



July 2019

Taxi and Private Hire Newsletter

Trade Consultation

The council is seeking the views of those associated with the licensed trade, including drivers, operators and proprietors on proposals to update guidance on determining the suitability of applicants and licensees for hackney carriage and private hire licences. It is thought that this guidance will supersede any other adopted application procedures and acceptable standards.

The proposed guidance is split into 10 sections and will form the basis for Officers and Members of Licensing Committee on the way in which an applicant's fitness will be considered. However, it is important to note that every application must be treated on its own merits, and the contents of the guidance will not bind the Council, its Officers or the Committee.

Listed below are the proposed changes to existing guidance or adopted policy:

- Provision of driving test by local provider, Lancaster Training Services.
- Updates to medical form and validity period.

- The introduction of Mandatory DBS update service and validity period.
- Section 8 - removal of lists of crimes/updated to provide categories of crime.
- Section 3 – Character and licence history section.
- The introduction of minimum standards (basic DBS certificates) for vehicle proprietors and private hire operators.

The proposed guidance on determining the suitability of applicants and licensees for hackney carriage and private hire licences can be viewed at Lancaster and Morecambe Town Halls or via the councils website - www.lancaster.gov.uk

The consultation will run from Monday 22nd July 2019 to Sunday 4th August 2019 (14 days) during which time we welcome your feedback on the proposals. Please send any comments to licensing@lancaster.gov.uk

The findings of the consultation will be presented to members of the Licensing Committee for amendment and decision before the implementation and adoption of the guidance.

Unmet Demand Survey – 2019/20

This council operates a quantity control policy which restricts the number of hackney carriage licences and intends to commission a survey to assess the current demand for hackney carriages within the district. It will also conduct some market research, including accessing the demand and availability of wheelchair accessible vehicles.

The survey will not be an additional fee to Hackney Carriage Proprietors as the cost of the exercise was accounted for in the 2019/20 fee setting exercise.



Permitted signage and advertising

Hackney Carriages

The display of signs on hackney carriages shall be restricted to the roof and sides of the vehicle. Door signs supplied by Lancaster City Council must be affixed to the front doors of the vehicle. In addition to this requirement the proprietor is permitted to display not more than one sign on each side of the vehicle.

Any roof sign shall be capable of illumination and be illuminated at all times when (and only when) the vehicle is available for hire. This means that the top light box must be operated through the taxi meter at all times. Separate switches or devices that carry out this function independently of the meter are not permitted at any time.

Hackney carriage vehicles with the capacity to carry more than four passengers must display a sign provided by the council in the nearside rear passenger window which states that the fare is the same as in a 4 seater hackney carriage.

The proprietor shall not display a telephone number in the rear window of the vehicle without the prior approval of the council.

(a) The Lancaster City Council licence plate must be permanently displayed on the outside rear of the vehicle, either immediately above or below the bumper without obstructing the registration plate.

(b) The licence plate is the property of the council, to whom it must be returned within seven days if the licence is ever suspended, revoked or not renewed for any reason.

The proprietor may display signs advertising the recruitment of drivers subject to the following conditions:-

(a) maximum number of one advertisement in the vehicle at any one time.

(b) advertisement to be placed in rear side windows only.

(c) advertisement to be no larger than a normal postcard.

Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles Additional Signage

All mandatory wheelchair accessible hackney carriage vehicles must display the nationally recognised wheelchair accessible sign in at least two prominent positions visible from the outside of the vehicle to be approved by the Licensing Manager.

Any person who provides a wheelchair accessible hackney carriage vehicle on a voluntary basis should declare the vehicle as wheelchair accessible to the Licensing Authority and should then display the required signage in order to avoid confusion for the general public.

Private Hire Vehicles

Door signs supplied by Lancaster City Council must be affixed to the front doors of the vehicle. The proprietors own sign, notice or advertisement may be displayed on the top section of the rear doors of the vehicle only and shall not exceed 20 inches by 12 inches.

Private hire vehicles shall display a sticker in a conspicuous position as approved by an authorised officer, stating that the vehicle must be pre booked and that any journey taken without there being a booking beforehand would render the insurance void, as the driver would not be complying with current legislation.

The proprietor may display signs advertising for the recruitment of drivers subject to the following conditions:-

(a) maximum number of one advertisement in the vehicle at any one time

(b) advertisement to be placed in rear side windows only

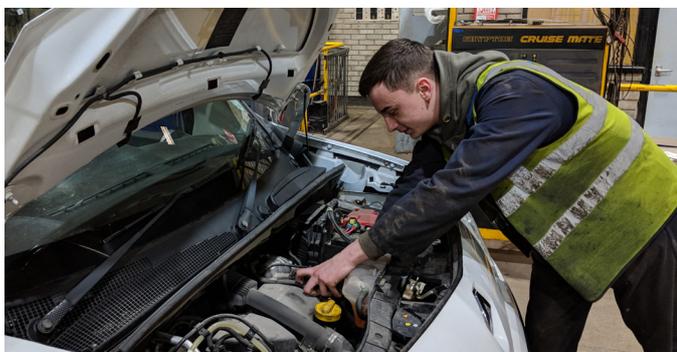
(c) advertisement to be no larger than a normal postcard

(d) advertisement to be of a standard acceptable to the council.

