



Review of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy

Consultation Results Report

Neighbourhood Services

31 March 2016

Table of contents

Section name	Page
1. Background	3
2. Methodology	4
3. Consultation results	6
3.1 Summary of key results from survey	6
3.2 Survey results	7
3.3 Additional feedback	21
3.4 Feedback from disability partnership	26
3.5 Equalities and diversity data	27
Appendices	
Appendix 1: Consultation briefing note	32
Appendix 2: Consultation survey	34

1. Background

Durham County Council's Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy, more commonly referred to as the "taxi policy", was adopted in May 2011. The policy was produced in accordance with the powers conferred by the Town Police Clauses Act 1847, the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 and the Transport Act 1985, as amended, which places on the Council the duty to carry out its licensing functions in respect of hackney carriage and private hire licensing. The policy sets out how the Council undertakes its function with respect to hackney carriage and private hire licensing in County Durham.

A hackney carriage vehicle is a public transport vehicle with no more than 8 passenger seats, which is licensed to 'ply for hire'. This means they can stand at ranks or be hailed / flagged down in the street by members of the public. A private hire vehicle must also have no more than 8 passenger seats however, they must be 'pre booked' in advance through an operator and may not ply for hire.

Hackney carriage and private hire vehicles have a specific role to play in an integrated transport system. They are able to provide services in situations where other forms of public transport are not available in rural areas and for those with mobility difficulties.

The Council recognises it is important that hackney carriage and private hire licensing powers are used appropriately to ensure that licensed vehicles of the Council are safe, comfortable, properly insured and available where and when required.

The policy states that the Council will review it every three years, making appropriate revisions and publishing an updated version accordingly.

Policy review

A review of the policy took place in summer 2015 when a number of possible changes to the policy were considered including:

- The use of vehicle top signs and other licensed vehicle identifications
- Introduction of new, more stringent safeguarding measures
- Age policy for vehicles and engine emission standards
- The suspension of licensed vehicles
- Numeracy and literacy testing for new drivers

Further details and a comprehensive list of all proposed changes can be found in the [Cabinet agenda and minutes](#) for Durham County Council's Cabinet on Wednesday 15 April 2015.

Cabinet decision

At a meeting on Wednesday 15 April 2015, Cabinet agreed to support the review process including a consultation taking place to obtain public feedback on the proposed changes to the policy, prior to revision to the policy.

Consultation

A 12 week public consultation was held between Thursday 4 June and Wednesday 26 August 2015.

This report describes the consultation process and provides details of the feedback obtained.

2. Methodology

The purpose of the consultation was to obtain feedback on proposed revisions to the hackney carriage and private hire licensing policy as part of a review of the policy.

A detailed engagement plan was developed in line with the council's consultation approach ensuring all appropriate, available communication channels were utilised to maximise awareness and encourage participation in the consultation.

Engagement methods

Respondents were able to take part in the consultation using the following methods:

- 1) **Online survey** - www.durham.gov.uk/consultation
- 2) **Paper survey** - available from the council's Licensing Team

Information about the proposed revisions to the licensing policy was published on the Council website. This included a briefing note outlining the main changes as well as the full table of changes being proposed.

Consultation survey

The consultation invited people to express their views whether they agree or disagree with the proposed revision to the "taxi policy". The survey (*Appendix 2*) also provided respondents the opportunity to provide general comments on this.

Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment

An equality and diversity initial screening was carried out on this policy review. The screening identified that some of the elements included in the proposed revision reflect national concerns regarding safeguarding and therefore there may be potential impacts on all protected characteristics as taxi services provide access for individuals and groups to a wide range of services, ie education and health together with access to family activities and social engagement. The consultation survey therefore asked people to provide information about themselves so responses could be monitored for different equality strands. The equality and diversity impact assessment is to be reviewed following consideration of the consultation results.

Equality and diversity data captured through this survey can be found in section 3.5.

Disability Partnership

The review of the taxi licensing policy was presented to the Council's Disability Partnership on 9 June 2015 to obtain feedback from members of the partnership on the proposed changes. Feedback notes from the Disability Partnership meeting can be found in section 3.4.

Promotional mechanisms

A range of communication mechanisms, open to the council, were used to raise awareness of the consultation and encourage participation. These included:

- A consultation webpage created specifically for the review of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy. This page included a briefing note providing details of the proposed changes and an online survey.
- Press release to the general public to communicate the proposed consultation following Cabinet approval.
- A reminder press release to prompt participation of the consultation.
- Social media releases signposting to the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing consultation webpage and survey
- Promotional slides on display in Durham County Council customer access points
- Information in the County Council's staff magazine 'Buzz'.
- Information in the County Council's magazine for local members 'Members Update'.
- Letter or email sent to the following stakeholders and consultees:
 - The taxi trade - all persons/businesses throughout County Durham who hold Hackney Carriage and Private Hire licences
 - Persons/bodies representative of local holders of the licence
 - Town and parish councils
 - Representatives of taxi trade
 - Members of the County Durham Taxi Working Group
 - DCC Highways
 - Integrated transport unit
 - Economic regeneration
 - North East Chamber of Commerce (NECC)
 - Disability groups
 - Fire and rescue
 - DCC Fleet managers
 - Area action partnerships
 - Visit County Durham
 - Durham BID
 - North East Strategic Licensing Group
 - Neighbouring/regional Councils
 - Durham Constabulary
 - Durham Local Safeguarding Children Board
 - County Durham Safeguarding Adults Inter-Agency Partnership
 - Children and Adult Services contacts who book taxis for service users

3. Consultation results and feedback

A total of 165 responses were received via the survey – 156 online responses and 9 paper surveys. These results can be found in section 3.2

Response method	Frequency	Percentage
Online survey	156	94.5%
Paper survey	9	5.5%
Total	165	100%

An additional seven responses were received by letter or email. Details of these responses can be found in section 3.3

3.1 Summary of key results from survey

Vehicle top signs

- 63.6% of respondents agreed that the policy should state what a top sign should look like
- 73.1% agreed that only hackney carriages should be allowed to display a top sign

Safeguarding of drivers and passengers

- Half (50.6%) of respondents agreed that CCTV in taxis should be compulsory
- Just over three quarters (76.9%) of respondents agreed that taxi drivers should be required to have random drug testing
- 80% agreed that taxis and drivers should be clearly identifiable
- Less than half of respondents (45.1%) agreed that DBS checks should be carried out annually instead of every three years
- 56.2% agreed that all taxi license applicants should undergo awareness training to assist in the prevention and reporting of sexual exploitation
- Just over three quarters (76.7%) agreed that new taxi licensing applicants should undergo basic literacy and numeracy testing

Age policy for vehicles and engine emission standards

- Less than half (44.2%) of respondents agreed that there should be an age policy for vehicles

Suspension of licensed vehicles

- 62.6% of respondents agreed that licensed vehicles not presented for test at an appointed date and time should be suspended immediately

