
2018 / 2019	166,556	-19%
2019 / 2020	189,000	+13%
2020 / 2021	51,772	-73%
2021 / 2022	151,484	+92%
Growth since last survey (2018/9 to 2021/2) (and from 97/98)		-9% (+37%)

Rail year (ends March in last year noted)	Entries / exits	Growth / decline
Bare Lane (1,569th) (was 1,583rd) Northern		
1997 / 1998	118,851	n/a
1998 / 1999	125,886	+6%
1999 / 2000	123,624	-2%
2000 / 2001	125,093	+1%
2001 / 2002	113,211	-10%
2002 / 2003	101,181	-11%
2003 / 2004	Not collected	
2004 / 2005	116,597	+15%
2005 / 2006	117,576	+1%
2006 / 2007	117,264	-0.3%
2007 / 2008	126,706	+8%
2008 / 2009	132,652	+5%
2009 / 2010	131,752	-1%
2010 / 2011	137,856	+5%
2011 / 2012	141,200	+2%
2012 / 2013	138,054	-2%
2013 / 2014	167,726	+21%
2014 / 2015	183,830	+10%
2015 / 2016	188,120	+2%
2016 / 2017	179,506	-5%
2017 / 2018	155,096	-14%
2018 / 2019	137,840	-11%
2019 / 2020	136,968	-0.06%
2020 / 2021	50,502	-63%
2021 / 2022	91,640	+81%
Growth since last survey (2018/9 to 2021/2) (and from 97/98)		-34% (-23%)

Rail year (ends March in last year noted)	Entries / exits	Growth / decline
Silverdale (1,929 th) (was 1,994 th) Northern		
1997 / 1998	38,146	n/a
1998 / 1999	37,451	-2%
1999 / 2000	38,927	+4%
2000 / 2001	34,301	-12%
2001 / 2002	30,676	-11%
2002 / 2003	27,441	-11%
2003 / 2004	Not collected	
2004 / 2005	34,419	+25%
2005 / 2006	33,520	-3%
2006 / 2007	36,082	+8%
2007 / 2008	42,268	+17%
2008 / 2009	45,080	+7%
2009 / 2010	45,126	+0.1%
2010 / 2011	47,024	+4%
2011 / 2012	44,566	-5%
2012 / 2013	45,818	+3%
2013 / 2014	50,404	+10%
2014 / 2015	59,352	+18%
2015 / 2016	54,872	-8% (+44% overall)
2016 / 2017	55,892	+2%
2017 / 2018	53,218	-5%
2018 / 2019	47,978	-10%
2019 / 2020	50,722	+6%
2020 / 2021	16,202	-68%
2021 / 2022	41,260	+155%
Growth since last survey (2018/9 to 2021/2) (and from 97/98)		-14% (+8%)

Rail year (ends March in last year noted)	Entries / exits	Growth / decline
Heysham Port (2,321st) (2,353rd) Northern		
1997 / 1998	16,869	n/a
1998 / 1999	10,070	-40%
1999 / 2000	6,924	-31%
2000 / 2001	9,387	+36%
2001 / 2002	7,682	-19%
2002 / 2003	6,788	-12%
2003 / 2004	Not collected	
2004 / 2005	5,696	-16%
2005 / 2006	5,251	-8%
2006 / 2007	6,924	+32%
2007 / 2008	7,178	+4%
2008 / 2009	7,606	+6%
2009 / 2010	7,752	+2%
2010 / 2011	8,858	+14%
2011 / 2012	7,682	-13%
2012 / 2013	8,310	+8%
2013 / 2014	9,064	+9%
2014 / 2015	9,608	+6%
2015 / 2016	9,128	-5% (-46% overall)
2016 / 2017	10,158	+11%
2017 / 2018	9,670	-5%
2018 / 2019	7,698	-20%
2019 / 2020	11,450	+49%
2020 / 2021	1,130	-90%
2021 / 2022	8,404	+644%
Growth since last survey (2018/9 to 2021/2) (and from 97/98)		+9% (-50%)

Rail year (ends March in last year noted)	Entries / exits	Growth / decline
Wennington (2402 nd)(was 2408 th) Northern		
1997 / 1998	2,321	n/a
1998 / 1999	2,461	+6%
1999 / 2000	2,073	-16%
2000 / 2001	2,306	+11%
2001 / 2002	1,811	-21%
2002 / 2003	2,005	+11%
2003 / 2004	Not collected	
2004 / 2005	2,900	+45%
2005 / 2006	2,697	-7%
2006 / 2007	2,848	+6%
2007 / 2008	3,111	+9%
2008 / 2009	3,040	-2%
2009 / 2010	3,222	+6%
2010 / 2011	3,696	+15%
2011 / 2012	3,340	-10%
2012 / 2013	2,948	-12%
2013 / 2014	3,378	+15%
2014 / 2015	3,492	+3%
2015 / 2016	3,956	+13%
2016 / 2017	4,394	+11%
2017 / 2018	4,384	-0.2%
2018 / 2019	4,768	+9%
2019 / 2020	5,398	+13%
2020 / 2021	430	-92%
2021 / 2022	3,604	+738%
Growth since last survey (2018/9 to 2021/2) (and from 97/98)		-24%% (+55%)



Department
for Transport

Guidance

Taxi and private hire vehicle licensing best practice guidance for licensing authorities in England

Updated 17 November 2023

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The Department for Transport has issued guidance on taxi and private hire vehicle licensing since 2006 to assist local authorities that have responsibility for the regulation of the taxi and private hire vehicle trades. This is updated periodically, considering stakeholder views and changes in the way the sector operates. This best practice guidance is one of a number of documents intended to assist the operation and regulation of the sector (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/licensing-of-taxis-and-phvs-for-local-authorities-in-england>). The objective of the government is to work with licensing authorities to promote the regulation of the sector in a way that enables the provision of safe, accessible, available, and affordable services that meet the wide range of passenger needs by a thriving trade.

In 2020 the government issued, for the first time, Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-taxi-and-private-hire-vehicle-standards>) to safeguard the most vulnerable in society. The Policing and Crime Act 2017 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/3/section/177/enacted>) enabled the Secretary of State to issue these to licensing authorities; though the focus was on the use of their powers to protect children and vulnerable adults over 18 from harm, the measures will increase the safety of all passengers.

Licensing authorities must give due regard to the Statutory Standards when setting their taxi and private hire vehicle licensing policies and procedures. This non-statutory best practice guidance complements the statutory standards, covering a range of issues outside the remit of the statutory standards.

Individual licensing authorities are still responsible for deciding their own policies and making decisions on individual licensing matters applying the relevant law and any other relevant considerations. This guidance is primarily intended to assist licensing authorities, but it is only guidance and does not intend to give a definitive statement of the law; any decisions made by an authority remain a matter for that authority.

The Local Government Association's Councillors' Handbook on taxi and private hire vehicle licensing (<https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/councillor-handbook-taxi-and-phv-licensing-2021>) advises that those responsible for licensing should communicate regularly with their counterparts in neighbouring authorities to ensure critical information is shared and decision-making is consistent and robust. By working together, local government can make sure that this vital service is safe, respected, and that it meets the needs of all those in their local communities.

This guidance links to relevant documents that licensing authorities may find useful to share with local partners (for example, taxi or private hire vehicle providers).

This version of the best practice guidance replaces all previous versions and will be subject to revision when necessary.

1.2 Terminology

Vehicles licensed under section 37 of the Town Police Clauses Act 1847 and section 6 of the Metropolitan Carriage Act 1869 are referred to in that legislation as 'hackney carriages'. This term is also used in older regulations. In more recent legislation the term 'taxi' is used.

In this document 'taxi' means vehicles licensed under the aforementioned sections of the above acts only. It does not include private hire vehicles (PHVs).

Vehicles licensed under section 48 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, section 7 of the Private Hire Vehicles (London) Act 1998 and section 5 of the Plymouth City Act 1975 are often referred to as 'minicabs', 'cabs' and even 'taxis'. The term 'private hire vehicle' is used in aforementioned sections of the above acts and so is used throughout this guidance to refer to all such vehicles.

Private hire vehicles include executive cars, chauffeur services, limousines and some school and day centre transport services. One of the overarching objectives of this guidance is to provide greater distinction for the public between taxis and PHVs so that the public is increasingly aware of this. Licensing authorities should adopt this approach in its communications.

1.3 Scope of the best practice guidance

This guidance does not seek to cover the whole range of possible licensing requirements. Instead, it seeks to concentrate on those issues that have caused difficulty in the past or that seem of particular significance. This document will be reviewed and updated when necessary and other specific issues may be added should the need arise. The law on taxi and private hire vehicle licensing contains many complexities which are beyond the scope of this guidance.

The guidance does not purport to give a definitive statement of the law and any decision made by a licensing authority remains a matter for that authority. Licensing authorities will need to seek their own legal advice on issues that are particularly relevant to them. The department is not responsible for interpreting the law – that is a matter for the courts.

The personal safety of passengers is critical. The government has clearly set out measures that licensing authorities should take to safeguard passengers in the Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-taxi-and-private-hire-vehicle-standards>). This guidance seeks to reinforce that message by highlighting other measures that should be considered to assist the sector to deliver the range of services the public demand.

Licensing authorities have to consider a range of vehicles and services in the context of private hire vehicle licensing. The department has produced guidance to assist licensing authorities in deciding which vehicles and services require licensing under the private hire vehicle regime and which fall outside the private hire vehicle definition (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/taxi-and-private-hire-vehicle-licensing-best-practice-guidance/private-hire-vehicle-licensing-guidance-note>). The guidance sets out the key principles and characteristics which the department considers define a private hire service.

The guidance on whether services might require a private hire vehicle licence stresses that it remains for licensing authorities to make decisions in the first instance and that, ultimately, the courts are responsible for interpreting the law.

2. The role of taxis and private hire vehicles

Taxis and private hire vehicles play a vital part in local transport, connecting residents to the local economy and in enabling businesses and residents to reach wider transport networks. All social groups use taxis and private hire vehicles. Groups that use them the most are low-income young women, amongst whom car ownership is low, and those with mobility difficulties.

The taxi and private hire vehicle sector is entirely demand-led. Though these services are most often associated with journeys for leisure, social and business purposes, they are an important part of the transport network. As discussed in section 14 of this guidance, they should be considered as part of local transport planning.

Taxis and private hire vehicle services reduce the need for private car ownership, enable key workers to commute when other modes are unavailable, provide door-to-door transport for those that are not able to travel via other modes and assist in meeting the needs for home-to-school transport provision. Taxis and private hire vehicles have a particularly important role in the night-time economy getting people home safely late at night.

3. The role of licensing authorities

As stated in the Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-taxi-and-private-hire-vehicle-standards>) issued by the department to licensing authorities, the primary and overriding objective of licensing must be to protect the public. Licensing authorities should also be aware that, as well as ensuring taxi and private hire vehicle services are safe, the public have a reasonable expectation that the services available will be accessible and affordable.

It is for licensing authorities to ensure that their licensing policy and requirements are proportionate, so that passengers can choose from a wide range of safe services. As indicated above, the primary function of the licensing regime is public safety; however, an unduly stringent regime on other issues may restrict the supply of taxi and private hire vehicle services by putting up the cost of operation, or otherwise restricting entry to the trade. Licensing authorities should recognise that too restrictive an approach can be counter-productive, restricting the licensed trade to such

an extent that the public resort to the use of unlicensed, unvetted and uninsured drivers and vehicles.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/37/section/17>) requires local authorities to consider the crime and disorder implications of all their activities and functions and do all that they reasonably can to reduce crime. Licensing authorities routinely do this by setting licensing requirements that protect passengers, but this duty also extends to considering ways that licensing requirements and policies can reduce crime against drivers. It is the case that drivers are subjected to robbery, verbal and physical assault, this can be racially motivated or aggravated. Licensing authorities must consider ways to protect those working in the trade as well as those that use its services.

Licensing authorities are required under the Public Sector Equality Duty (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-sector-equality-duty>) to pay regard to the need to eliminate conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, to promote equality of opportunity and to foster understanding between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. It is beyond the scope of this document to identify actions which would demonstrate compliance with this duty, and ultimately only a court can do so definitively. We would however suggest that authorities:

- maintain a body of evidence on the impact of services on people with different protected characteristics and use it to make policy decisions consistent with the duty
- consider how they can actively promote equality, such as by consulting regularly with users, planning strategically to provide services which meet their needs, and by prioritising actions which seek to eliminate discrimination or barriers to equal access
- consider how to demonstrate the consideration given in a manner which promotes public awareness of the authority's inclusive approach to service support and provision

Disability is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, and disabled people may face particular barriers accessing taxi and private hire vehicle services if authorities fail to regulate services inclusively and to uphold the rights of affected passengers. In our view, an inclusive service accessible to disabled people is one where:

- there are sufficient vehicles meeting disabled people's access needs, to allow them to travel as easily, between the same locations and at the same times, as non-disabled people
- policy decisions are informed by an accurate and up-to-date understanding of the experience and needs of disabled people with a range of visible and less visible impairments

- action is taken proactively to improve the accessibility of the services supported
- disabled people have confidence that services will meet their needs and that, if things go wrong, their concerns will be understood and investigated thoroughly
- if operators and drivers fail in their responsibilities, that appropriate enforcement action is taken to prevent its recurrence and protect other disabled passengers

3.1 The regulators' role

Licensing authorities are required under section 22(2) of the Legislative and Regulatory Reform Act 2006

(<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/51/section/22>), to have regard to the Regulators' Code (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulators-code>).

The code states that:

“Regulators should avoid imposing unnecessary regulatory burdens through their regulatory activities and should assess whether similar social, environmental and economic outcomes could be achieved by less burdensome means. Regulators should choose proportionate approaches to those they regulate, based on relevant factors including, for example, business size and capacity.”

As with other regulators, licensing authorities' interventions should be focussed on mitigating safety risks for passengers and drivers, and enabling fair competition within the trade by ensuring consistency of regulation and enforcement. Licensing authorities should actively promote inclusivity, equality and independence for disabled people and ensure that they only issue licences to those that are fit and proper to hold one.

A need to intervene might be established through analysing complaints received or consulting with passengers and/or the trade. Licensing authorities should consider the wider impact of interventions and how they affect the delivery of safe, available, affordable and accessible services.

3.2 The objective of regulation and consideration of policies

When formulating a taxi and private hire vehicle policy, the primary and overriding objective must be to protect the public. Ensuring high safeguarding requirements and processes, as set out in the Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-taxi-and-private-hire-vehicle-standards>), is only one way in which licensing authorities can help ensure the personal safety of passengers.

Ensuring local residents understand the distinction between the taxi and private hire vehicle trades and how each service can be legally engaged is very important.

The key message needs to be that, unless you are hailing a locally licensed taxi in the street or at a stand, you should not get in any other vehicle unless you have pre-booked it and have received information from the operator to identify it. This messaging can be supported by a policy that makes taxis look distinct from private hire vehicles; this is discussed further in section 8.

In addition to the safety of passengers, regulation should protect equality and enable fair competition. Once a need to intervene is established, licensing authorities should consider whether any policy changes would have unintended negative consequences that might outweigh the benefits of that policy.

For example, if a licensing authority established that the drivers they license have frequent collisions, it may set an objective to reduce these. The authority might try to address this concern by requiring all drivers to have ten years' driving experience on the basis that 'experienced drivers are safer'.