Private hire vehicles are not permitted to have a top sign fitted at any time.

General Guidelines

No private hire vehicle shall display the word taxi, for hire and any other word/phrase that may lead the public to think that it is a hackney carriage.



Vehicles re-tests will be conducted at VMU between 3pm-4pm on testing days ONLY (Wednesday and Thursdays)

VMU Testing Arrangements

Could vehicle proprietors please be aware that on vehicle testing days (Wednesdays and Thursdays) licence plates can usually be collected from Morecambe Town Hall, Licensing section after 4pm.

Please do not call the Licensing Department or visit Morecambe Town Hall before this time as licence plates will not be issued before 4pm.

On occasion, due to service demands it may be necessary to delay the issuing of licence plates until the following day, vehicle proprietors will always receive licence plates before their current licence plates expire.

Vehicle Re-test Procedure

Vehicles that attend VMU for a licensed vehicle test and subsequently fail are required to have their vehicle re-tested to ensure any issues are rectified before licensing is permitted.

Vehicle Inspection Checklist

As you may be aware, licensing officers are attending the vehicle maintenance unit on testing days. The purpose of their attendance is to ensure compliance with the taxi elements of vehicle testing and licence conditions. Area of focus include, plate position, door livery, specific fire extinguisher and first aid kit requirements, signage, general cleanliness of interior/exterior, radio secure, fare card in situ and fittings/upholstery.

A full checklist is available from licensing and Vehicle Maintenance Unit.

Taximeters Calibration Certificates and Fare Cards

Section 65 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 makes provision for the council to fix the rates of fares within the district for time, distance and all other charges in connection with the hire of a hackney carriage. The table of fares is attached to the inside of a hackney carriage; this allows members of the public to view all charges when hiring a vehicle.

Hackney carriages must be fitted with a taximeter, calibrated to the council's set table of fares.

There are no powers under existing taxi and private hire legislation that allows a district council to oversee or in any way govern private hire fares, but those private hire vehicles operating with taximeters, must be calibrated and tested by the council.

Historically, the Licensing Authority has not requested calibration certificates of those private hire vehicles fitted with a taximeter. As of 1st April 2019 licensing staff were instructed to ensure that all private hire vehicles have a valid calibration certificate if fitted with a taximeter (enforced upon licence renewal).

As you can appreciate, with public protection in mind and to ensure a fair approach; those private hire vehicles fitted with a taximeter are also required to provide a table of fares to which the meter is calibrated as fares can vary from private hire operator to operator, with many private hire operators choosing to use the hackney carriage table of fares when setting their tariff.

That table of fares should also be visible to those members of the public who hire private hire vehicles. If that is the same as the hackney carriage tariff then the table of fares will mirror that present in hackney carriage vehicles.

It is for private hire operators to ensure a suitable table of fares applicable to their tariff is present in vehicles operating for their firm. A template has been emailed to all private hire operators.

Make Offs

(passengers who leave the vehicle without paying for their journey)

At a meeting between the council and police, our licensing team was informed that even though it is a crime for passengers to make off without payment or part-payment, different police officers deal with it differently, he could not ensure a consistent approach across the district.

Advice from licensing would be to not physically restrain or hold the passenger in the vehicle whilst trying to obtain payment, but to allow the passenger to leave the vehicle and report the incident to police with as much detail as possible.

If a driver is unsure of a passengers intentions when enquiring about a fare please ask for part/ full payment in advance of the journey or refuse to accept the fare on that basis.

Complaints – Private Hire Operators

From time to time members of the public approach private hire operators with complaints regarding licensed drivers who are working for that operator. Complaints range from the very serious, to minor breaches of the licensed driver code of conduct.

Private hire operators should develop an in-house complaints procedure that deals with complaints, as well as referring to licensing for investigation. Too often members of the public are being referred direct to licensing before any action is taken at the operator stage.

Please remember that drivers are representing your operation, such complaints if handled well can have a positive impact on the operator, but those operators who respond in a defensive, unhelpful manner run the risk of losing custom and causing long-term reputational damage.

Licensing Committee Decisions Vehicle Licence Condition

At the Licensing Committee meeting on 6th June 2019 members resolved to waiver the conditions on Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles in relation to access/egress.

Vehicles will therefore be licensed for the number of seats as specified in the V5 document.

At the same meeting members made the following resolution in respect of tint levels on licensed vehicles.

There are no restrictions in respect of level of tint on rear windscreens and rear passenger windows of licensed vehicles.

In respect of front windscreen and front side door glass that the City Council have adopted the following restrictions for future vehicle licences:-

- Front windscreen transmission - minimum 75% light
- Front side door glass transmission - minimum 70% light

VMU will conduct light transmission tests as part of the "Vehicle Test", the standards will become enforceable on application for a new vehicle not on licence renewal.

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www.lancaster.gov.uk/taxi