3.2 Survey results and feedback

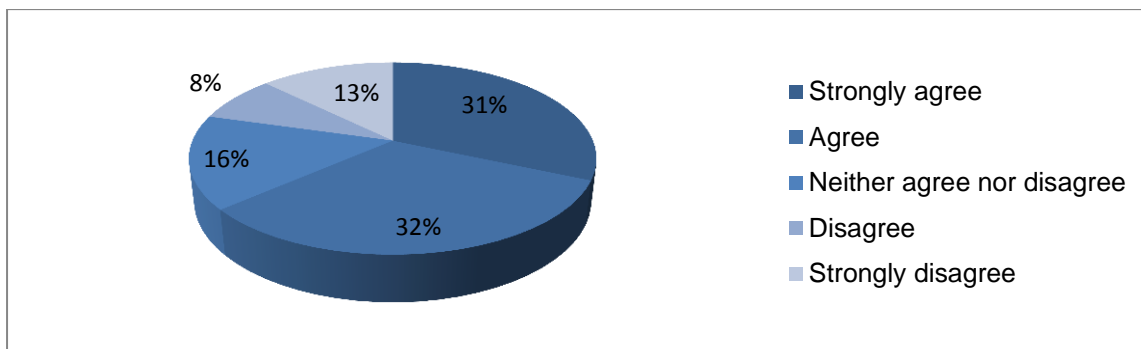
Q1 – Vehicle top signs.

Do you agree or disagree that the policy should state exactly what a top sign would look like, including the wording displayed on it?

Table 1a - Overall responses

Response	Number of responses	Percentage of cases
Strongly agree	52	31.5%
Agree	53	32.1%
Neither agree nor disagree	26	15.8%
Disagree	13	7.9%
Strongly disagree	21	12.7%
Total	165	100%

Chart 1a – Overall responses



If you disagree with this, please state why.

Those who disagreed gave the following reasons:

- Suggestions were provided for what the top sign should contain
- To implement this would have cost implications to drivers and taxi companies
- The wording is irrelevant on top signs
- With generic wording it would be difficult to differentiate between taxi companies

Table 1b – Level of agreement by taxi company, customer and driver.

Respondent	Agree or strongly agree – number of respondents	Agree or strongly agree %
Taxi company	11	45.8%
Taxi customer	40	69%
Taxi driver	35	62.5%

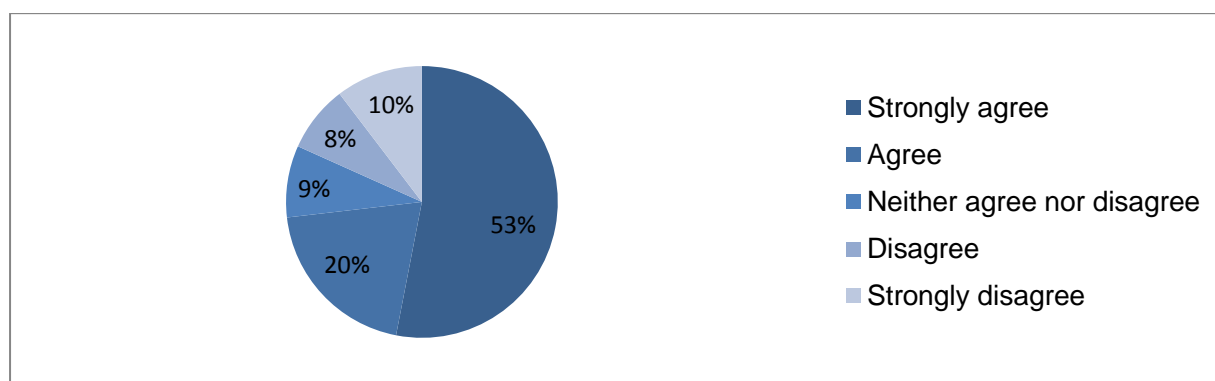
Q2 – Vehicle top signs.

Do you agree or disagree that only hackney carriages should be allowed to display a top sign?

Table 2a – Overall responses

Response	Number of responses	Percentage of cases
Strongly agree	87	53%
Agree	33	20.1%
Neither agree nor disagree	14	8.6%
Disagree	13	7.9%
Strongly disagree	17	10.4%
Total	164	100%

Chart 2a – Overall responses



If you disagree with this please state why.

Those who disagreed gave the following reasons.

- The top sign on any taxi makes it easily identifiable to customers
- It is not necessary to change this from the current rules
- To implement this would have cost implications to drivers and taxi companies
- Drivers and taxi companies should be able to choose if they want a top sign

Table 2b – Level of agreement by taxi company, customer and driver.

Respondent	Agree or strongly agree – number of respondents	Agree or strongly agree %
Taxi company	19	82.6%
Taxi customer	36	62.1%
Taxi driver	45	80.4%

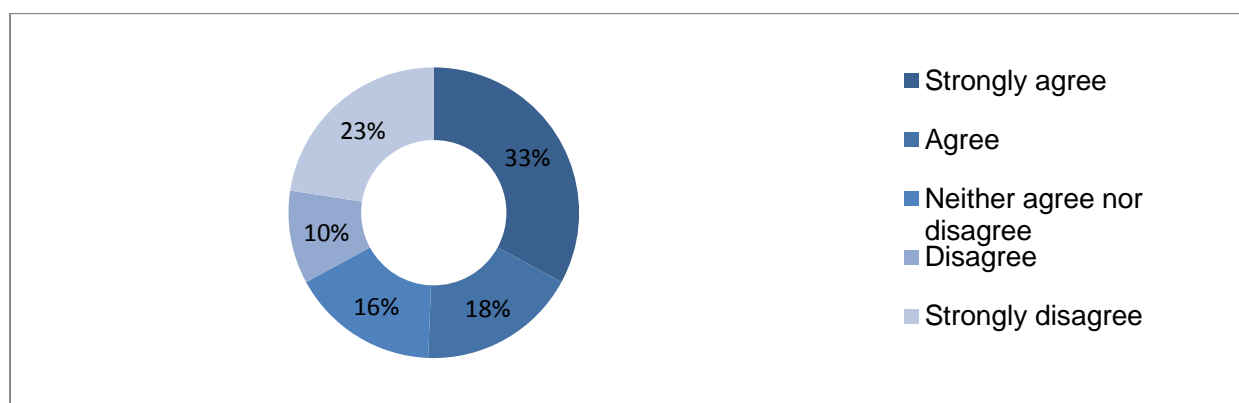
Q3 - Safeguarding of drivers and passengers

Do you agree or disagree that CCTV in taxis should be compulsory?

Table 3a - Overall responses

Response	Number of responses	Percentage of cases
Strongly agree	54	32.9%
Agree	29	17.7%
Neither agree nor disagree	27	16.5%
Disagree	17	10.4%
Strongly disagree	37	22.5%
Total	164	100%

Chart 3a – Overall responses



If you disagree with this please state why.

Those who disagreed gave the following reasons.

- CCTV should be a personal choice of the driver and/or the taxi company
- CCTV and footage could be open to inappropriate use
- CCTV could be too invasive of privacy
- To implement this would have cost implications to drivers and taxi companies

Table 3b – Level of agreement by taxi company, customer and driver.