Such a requirement would however prevent an individual under the age of 27 entering the trade. This would be regardless of whether they held an advanced driving qualification. It is probable that such an individual is a safer driver than someone over 27, who passed their driving test 10 years ago but has rarely driven since. While experience is generally useful, individuals should be able to evidence that they meet the objective of the policy rather than an arbitrary criterion.

Licensing authorities should ensure that their various licensing requirements are proportionate to the risk they aim to address or the policy objective they are seeking to achieve. The cost of a requirement, in terms of its effect on the availability of transport to the public, should be at least matched by its benefit. A detailed, quantitative, cost-benefit assessment is not needed in each case, but licensing authorities are urged to look carefully at the costs, financial or otherwise, imposed by each of their licensing policies and of the equality impacts as required by law.

The Competition and Markets Authority provided guidance to licensing authorities (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/private-hire-and-hackney->

carriage-licensing-open-letter-to-local-authorities/regulation-of-taxis-and-private-hire-vehicles-understanding-the-impact-on-competition) to consider when designing policy or regulations to assess their impact on competition and the interests of consumers. Their competition impact assessment (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/competition-impact-assessment-guidelines-for-policymakers>) guidelines are a useful tool in this process.

The guidelines contain 4 tests which help policy makers assess whether their proposals will limit competition:

- Will the measure directly or indirectly limit the number or range of suppliers?
- Will the measure limit the ability of suppliers to compete?
- Will the measure limit suppliers' incentives to compete?
- Will the measure limit the choices and information available to consumers?

Consideration of these questions will help ensure licensing authorities are aware of the restrictions they may be introducing on competition and may encourage them to consider alternative courses of action where possible.

As well as setting licensing requirements and imposing conditions, licensing authorities may introduce byelaws to assist them in the regulation of the taxi sector. The department has provided:

- a set of model byelaws (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/taxi-and-private-hire-vehicle-licensing-best-practice-guidance>)
- guidance on the process of making or amending byelaws (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/taxi-and-private-hire-vehicle-licensing-best-practice-guidance/taxi-byelaws-guidance-and-the-byelaw-making-process>)

3.3 Delivering licensing services

Taxi and private hire vehicle licensing is a statutory function of licensing authorities and it is important they consider how best to deliver this service in a timely and efficient manner.

Enabling those that wish to enter the trade to evidence that they meet the necessary requirements in a timely way will benefit the trade and passengers through greater choice and availability.

As an example, the statutory standards state that licensing authorities "should require taxi and private hire vehicle drivers to undertake

safeguarding training”; licensing authorities should consider how this training is provided to avoid unnecessary delays to gaining a licence. This might mean providing training material (hardcopy or online) and requiring the driver to attend an assessment. There should be sufficient availability of assessment slots to enable an applicant to evidence this knowledge in a reasonable time.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, several licensing authorities did not accept new licence applications for a substantial period. Refusing to accept an application makes the licensing authority vulnerable to judicial review and reputational damage. New ways of working were implemented by many licensing authorities, including training via virtual meeting platforms, temporary measures / relaxation of licensing requirements, temporary licences, and self-declarations.

Licensing authorities should learn from the challenges presented by COVID-19 and review their contingency plans to improve the way they administer the system and make sure the statutory licensing function can continue if circumstances make ‘normal’ procedures and processes impossible.

3.4 Licensing fees

It is essential to a well-functioning taxi and private hire vehicle sector that those administering and enforcing the regime are well-resourced. The licensing model is intended to be self-funding through licensing fees and it is expected that licensing authorities seek to provide a well-resourced system at the lowest cost to licensees. Licensing authorities should regularly review their fees to reflect changes to costs, both increases and reductions.

3.5 Licensing policy

The department recommends that all licensing authorities make publicly available a cohesive policy document or single online page which complies with current accessibility guidance, including WCAG 2.1 accessibility standard (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/accessibility-requirements-for-public-sector-websites-and-apps>) to Level AA as a minimum and the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/accessibility-requirements-for-public-sector-websites-and-apps>) for digital content, that brings together its key information on taxi and private hire vehicle licensing. This should include, but not be limited to:

- details on how the public can provide feedback on taxis and PHV licensees

- a 'fit and proper' person test
- licence conditions
- vehicle standards
- taxi tariffs
- licensing fees

Licensing authorities should also refer to the Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-taxi-and-private-hire-vehicle-standards>) when compiling this document.

3.6 Consultation at the local level

Licensing authorities should consult on proposed changes in licensing rules that may have significant impacts on passengers and/or the trade. Such consultation should include not only all taxi and private hire vehicle licensees but also groups likely to be the trades' customers.

Examples are groups representing disabled people, chambers of commerce, organisations with a wider transport interest (for example, local transport user groups and other transport providers), women's groups, local traders, and local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. It may also be helpful to consult with night-time economy groups (such as Pubwatch) if the trade is an important element of dispersal from the local night-time economy's activities.

Any decision taken to alter the licensing regime is likely to have an impact on the operation of the taxi and private hire vehicle sector in neighbouring areas. Licensing authorities should engage with these areas to identify any concerns and issues that might arise from a proposed change. Many areas convene regional officer consultation groups or, more formal, councillor liaison meetings; this approach should be adopted by all authorities.

3.7 Changing licensing policy and requirements

Any changes in licensing requirements should be followed by a review of the licences already issued. If a need to change licensing requirements has been identified, this same need is likely to apply to those already in possession of a licence. That is not, however, to suggest that licences should be automatically revoked overnight. For example, if a vehicle specification is changed, then it is proportionate to allow those that would

not meet the criteria to have the opportunity to adapt or change their vehicle.

The same pragmatic approach should be taken to driver licence changes - if requirements are changed to include a training course, a reasonable time should be allowed for this to be undertaken or gained. The implementation schedule of any changes that affect current licence holders must be transparent and communicated promptly and clearly.

Licensing authorities must consider each case on its own merits. Where there are exceptional, clear and compelling reasons to deviate from a policy, then they should consider doing so. Licensing authorities should record the reasons for any deviation from the policies that are in place.

4. Accessibility

There are around 13.9 million disabled people in the UK, representing 20% of the population, a proportion that is expected to rise as the average age of the population increases. National Statistics published in the current Family Resources Survey showed that the proportion of people in England who reported a disability was 21%. As people age, the incidence of disability increases, with 40% of over 60s and 75% of over 80s being disabled, meaning that disability will become a fact of life for an increasing number of people, which may not always appear obvious.

Disabled people are particularly reliant on taxi and private hire vehicle services, either because they may not have access to a private car, are unable to use public transport, or because the built environment is insufficiently accessible to meet their needs. This can mean that the availability of an accessible, affordable taxi or private hire vehicle service can make the difference that allows them to live their life the way they want to, and ultimately, to fulfil their potential.

The government wants disabled people to be able to travel easily, confidently and without additional cost, and it is important that all transport services play their part in making this a reality.

The way in which people are disabled and the specific barriers they face may not always be obvious. Licensing authorities and providers of taxi and private hire vehicle services must therefore anticipate the needs of people whose access needs may be more apparent, such as wheelchair users and assistance dog owners, as well as those with less visible impairments, including autistic people or those with mental illness.

Every taxi and private hire vehicle passenger is an individual, each with their own unique wishes and requirements, none more than a disabled

passenger using services. It is, however, important to recognise that there are certain access barriers which will be familiar to people with similar impairments, which authorities should take time to understand.

4.1 Accessibility barriers

Many disabled people face physical barriers when accessing transport services. This may be because the built environment includes features which are difficult for them to use, such as steps, or it may be because vehicle designs cannot accommodate a particular size of wheelchair. Some barriers to the provision of taxi and private hire vehicle services include:

- ranks provided with inadequate space to deploy a ramp
- waiting areas lacking seating for people unable to stand for prolonged periods
- inadequate supply of wheelchair accessible vehicles to ensure that every passenger can travel when and where they want to
- vehicle designs which do not accommodate larger or heavier wheelchairs
- private hire vehicles needed to pick up passengers in large or complex car parks, such as at airports or railway stations
- street design which prevents taxis and private hire vehicles from stopping close to destinations

To mitigate these physical barriers authorities must ensure that due regard is given to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) (see section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>)) when taking decisions concerning the provision of taxi and private hire vehicle services and supporting infrastructure, and that reasonable adjustments are made to remove barriers preventing disabled people from accessing taxi and private hire vehicle services.

Licensing authorities should also do the following:

- consult with disabled passengers regularly on their experience of using taxi and private hire vehicle services, in addition to consulting trade unions and associations representing those providing services, and ensure that their feedback informs service development
- incentivise the uptake of wheelchair accessible vehicles where mandating them would be inappropriate.
- consider specifying that wheelchair accessible vehicles should be capable of carrying wheelchairs larger than the reference size

- work with airports, station operators and other locations where large numbers of passengers use taxi and private hire vehicle services to ensure disabled passengers can always access and exit vehicles safely and easily
- exercise discretion on application of other vehicle requirements if they would prevent suitable wheelchair accessible vehicles from being brought into service where there is unmet demand

4.2 Communication barriers

Disabled people may experience communication barriers when booking taxis or private hire vehicles or completing journeys. These may be related to a sensory impairment, such as blindness or deafness, or due to a cognitive impairment or autism. Taking time to understand the communication needs of individual passengers can make them feel more confident when using services. Communication barriers might include:

- inability to book a taxi or private hire vehicle where using a telephone is the only option
- inability to book a taxi or private hire vehicle where the use of an app, inaccessible to visually impaired people, and those with limited or no access to technology, is the only option
- difficulty identifying the vehicle and seeking assistance from its driver
- difficulty communicating with drivers, particularly when conducted through a screen separating the driver and passenger compartments
- inability of some passengers to understand the driver and to provide information necessary for completing the journey
- inability for some passengers to read a meter (if fitted)

To mitigate these communication related barriers, authorities should take the relevant actions provided in the other sections of this guidance and ensure that:

- a range of booking methods are provided, so that people with limited access to certain forms of technology or communication can request a PHV
- operators should identify a passenger's accessibility needs prior to taking a booking, to ensure an appropriate vehicle is provided.
- information provided in hard copy in vehicles and in public places (such as libraries or private hire vehicle offices) is also readily available in alternative accessible formats, including large print, Braille, and Easy Read

- authority websites, including any pages relating to the taxi and private hire vehicle services and procedures for providing feedback and making complaints, comply with current accessibility guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-and-access-for-disabled-people-a-good-practice-guide>) and legislation, including WCAG 2.1 accessibility standard (<https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/helping-people-to-use-your-service/understanding-wcag>) to Level AA as a minimum and the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/accessibility-requirements-for-public-sector-websites-and-apps>) for digital content
- operator websites and digital booking apps comply with the WCAG 2.1 accessibility standard to Level AA and with the principles of the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 as a minimum for digital content

4.3 Barriers relating to the carriage of assistance dogs

There are around 6,000 assistance dog partnerships in the UK, supporting disabled people to navigate the built environment, respond to sounds they cannot hear, react to health emergencies, and interact with objects and obstacles. They are often vital for their owners' ability to live independently, confidently and safely, yet 76% of assistance dog owners surveyed for the 2022 Inclusive Transport Strategy Evaluation report (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-transport-strategy-evaluation-baseline-and-technical-reports>) had experienced a refusal or near-refusal during the preceding year. The main barriers faced by assistance dog owners when using these services include:

- the outright refusal of carriage
- an initial refusal of carriage followed by a protracted argument over an assistance dog owner's right to travel
- the provision of a sub-standard service because of a wish not to carry an assistance dog
- longer waits for booked vehicles due to operators allocating only drivers willing to convey passengers accompanied by assistance dogs
- the charging of higher fares or additional fees
- requiring the assistance dog to travel in a separate compartment to its owner
- the failure of local authorities to prosecute drivers even where sufficient evidence exists, preventing affected passengers from having their legal rights upheld

4.4 Confidence barriers

Many disabled people lack confidence to use public transport services including taxis and private hire vehicles. They may have had negative experiences in the past or read about accessibility issues that others have experienced. Social media now makes it simple for disabled people, and others, to share accounts of being refused carriage or of licensing authorities failing to take decisive action against drivers who discriminate, and this can exacerbate perceptions that such services are not accessible. Confidence related barriers might include:

- the expectation that services will not be accessible, leading disabled people not to travel, or to use other less convenient or safe means
- the fear of confrontations which can ensue when attempting to travel with mobility equipment or an assistance dog
- the fear of being charged too much or taken on a circuitous route
- anxiety linked to mental health or other conditions, exacerbated by previous negative experiences or a fear of not being provided with appropriate assistance
- a lack of confidence in accessibility issues being investigated effectively and drivers facing sanctions where appropriate

To mitigate these confidence-related barriers authorities should take the relevant actions provided in the other sections of this guidance and:

- provide information publicly on the accessibility of taxi and private hire vehicle services, and the action that will be taken if they fall short of reasonable expectations
- always ensure that passengers are kept informed about the progress of investigations into complaints they have made, and that they understand the rationale for any resulting decision on action to be taken
- include in operator and driver facing communications testimonials of passengers who face confidence-related barriers when using taxis and private hire vehicles
- provide handouts explaining how confidence can be undermined by poor service
- support local travel training initiatives to support disabled people to access taxi and private hire vehicle services independently
- invite positive feedback on the accessibility of services, and champion inclusive behaviour, perhaps through communications, awards or other incentives

To assist passengers who would like to raise a complaint, licensing authorities should require operators to provide a driver's private hire licence number and any information relating to a booking upon the relevant licensing authority's request.

4.5 Supporting an inclusive service

Licensing authorities are uniquely placed to ensure that taxi and private hire vehicle services within their jurisdiction actively promote equality and independence for disabled people. By ensuring drivers and operators understand how to provide every customer with the assistance they need, authorities can ensure disabled people can travel with confidence that their needs will be met.

By taking action to ensure there are sufficient wheelchair accessible vehicles to satisfy passenger demand, authorities can ensure that wheelchair users need no longer structure their lives around the times and locations when vehicles accessible to them are likely to be available. And, by taking prompt and robust action to investigate and prosecute licensees in response to cases of discrimination, authorities can ensure that every operator and driver treats seriously their role in providing an inclusive service. Authorities should ensure those that are found liable for discriminatory treatment towards a disabled person are subject to a fine or the loss and/or suspension of their license as a consequence.

Supporting an accessible service is an integral aspect of licensing authorities' role, therefore, it is important that authorities make the provision of an inclusive service a core strategic aim, and that they consider the factors which can influence the extent to which such services meet the needs of all passengers.

4.6 Inclusive service plan

All licensing authorities should develop and maintain an inclusive service plan (ISP), either as a standalone document or as an integral element of a wider strategy. The ISP should describe:

- the demand for accessible services in their area, from wheelchair users and non-wheelchair users, and from people with both visible and less-visible impairments, and an assessment of the extent to which that need is currently being met

- the authority's strategy for making transport more inclusive generally, and specifically in relation to taxi and private hire vehicle provision
- the steps that the authority will take to improve the inclusivity of the taxi and private hire vehicle services it supports, including timescales for their completion
- the courses or assessments authorities require applicants to undertake - these should be suitable for a range of participants e.g. including older drivers

ISPs should be developed collaboratively with organisations representing the interests of disabled people and people with other protected characteristics. This should be based on accurate and up-to-date evidence of need and usage. To support the production and updating of an ISP, authorities should survey existing and potential disabled passengers at least every 5 years, building an understanding of the extent to which the vehicles and services provided by taxi and private hire vehicle fleets adequately support the needs of all passengers and whether driver training needs are being met.