Respondent	Agree or strongly agree – number of respondents	Agree or strongly agree %
Taxi company	9	37.5%
Taxi customer	33	57.9%
Taxi driver	29	51.8%

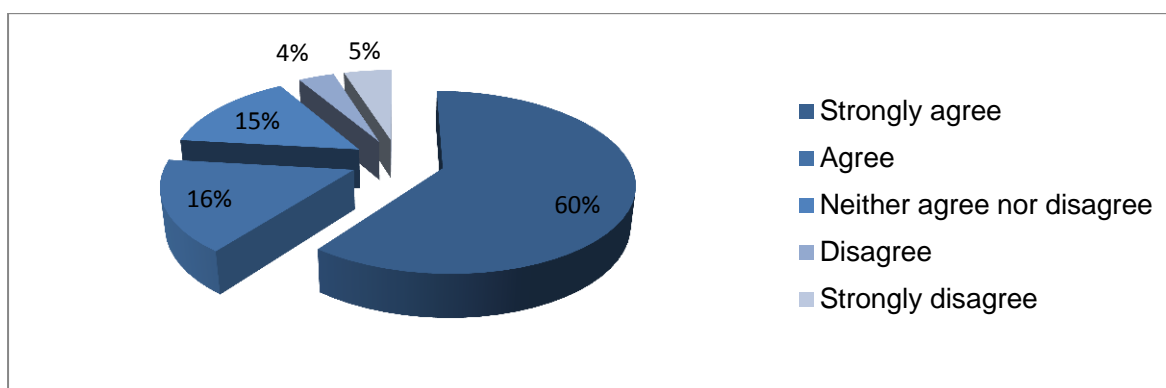
Q4 - Safeguarding of drivers and passengers

Do you agree or disagree that taxi drivers should be required to have random drug testing?

Table 4a – Overall responses

Response	Number of responses	Percentage of cases
Strongly agree	99	60.4
Agree	27	16.5
Neither agree nor disagree	24	14.6
Disagree	6	3.6
Strongly disagree	8	4.9
Total	164	100%

Chart 4a – Overall responses



If you disagree with this please state why.

Those who disagreed gave the following reasons.

- Drug testing is not necessary
- Drivers should be tested for alcohol as well as drugs
- To implement this would have cost implications to drivers and taxi companies
- Drugs testing needs to be stricter
- This type of testing should be carried out by the police

Table 4b – Level of agreement by taxi company, customer and driver.

Respondent	Agree or strongly agree – number of respondents	Agree or strongly agree %
Taxi company	18	75.0%
Taxi customer	47	82.5%
Taxi driver	38	67.9%

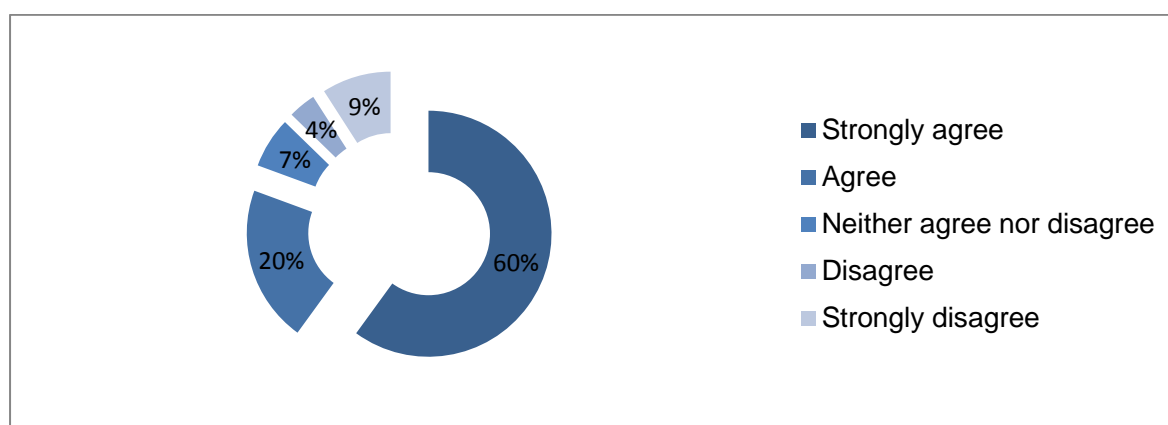
Q5 - Safeguarding of drivers and passengers

Do you agree or disagree that taxis and their drivers should be clearly identifiable by the display of items such as in-car signage, armbands or taxi badges?

Table 5a – Overall responses

Response	Number of responses	Percentage of cases
Strongly agree	99	60%
Agree	34	20.6%
Neither agree nor disagree	11	6.7%
Disagree	6	3.6%
Strongly disagree	15	9.1%
Total	165	100%

Chart 5a – Overall responses



If you disagree with this please state why.

Those who disagreed gave the following reasons.

- Not all of the suggested forms of ID in the survey are required/ appropriate
- No full names/ only ID numbers should be shown
- To implement this would have cost implications to drivers and taxi companies

Table 5b – Level of agreement by taxi company, customer and driver.

Respondent	Agree or strongly agree – number of respondents	Agree or strongly agree %
Taxi company	17	70.8%
Taxi customer	54	93.1%
Taxi driver	39	69.6%

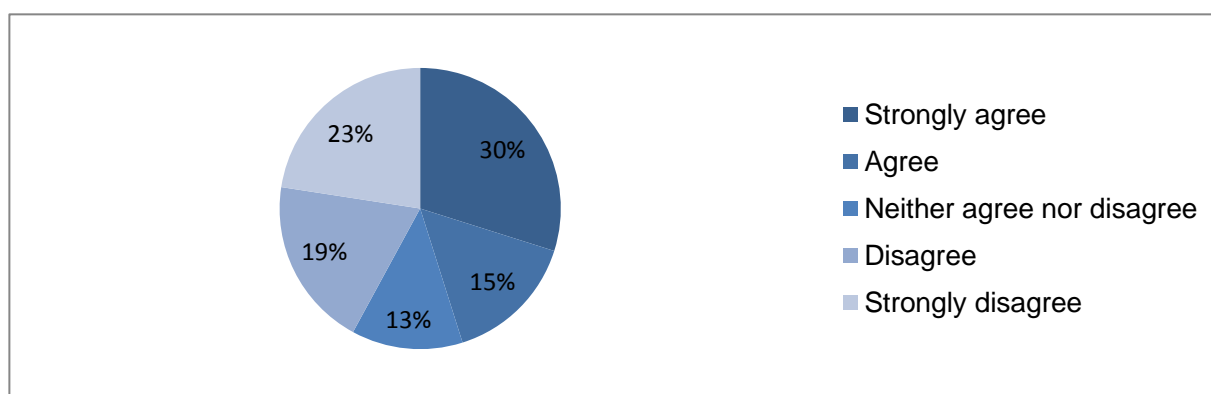
Q6 - Safeguarding of drivers and passengers

Do you agree or disagree that Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks should be carried out annually instead of every three years?

Table 6a – Overall responses

Response	Number of responses	Percentage of cases
Strongly agree	49	29.9%
Agree	25	15.2%
Neither agree nor disagree	21	12.8%
Disagree	32	19.5%
Strongly disagree	37	22.6%
Total	164	100%

Chart 6a – Overall responses



If you disagree with this please state why.

Those who disagreed gave the following reasons.

- To implement this would have cost implications to drivers and taxi companies
- Convictions should be reported therefore annual checks are not necessary
- The current policy/ 3 years for a DBS check is sufficient
- It should be expanded to other roles e.g. teacher not just taxi drivers

Table 6b – Level of agreement by taxi company, customer and driver.

Respondent	Agree or strongly agree – number of respondents	Agree or strongly agree %
Taxi company	4	17.4%
Taxi customer	41	70.7%
Taxi driver	16	28.6%

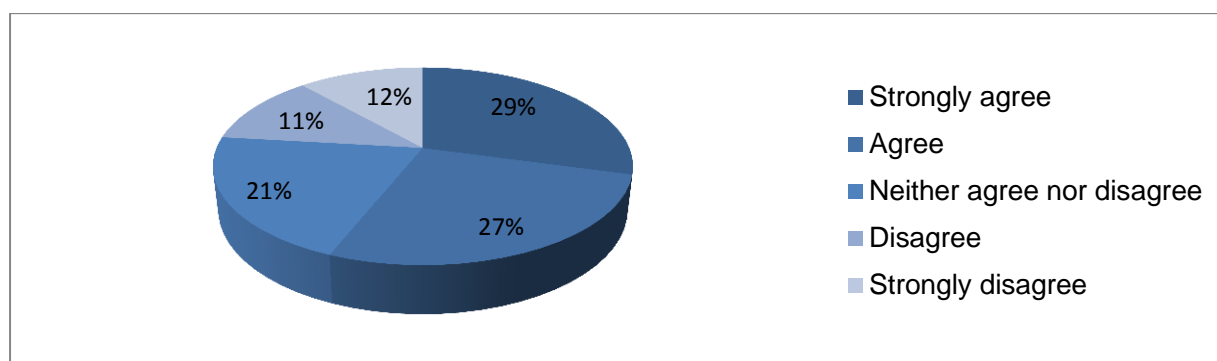
Q7 - Safeguarding of drivers and passengers

Do you agree or disagree that all taxi licence applicants should undergo awareness training to assist in the prevention and reporting of sexual exploitation?

Table 7a – Overall responses

Response	Number of responses	Percentage of cases
Strongly agree	48	29.3%
Agree	44	26.8%
Neither agree nor disagree	34	20.7%
Disagree	19	11.6%
Strongly disagree	19	11.6%
Total	164	100%

Chart 7a – Overall responses



If you disagree with this please state why.

Those who disagreed gave the following reasons.

- It is not within the role of a taxi driver/ it puts too much responsibility on drivers
- Responsibility should be left to the police
- Other measures could be taken to make taxi drivers aware of this/ to prevent incidents
- Training should not be exclusive for taxi drivers and should be expanded to other roles

Table 7b – Level of agreement by taxi company, customer and driver.

Respondent	Agree or strongly agree – number of respondents	Agree or strongly agree %
Taxi company	10	41.7%
Taxi customer	44	77.2%
Taxi driver	19	33.9%

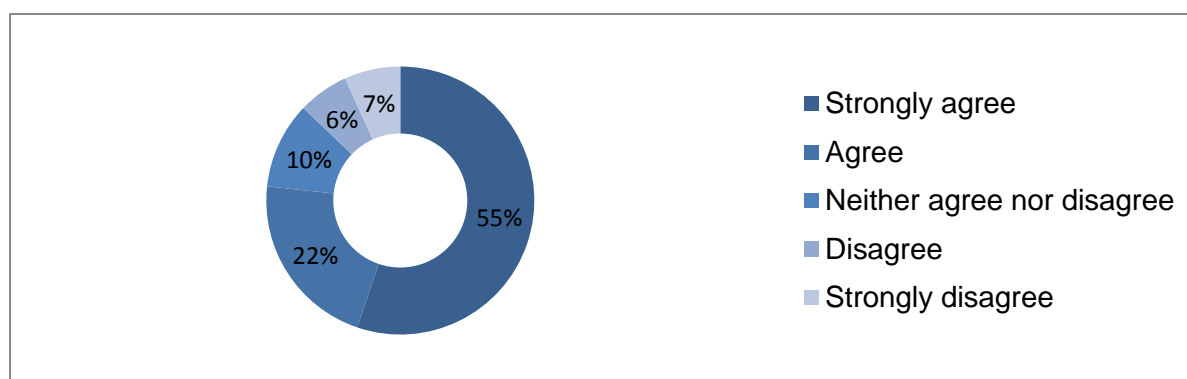
Q8 - Safeguarding of drivers and passengers

Do you agree or disagree that all new taxi licensing applicants should undergo basic numeracy and literacy testing to ensure customer requests are understood and fees communicated effectively?

Table 8a – Overall responses

Response	Number of responses	Percentage of cases
Strongly agree	90	55.2%
Agree	35	21.5%
Neither agree nor disagree	17	10.4%
Disagree	10	6.1%
Strongly disagree	11	6.8%
Total	163	100%

Chart 8a – Overall responses



If you disagree with this please state why.

Those who disagreed gave the following reasons.

- Current tests are sufficient
- Additional English speaking training should be carried out
- Current tests should be stricter
- Existing drivers should be required to carry out the tests as well

Table 8b – Level of agreement by taxi company, customer and driver.

Respondent	Agree or strongly agree – number of respondents	Agree or strongly agree %
Taxi company	20	83.3%
Taxi customer	44	77.2%
Taxi driver	45	81.8%

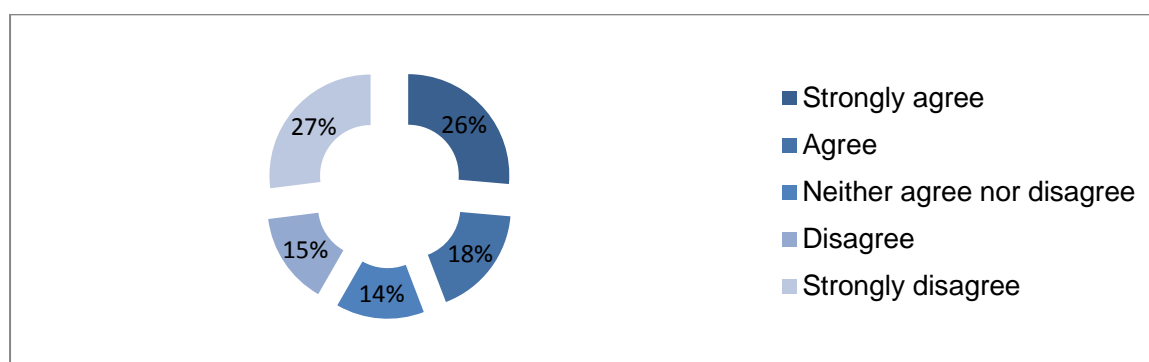
Q9 - Age policy for vehicles and engine emission standards

Do you agree or disagree that there should be an age policy for vehicles?