ISPs should be policy documents first and foremost, intended to demonstrate publicly authorities' commitment to improving accessibility continually. They may, however, also serve to demonstrate to passengers the steps being taken to improve services. Authorities should consider how the content can be made more accessible to the public. They should in any case always be made available on authority websites and in alternative accessible hard copy formats, consistent with authorities' legal equalities duties.

ISPs should be updated at least every 5 years, to ensure decisions are based on an up-to-date understanding of passenger needs. ISP reviews should align with other periodic aspects of licensing practice and, where possible, the production of the local transport plan.

ISPs should be developed with an awareness of the context facing disabled passengers. Unfortunately, too many disabled people still report receiving inadequate service from taxi and private hire vehicle operators and drivers, or a lack of support from licensing authorities when they report alleged discrimination. In the three years after rules on the carriage of wheelchair users were introduced, over 30% of authorities had not implemented them, denying disabled passengers the right to be treated like anybody else.

Two decades have passed since the law made it illegal for taxis and private hire vehicles to refuse an assistance dog and yet today too many owners report that they continue to be refused carriage. Additionally, disabled people continue to face barriers when using taxis and private hire vehicles, for example from unhelpful drivers, vehicles with too high a step or a lack of handholds or being refused carriage and left waiting at the kerbside.

To ensure decisions taken on the regulation of services are informed by the lived experiences of disabled people, authorities should take steps to ensure that policy makers and staff dealing with the public understand the barriers that disabled people can face when using transport services. Therefore, relevant authority staff should complete disability awareness training.

ISPs should also take into account any authority rules on the specification of licensed vehicles, including the ease with which they can be converted to convey passengers seated in a wheelchair. We understand that there is a particular challenge with some electric vehicles, and authorities should ensure they have considered fully the impact of any decision to require the use of such vehicles before changing licensing requirements.

4.7 Assistance for all passengers

Drivers and operators have specific duties not to discriminate against disabled passengers generally, and passengers in wheelchairs or who are accompanied by assistance dogs specifically. However, they also have general duties not to discriminate against anybody on account of their protected characteristics and proactively to provide reasonable adjustments that permit disabled passengers specifically to access their services. Although such general duties are enforced by disabled people through the Civil Courts, authorities have a role to play in creating an expectation that every potential passenger should be valued, regardless of any protected characteristic, and that any passenger requiring reasonable assistance is provided with it.

As a matter of course, drivers should help passengers to stow mobility aids, pushchairs and luggage, to ensure that older, younger or disabled passengers leave the vehicle safely away from traffic, and support customers to use card readers or count their change. Authorities can reinforce this through communications and training but could also include relevant requirements in licensing conditions or byelaws, which can be enforced by the authority.

All licensing authorities must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) (see Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/149>)) when taking decisions concerning the provision of taxi and private hire vehicle services and supporting infrastructure. Licensing authorities must also ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to remove physical barriers preventing disabled people from accessing taxi and private hire vehicle services.

Licensing authorities should provide a straightforward, accessible means of reporting alleged instances of discriminatory behaviour, including a

dedicated email address and a telephone number. They should also take proactive steps to investigate allegations, interview passengers, and seek relevant evidence from operators and partner agencies.

Cases should be prosecuted where there is sufficient evidence to identify the driver and substantiate the claims made. The guidance on the assessment of convictions provided with the Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-taxi-and-private-hire-vehicle-standards>) states that where an applicant has a conviction involving or connected with discrimination in any form, a licence will not be granted until at least seven years have elapsed since the completion of any sentence imposed. Licensees convicted of such offences should be subject to the same standards.

Where a complaint about discrimination is received that will not result in a conviction, licensing authorities should consider a range of outcomes and take appropriate action based on the balance of probabilities. Licensing sanctions should be considered, such as suspension or revocation. The licensing authority must give full consideration to the available evidence before any decision is made and the licensee should be given the opportunity to state their case. Possible outcomes would include no action being taken and the complaint being recorded, a suspension until disability and equality awareness training/assessment is completed, or revocation of a licence and a refusal to issue another for an appropriate period.

4.8 Assistance dogs

To mitigate barriers relating to the carriage of an assistance dog, authorities must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) (see Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/149>)) when taking decisions concerning the provision of taxi and private hire vehicle services. This includes adoption of any policies affecting the carriage of assistance dogs in taxis and private hire vehicles or the investigation and, where appropriate, prosecution of drivers alleged to have discriminated against their owners.

Licensing authorities should:

- remind operators and drivers regularly of their duties under sections 168 to 171 of the Equality Act 2010 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>) and of the authority's intention to prosecute those that refuse to comply
- make it simple for passengers to report alleged instances of illegal discrimination relating to the carriage of assistance dogs

- investigate all such alleged instances, and prosecute drivers where sufficient evidence is identified
- where drivers are legally exempt from carrying assistance dogs, provide them with a card confirming this in large print and Braille, in addition to the statutory exemption notice
- invite operators and drivers to meet with assistance dog owners and learn about the role they play
- work with organisations, such as the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, to produce hand out material which can be provided to operators and drivers
- encourage drivers to accept the carriage of trainee assistance dogs, which can benefit service accessibility by familiarising operators and drivers with the role of respective dogs and by helping the dogs to learn to behave appropriately when travelling by taxi or private hire vehicle
- build relationships with private hire vehicle operators to encourage proactive reporting of drivers alleged to have discriminated against passengers with assistance dogs, and provision of relevant evidence to support the authority's investigation.
- consider implementing policies at a local level which provide for categories of assistance dogs other than those prescribed at s173 of the Equality Act 2010 to travel in vehicles, where this is deemed appropriate

5. Enforcing the licensing regime

This section reiterates the importance of this function as outlined in the Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-taxi-and-private-hire-vehicle-standards>).

Implementing an effective framework for licensing authorities, to ensure that a full range of information is made available to suitably-trained decision makers who are supported by well-resourced officials, is essential to a well-functioning taxi and private hire vehicle sector. Whilst this helps prevent the licensing of those that are not deemed 'fit and proper', it does not ensure that those already licensed continue to display the behaviours and standards expected.

5.1 Setting expectations and monitoring

Licensing authorities should ensure that licensees are aware of the policies to which they must adhere, are properly informed of what is expected of them, and the repercussions for failing to do so.

The provision of a clear, simple and well-publicised process for the public to make comments and complaints about drivers, vehicles and operators will enable authorities to recognise and promote excellence and target compliance and enforcement activity. This will provide a further source of intelligence when considering the renewal of licences and of any additional training that may be required.

It is then for the licensing authority to consider if any intelligence indicates a need to suspend or revoke a licence in the interests of public safety or due to discriminatory behaviour, or to prosecute drivers in the Magistrates' Court for evidenced breaches of sections 165, 168 or 170 of the Equality Act 2010 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>).

Authorities should note that it can be particularly difficult for disabled passengers, including those who are visually impaired, to provide evidence of incidents. They may not, for instance, always be able to identify a driver visually. Authorities should still investigate such reports thoroughly, including taking statements from passengers, drivers and witnesses, accepting video or audio recordings as evidence where appropriate, and seeking evidence from partner agencies and from private hire vehicle operators (where relevant).

Where operators or drivers are prosecuted for Equality Act 2010 offences enabling those affected to give evidence in court may help to strengthen the authority's case, crystallise the harm caused to individuals, and increase complainants' confidence in the enforcement process. It is our view that prosecuting drivers and operators for offences under the Equality Act 2010, rather than relying solely on licensing sanctions, is proportionate to the harm caused by such discrimination and is vital to increasing the confidence of disabled passengers to use services.

We therefore recommend that cases are prosecuted where sufficient evidence exists and doing so would be in the interest of the inhabitants of the area. Blanket policies on not prosecuting offences may be incompatible with authorities' wider equalities duties.

Well-directed compliance and enforcement activity by the licensing authority benefits not only the public but also the responsible people in the taxi and private hire vehicle trades. Indeed, it could be argued that public safety depends upon licensing authorities having effective compliance and enforcement mechanisms in place. This includes actively seeking out those that operate outside the licensing system, not just those who come forward seeking the appropriate licences.

The resources devoted by licensing authorities to enforcement will vary according to local circumstances, including, for example, any difficulties with touting by unlicensed drivers and vehicles (a problem in some urban areas). Licensing authorities will also wish to liaise closely with the police. Multi-agency enforcement exercises (involving, for example, the Department for Work and Pensions) have proved beneficial in some areas.

Licensing authorities often use enforcement staff to check a range of licensed activities (such as premises selling alcohol, market traders etc.) as well as the taxi and private hire vehicle trades, to make the best use of staff time. But it is desirable to ensure that taxi and private hire vehicle enforcement effort is at least partly directed to areas where there is an evening or late-night economy, when problems such as touting and illegal standing or plying for hire tend most often to arise. In formulating policies to address these issues, licensing authorities should be aware of the Sentencing Council's guidelines

(<https://www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk/offences/magistrates-court/item/taxi-toutingsoliciting-for-hire-revised-2017/>) that specifically consider taxi touting/soliciting for hire and ensure those considering cases are aware of these and further guidelines on offences committed for 'commercial' purposes (<https://www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk/explanatory-material/magistrates-court/item/fines-and-financial-orders/approach-to-the-assessment-of-fines-2/6-offence-committed-for-commercial-purposes/>).

5.2 Test purchasing

Test purchasing can be a powerful tool in identifying drivers and operators that are not complying with the requirements and standards an authority expects of its licensees; and those that are unlicensed, uninsured and unvetted who are seeking to illegally carry passengers.

This tool can be particularly useful in identifying those who discriminate against disabled passengers, particularly as evidencing ad hoc incidents can be difficult for the passengers concerned. Authorities have used disabled staff volunteers to run such exercises, targeting locations or particular operators linked to complaints about discrimination, with enforcement officers on hand to take evidence to support potential future prosecutions. Publicising the use of such approaches may act as a deterrent to licensees considering refusing carriage to a disabled person.

Licensing authorities should consider seeking legal advice before undertaking any covert test purchasing activity that will or is likely to take place inside a vehicle. This is so that an assessment can be made as to whether the proposed activity is considered to be covert surveillance (either directed surveillance or intrusive surveillance) under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/23/contents>) (RIPA). More information on directed and intrusive surveillance can be found in the [Covert Surveillance and Property Interference Code of Practice](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covert-surveillance-and-covert-human-intelligence-sources-codes-of-practice) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covert-surveillance-and-covert-human-intelligence-sources-codes-of-practice>).

Test purchase activity does not in general require a covert human intelligence sources (CHIS) authorisation under RIPA as vendor-purchaser activity does not normally constitute a relationship as the contact is likely to be so limited. However, if repeat contact is made with the same driver or operator to encourage familiarity, a relationship may be established for a covert purpose and a CHIS authorisation should be considered.

5.3 Joint authorisation of enforcement officers

Licensing authorities should, where the need arises, jointly authorise officers from other authorities so that compliance and enforcement action can be taken against licensees from outside their area. An agreement between licensing authorities to jointly authorise officers enables the use of compliance and enforcement powers regardless of which authority within the agreement employs the officer and which issued the licence. This will mitigate the opportunities for licensees to evade regulation. Such an agreement will enable those authorities to take action against vehicles and drivers that are licensed by the other authority when they cross over boundaries. A model for agreeing joint authorisation is contained in the [LGA Councillors' handbook](https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/councillor-handbook-taxi-and-phv-licensing-2021) (<https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/councillor-handbook-taxi-and-phv-licensing-2021>).

5.4 The Community Safety Accreditation Scheme

The [Community Safety Accreditation Scheme \(CSAS\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-safety-accreditation-scheme-powers) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-safety-accreditation-scheme-powers>) is a voluntary scheme under which chief constables can choose to accredit employed people already working in roles that contribute to maintaining and improving community safety with limited but targeted powers. These roles include neighbourhood wardens, hospital security guards, park wardens, shopping mall guards and train guards and local authority enforcement officers.

The scheme creates a framework for public and private bodies to work in partnership with the police, providing additional uniformed presence in communities and capitalising on the skills and information captured by those already engaged with the community.

All schemes are managed, monitored and assessed at a local level by the responsible police force. Main benefits of the scheme include:

- increasing uniformed presence on the streets (CSAS accredited persons wear the uniform of their employing organisation, with an identification badge endorsed by the local police force)
- saving valuable police time in community safety
- promoting partnership working and the two-way exchange of information and intelligence between agencies

For more information about CSAS in your area, please contact your local police force (<http://www.police.uk/>).

5.5 Points-based enforcement systems

To increase compliance with licensing requirements some licensing authorities operate a points-based system, which allows minor breaches of the rules to be recorded and considered in context, while referring those with persistent or serious breaches to the licensing committee (or other bodies charged with reviewing). Such systems can provide greater consistency in enforcement and make better use of the licensing committee's time. Authorities that operate a points-based enforcement system should make clear to licensees that these are separate to the 'penalty points' (endorsements) that the courts can put on a motorist's licence. As set out at 5.1, licensing authorities that use a points-based system should ensure that licensees are aware of the policies to which they must adhere, are properly informed of what is expected of them, and the repercussions for failing to do so - the points for specific breaches should be clearly set out.

Where a points-based enforcement system is in operation points incurred should remain on the record for a fixed period. The usual duration of a driver and private hire vehicle operator licence is 3 and 5 years respectively. To ensure that all past behaviour is taken into account when considering whether to grant a new licence, the department recommends that points should remain on the record from the date of the incident for a minimum of 3 years for drivers and a minimum of 5 years for private hire vehicle operators.

It should be noted that reaching a points limit must not result in an automatic action but should be used to trigger a review of the conduct of the licensee and whether further action is necessary to address any concerns. Such action might be undertaking additional training not just a suspension or revocation. Licensing authorities should however consider whether a review is undertaken in situations where points are incurred within a short

period but have not reached a review point; for example, a rapid accumulation of points may indicate deteriorating standards or increasingly unsatisfactory conduct.

5.6 Suspension and revocation of driver's licences

Section 61 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1976/57/section/61>), section 16 of the Private Hire Vehicles (London) Act 1998 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/34/section/17>) and section 19 of the Plymouth City Council Act 1975 provide licensing authorities with the ability to suspend or revoke a driver's licence.

Following the High Court's decision in *Singh-v-Cardiff City Council* 2012 EWHC 1852 Admin, the interim suspension (pending investigation or trial) of a licence is no longer practicable. A decision to suspend a licence is a final decision and should not be made before a reasoned determination has been made that one of the above grounds (detailed in the relevant aforementioned act) has been met.

Before any decision is made, the licensing authority must give full consideration to the available evidence and the driver should be given the opportunity to state their case. As with the initial decision to license a driver, this determination should be reached based on probability, not on the burden of beyond reasonable doubt. If a period of suspension is imposed, it cannot be extended or changed to revocation later.