Table 9a – Overall responses

Response	Number of responses	Percentage of cases
Strongly agree	43	26.4%
Agree	29	17.8%
Neither agree nor disagree	23	14.1%
Disagree	24	14.7%
Strongly disagree	44	27%
Total	163	100%

Chart 9a – Overall responses



If you disagree with this please state why.

Those who disagreed gave the following reasons.

- Age of a vehicle is irrelevant and emissions are more important
- Current tests that the council carry out are sufficient
- To implement this would have cost implications to drivers and taxi companies
- This requirement should be expanded to other vehicles not just taxis e.g. buses

Table 9b – Level of agreement by taxi company, customer and driver.

Respondent	Agree or strongly agree – number of respondents	Agree or strongly agree %
Taxi company	12	50.0%
Taxi customer	40	70.2%
Taxi driver	9	16.4%

Q10 - Age policy for vehicles and engine emission standards

If an age policy for vehicles is introduced, what in your view would be an appropriate maximum age in years for a newly licensed vehicle and a vehicle licence renewal?

Table 10a – Overall responses

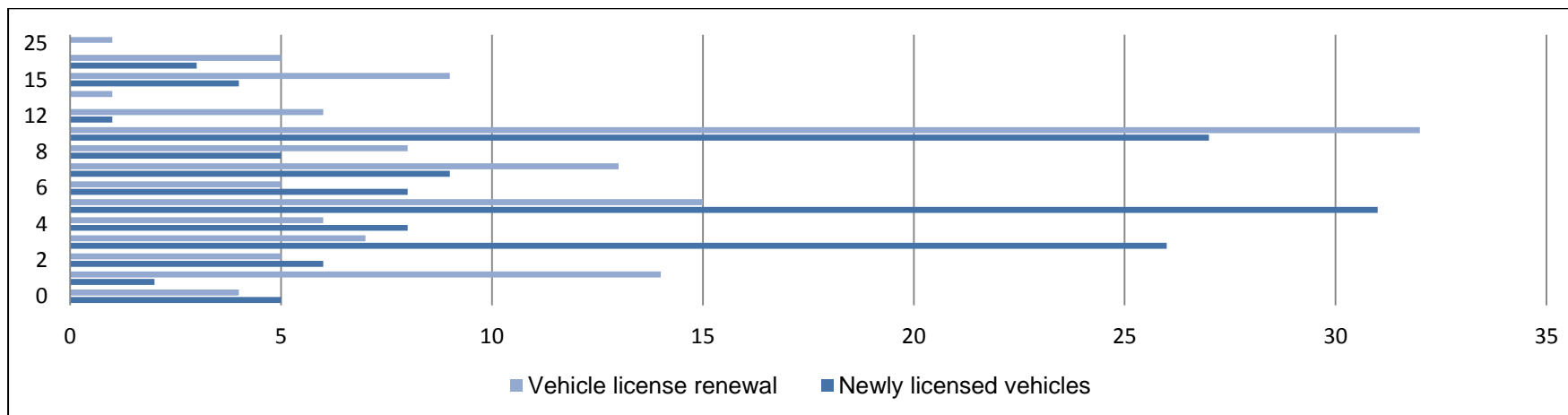
Response (years)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	10	12	13	15	20	25	Total
Number of responses - Newly licensed vehicles	5	2	6	26	8	31	8	9	5	27	1	0	4	3	0	135
Percentage of cases	3.7%	1.5%	4.4%	19.3%	5.9%	23%	5.9%	6.7%	3.7%	20%	0.7%	0%	3%	2.2%	0%	100%
Number of responses - A vehicle license renewal	4	14	5	7	6	15	5	13	8	32	6	1	9	5	1	131
Percentage of cases	3.1%	10.7%	3.8%	5.3%	4.6%	11.4%	3.8%	9.9%	6.1%	24.4%	4.6%	0.8%	6.9%	3.8%	0.8%	100%

Q10 continued...

Q10 ...continued - Age policy for vehicles and engine emission standards

If an age policy for vehicles is introduced, what in your view would be an appropriate maximum age in years for a newly licensed vehicle and a vehicle licence renewal?

Chart 10a – Overall responses



Q10 continued...

Q10 ...continued - Age policy for vehicles and engine emission standards

If an age policy for vehicles is introduced, what in your view would be an appropriate maximum age in years for a newly licensed vehicle and a vehicle licence renewal?

Table 10b – Level of agreement by taxi company, customer and driver.

Response (years)		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	10	12	13	15	20	25	Total
Number of responses - Newly licensed vehicles	Taxi company	1	0	0	5	2	5	0	1	0	5	0	0	1	0	0	20
	Taxi customer	2	1	4	13	3	12	4	3	1	9	1	0	0	0	0	53
	Taxi driver	1	0	1	3	3	10	2	4	3	11	0	0	3	1	0	42
	Other	1	0	1	3	0	3	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	15
	Blank	0	1	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	5
Number of responses - A vehicle license renewal	Taxi company	1	2	0	0	1	1	2	2	2	6	0	0	2	0	0	19
	Taxi customer	1	9	3	5	2	10	3	5	1	11	2	0	1	1	0	54
	Taxi driver	2	0	1	0	1	2	0	5	5	10	3	1	6	2	1	39
	Other	0	2	0	2	1	2	0	1	0	4	1	0	0	2	0	15
	Blank	4	14	5	7	6	15	5	13	8	32	6	1	9	5	1	4

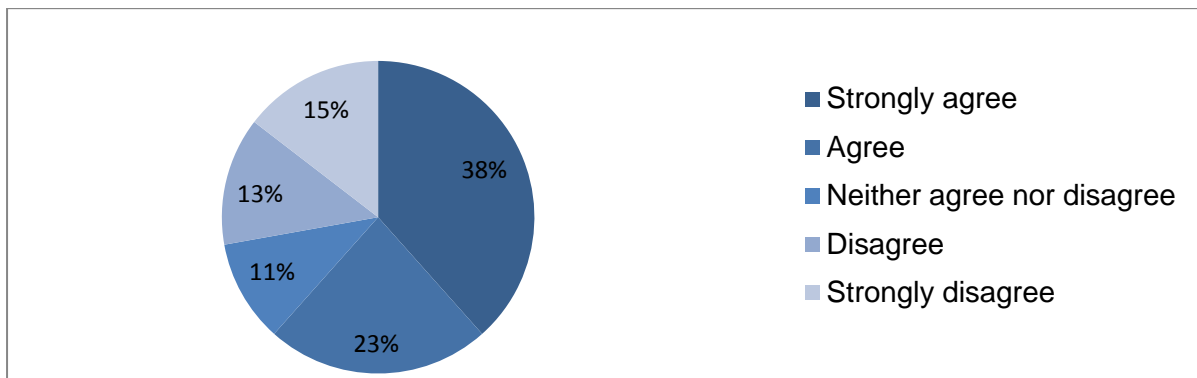
Q11 - Suspension of licensed vehicles

Do you agree or disagree that licensed vehicles not presented for test at an appointed date and time should be suspended immediately?

Table 11a – Overall responses

Response	Number of responses	Percentage of cases
Strongly agree	58	38.4%
Agree	35	23.2%
Neither agree nor disagree	16	10.6%
Disagree	20	13.2%
Strongly disagree	22	14.6%
Total	151	100%

Chart 11a – Overall responses



If you disagree with this please state why.

Those who disagreed gave the following reasons.

- Suspension should only happen if a missed appointment occurs more than once
- Suspension should depend on circumstances of why the appointment was missed
- Appointments should be more flexible

Table 11b – Level of agreement by taxi company, customer and driver.

Respondent	Agree or strongly agree – number of respondents	Agree or strongly agree %
Taxi company	12	54.5%
Taxi customer	41	80.4%
Taxi driver	27	50.0%

Q12 – Other comments

Is there anything else you think should be added to the policy or do you have any other comments on the proposed changes?

Table 12a – Overall responses

Comment	Number of responses	% of cases
Too many/ better management of taxis in Durham	14	11.4%
Policies make it difficult/ costly for drivers and/or operators	11	8.9%
Review taxi ranks/ better management in Durham City	7	5.7%
Restrictions on the colour of taxis and top signs	6	4.8%
Tariffs to be reviewed and regulated/ clearly displayed in taxis or at ranks	6	4.8%
Further training including diversity/ first aid/ sexism/ racism/ NVQ	5	4.1%
Knowledge tests to be removed/ eased (for private and/ or hackney carriages)	5	4.1%
Knowledge/ basic English tests to be carried out	5	4.1%
Non local taxis causing issues	5	4.1%
Reduce pollution/ engines to be switched off when waiting	5	4.1%
How would proposals benefit enforcement/ how could enforcement be ensured	4	3.2%
Query on the development of the survey/ proposals	4	3.2%
Age policy of vehicles not required	3	2.4%
Alcohol and/or drug testing to take place	3	2.4%
Authorities must talk/ listen to drivers and taxi operators	3	2.4%
CCTV needs to be secure and a solid process for penalty	3	2.4%
ID/ plates should be clearly displayed	3	2.4%
Taxi speeds should be recorded	3	2.4%
Age policy would reduce pollution	2	1.6%
Annual DBS checks/ query on how DBS checks are carried out	2	1.6%
Drivers should have a dress code	2	1.6%
Maximum number of hours worked limited	2	1.6%
Private hire vehicles and hackney carriages should be easily identifiable/ differentiated	2	1.6%
Random checks of vehicles/ random cleanliness checks	2	1.6%
The policy should not be changed	2	1.6%
Other	14	11.4%
Total	123	99.5%*

*Some respondents provided more than one comment

3.3 Additional feedback

Additional feedback 1 – provided in addition to survey

Perhaps if a driver is asked to reveal full name to a customer he could also have the right to ask the customer for their full name and address also?

Additional feedback 2 – provided in addition to online survey

- Insufficient evidence

I have not responded to some questions as you have not provided the evidence as to why you think a change is necessary, and this is not something that is within my own knowledge.

- Age policy for vehicles and engine emission standards

As I indicated on the form, I agree with the aim of improving vehicle standards and helping to improve local air quality through the reduction of exhaust emissions from taxis. However, an age policy is not the right way to go about this. The Council should set vehicle standards, including those for exhaust emissions, and then have these checked during the regular testing. Emissions from diesel engines are now recognised as being more of a problem than those from petrol-engined cars. Some taxis are now powered by LPG. I don't know if there are yet any electric or hybrid taxis but the technology is improving all the time and it would be prudent to have a policy in place now, and not wait till the next update to the policy.

- Basic numeracy and literacy testing

I am sufficiently hard of hearing that I need to use hearing aids. This form of disability is quite common among older people. Your tests should ensure that drivers are aware of this possibility and are able to communicate appropriately.

- Other comments

I live in Durham City and it's clear that the City is a honeypot for taxis from far and wide. Residents suffer from long queues of taxis. North road is a particular problem and given your aim of reducing exhaust emissions if nothing else taxis should not really be allowed to queue here, certainly not in the daytime and to the extent that they do. I'm sure you are aware of this issue and it should have been tackled in the revised Policy.

There is a further problem, in that drivers from out of town are not familiar with the area and do not know where the passenger has asked to be taken to. If the passenger is also from out of town they may not know the postcode, which reduces the value of satnavs.

There is a change I think you should consider, which could also address the problem raised by Councillor Owen Temple at the full Council on 17 June. You may recall he asked a question "I wonder whether the Portfolio Holder is aware that since new testing procedures were put in place by April 19 out of 20 applicants had failed the new knowledge test and 17 out of 20 the Locality Test". I suggest that the County should again be divided up into zones,

but not on the old District boundaries since some of these split communities, e.g. in Esh Winning. Each of these zones would have a Locality Test. Taxi drivers would then be allowed to ply for trade in any zone for which they passed the relevant test. Drivers could choose not to be examined for a zone they were not familiar with.

This might well reduce the number of taxis in Durham, particularly if existing drivers were re-examined as their licences came up for renewal. And it would increase the supply of drivers elsewhere in the County as they would only need to pass the Locality Test for their home zone. In the fullness of time they could take the test for other zones and extend their area of operation.

Additional feedback 3

I frequently cycle in and around Durham city centre and I also spend many Saturday nights (9pm-4am) voluntarily looking after residents and visitors in the city centre. There are a number points about the taxis that are very clear from my view.

- The Claypath night-time road closure is a great success. It is a lot safer and incredibly easier for emergency vehicles to get where they are needed. I would support it becoming a permanent arrangement with the use of ANPR cameras to lower ongoing costs, so long as non-resident drivers are able to avoid fines should they provide an acceptable reason after using the road.
- There are problems with taxis in the Market Place, the wide entrance to the Market Place (beside the side of St Nics Church), and on the bridge between Claypath and the Market Place. I understand these to all be specifically non-waiting areas for taxis or other motorists. However it is not clearly marked/painted or signed, I think taxi drivers are aware of this but will ignore the rules unless police officers repeatedly move them on. The bridge is of particular concern as I have witnessed this still causes access issues for emergency vehicles (police/ambulance) and private vehicles such as those picking up family members that are under the care of paramedics or first-aiders.
- The taxi rank works well on the longer slip road. Although the taxi rank can extend round the corner across New Elvet Bridge, this is the best place as it disturbs few residents and the queue of taxis keeps moving.
- It is unclear why taxi rank marshals were removed from Durham city. It would be useful to have these return, as the public can become unclear whether they need to walk down hill to the next unclaimed taxi or to wait for one to drive up when the front ones have moved on. It seems simple but a little confusion and different choices makes the customer queue quickly lose definition.
- When taxis sit in unauthorised places (such as those mentioned earlier) there seems to be no power of the police other than to move them on. It is clear to anyone regularly out that it tends to be repeat offenders. The taxi drivers know this and almost mock the powerless police officers. It would be good if the public could report taxi drivers with photos of them standing still so they lose their taxi license (the city wouldn't hurt to have a few less taxis).
- It is shocking to know that the licensing authority struggle to keep their records in order and don't have computer records of who is licensed.