A decision to revoke a licence does not prevent the reissuing of a licence if further information is received that would alter the balance of probability, nor does a suspension prevent a subsequent decision to revoke. The decision to suspend or revoke is based on the evidence available at the time it made the determination. New evidence may, of course, become available later.

New evidence may be produced at an appeal, leading the appeal court to a different decision to that reached by the licensing authority. Alternatively, an appeal may be settled by agreement between the licensing authority and the driver on terms which, in the light of new evidence, become the appropriate course. If, for example, the allegations against a driver were now, on the balance of probability, considered to be unfounded, a suspension could be lifted and if the licence was revoked, an expedited re-licensing process used.

A suspension may still be appropriate if it is believed that a minor issue can be addressed through additional training or following a review of the individual circumstances where the limit of a points-based system is met. In this instance, the licence would be returned to the driver once the training

has been completed without further consideration. This approach is clearly not appropriate where the licensing authority decides that, based on the information available at that time and on the balance of probability, the driver presents a risk to public safety.

Section 61(2B) Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976
(<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1976/57/section/61>) and section 17(2) of the Private Hire Vehicles (London) Act 1998
(<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/34/section/17>) enable licensing authorities to suspend or revoke a taxi or private hire vehicle driver's licence with immediate effect on the grounds that it is in the interest of public safety and provided that the appropriate form of notice is given. In other cases, the suspension or revocation will take effect 21 days after the appropriate notice is given. The department is not proposing to issue any specific guidance on this issue of when immediate suspension or revocation of a licence is appropriate, preferring to leave it to the discretion of licensing authorities as to when the power should be used.

5.7 Suspension and revocation of vehicle licences

Section 60 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976
(<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1976/57/section/60>), section 16 of the Private Hire Vehicles (London) Act 1998
(<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/34/section/16>) and section 18 of the Plymouth City Council Act 1975
(<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukla/1975/20/enacted>) provide licensing authorities with powers to suspend or revoke vehicle licences.

In addition, licensing authorities have powers to inspect and test taxis and private hire vehicles. If the licensing authority is not satisfied as to the fitness of the vehicle, or as to the accuracy of the taximeter in the case of taxis, they can suspend the vehicle licence and require the vehicle or the taximeter to be made available for further inspection. If the authority is not satisfied as to the fitness of the vehicle or accuracy of the taximeter after 2 months, this can lead to revocation of the vehicle licence - see section 68 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976
(<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1976/57/section/68>), section 9 of the Private Hire Vehicles (London) Act 1998
(<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/34/section/9>) and section 26 of the Plymouth City Council Act 1975
(<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukla/1975/20/enacted>) for further details.

5.8 Suspension and revocation of private hire vehicle operator licences

Section 62 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1976/57/section/62>) provides authorities with wide powers to suspend an operator's licence, section 20 provides a similar power under the Plymouth City Council Act 1975 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukla/1975/20/enacted>). Transport for London may, under section 16(2) of the Private Hire Vehicles (London) Act 1998 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/34/section/16>), suspend or revoke an operator's licence. Additionally, if in the interests of public safety, the suspension or revocation may take effect immediately under section 17(2) of the 1998 act (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/34/section/17>). Otherwise, the suspension or revocation takes effect 21 days after the appropriate notice is served.

6. Driver licensing

6.1 Duration of driver licences

The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1976/57>) (as amended), the Private Hire Vehicles (London) Act 1998 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/34/contents>) and the Plymouth City Council Act 1975 (https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/sites/default/files/PCCA%201975_1.pdf) set a standard length of 3 years for taxi and private hire vehicle driver licences. Any shorter duration licence should only be issued when the licensing authority thinks it is appropriate in the specific circumstances of the case. For example, where the licence holder's leave to remain in the UK is time-limited, the licensee has requested a shorter duration or the licence is only required to meet a short-term demand. Taxi and private hire vehicle licences should not be issued on a 'probationary' basis.

6.2 Fit and proper test

The Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-taxi-and-private-hire-vehicle-standards>) sets out the approach licensing authorities should take in respect to the fit and proper test. However, in addition to those checks provided in the statutory standards, as a minimum, the department would expect all applicants to undergo an assessment of their medical fitness. Before making a decision on a person's application for, or for the renewal of, a driver's licence a licensing authority must search the database provided by the National Anti-Fraud Network, the National Register for Revocations, Refusals and Suspensions (NR3S), for entries relating to the applicant.

This requirement to search the database arises under the Taxis and Private Hire Vehicle (Safeguarding and Road Safety) Act 2022

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2022/14/enacted>). The responsibilities of licensing authorities to share safeguarding and road safety concerns about taxi and private hire vehicle drivers with each other under this act are outlined in statutory guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/taxis-and-private-hire-vehicles-safeguarding-and-road-safety-act-2022>).

6.3 Disability awareness

Drivers should be trained in disability awareness and/or have their knowledge and skills assessed. Drivers should also be encouraged, through targeted and general communications, to uphold the highest standards of customer service. The training or assessment should include but not be limited to:

- the features of an inclusive, high quality service
- appropriate attitudes, behaviours and skills
- assistance that can be provided to all passengers
- the protected characteristics, and related Equality Act 2010 duties
- understanding the different barriers that disabled people face when using taxis and private hire vehicles, and how they might be identified
- the role of taxis and private hire vehicles in enabling disabled people to be independent and the role of drivers and operators in facilitating this
- how to communicate with people with different communication needs
- how to assist people with a range of visible and less visible impairments
- supporting wheelchair users to board, alight and travel in safety and comfort whilst seated in their wheelchair
- the identification and role of assistance dogs

- legal obligations towards disabled passengers and the consequences of not complying with them
- an assessment of the trainee's knowledge and skills

The REAL disability equality training programme

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/real-training-introduction-and-all-transport-modes-modules>) created on behalf of the Department for Transport, which includes common content for all modes as well as content developed for taxi and private hire vehicle drivers may provide a foundation for the development of courses meeting these requirements and should be considered when assessing disability awareness training needs.

Licensing authorities should encourage drivers to learn British Sign Language, including contributing to related costs.

6.4 Driver proficiency

The Road Safety Statement (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/road-safety-statement-2019-a-lifetime-of-road-safety>) published in 2019 stated that:

“The need to improve road safety does not end with the driving test; nor does it exclude those who drive or ride professionally or as part of their job.”

Licensing authorities should require taxi and private hire vehicle drivers, as professional drivers, to display a higher degree of driving aptitude and diligence than a private motorist. This is considered appropriate and proportionate and is consistent with other elements of taxi and private hire vehicle driver licensing, for example, medical and vision assessments.

The ability to drive a car is tested when obtaining a driving licence. Nevertheless, evidence shows that driving behaviours are a significant contributor to road collisions. Factors such as fatigue, distractions and excess speed contribute significantly to collisions; excess speed alone accounted for 12 percent of all road traffic collisions in 2021 and 25 percent of those that resulted in a fatality. As professional drivers, for whom time is money, an appreciation of the effect of additional distractions and pressures which can negatively influence their driving behaviours is particularly relevant.

Licensing authorities should require taxi and private hire vehicle drivers to undertake training and/or assessment focussed on attitudes and behaviours, such as those provided by IAM Roadsmart and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA), at first application and renewal (typically every 3 years). Where an authority has specific concerns

about the driving ability of a driver, for example through passenger complaints, it would be appropriate for the authority to consider whether the driver in question should undertake a practical driving ability training course or assessment to address those concerns.

6.5 Acceptance of non-UK driving licences

Individuals can drive legally in the UK with non-UK car and motorcycle licences for up to 12 months. Some individuals will then be required to (or may wish to) exchange a licence issued by another country. A tool is available to provide more information on which licences must be exchanged (<https://www.gov.uk/driving-non-uk-licence>) as well as the requirements and processes involved.

6.6 Medical and vision assessment

There is general recognition that it is appropriate for taxi and private hire vehicle drivers to have more stringent medical standards than those applicable to normal car drivers because:

- they carry members of the general public who have expectations of a safe journey
- they are on the road for longer hours than most car drivers
- they may have to assist disabled passengers and handle luggage

Licensing authorities should apply the Group 2 medical required for an entitlement to drive lorries (category C) and for buses (category D) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/general-information-assessing-fitness-to-drive>).

All initial category C and D licence applications require a medical assessment by a registered medical practitioner - recorded on the D4 form, this does not need to be the applicant's GP. Category C and D licence holders are required to make a medical declaration at each renewal of their category C or D driver's licence (every 5 years) until the age of 45 when an assessment is required again.

From age 45 an assessment is required every 5 years until the age of 65 when the requirement is an annual medical assessment.

Though it is not a requirement, the DVLA recommends that drivers who submit a medical report with an application or renewal for a category C and D licence should obtain this from a doctor with access to their full medical

records. When conducting medical investigations, the DVLA will write to the driver's GP or consultant if further medical information is required; licensing authorities should do the same.

It is the responsibility of licensing authorities to assess the medical information they receive and decide whether a taxi or private hire vehicle licence should be issued. It is not the responsibility of the medical professional that provides the information to do this. Licensing authorities should seek the same information to inform their decision as required by the DVLA for category C and D licences. It is therefore suggested that DVLA's medical examination report (D4)

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/d4-medical-examiner-report-for-a-lorry-or-bus-driving-licence>) is used as a template for licensing authorities to gather relevant information.

Detailed guidance on assessing medical fitness to drive is available in DVLA's Assessing fitness to drive – a guide for medical professionals (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/assessing-fitness-to-drive-a-guide-for-medical-professionals>).

6.7 Immigration checks

The Immigration Act 2016

(<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2016/19/contents/enacted>) (section 37 and Schedule 5) amended existing licensing regimes in the UK to prevent illegal working in the taxi and private hire vehicle sector, as drivers and operators. Licensing authorities are prohibited from issuing a licence to anyone who is disqualified by reason of their immigration status, and they discharge their duty by conducting immigration checks. The Home Office have provided guidance for licensing authorities (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/licensing-authority-guide-to-right-to-work-checks>) on this matter.

Being disqualified from holding a licence by reason of their immigration status means that the person is in the UK illegally, is not permitted to work, or is permitted to work, but is subject to a condition that prohibits them from holding a licence in this sector.

The requirement to check the immigration status of licence applicants is in addition to and does not amend or replace the existing 'fit and proper' test.

6.8 Age limits

It is not appropriate to set a maximum age limit for drivers. Medical fitness to drive should be regularly assessed. Minimum age limits, beyond the statutory periods for holding a full driving licence, also seem inappropriate. Applicants should be assessed on their merits, and to do otherwise may in any case be contrary to the Equality Act 2010 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>), unless such restrictions can be justified in the public interest.

6.9 Language proficiency

The Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-taxi-and-private-hire-vehicle-standards>) recommend that a licensing authority's test of a driver's proficiency should cover both oral and written English language skills. Written proficiency is relevant because this could affect a driver's ability to understand written documents, such as policies and guidance relating to the protection of children and vulnerable adults, and applying this to identify and act on signs of exploitation. Oral proficiency will be relevant in identifying potential exploitation through communicating with passengers and their interaction with others.

Language proficiency will bring wider passenger benefits to those set out in the Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-taxi-and-private-hire-vehicle-standards>) in terms of the driver's ability to demonstrate an understanding of the desired destination, an estimation of the time taken to get there and other common passenger requests and for the driver to provide a legibly written receipt upon request.

6.10 Vocational training and assessment

The Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-taxi-and-private-hire-vehicle-standards>) are clear that all drivers should be required to undertake safeguarding training to understand policies and guidance relating to the protection of children and vulnerable adults to identify and act on signs of exploitation.

Whilst the minimum recommended requirements for safeguarding and disability awareness training could be met by requiring drivers to undertake vocational qualifications, it does not have to be delivered through this route. As set out in section 3 of this document, licensing authorities should be able

to demonstrate that any licensing conditions or requirements over and above that recommended by government are justified and proportionate.

Vocational qualifications provide a 'snapshot' of learning as they are awarded based on the curriculum of the course at the time it is taken. The training required of drivers will naturally evolve over time and so a vocational qualification may need to be supplemented with further training and assessment. An example of this is the inclusion of 'county lines (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/county-lines-protecting-vulnerable-people-from-exploitation>)' awareness as part of safeguarding training.

Given the need for driver knowledge and awareness to evolve and the potential need for periodic assessment, licensing authorities should not require applicants for a licence to have obtained a vocational qualification. If drivers and private hire vehicle operators wish to go beyond what is required to obtain a licence as part of their development or business model they can obviously do so, but it should not be a licensing requirement.

6.11 Topographical knowledge

Taxi drivers need a good working knowledge of the area for which they are licensed because taxis can be hired immediately, directly with the driver, at ranks or on the street and so drivers are not able to prepare a route. Licensing authorities should therefore require prospective taxi drivers to pass a test of local topographical knowledge as a pre-requisite to the first grant of a licence. The department's view is that the stringency of the test should reflect the complexity or otherwise of the local geography, in accordance with the principle of ensuring that barriers to entry are not unnecessarily high.

Private hire vehicles are not legally available for immediate hiring. To hire a private hire vehicle the prospective passenger must go through an operator; the operator should gather sufficient information from the passenger to identify the collection and drop-off points, this will enable the driver to check the details of a route before starting a journey and plan or enter it in a navigation system. Given the availability, reliability and ease of use of sat nav systems, licensing authorities should not require any topographical knowledge or navigational tests for private hire vehicle drivers.

6.12 Intended use policies in respect of taxi drivers

Holders of taxi licences are permitted to carry pre-booked fares anywhere in England and Wales, reflecting that taxi drivers may carry passengers

beyond the boundary of their licensing authority, the 'compellable area', and seek a return fare to avoid additional miles without a fare. We are aware that a number of licensing authorities have introduced a taxi 'intended use' policy when considering licence applications aimed at reducing the number of taxis working predominantly to carry prebooked fares in other areas rather than plying for hire in their licensed area.

Licensing authorities should require an applicant for a taxi driver licence to declare that they intend to work predominately within the licensing authority's area. The residential address provided by the application should be considered in assessing the likelihood of this declaration being adhered to when assessing an application for a taxi driver licence.

6.13 Vehicle condition check

The driver of a vehicle is always legally responsible for its condition while in use. Licensing authorities should require drivers to conduct a walkaround check as part of a driver's core role. Drivers can be fined up to £2,500, be banned from driving and get three penalty points for driving a vehicle in a dangerous condition. Annex 6 of the Highway Code (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-highway-code/annex-6-vehicle-maintenance-safety-and-security>) provides information and rules about vehicle maintenance.

A driver should undertake a walkaround check before a vehicle is used. Where more than one driver will use the vehicle during the day's running, the driver taking charge of a vehicle should make sure it is roadworthy and safe to drive by carrying out their own walkaround check.

Drivers should be required to retain the vehicle checklist as proof that they have undertaken the required vehicle check. Drivers should be made aware that they may be subject to sanctions if they are unable to produce this or it is clear that while the form has been completed, the check has not. Further sanctions may result against them, as well as vehicle proprietors, if they are found using a defective vehicle, especially if the condition of the vehicle is such that it is obvious no routine checks have occurred over several days.

A model vehicle checklist is available on GOV.UK landing page for this guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/taxi-and-private-hire-vehicle-licensing-best-practice-guidance>).