- Some members of the public will note the taxi license number when their friend gets in a taxi, or text it to a friend when they get in a taxi. They should be educated that the car license number plate is more important and useful in the case of any complaint needing to be brought against the taxi driver.
- I have heard rumours that some taxi drivers deliberately set the Christmas tariff. It would be good to have a campaign to educate the public that they can look for the number 1-6 on the metre to know that they will be charged the correct rate. I have not seen myself any cases of the wrong rate being set, but I have not looked at many metres.

Additional feedback 4

One issue not mentioned by you is the excessive number of taxis in Durham. There are always a dozen taxis queuing in North Rd. The evening queue near the prince Bishops' car park is positively dangerous as it backs up on to Elvet Bridge and can interfere with traffic coming from Leazes Rd and trying to reach Claypath.

Additional feedback 5

I write to you on behalf of the Durham Independent Taxi Association regarding the current taxi consultation, We wish to make the following points:

- Child sex exploitation awareness, we feel that this is a dedicated agencies responsibility and therefore see no benefit as we feel that the trade would not support such measures as the time and resources drain on our businesses is another cost which we cannot sustain, in simple terms we don't think any driver/operator will get involved in reporting such issues as this would lead to a great deal of time where we could be operating our businesses instead of being the only ones whom are not being paid to do someone else duty.
- Signage while we agree in principle we think again armbands are of no use in reality, if a passenger gets into a taxi in the rear there will be no point in a driver wearing an armband and they look ridiculous.
- DBS checks, the government recommend every 3 years as the best practice, again this is another expense and waste of time that the trade cannot sustain
- CCTV we believe this should be at the choice of the operator/driver not mandatory as again this is another expense that the trade cannot sustain, neither do we have any evidence that it is beneficial to anyone or indeed necessary.
- We notice as usual that there has been no discussion with the taxi trade to seek suggestions to help towards the consultation as per usual, no views of the people that are doing the job or suggestions that could have improved the situation for all the people involved, we also notice all the items that are included all involve the time and expense of the taxi trade. No where in the consultation document is there any mention of the council doing anything whatsoever to improve things.
- We consider the consultation to be a knee jerk reaction by the county council with little or no consideration to the taxi trade and think that the council are trying to purposefully strangle the trade with red tape against advice from the best practice.

- We as a trade will resist these measures forcefully as apart from the above points we feel we as a trade are not being serviced correctly by the existing policy which has not been effectfully enforced.
- As a trade we would request a meeting with yourself as licencing manager and councillor Carr as chair of the licencing committee to discuss these issues and many more as a matter of urgency.

Additional feedback 6

As you know, I represent the Durham Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). The Durham LSCB Board meeting on the 20 August 2015 discussed the safeguarding proposals for the taxi licencing, (as part of my policy update) and were recommended to formally support your proposal.

As recommended, the LSCB Board have asked me to write to you on behalf of Durham LSCB to formally support your proposal that; *All licence applicants to undergo awareness training to assist in the prevention and reporting of sexual exploitation.*

The board did not feel it was appropriate to respond to any other questions in the consultation.

Additional feedback 7

I am writing in response to the taxi consultation.

- Taxi signs.

Why do you feel the need to micromanage to the nth degree?

Yes make top signs for HCs only but stop trying to increase costs by dictating size, fonts and what can be on it.

This shows me there are to many people with to much spare time on their hands.

- CCTV

If you are paying for it possibly, otherwise no.

Why should we have the council spying on what customers we have and private business contracts?

- Drug testing

Totally in favour with one condition, it is introduced for all council staff and councillors on the same day.

- Armbands etc:

What we have is ok as it is. We need no extra costs.

- DBS [CRB]

Yearly tests only if we no longer pay for them.

- Sexual exploitation training.

It should not be compulsory as I believe it would be of little use, having said that, it should be available free of charge.

- Literacy and Numeracy tests

YES.

- Age policy

Using emissions and age is just forcing more costs on the trade.

If a car is under 7 years old at first test and passes all following tests, it should be ok. 10 years should be a cut off for all taxis except where the use of retro/vintage vehicles is proposed.

- Suspension for not turning up at test.

Not immediate, it should depend on the reason if there is one.

- Policy document changes.

You issue a draft showing which words and paragraphs you want to alter, but don't know what you want to change them to?

Please stop, we all know that is not true.

Try being honest and open with the trade and the public.

Get rid of that joke undemocratic quango you operate.

[Countywide Taxi Working Group]

I have studied the minutes of the meetings from 2013 to the present day.

It only provides a hiding place for council staff who have a phobia of transparency.

It needs replacing by quarterly open meetings with the trade as a whole.

With the same council, police representatives as now, but with the chair tasking someone to deal with a problem so that the same problems are not on the minutes after TWO years, or explain their failure.

3.4 Disability Partnership feedback

Notes – Disability Partnership – 9th June 2015

Present –

John Clarke – Durham Access for All

Angela Colfield – Headway

John Colfield – County Durham Activity Day Unit

Representing the Taxi Licensing Unit

Helen Johnson – Licensing Team Leader

Garry Keay – Licensing Team Leader

Helen and Garry outlined the objectives of the Taxi Licensing Policy review and encouraged those attending the meeting to either go on-line and complete the survey or to complete a copy of the questionnaire which were handed out during the meeting. The closing date for the consultation is 26th August 2015

General comments

- How many wheelchair accessible vehicles are there registered in the County?
- There have been instances where taxis have left customers because of the time taken to get to and from the Taxi
- Garry explained the difference between a Hackney Taxi and a Private Hire vehicle. There are approximately 1800 Hackney Taxi and 400-500 Private Hire. A Hackney Taxi cannot charge for waiting time but a Private Hire vehicle can.
- Vehicles that are identified as Wheelchair accessible must have secure points for chairs.
- A certificate of compliance is issued annually and these vehicles are checked for wheelchair compliance.
- The checks are carried out at Meadowfield as this has specialist experience and equipment for checking these types of vehicles.
- Prior to any contract being let via Passenger Transport to customers using wheelchairs the drivers must undergo training. They must also undergo refresher training every three years.
- It was suggested that all taxi drivers undergo Disability Awareness training including an understanding of those customers with cognitive difficulties or have suffered a stroke.
- Any feedback or problems encountered are welcomed to be reported to the Taxi team.

3.5 Equality and diversity data

The following tables show the level of agreement with each proposal by equality and diversity group. It should be noted that not all respondents provided information about themselves and so these results only reflect the responses of those who did.

Q1 – Do you agree or disagree that the policy should state exactly what a top sign for hackney carriages should look like, including the wording displayed on it?

Group	Segment	% Agree or strongly agree
Gender	Female	66.7%
	Male	62%
Age	16 – 24	80%
	25 – 64	62.3%
	65 +	70.6%
Disability	With disability	66.7%
Sexuality	Heterosexual/straight	61.4%
	Gay/lesbian/bisexual/other	87.5%
Ethnicity	Ethnic minority (non-white)	71.4%
	White (British/non-British)	60.2%

Q2 – Do you agree or disagree that only hackney carriages should be allowed to display a top sign?