7. Private hire vehicle operator licensing

The objective in licensing private hire vehicle operators is, again, the safety of the public, who will be using operators' premises and the vehicles and drivers arranged through them. The Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-taxi-and-private-hire-vehicle-standards>) sets out relevant safeguarding checks for operators, including criminality checks. In addition, the Department consider it appropriate to ensure that private hire vehicle operators administer their business correctly to be considered 'fit and proper'. Licensing authorities should consider the following as part of their assessment.

7.1 Sources of information

Checking open-source information, cross checking information with bodies such as Companies House and the Office of the Traffic Commissioner can help licensing authorities assure themselves that the company is suitable to be licensed.

7.2 Disability awareness

The licensee and all staff in customer facing roles and people managing service delivery should be trained in disability awareness, or have their knowledge and skills assessed, and be encouraged through targeted and general communications to uphold the highest standards of customer service. Training or assessment should include but not be limited to:

- the features of an inclusive, high quality service
- appropriate attitudes, behaviours and skills
- assistance that can be provided to all passengers
- the protected characteristics, and related Equality Act 2010 duties
- understanding the different barriers that disabled people face when using private hire vehicles, and how they might be identified
- the role of private hire vehicles in enabling disabled people to be independent and the role of operators in facilitating this
- how to communicate with people with different communication needs
- how to assist people with a range of visible and less visible impairments
- the identification and role of assistance dogs
- legal obligations towards disabled passengers and the consequences of not complying with them

- an assessment of the trainee's knowledge and skills

The REAL disability equality training programme

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/real-training-introduction-and-all-transport-modes-modules>) created on behalf of the Department for Transport, which includes common content for all modes, as well as content developed for taxis and private hire vehicles

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/real-training-taxi-and-phv-modules>) may provide a foundation for the development of courses meeting these requirements, and should be considered when assessing disability awareness training needs.

Licensing authorities should require operators to ensure that any digital booking platforms comply with the WCAG 2.1 accessibility standard (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/accessibility-requirements-for-public-sector-websites-and-apps>) to Level AA and with the principles of the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 as a minimum.

Cases should be prosecuted where there is sufficient evidence to substantiate offences under section 167A or section 170 of the Equality Act 2010 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>), or where an operator has unlawfully discriminated against a passenger or failed to make reasonable adjustments under the same Act.

7.3 Private hire vehicle operators – duration of licences

The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976

(<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1976/57>) (as amended) and the Private Hire Vehicles (London) Act 1998

(<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/34/contents>) set a standard length of licence of 5 years for private hire vehicle operators. Any shorter duration licence should only be issued when the licensing authority thinks it is appropriate in the specific circumstances of the case. For example, the licence holder's leave to remain in the UK is time-limited, the licensee has requested a shorter duration, or the licence is only required to meet a short-term demand. Private hire vehicle operator licences should not be issued on a 'probationary' basis.

7.4 Insurance

It is appropriate for a licensing authority to check that appropriate public liability insurance has been obtained.

7.5 Health and Safety responsibilities

Health and safety law creates duties on businesses where requirements apply to workers in the same way as they do for employees. Guidance from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) (Health and safety for gig economy, agency and temporary workers - HSE

(<https://urldefense.com/v3/https://www.hse.gov.uk/vulnerable-workers/gig-agency-temporary-workers/index.htm> ;!!HEBAkwG3r5RD!qyHlgFBDggAjXZaivgVkZPGVEKuKVGfmzgXU-uAJQRInY_io3BvjIMn2MvH-yL2eGIEpTA\$)) outlines the different type of workers and what is expected of businesses who use their services.

In practice, this means establishing effective management arrangements and carrying out an assessment of the risks to workers while they are at work, and to other people who may be affected by their work activities. Any assessment should identify the significant risks affecting workers and others, and, importantly, identify measures to reduce those risks. For example, this includes how to ensure work-related road safety (see Driving for work (<https://www.hse.gov.uk/workplacetransport/drivingforwork.htm>) for further guidance), training requirements and the provision and use of any protective equipment. The HSE also provide guidance for both employers and workers on protecting lone workers (<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg73.htm>). This guidance applies to anyone contracted to work for an operator, including self-employed people.

Secured by Design (<https://www.securedbydesign.com/>) (SBD) is the official police security initiative that works to improve security to provide safe places, including those in which to work. SBD's product based accreditation scheme – the Police Preferred Specification (<https://www.securedbydesign.com/member-companies/police-preferred-specification-explained>) - provides a recognised standard for all security products that can deter and reduce crime and includes those for lone workers.

Devices and apps are available (<https://www.suzyamlplugh.org/lone-worker-devices>) to help employers protect lone workers, however they are not likely to be sufficient on their own. Operators must still manage the risks of working alone, including training, supervising and monitoring lone workers as well as keeping in touch with them and responding to any incidents.

In the department's view, although it may not be the role of licensing authorities to enforce Health and Safety legislation, it is reasonable for any breaches of this legislation to be considered as part of the 'fit and proper'

test. As stated in this guidance, the primary and overriding objective must be to protect the public.

7.6 Compliance with employment law

It is not within the scope of this guidance to offer an opinion on the employment status of private hire vehicle drivers, nor is it for licensing authorities to decide on these matters: only the courts can make rulings on employment status. The Department for Business and Trade has published guidance to make it easier for individuals and businesses to understand which employment rights apply to them (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/employment-status-and-employment-rights>).

In the department's view, where an employment tribunal or a court of law has ruled on the employment status of a driver or drivers working for an operator, whether the operator is complying with that decision in respect of the driver(s) referred to in the ruling, should reasonably be considered by a licensing authority as part of the 'fit and proper' test for a private hire vehicle operator.

8. Vehicle licensing

The legislation gives licensing authorities a wide range of discretion over the types of vehicle that they can license as taxis or private hire vehicles. Some authorities specify conditions that in practice can only be met by purpose-built vehicles but the majority license a range of vehicles.

8.1 Specification of vehicle types that may be licensed

Normally, the best practice is for licensing authorities to adopt the principle of enabling as many different types of vehicles as possible to be licensed. Indeed, licensing authorities should set down a range of general criteria, leaving it open to the taxi and private hire vehicle trades to put forward vehicles of their own choice which can be shown to meet those criteria. In that way, there can be flexibility for new vehicle types to be readily considered.

Licensing authorities should give very careful consideration to a policy that automatically rules out particular types of vehicle or prescribes only one type or a small number of types of vehicle. For example, the department believes authorities should be particularly cautious about specifying that only purpose-built taxis can be licensed, given the strict constraint on supply that that implies. Nevertheless, purpose-built vehicles are amongst those that a licensing authority could be expected to license. It may also be too restrictive to automatically rule out considering multi-purpose vehicles, provided that the capacity of the vehicle is not more than 8 passengers.

The owners and drivers of vehicles may want to make appropriate adaptations to their vehicles to help improve the personal security of the drivers. Licensing authorities should look favourably on such adaptations, but, as mentioned in the section of this guidance on partitions in vehicles, they may wish to ensure that modifications are present when the vehicle is tested and not made after the testing stage.

8.2 Motorcycles

It is recognised that some licensing authorities may wish to license motorcycles as private hire vehicles. To assist those authorities the department has published guidance which outlines the standards and conditions which the department considers to represent best practice when licensing motorcycles as private hire vehicles (<http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/licensing-motorcycles-as-private-hire-vehicles>).

8.3 Pedicabs

Pedicabs or rickshaws are pedal-powered vehicles in combination with a trailer designed to carry passengers. They include electrically assisted pedal cycles. Pedicabs offer short-distance, zero emission journeys. Outside London, pedicabs can be regulated as taxis. Where there is local interest in providing pedicab services, licensing authorities should make appropriate adjustments to their licensing requirements for drivers and vehicles to accommodate these requests. Under London legislation, pedicabs cannot be licensed as taxis.

8.4 Vehicle age limits

The frequency of testing required (see [frequency of vehicle tests](#)) to ensure the ongoing safety of vehicles is a separate issue to the setting of maximum age limits at first licensing, or maximum age limits beyond which an authority will not licence a vehicle.

The setting of an arbitrary age limit may be inappropriate, counterproductive and result in higher costs to the trade and ultimately passengers. For example, a maximum age for first licensing may have adverse unintended consequences. A 5-year-old used electric vehicle will produce less emissions than a new Euro 6 diesel or petrol car – enabling the trade to make use of previously owned vehicles will assist it to transition more rapidly to zero emission vehicles and improve air quality.

Licensing authorities should not impose age limits for the licensing of vehicles instead they should consider more targeted requirements to meet their policy objectives on emissions, safety rating and increasing wheelchair accessible provision where this is low.

8.5 Vehicle safety ratings

The increasing ability of a car to reduce or prevent injury during an impact is reported as having had the most significant effect on road casualty totals in recent years. Although numbers have remained broadly consistent since 2010, they still indicate 30% fewer fatalities in 2018

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/reported-road-casualties-in-great-britain-annual-report-2018>) than a decade earlier.

Euro NCAP (<https://www.euroncap.com/en>) is an independent, not-for-profit, organisation which is widely recognised by the motor industry and road safety professionals as providing motorists with objective information on the crash safety of passenger cars. The 1-5 star rating helps consumers compare the safety potential of different models and is based on assessment in 4 important areas:

- adult occupant protection (for the driver and passengers)
- child occupant protection
- vulnerable road user protection (pedestrians and cyclists)
- Safety Assist, which evaluates driver assistance (for example, lane keeping and autonomous emergency braking) and occupant status (for example, seat belt reminders and driver monitoring) technologies

Evolving vehicle regulations and consumer information have supported this trend and a 2019 research paper

(<https://cdn.euroncap.com/media/53186/developments-in-car-crash-safety-and->

[comparisons-between-results-from-euro-ncap-tests-and-real-world-crashes.pdf](#)) considered differences in real-world injury outcome for occupants in cars rated by Euro NCAP. It concluded that the risk of fatal injury was reduced by 40% for occupants of a 5-star rated car when compared with an equivalent 2-star rated car.

The NCAP star rating system goes beyond type approval and not all new vehicles undergo Euro NCAP tests. A car that just meets the minimum type approval standards would not be eligible for any stars. This also means that a car which is rated poorly is not necessarily unsafe, but it is not as safe as its competitors that were rated better. As of 2021, [Government Buying Standards for transport](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainable-procurement-the-gbs-for-transport-vehicles/government-buying-standards-for-transport-2017) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainable-procurement-the-gbs-for-transport-vehicles/government-buying-standards-for-transport-2017>) have required that new cars must have a minimum and valid 5-star Euro NCAP safety rating.

[Read more information on the NCAP rating system, how this has evolved and what this means for older vehicles](https://www.euroncap.com/en/about-euro-ncap/how-to-read-the-stars/) (<https://www.euroncap.com/en/about-euro-ncap/how-to-read-the-stars/>).

Licensing authorities should consider the safety benefits to passengers, drivers and pedestrians of vehicles which have received a higher NCAP rating, where these have been assessed, alongside the potential impacts on the availability of vehicles for passengers. Any requirements should be kept under review as the range of vehicles changes.

8.6 Environmental considerations

The UK is committed to a 2050 net zero target. This puts the UK on track to end our contribution to climate change, becoming one of the first major economies to legislate for net zero emissions. On transport, government is phasing out the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans, from 2035 all new cars and vans must be zero emissions at the tailpipe.

Where clean air zones are introduced, authorities will already be working to address local environmental considerations under the [Clean Air Zones Framework](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/air-quality-clean-air-zone-framework-for-england) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/air-quality-clean-air-zone-framework-for-england>). More widely, licensing authorities, in discussion with those responsible for environmental health issues, will wish to consider how its vehicle licensing policies can and should support any environmental policies adopted by the local authority. This will be particularly important in designated air quality management areas or low/ultra-low emission zones.

Licensing teams should work with council colleagues with air quality and climate responsibilities to ensure taxi and private hire vehicle fleets play their part in work to tackle local emissions. Leading areas cite large-scale

change in these fleets needs a longer-term strategy, with a coordinated approach across council teams and local trades, that considers licencing requirements, other supportive policies (for example, try-before-you-buy scheme), and, in the context of moving to a fully zero emission vehicle fleet, a strategy for supporting the installation of electric vehicle charge points.

Taxis and private hire vehicles that operate predominantly in urban areas can be significant contributors to poor local air quality, if not properly maintained and regularly checked, due to their higher usage.

Licensing authorities should carefully and thoroughly assess the impact of vehicle emission requirements to enable the sector to plan for the future. The short-term objective should be to mitigate the harm from internal combustion engines through the setting of high EURO emission standards for example, EURO 6 but, in the long-term, the trade will need to be fully prepared for the end of the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and the need to transition to zero emission vehicles. Licensing authorities should set out their own long-term plan in good time.

In response to local air quality concerns, many licensing authorities are considering how to support the use of ultra-low or zero emission vehicles given the growing range of vehicles available. As stated in the vehicle age limit section of this guidance, greater flexibility regarding the age of vehicles licensed can result in more rapid improvement in air quality than mandating new 'clean' internal combustion engine vehicles.

8.7 Imported vehicles: type approval

It may be that, from time to time, an authority will be asked to license a taxi or private hire vehicle that has been imported independently (by somebody other than the manufacturer). Such a vehicle might meet the authority's criteria for licensing, but the authority may nonetheless be uncertain about the wider rules for foreign vehicles being used in the UK. Such vehicles will be subject to the 'type approval' rules. For passenger cars up to 10 years old at the time of first GB registration, this means meeting the technical standards of either a GB vehicle type approval or an individual vehicle approval.

Most registration certificates issued since late 1998 should indicate the approval status of the vehicle. The technical standards applied (and the safety and environmental risks covered) under each of the above are proportionate to the number of vehicles entering service. Read further information about these requirements and the procedures for licensing and registering imported vehicles (<http://www.gov.uk/importing-vehicles-into-the-uk/overview>).

8.8 Tinted windows

For most cars on the road today, the minimum light transmission for windscreens is 75% and 70% for front side windows. There are no rules for tinting the windows rear of the B-pillar and vehicles are often manufactured with glass in the rear that is darker than the front, especially in luxury, estate and people carrier style vehicles.

There is a significant cost and inconvenience associated with requiring drivers to replace the standard manufacturer or factory specifications for window glass. Some passengers may feel more comfortable in vehicles that do not have very heavily tinted rear windows but there is a lack of evidence to suggest that these are detrimental to public safety. Balancing these factors, the department considers that licensing authorities should not require the removal of windows rear of the B-pillar if they have a minimum light transmission of 30% or above. This should maintain passenger confidence whilst ensuring a wide range of vehicles may be licensed.

The department recognises that a minimum light transmission of 30% for windows rear of the B-pillar might impact on executive hire vehicles, where passengers demand a higher degree of privacy. Some licensing authorities already grant executive hire vehicles plate exemptions, and they could determine that an exemption from the 30% minimum light transmission level for these vehicles is appropriate. Authorities should be assured that those vehicles are not used for 'normal fares'.

Authorities should carefully consider the views of the public and the trade when considering the acceptance of 'after-market' tinting and should be assured that any after-market window tinting does not negatively affect the safety features of the glass it is applied to.

Read separate guidance about the [rules for tinted vehicle windows](https://www.gov.uk/tinted-vehicle-window-rules) (<https://www.gov.uk/tinted-vehicle-window-rules>).

8.9 An accessible fleet

The physical accessibility of vehicles used to provide taxi and private hire vehicle services is a significant factor in the inclusivity of the overall service provided. Wheelchair accessible vehicles are essential for wheelchair users who are unable to transfer from their wheelchair to the vehicle, or who prefer to travel in their wheelchair.

Licensing authorities should understand the demand for mixed fleets in its area and ensure that, when issuing licences, it has the right mix of vehicles. They should recognise that some designs of wheelchair accessible vehicles may not be suitable for some ambulant disabled passengers.

Licensing authorities should assess the demand for wheelchair accessible vehicles in its area on a 5-yearly basis and publish the results. If demand is not currently met, it should also provide an explanation about how the licensing authority plans to meet this demand. Licensing authorities should consider ways to incentivise an increase in wheelchair accessible vehicle provision. This may consist of licence fee rebates, access to bus lanes where agreed with the local highways authority, relaxation of other licensing requirements where it would otherwise be difficult to source appropriate wheelchair accessible vehicles, priority roadway access and, in the case of taxis, rank access.

8.10 Inclusive vehicle specifications

The design of non-wheelchair accessible vehicles licensed for use as taxis or private hire vehicles can also have a bearing on their accessibility. This guidance advises authorities to adopt the principle of setting down general criteria for vehicles and allowing drivers and operators to demonstrate how their vehicles fulfil them. When setting minimum criteria for newly licensed vehicles, authorities should consider factors which could influence the accessibility of vehicles to disabled passengers, including:

- the ease with which passengers can enter and leave the vehicle, including the height of steps and the positioning of seats
- the space available for assistance dogs to remain with their owner in the vehicle
- the space available for folded mobility aids in addition to other items of luggage
- the comfort and safety with which disabled people can use them
- wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs)

The government's 2022 statutory guidance 'Access to taxis and private hire vehicles for disabled users (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-taxis-and-private-hire-vehicles-for-disabled-users/access-to-taxis-and-private-hire-vehicles-for-disabled-users--2>)' recommends that WAVs large enough to accommodate a passenger seated in a "reference wheelchair" should be designated formally as being "wheelchair accessible" for the purposes of section 167 of the Equality Act 2010 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>).

This reflects the department's view that a vehicle which is only able to accommodate smaller wheelchairs would not be accessible to the majority of wheelchair users. Authorities should also maintain a consistent policy on their support or otherwise for WAVs which wheelchair users enter through the rear door. Many wheelchair users find boarding and travelling in such vehicles can be easier and more comfortable, and authorities should consider permitting their use where this is not already the case.

We have undertaken a review of the reference wheelchair standard and believe that further consideration on its use is required. In the meantime, we suggest that licensed WAVs meet minimum size requirements and any changes in policy will be reflected in future guidance.

For some passengers in wheelchairs, only vehicles which enable them to board, alight from and travel whilst remaining in their wheelchair are accessible and it is important that sufficient vehicles of this category are available throughout the day to provide an acceptable service.

Other wheelchair users may be able to transfer onto the seat of a car, with or without assistance, with the wheelchair stored in the vehicle's boot during the journey. For such passengers, and for some ambulant disabled people, for whom high steps and large open spaces may be difficult to negotiate, traditional WAVs may be challenging to access.

Licensing authorities should adopt policies on the minimum standards for WAVs, noting that some passengers need to use wheelchairs larger and heavier than the reference wheelchair

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bus-coach-accessibility-faq/guidance-for-manufacturers-and-operators>).

A truly inclusive transport system is one where a mixed fleet is available, where wheelchair users can travel as easily as anybody else, and this means ensuring that there are sufficient suitable vehicles to serve their needs.

Licensing authorities should assess the demand for wheelchair accessible taxis and private hire vehicles within their jurisdiction at least every five years, aligning with the production of the local transport plan where possible, and take appropriate steps to ensure that the supply of suitably accessible vehicles meets the demand for them.

The assessment, targeted proportion, and details of the steps that will be taken to achieve it should be documented in the authority's inclusive service plan.

8.11 Accessibility equipment

Authorities should consider the benefits of requiring additional accessibility equipment to be provided in vehicles beyond that which might be included in a standard vehicle specification, noting that the benefits to disabled customers in terms of their confidence and willingness to travel cannot always be monetised. Authorities should, as a minimum, require the installation of hearing loops in vehicles where an internal screen is fitted, to support passengers who are deaf or hard of hearing to communicate with drivers.

Authorities should also investigate options for making the payment process more accessible for visually impaired passengers. Whilst not widely used in the UK, 'talking' meters are used in other countries, and some payment card readers are more accessible than others. Implementing such interventions could support more disabled passengers to use taxi and private hire vehicle services with confidence.

Licensing authorities should ensure that such modifications are present when the vehicle is tested and not made after the testing stage.

8.12 Vehicle identification and signage

Members of the public can often confuse private hire vehicles with taxis, failing to realise that they are not available for immediate hire and that a private hire vehicle driver can only fulfil pre-booked requests. Greater differentiation in signage will help the public to distinguish between the two elements of the trade. To achieve this, licensing authorities should seek to differentiate the profile of private hire vehicles as these can only be legally engaged through a booking with a licensed operator.

Licensing authorities should not permit roof signs of any kind on private hire vehicles and should require all taxis to display a 'taxi' roof sign/box that can be illuminated when available for hire. Roof signs must comply with the Road Vehicles Lighting Regulations 1989

(<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/1989/1796/part/II/made>). Permitting any sign/box on a private hire vehicle, regardless of the wording on such a sign, is likely to increase awareness of the vehicle and the likelihood of being mistaken for a taxi.

This increases the success of those illegally standing or plying for hire and may lead to confrontation when private hire vehicle drivers refuse a request for a journey that has not been pre-booked. Having an illuminated sign on taxis and prohibiting them from private hire vehicles will provide a simple way for the public to differentiate between the two services and we encourage all licensing authorities to promote this difference to raise public awareness.

Licensing authorities should not impose a livery requirement on private hire vehicles. The more distinctive a private hire vehicle is made to appear, the greater the chance that this might be confused with a taxi. To assist the differentiation further, licensing authorities which require taxis to be a particular colour should prevent private hire vehicles from being that same colour, unless they are easily identifiable i.e. they are purpose-built vehicles as is the case in many of our cities.

Licensing authorities' private hire vehicle signage requirements should be limited to the authority licence plate or disc and a "pre-booked only" door sign.

This approach enables passengers to be given the clear and consistent message that you should only get in a vehicle that 'has a taxi sign on the roof' unless you have pre-booked a private hire vehicle and have received information from the operator to identify it.

A private hire vehicle driver and proprietor are free to work with more than one operator and licensing conditions or requirements that effectively tie a vehicle or driver into an exclusive relationship with an operator should not be implemented or should be discontinued where these are currently imposed. Examples of such policies are a requirement for the private hire vehicle to display the name of the operator under which it is operating by means of a permanent or semi-permanent sign, or to require a driver to advise the licensing authority of the operator who they intend to work for and require notification in advance of any change.

Where an exclusive relationship exists between the vehicle proprietor, driver and operator, a licensing authority should consider permitting the display of operator details in a discreet manner to not undermine the overall objective of enabling the public to differentiate easily between taxis and private hire vehicles. This might, for example, be through small branding on the rear of the vehicle.

Restrictions on the use of terms which might lead to confusion among the public are detailed in section 64 of The Transport Act 1980 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1980/34/section/64>) in respect of roof-signs; to assist the public in differentiating taxis from private hire vehicles, similar restrictions should be applied to all signage on private hire vehicles. Signs which include the word "taxi" or "cab", whether singular or plural, or any word of similar meaning or appearance to any of those words, whether alone or as part of another word should not be permitted.

Licensing authorities should only exempt the display of a licence plate by a private hire vehicle in exceptional circumstances. 'Executive hire' services are licensed as private hire vehicles and licensing authorities should assure themselves that there is sufficient justification to exempt these vehicles from a requirement to display a plate or disc and that there is an effective means to prevent the vehicle being used for 'normal' private hire work.

8.13 Passenger capacity

Licensing authorities are responsible for deciding how many passengers a taxi or private hire vehicle is licensed to carry. Whilst the Vehicle Registration Certificate (V5C) issued by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency states the seating capacity of a vehicle, licensing authorities are entitled to restrict the passenger carrying capacity in the interest of convenience and comfort. When considering limiting the passenger carrying capacity on the grounds of comfort, authorities should consider the principles set out in the Competition and Market Authority's guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/private-hire-and-hackney-carriage-licensing-open-letter-to-local-authorities/regulation-of-taxis-and-private-hire-vehicles-understanding-the-impact-on-competition>).

Licensing authorities should consider whether there may be a safety risk for passengers in terms of 'third row' seats, if passengers must move other seats with which they are unfamiliar to enter or exit the vehicle in an emergency situation. Should these seats be included in the licensed seating capacity, licensing authorities should require operators to advise passengers in advance that some seats have restricted access and so may be unsuitable for those with mobility difficulties.

Given the benefits of seatbelts, the department considers that taxis and private hire vehicles should not be licensed to carry more people than the number of seatbelts available. Though rear-facing seats do not require a seatbelt, they often are equipped with one. Vehicles that have a designated space for the carrying of a wheelchair should have this space considered in the vehicle's licensed capacity.

8.14 Carrying children

The safest way for a child to travel by car is in an appropriate car seat. It is however unreasonable and impractical for a taxi or private hire vehicle to carry a range of seats to meet the possible needs of all passengers. If the correct child car seat has not been provided, the law allows children to travel in taxis and private hire vehicles, but only if they travel on a rear seat; children under three can travel in a rear seat without a seat belt, and children who are three or older must wear an adult seat belt.

Children aged 3 and over should always count towards the licensed capacity of the vehicle because if an appropriate car seat is not available, they must wear an adult seat belt. Children under the age of 3 do not need to wear an adult seatbelt when an appropriate car seat is not available, so

they do not need to count towards the licensed capacity. Licensing authorities should provide advice to licensees on its policy on the carriage of children under three years to provide certainty in terms of overloading and refusal of carriage in such situations.

Further information on the carriage of children safely in taxis and private hire vehicles has been published by the Royal Society on the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) (<https://www.childcarseats.org.uk/media/1018/carrying-children-safely-in-taxis-coaches-buses-and-minibuses.pdf>) with the support of the Department for Transport. Drivers and operators should be made aware of this guidance to ensure compliance with the law and to protect passengers.

8.15 Personal security

The personal security of taxi and private hire vehicle drivers and staff must be considered. Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/37/section/17>) requires local authorities and others to consider crime and disorder reduction while exercising all their duties. Authorities should ensure that security adaptations (for example, partitions in vehicles) do not prevent drivers from fulfilling their legal obligations towards disabled passengers. For example, whilst front seats may not be included in occupancy numbers or generally used by passengers where security screens are fitted, some disabled people may require access to the front seat to complete a journey comfortably and safely, thereby reducing the numbers carried in the back.

To emphasise the reciprocal aspect of the taxi and private hire vehicle services, licensing authorities should make available signs or notices which set out not only what passengers can expect from drivers, but also what drivers can expect from passengers who use their service. Two sample notices have been provided for illustrative purposes (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/taxi-and-private-hire-vehicle-licensing-best-practice-guidance/sample-notices-between-taxi-or-private-hire-vehicle-driver-and-passenger>) but licensing authorities are encouraged to formulate their own, in the light of local conditions and circumstances.

Licensing authorities should seek to build good links between the taxi and private hire vehicle trades and the local police force, including participation in any community safety partnerships.

The Health and Safety Executive list the installation of CCTV with visible signage as a successful measure to improve safety (<https://www.hse.gov.uk/violence/index.htm>). Community safety partnerships are also required to invite public transport providers and operators to participate in the partnerships. Research has shown that anti-social behaviour and crime affects taxi and private hire vehicle drivers and control centre staff. It

is therefore important that the personal security of those working in the sector is considered.

Other security measures include guidance, talks by the local police and conflict avoidance training. The department has issued guidance for drivers on staying safe:

- Staying safe: guidance for taxi drivers
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-safe-guidance-for-taxi-and-public-hire-vehicle-drivers/staying-safe-guidance-for-taxi-drivers>)
- Staying safe: guidance for the private hire vehicle trade
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-safe-guidance-for-taxi-and-public-hire-vehicle-drivers/staying-safe-guidance-for-the-private-hire-vehicle-trade>)

8.16 Partitions in vehicles

Vehicles used by the trade that are not purpose built are unlikely to have a partition between the front and rear of the vehicle which may provide protection for the driver from assault. Partitions can be made from materials that withstand a knife attack or hard body impact and can be fitted and taken out easily.

The fitting of in-vehicle partitions must not cause the vehicle to be a danger to anyone in the vehicle or on the road, in compliance with regulation 100 of the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukSI/1986/1078/contents/made>). In order that the partition is effective in providing a means to separate drivers and passengers, the front passenger seat should not be included in the seating capacity of the vehicle licence where a partition is fitted. The department has published guidance on the design and fitting of screens to taxis and private hire vehicles (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-safety-screens-for-taxis-and-phvs/coronavirus-covid-19-safety-screens-for-taxis-and-phvs>) not originally designed to have a screen.

Licensing authorities may wish to ensure that such modifications are present when the vehicle is tested and not made after the testing stage.

8.17 In-vehicle visual and audio recording – CCTV

The Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-taxi-and-private-hire-vehicle->

standards) set-out the department's position on this matter - that CCTV can provide additional deterrence to prevent crime and investigative value when it occurs. The use of CCTV can provide a safer environment for the benefit of taxi and private hire vehicle passengers and drivers by:

- deterring and preventing the occurrence of crime
- reducing the fear of crime
- assisting the police in investigating incidents of crime
- assisting insurance companies in investigating motor vehicle accidents

The statutory standards state that all licensing authorities should consult to identify if there are local circumstances which indicate that the installation of CCTV in vehicles would have either a positive or an adverse net effect on the safety of taxi and private hire vehicle users, including children or vulnerable adults, and taking into account potential privacy issues. Signs in the vehicle are required to highlight the presence of CCTV to passengers and an extra indicator is required to show when audio recording has been activated. The department's view is that CCTV in vehicles can enhance both drivers' and passengers' safety and consideration of the merits of CCTV by licensing authorities must include both aspects.

Licensing authorities should review the Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-taxi-and-private-hire-vehicle-standards>) for further information on consideration of mandating CCTV in taxis and private hire vehicles.

8.18 Emergency equipment

The Highway Code advises that should a vehicle catch fire, the occupants should get out of the vehicle quickly and to a safe place and not to attempt to extinguish a fire in the engine compartment, as opening the bonnet will make the fire flare. The National Fire Chief Council (NFCC) recommends that licensing authorities that require fire extinguishers to be provided in vehicles, should ensure that suitable and sufficient training is received by the drivers.

The NFCC's advice is that if a licensing authority elects not to require drivers to undertake training on the safe way to tackle a vehicle fire, vehicles should not be required to carry fire extinguishers and drivers advised to get out and stay out of the vehicle and call 999, rather than attempting to firefight.

8.19 Vehicle testing

Licensing authorities must only license vehicles that are safe. It is therefore appropriate and proportionate that authorities require vehicles to pass rigorous safety checks. There is considerable variation between licensing authorities on vehicle testing, including the related but separate question of age limits. The following can be regarded as best practice.

Frequency of vehicle tests

The legal requirement is that private hire vehicles which are at least three years old, and all taxis, must be subject to an MOT test or its equivalent at least once a year. Local authorities may obtain a designation from the Secretary of State for Transport to issue 'Certificates of Compliance'. The requirements of the test normally include those in an MOT test but may also include another inspection by a licensing officer to ensure the vehicle meets the relevant local requirements for issuing a taxi or private hire vehicle licence e.g. cleanliness of the vehicle inside and outside, correct plates displayed etc.

An annual test for licensed vehicles of whatever age (including vehicles that are less than three years old) seems appropriate in most cases, unless local conditions suggest that more frequent tests are necessary. More frequent tests may be appropriate for older vehicles which may be more prone to mechanical defects (see Vehicle age limits or for vehicles owned by proprietors that persistently present vehicles that do not meet the standards required by the authority. More information is also provided in the Environmental considerations section of this guidance.

Monitoring diligence

Licensing authorities should, where possible, obtain details of the test, including failures. Where testing arrangements do not make the sharing of this information possible, the licensing authority should use GOV.UK to check the MOT record (<https://www.gov.uk/check-mot-history>) of a vehicle to ascertain if any vehicle defects were identified during an MOT. Where licensing authorities designate where a vehicle must be inspected, and the outcome is not recorded on the MOT database, the authority should require the tester to provide them with the outcome of the test.

It is expected that diligent monitoring and maintenance of the vehicle condition by proprietors should result in few if any dangerous or minor defects being detected at on-road compliance checks. A vehicle proprietor should ensure that a vehicle is in a safe and satisfactory condition, frequent failures can be raised with the proprietor and authorities can consider whether they are content that the proprietor is taking sufficient action to monitor and maintain the safety of their vehicles.

Criteria for tests

MOT tests ensure that vehicles comply with roadworthiness and environmental standards which contribute to the government's road safety strategy. It seems appropriate to apply the same criteria to taxis and private hire vehicles. However, taxis and private hire vehicles provide a service to the public, so it is also appropriate to set criteria for assessing the internal condition of the vehicle, for example, wheelchair fixings and restraint straps, though these criteria should not be unreasonably onerous.

Number of testing stations

As the application of the MOT standards is considered appropriate to ensure the mechanical safety of a vehicle it should be accepted that any DVSA approved testing centre is able to conduct this assessment in this respect and that any recent MOT will evidence the fact the vehicle is roadworthy. This approach maximises the testing capacity available to vehicle proprietors and allows licensing authorities to focus their testing capacity on any additional criteria that they consider necessary for taxi and private hire vehicles.

Licensing authorities should ensure that their testing standards are publicised and easily obtainable by applicants for vehicle licences.

9. Quantity restrictions of taxi licences outside London

9.1 Legal powers

The present legal provision on quantity restrictions for taxis outside London is set out in section 16 of the Transport Act 1985 (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1985/67/section/1>). This provides that the grant of a taxi licence may be refused for the purpose of limiting the number of licensed taxis if, but only if, the licensing authority is satisfied that there is no significant unmet demand for taxi services in their area.

In the event of a challenge to a decision to refuse a licence, the authority concerned would have to establish that it had, reasonably, been satisfied that there was no significant unmet demand.

9.2 Impacts of quantity restrictions

The Competition and Markets Authority was clear in its 2017 guidance on the Regulation of taxis and private hire vehicles: understanding the impact of competition (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/private-hire-and-hackney-carriage-licensing-open-letter-to-local-authorities/regulation-of-taxis-and-private-hire-vehicles-understanding-the-impact-on-competition>) that:

“Quantity restrictions are not necessary to ensure the safety of passengers, or to ensure that fares are reasonable. However, they can harm passengers by reducing availability, increasing waiting times, and reducing the scope for downward competitive pressure on fares.”

Most licensing authorities do not impose quantity restrictions. The department regards that as best practice. Where restrictions are imposed, the department would urge that the matter should be regularly reviewed. The matter should be approached in terms of the interests of the travelling public:

- What benefits or disadvantages arise for them because of the continuation of controls?
- What benefits or disadvantages would result for the public if the controls were removed?
- Is there evidence that removal of the controls would result in a deterioration in the amount or quality of taxi service provision?
- Are there alternative ways in which the issue could be addressed?

If alternative measures could be used to achieve the same effect, then the department believes these should be used in preference to quantity restrictions.

It has been observed that where quantity restrictions are imposed, vehicle licence plates command a premium, often of tens of thousands of pounds. This indicates that there are people who want to enter the taxi market and provide a service to the public, but who are being prevented from doing so by the quantity restrictions.

9.3 Demand surveys

If a licensing authority does nonetheless take the view that a quantity restriction can be justified in principle, there remains the question of the level at which it should be set, bearing in mind the need to demonstrate that there is no significant unmet demand. This issue is usually addressed by means of a survey. It will be necessary for the licensing authority to carry out a survey sufficiently frequently to be able to respond to any challenge to the satisfaction of a court. To assist in the inclusion of the taxi and private

hire vehicle sector in Local Transport Plans these surveys should, where possible, follow the cycle of their production but should be undertaken at least every 5 years.

The following points should be considered when conducting a survey on quantity restrictions:

- waiting time at ranks
- waiting time for street hailing
- waiting time for telephone/online/app engagement
- latent demand (those that would choose to travel by taxi but do not due to excessive waiting times) peak demand (the most popular times for consumers to use taxis should not be discounted as atypical)
- assessments should consider whether the demand for WAVs has been met

The financing of demand surveys should be paid for by the local taxi trade through general revenues from licence fees. Other funding arrangements may call in to question the impartiality and objectivity of the survey process.

9.4 Consultation on quantity restrictions

As well as statistical demand surveys, assessment of quantity restrictions should include consultation with all those concerned, including user groups. User groups that typically use taxis (and/or private hire vehicles) the most include people with mobility difficulties, women, older people and those without access to a car. The views of the retail and hospitality sector (including hoteliers, operators of pubs and clubs and visitor attractions) should also be sought and considered, recognising that most taxi (and private hire vehicle) journeys are for leisure and shopping purposes.

The role taxis can play in dispersing the public that have enjoyed the night-time economy should not be ignored. Alongside pre-booked private hire vehicles, taxis may be the only means by which people can return home. Excessive waits for vehicles may lead to conflict among passengers or the increased use of unlicensed, unvetted and uninsured drivers and vehicles, both of which may then result in increased call upon police resources: they should therefore be consulted on any restrictions.

All local transport plans are expected to promote the use of active or public transport - taxis are frequently used for the 'first and last mile' of longer journeys that could be made using public transport. The views of the providers of other transport modes (such as train operators) should also be sought and considered if a quantity restriction is to be imposed.

All the evidence gathered in a survey should be published, together with an explanation of what conclusions have been drawn from it and why. If quantity restrictions are to be continued, their benefits to consumers and the reason for the level at which the number is set should be set out.

9.5 Reviewing quantity restrictions

The department's view is that licensing authorities that elect to restrict taxi licences should review this decision and, if the policy continues, the quantity at least every 5 years and aligned to the production of local transport plans where possible. The department also expects the justification for any policy of quantity restrictions to be included in the local transport plan process where this is their responsibility. Licensing authorities should consider the following questions when considering quantity controls.

Have you considered the government's view that quantity controls should be removed unless a specific case that such controls benefit the consumer can be made?

Questions relating to the policy of controlling numbers

- Have you recently reviewed the need for your policy of quantity controls?
- What form did the review of your policy of quantity controls take?
- Who was involved in the review?
- What decision was reached about retaining or removing quantity controls?
- Are you satisfied that your policy justifies restricting entry to the trade?
- Are you satisfied that quantity controls do not:
 - reduce the availability of taxis
 - increase waiting times for consumers
 - reduce choice and safety for consumers
- What special circumstances justify retention of quantity controls?
- How does your policy benefit consumers, particularly in remote rural areas?
- How does your policy benefit the trade?
- If you have an accessibility policy, how does this fit with restricting taxi licences?

Questions relating to setting the number of taxi licences

- When last did you assess unmet demand?
- How is your taxi limit assessed?

- Have you considered latent demand, i.e. potential consumers who would use taxis if more were available, but currently do not?
- Are you satisfied that your limit is set at the correct level?
- How does the need for adequate taxi ranks affect your policy of quantity controls?

Questions relating to consultation and other public transport service provision

When consulting, have you included:

- those working in the market
- consumer and passenger (including disabled) groups
- groups which represent those passengers with special needs, children and other vulnerable groups
- local interest groups, e.g. hospitals or visitor attractions
- the police
- a wide range of transport stakeholders e.g. rail/bus/coach providers and traffic
- managers

Do you receive representations about taxi availability?

What is the level of service currently available to consumers (including other public transport modes)?

10. Taxi fare rates

10.1 Legal powers

Licensing authorities have the power to set maximum taxi fares for journeys within their area, and most do so. There is no power to set fares for private hire vehicles. Unlike most licensing functions, the setting of fares is an executive function, not a council function.

10.2 Setting taxi fare rates

Maximum fare rates should be designed with a view to practicality and reviewed regularly, including any variability of the fare rates dependent on time of day or day of the week. Authorities should consider adopting a simple formula for deciding on fare changes as this will increase understanding and improve the transparency of the process for passengers. The Department recommends that in reviewing fare rates, authorities should pay particular regard to the needs of the travelling public, with reference both to what it is reasonable to expect people to pay but also to the need to give taxi drivers the ability to earn a sufficient income and so incentivise them to provide a service when it is needed. There is likely to be a case for higher fare tariffs at times of higher demand to encourage more drivers to make themselves available or when the journeys are required at anti-social times.

To ensure that taxi tariffs reflect the costs of the trade they should be reviewed following significant changes in licensing fees and other major costs such as fuel. Regular reviews will assist drivers in maintaining their earnings and so continue to attract those seeking to become taxi drivers and provide existing licensees with greater confidence to remain in the trade and plan for future investment in new vehicles. Regular reviews will also avoid large changes in fares for passengers that infrequent reviews are more likely to result in.

The Competition and Markets Authority recognised in its 2017 report (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/private-hire-and-hackney-carriage-licensing-open-letter-to-local-authorities/regulation-of-taxis-and-private-hire-vehicles-understanding-the-impact-on-competition>) the need for licensing authorities to be responsive to patterns of demand, that they:

“should monitor waiting times and consider adjusting the regulated fare cap to address mismatches between supply and demand. Addressing such mismatches is likely to benefit passengers.”

10.3 Price competition in taxi fares

Taxi fare tariffs are a maximum, and in principle are open to downward negotiation between passenger and driver. It is not good practice to encourage such negotiations at ranks, or for on-street hailing; there would be risks of confusion and security problems.

Licensing authorities should however make it clear that published fares rates are a maximum. The growing use of telephone and electronic means to hire taxis means that passengers may benefit from competition and price comparison among taxi intermediaries. It is perfectly legitimate for taxi intermediaries to advertise discounted fares, such as ‘5% discount from fares.’

11. Taxi ranks and roadside infrastructure

Taxi ranks can provide a useful interchange between modes of transport and a focal point for taxis and passengers at peak periods. There are a number of aspects that should be considered when assessing the number and location of taxi ranks, including how ranks contribute to a wider transport policy and its success in delivering accessible transport as disabled users are less able to seek alternatives.

When providing new taxi ranks or redesigning areas of the built environment in which existing ones are located, authorities should seek to locate ranks as close as possible to transport interchanges and other key destinations that they serve in order to minimise walking distances for passengers and follow the Department for Transport's Inclusive Mobility (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-mobility-making-transport-accessible-for-passengers-and-pedestrians>) guidance and other sources of best practice in accessible street design. As well as the taxi trade, licensing authorities should seek the views of residents and other interested parties such as businesses in the night-time economy and transport hub operators.

The provision of taxi ranks should be subject to regular review. This will help authorities establish whether a change is required to current provision and how to make necessary amendments to ranks for the benefit of the travelling public. The department's view is that, in the absence of regular engagement with the taxi trade on this issue, a review at least every 5 years strikes the right balance between the burden placed on licensing authorities, being responsive to changes in passenger uptake or changing patterns in people flow and, where possible, alignment with the production of local transport plans.

Taxi ranks late at night can become a hotspot for anti-social behaviour. These problems can be mitigated or even solved through a taxi marshal scheme in busy town and city centres. Such schemes can be jointly funded by taxi drivers and licensing authorities. Marshals can help local authorities support their night-time economy by fostering public confidence in taxis by encouraging users to form an orderly queue, eliminating potential flashpoints and moving people quickly and efficiently. It is also an opportunity to prevent the use of unlicensed vehicles plying for hire.

If feasible, a short-term waiting area for drivers of taxis picking up disabled passengers should be considered. This could be an area of the footway with a kerb assigned as a setting-down/picking-up point for people using taxis that have ramps designed for transfer directly to the footway.

Wheelchair access to most taxis is on the nearside, though some taxis load wheelchair users through the rear door or the far side door. Where taxi ranks are being designed or redeveloped, they should be designed to facilitate access into all vehicle types without creating safety risks for either customers or drivers.

Licensing authorities should work with local authority partners to ensure that vehicle priority measures, parking and waiting restrictions do not prevent disabled passengers from being picked up and/or dropped off close to their origin or destination. Taxi and private hire vehicle drivers, operators and those developing cycling infrastructure play a collective role in ensuring vulnerable road users can reach their destinations safely. The need for inclusively designed cycle infrastructure should be considered so that disabled passengers are able to access the kerbside with ease where possible. The local transport note guidance (LTN 1/20 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycle-infrastructure-design-ltn-120>)) supports authorities with the delivery of accessible cycling infrastructure, and further advice can be sought from Active Travel England.

Consideration should also be given to how disabled people relying on taxis and private hire vehicles will gain access to the kerbside on roads where access is prevented, such as areas where bus priority is implemented.

Authorities should also work with the operators of facilities served by a high volume of private hire vehicles to ensure that safe spaces are provided for drivers to collect passengers, without requiring them to navigate busy car parks alone.

Where information is provided at taxi ranks, authorities should consider including directions to nearby public toilet facilities.

12. Taxi zones

The areas of some licensing authorities are divided into two or more zones for taxi licensing purposes. Drivers may be licensed to ply for hire in one zone only. Zones exist for historical reasons, due to local authority boundary changes.

Taxi and private hire vehicle licensing is highly devolved with lower tier local authorities often responsible for administering the regime. The Department recommends the abolition of taxi zones. This would chiefly benefit the travelling public. Zoning tends to diminish the supply of taxis and the scope for customer choice – for example, if 50 taxis were licensed overall by an authority, but only 25 of them were entitled to ply for hire in each zone. It can be confusing and frustrating for people wishing to hire a taxi to find that

a vehicle licensed by the relevant authority is nonetheless unable to pick them up (unless pre-booked) because they are in the wrong part of the authority's area. Abolition of zones can also reduce costs for the authority, for example through simpler administration and enforcement. It can also promote fuel efficiency, because taxis can pick up a passenger anywhere in the authority's area, rather than having to return empty to their licensed zone after dropping a passenger in another zone.

It should be noted that, in 2008, the government made a legislative reform order that removed the need for the Secretary of State to approve amalgamation resolutions made by licensing authorities. Although these resolutions no longer require the approval of the Secretary of State, the statutory procedure for making them – in paragraph 25 of schedule 14 to the Local Government Act 1972 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1972/70/contents>) – remains the same.

13. Flexible transport services

It is possible for taxis and private hire vehicles to provide flexible transport services in a number of different ways. Such services can play a valuable role in meeting a range of transport needs, especially in rural areas – though potentially in many other places as well.

The department encourages licensing authorities, as a matter of best practice, to play their part in promoting flexible services to increase the availability of transport to the travelling public. This can be done partly by drawing the possibilities to the attention of the taxi and private hire vehicle trade. It also should be borne in mind that vehicles with a higher seating capacity than the vehicles typically licensed as taxis (for example those with 6, 7 or 8 passenger seats) may be used for flexible services and should be considered for licensing in this context.

The main legal provisions under which flexible services can be operated are:

Shared taxis and private hire vehicles – advance bookings (section 11, Transport Act 1985 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1985/67/contents>)): licensed taxis and private hire vehicles can provide a service at separate fares for passengers sharing the vehicle. The operator takes the initiative to match up passengers who book in advance and agree to share the vehicle at separate fares (lower than for a single hiring). An example could be passengers being picked up at home to go to a shopping centre or returning from the shops to their homes. The operator benefits through increased passenger loadings and total revenues.

Shared taxis – immediate hiring (section 10, Transport Act 1985

(<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1985/67/contents>)): such a scheme is at the initiative of the local licensing authority, which can set up schemes whereby licensed taxis (not private hire vehicles) can be hired at separate fares by people from ranks or other places that have been designated by the authority. Authorities are required to set up such a scheme if holders of ten per cent or more of the taxi licences in their area ask for one. The passengers pay only part of the metered fare and without pre-booking, but the driver receives more than the metered fare.

Taxi and private hire vehicle buses (section 12, Transport Act 1985

(<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1985/67/contents>)): owners of licensed taxis and private hire vehicles can apply to the Traffic Commissioner for a 'restricted public service vehicle (PSV) operator licence'. The vehicle owner can then use it to provide a bus service for up to eight passengers. The route must be registered with the Traffic Commissioner and must have at least one stopping place in the area of the authority that licensed the taxi, though it can go beyond it. The bus service will be eligible for Bus Service Operators Grant (subject to certain conditions) and taxi/private hire vehicle buses can be used for local authority subsidised bus services. The benefits are that the travelling public have another transport opportunity opened for them, whilst taxi and private hire vehicle owners have another business opportunity.

14. Local transport plans and strategy

The Transport Act 2000 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/38/contents>) as amended by the Local Transport Act 2008

(<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/26/contents>), requires all local transport authorities in England, excluding London, to produce a Local Transport Plan (LTP), having regard to Government policy.

An LTP is a public facing document that sets out the future of transport in the local authority. LTPs should clearly articulate an integrated transport strategy drawn from a robust evidence base and vision for the local area, and also include an implementation plan that list the policies and interventions that will deliver the strategy.

All modes of transport including taxi and private hire vehicle services have a valuable part to play in the provision of local transport, and so licensing authorities are likely to have a role to play in delivering LTPs. The key policy themes for such services could be availability and accessibility. LTPs can cover:

- quantity controls, if any, and plans for their review

- licensing conditions, with a view to safety but also to a good supply of taxi and private hire vehicle services
- how passengers can access services, such as the provision of taxi ranks and safe areas for pick-up and drop-off points
- vehicle suitability and availability for people with disabilities
- vehicle emission standards and the location and capacity of electric vehicle charging infrastructure to support taxis and private hire vehicle to contribute to air quality objectives
- encouragement of flexible services

The Greater London Authority Act 1999

(<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1999/29/part/IV/chapter/I/crossheading/the-transport-strategy>) places a similar duty on the Mayor of London. The Mayor must publish a transport strategy to develop and implement policies for the promotion and encouragement of safe, integrated, efficient and economic transport facilities and services to, from and within Greater London. As above, taxi and private hire vehicle services have a valuable part to play in overall transport provision.

15. Tax checks in taxi and private hire vehicle licensing

HMRC introduced a tax registration check (tax check) for renewed applications in England and Wales to drive taxis and private hire vehicles and to operate a private hire vehicle business in April 2022.

An applicant who wishes to renew a licence needs to carry out a tax check. The licensing authority must obtain confirmation from HMRC that the applicant has completed the check before being able to consider their renewed licence application.

This aims to address part of the hidden economy by helping applicants for taxi and private hire vehicle driver and operator licences to understand their tax obligations and by making access to the licences they need to trade conditional on completing a tax check.

The rules apply to applications made by individuals, companies and partnerships, including Limited Liability Partnerships. Licensing authorities are required to signpost first-time applicants to HMRC guidance about their potential tax obligations and obtain confirmation that the applicant is aware of the guidance before considering the application.

Where the application is not a first-time application (a renewed application) the licensing body must, before considering the application, obtain confirmation from HMRC that the applicant has completed a tax check.

An applicant can carry out a tax check by providing information to enable HMRC to satisfy itself that the applicant has told HMRC about income earned under the licence. The check verifies that a person has complied with an obligation to notify their chargeability to tax, where such an obligation applied. The check is quick and easy to complete, and HMRC has developed a digital system to facilitate it. Additional help is also available to individuals who are digitally excluded or need extra support.

HMRC has published guidance for licensing authorities and applicants on how to complete checks (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/changes-for-taxi-private-hire-or-scrap-metal-licence-applications-from-april-2022>).



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LICENSING COMMITTEE

Vehicle Licensing - Feedback

10 September 2026

Report of Licensing Manager

PURPOSE OF REPORT

Following changes to vehicle licensing procedures and moving towards an annual licensing regime for all vehicles, members of the taxi and private hire liaison group discussed its impact, including successes and suggestions for further improvement.

This report is public.

RECOMMENDATIONS

(1) That members note the feedback and suggestions

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Since Monday 25th May 2026 all applications for a vehicle licence have been issued for 12 months. This has applied to both Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles. Additionally, vehicle licences, plates and internal signage have been sent to proprietors directly to their home address from our supplier; removing the requirement to attend Council buildings for collection.
- 1.2 At a recent taxi and private hire liaison group meeting members of the local trade, along with members of Licensing Committee and Council Officers met to discuss matters affecting the local licensed trade; the recent changes to vehicle licensing formed part of the agenda.
- 1.3 The Licensing Manager felt it was a pertinent time to request feedback from the liaison group members as to how they felt the new processes were being received by the wider trade and make any further suggestions for improvements.

2.0 Feedback

- 2.1 Overall, feedback was positive regarding the application and booking procedure. One Private Hire Operator suggested that he had struggled to obtain a vehicle test at the Councils Vehicle Maintenance Unit (VMU) and that availability of tests was a problem; given there is only one test site.

Initially, due to the reduction in test requirements (less frequent licensing/decrease test demand), the Licensing Service reduced the number of weekly tests to 12, from 20. It is accepted this was premature in terms of assessing impact and the service worked alongside VMU staff to increase capacity of testing back to 20 per week. Since that time, there have been vacant ad-hoc spots throughout the week.

For reassurance, should a vehicle proprietor require a test and find that VMU are fully booked for at least 7-10 days, they are encouraged to call the service and request a test. VMU can usually accommodate such requests, given the circumstances.

- 2.2 As part of the updated procedures, vehicles are issued with an internal “plate” and plastic pocket holder. Members of the trade requested clarity in where the plate should be displayed. Further guidance on positioning will be provided via the trade newsletter and when the Private Hire and Hackney carriage Policy is updated.
- 2.3 It was noted that a number of vehicle proprietors are not renewing their licence or leaving adequate time for delivery of licence, plate and internal signage prior to expiry. A trade newsletter, specific to the changes was circulated ahead of the launch of annual licensing to all licensed drivers and shared with operators; with a hope they would cascade the message to drivers. Proprietors are advised to book a test at least 7-10 days prior to expiry. **(Attached at Appendix 1)**

The Licensing Service will continue to share this message wherever possible and in future newsletters. Additionally, the service will continue to issue text reminders to renew, 30 days prior to expiry.

It is hoped that as renewals are now only required once a year, the management of booking a test/re-licensing will not be cumbersome to the local trade.

3.0 Suggestions

- 3.1 The trade members of the taxi and private hire liaison group raised a suggestion regarding new vehicle licences. They feel that the waiting time for delivery of new vehicle licences, plates and signage is not workable; given they could previously (if a vehicle passed its test at VMU) collect items the same day from Council offices.

Members will be aware that vehicle licences, plates and internal signage is sent directly from supplier to vehicle proprietors home address, it is guaranteed to be sent within 24 hours of ordering and usually received within 3 working days (6 days a week, Saturdays included). Information from the supplier confirms that 40-50% of orders are received within 2 days.

- 3.2 The trade suggested that if a vehicle completes all licensing requirements on a Thursday, the vehicle will not be permitted to be driven until all items are received after the weekend. Meaning a loss of potential earnings for that driver/vehicle. A request for a temporary vehicle licence was suggested.
- 3.3 The Licensing Manager feels that issuing a temporary licence or the service maintaining stock levels is a step backwards and will lead to unreasonable requests from the trade. Annual vehicle licensing, including outsourcing licence and plate production was implemented to streamline applications and ensure efficiency.
- 3.4 Vehicle proprietors are responsible for managing their own test booking and submitting valid application documents; receiving licences between 2-3 days is not unreasonable or excessive.

4.0 Conclusion

- 4.1 At the time of writing this report, changes to vehicle licensing have been in place for a little over 2 months. It is important to review such changes at timely intervals to ensure any teething or emerging problems are dealt with efficiently and effectively.
- 4.2 Vehicle licensing was discussed at a recent taxi and private hire liaison group, with Officers requesting feedback from members of the licensed trade. Overall, feedback was positive and the trade seem happy with the arrangements for annual vehicle licensing.
- 4.3 Vehicle licences, plates and internal signage is now issued by the supplier and delivered to the registered address of the vehicle proprietor; this measure was introduced to streamline process and minimise unnecessary journeys to Council buildings for collection of items. Items are delivered within 3 working days, (6 days a week, Saturdays included). 40-50% of orders are received within 2 days.
- 4.4 Any amendments to the current system require significant thought, including additional costs associated with a temporary arrangement, updates to internal templates and demands on the licensing service.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Health & Safety, Equality & Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing):

Any new application will be dealt with efficiently and in line with other application processes.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There is no legal mechanism or legislative pathways to introduce a temporary vehicle licence.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

In terms of resource, introducing a temporary licence will require an Officer to be on-site and stock levels to be maintained by the service.

OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS, such as Human Resources, Information Services, Property, Open Spaces

None identified.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

None.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

None.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Contact Officer: Miss J Curtis
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Ref: AVL2026

Taxi Newsletter

Annual Vehicle Licensing

Important Changes to Vehicle Licensing

From **Monday 25th May 2026** all applications for a vehicle licence will be issued for 12 months. This will apply to both Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles, regardless of age.

Please read the following information carefully and understand how this will affect your vehicle licence application and ensure a smooth renewal process.

Digital Application Form

From the above date, online application forms will be updated to reflect the changes to licence length, the only option available will be for a 12-month licence. This is without exception; full payment will be required at the time of application for a 12-month licence.

One Process

From the above date you will be required to complete your digital application form and book a vehicle test at the same time; this is to streamline processes further and ensure minimal time and resources is spent (by all parties) in uploading documents and making payments. The link to book a vehicle test will be removed from the Councils website and will only be available via a link on your confirmation summary.

Insurance

Vehicle proprietors are asked to consider submitting relevant insurance that covers the vehicle for the full licence period at the point of application. This will create efficiencies and streamline processes; this will ensure no contact is required between renewals and no requirement to upload individual documents.

Those with fleet insurance could continue to submit an annual policy, documenting all vehicles covered; if new vehicles are added to the fleet; an updated policy is submitted to the Service.

Booking a Vehicle Test

The Councils Vehicle Maintenance Unit (VMU) will continue to facilitate vehicle tests; however, the number of test days will reduce to 3; Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. No testing will be available on a Monday or Friday. The time slots available will be 8.30am, 9.30am, 10.30am and 11.30am. Capacity will be 12 vehicle tests per week.

Testers at VMU will undertake an MOT and check taxi related matters, additionally they will designate vehicles, both Hackney Carriage and Private Hire as wheelchair accessible, this is in addition to the 15 mandatory Hackney Carriage Vehicles. This is a legal requirement; you can access more information via the link below.

[Access to taxis and private hire vehicles for disabled users - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/topics/taxis-and-private-hire-vehicles)



Licence and Plate Delivery

Licence plates, door-signs, internal plate (incl pouch) will be delivered directly to your registered address. Upon licence application/renewal you will be asked to confirm your delivery address, you will then receive communication directly from Royal Mail who will advise of date/time of expected delivery.

Vehicle Incident/Accident check

Vehicle proprietors reporting an incident/accident to the Licensing Authority will be required to attend the Councils VMU for assessment of the damage/roadworthiness of the vehicle.

All vehicles subject to a road traffic accident will be required to undergo a vehicle check at VMU at a cost of £64.00, A link to book the test is incorporated into the accident report form available on the Councils website.

Please **do not** attend VMU without booking a vehicle check – accident via the booking system.

As vehicles may go up to 12-months without mechanical inspection, it is imperative that vehicles involved in an accident/incident are assessed for safety thoroughly, this takes time and resources.

Annual Reminders

Licensing will continue to issue text reminders to renew licences, you are advised to book a vehicle test **at least 7-10** days prior to licence expiry. This will ensure delivery of your updated licence before expiry of the current licence.

Renewals will only be required once a year, individual lack of organisation or failure to book a test in good time will not become a service priority; vehicle proprietors are responsible for ensuring they allow sufficient time (approx. 72hrs) for licence production and delivery.

Expired Licence Plates

Currently expired licence plates are recycled by the Licensing Service with the plate provider. We kindly ask that any expired licence plates are deposited at Lancaster Town Hall.

Ad-hoc Items/Replacement Plates

Should you require any replacement licence plates or door-signs due to loss/damage, you can order and make payment on the Councils website here - [Replacement Items - Licensing estore](#).

The items will be sent to your registered address, usually within 72hrs. The Licensing Service will not be holding stock items for production/collection same day.

Frequently asked questions

I have already booked a vehicle test and made a renewal application for a 4-month licence (Mid - May) – can I swap this for an annual licence? *No, you will have to wait until the next renewal date, in 4-months' time to transition to a 12-month licence.*

My vehicle is being tested after 25th May, but I haven't made my renewal application yet; will I be issued with a 12-month licence. *Yes, digital application processes will be amended from 25th May, any application made on/after this date will be eligible for an annual vehicle licence.*

My vehicle licence expires the week before this takes effect; can I get an annual licence. *You are advised to submit a new application on/after 25th May, this may mean you have a period of time off the road but some vehicle proprietors may prefer an annual licence.*

I don't understand the changes, and I struggle with the digital system, what support or assistance is available to complete my renewal. *Please email licensing@lancaster.gov.uk or call 01524 582033 and a member of the team can advise or assist; alternatively ask a friend or Operator in the trade to help.*