Group	Segment	% Agree or strongly agree
Gender	Female	62.5%
	Male	76.9%
Age	16 – 24	80%
	25 – 64	74.4%
	65 +	64.7%
Disability	With disability	65%
Sexuality	Heterosexual/straight	74.8%
	Gay/lesbian/bisexual/other	75%
Ethnicity	Ethnic minority (non-white)	85.7%
	White (British/non-British)	72.7%

Q3 – Do you agree or disagree that CCTV in taxis should be compulsory?

Group	Segment	% Agree or strongly agree
Gender	Female	65.6%
	Male	47.9%
Age	16 – 24	60%
	25 – 64	51.2%
	65 +	58.8%
Disability	With disability	61.9%
Sexuality	Heterosexual/straight	53.8%
	Gay/lesbian/bisexual/other	75%
Ethnicity	Ethnic minority (non-white)	42.9%
	White (British/non-British)	51.9%

Q4 – Do you agree or disagree that taxi drivers should be required to have random drug testing?

Group	Segment	% Agree or strongly agree
Gender	Female	87.9%
	Male	73.3%
Age	16 – 24	100%
	25 – 64	76.9%
	65 +	75%
Disability	With disability	85.7%
Sexuality	Heterosexual/straight	77.9%
	Gay/lesbian/bisexual/other	100%
Ethnicity	Ethnic minority (non-white)	71.4%
	White (British/non-British)	78%

Q5 – Do you agree or disagree that taxis and their drivers should be clearly identifiable by the display of items such as in-car signage, armbands or taxi badges?

Group	Segment	% Agree or strongly agree
Gender	Female	90.9%
	Male	77.7%
Age	16 – 24	80%
	25 – 64	79.2%
	65 +	94.1%
Disability	With disability	95.2%
Sexuality	Heterosexual/straight	83.3%
	Gay/lesbian/bisexual/other	87.5%
Ethnicity	Ethnic minority (non-white)	71.4%
	White (British/non-British)	84.2%

Q6 – Do you agree or disagree that Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks should be carried out annually instead of every three years?

Group	Segment	% Agree or strongly agree
Gender	Female	57.6%
	Male	42.5%
Age	16 – 24	80%
	25 – 64	45.7%
	65 +	41.2%
Disability	With disability	57.1%
Sexuality	Heterosexual/straight	47.3%
	Gay/lesbian/bisexual/other	50%
Ethnicity	Ethnic minority (non-white)	14.3%
	White (British/non-British)	49.2%

Q7 – Do you agree or disagree that all taxi licence applicants should undergo awareness training to assist in the prevention and reporting of sexual exploitation?

Group	Segment	% Agree or strongly agree
Gender	Female	75%
	Male	52.1%
Age	16 – 24	60%
	25 – 64	55.8%
	65 +	64.7%
Disability	With disability	66.7%
Sexuality	Heterosexual/straight	58.8%
	Gay/lesbian/bisexual/other	75%
Ethnicity	Ethnic minority (non-white)	71.4%
	White (British/non-British)	57.6%

Q8 – Do you agree or disagree that all new taxi licensing applicants should undergo basic numeracy and literacy testing to ensure customer requests are understood and fees communicated effectively?

Group	Segment	% Agree or strongly agree
Gender	Female	75%
	Male	78.3%
Age	16 – 24	80%
	25 – 64	78.1%
	65 +	88.2%
Disability	With disability	81%
Sexuality	Heterosexual/straight	82.3%
	Gay/lesbian/bisexual/other	75%
Ethnicity	Ethnic minority (non-white)	57.1%
	White (British/non-British)	81.7%

Q9 – Do you agree or disagree that there should be an age policy for vehicles?

Group	Segment	% Agree or strongly agree
Gender	Female	62.5%
	Male	39.2%
Age	16 – 24	80%
	25 – 64	44.5%
	65 +	35.3%
Disability	With disability	61.9%
Sexuality	Heterosexual/straight	42.3%
	Gay/lesbian/bisexual/other	87.5%
Ethnicity	Ethnic minority (non-white)	42.9%
	White (British/non-British)	45.8%

Q10 – If an age policy for vehicles is introduced, what in your view would be an appropriate maximum age in years for

...a newly licensed vehicle?

Group	Segment	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	10	12	13	15	20	25
Gender	Female	1	1	1	7	1	8	3		1	6					
	Male	4	1	5	19	6	21	4	9	3	18	1			4	3
Age	16 – 24	1					2			1	1					
	25 – 64	4	2	4	21	7	25	6	7	3	25	1	0	2	1	0
	65 +	0	0	2	3	1	2	1	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
Disability	With disability	1		2	2	1	6	3			1			1	1	
Sexuality	Heterosexual/straight	2	1	5	25	5	25	6	7	3	22			3	2	
	Gay/lesbian/bisexual/other	1				2	2	1	1		1					
Ethnicity	Ethnic minority (non-white)			1			2			2	3					
	White (British/non-British)	4	11	4	7	5	10	5	12	6	26	3	1	8	5	

...a vehicle licence renewal?

Group	Segment	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	10	12	13	15	20	25
Gender	Female		8	2	2	3	6	1	1	1	5			1		
	Male	4	5	3	4	1	9	4	12	7	26	4	1	8	5	1
Age	16 – 24			1			2				2					
	25 – 64	4	11	4	6	4	11	3	10	7	29	4	1	8	2	1
	65 +	0	2	0	1	1	1	2	3	1	0	0	0	1	1	0
Disability	With disability		3		2		5			2	3	1			2	
Sexuality	Heterosexual/straight	4	11	4	7	5	11	4	11	8	24	2	1	7	4	
	Gay/lesbian/bisexual/other			1			1		1		4	1				
Ethnicity	Ethnic minority (non-white)			1			2			2	3					
	White (British/non-British)	4	11	4	7	5	10	5	12	6	26	3	1	8	5	

Q11 – Do you agree or disagree that licensed vehicles not presented for test at an appointed date and time should be suspended immediately?

Group	Segment	% Agree or strongly agree
Gender	Female	62.1%
	Male	59.8%
Age	16 – 24	80%
	25 – 64	59.8%
	65 +	75%
Disability	With disability	73.7%
Sexuality	Heterosexual/straight	62.1%
	Gay/lesbian/bisexual/other	83.3%
Ethnicity	Ethnic minority (non-white)	33.3%
	White (British/non-British)	63.4%

Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy Consultation

Briefing note
June 2015



Introduction

The Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy was introduced in 2011 and is now due for review. As part of this review, we are consulting on proposals in the following areas:

- Vehicle top signs (signs displayed on the roof of taxis).
- New, more stringent safeguarding measures to improve safety of drivers and passengers.
- Age policy for vehicles and engine emission standards.
- Suspension of licensed vehicles.

This briefing note provides information on the potential changes which are being considered as part of the policy review.

Vehicle top signs

Hackney carriages are currently required to display a taxi top sign (on the roof) of a design approved by the Council which is illuminated when the vehicle is available for hire.

We are considering changing this condition to state exactly what such a sign would look like, including the wording displayed on it.

We are also considering stopping private hire vehicles using top signs so people can distinguish between a hackney carriage and a private hire vehicle.

Safeguarding of drivers and passengers

We are looking at a number of options which will help to ensure that drivers and passengers of taxis in County Durham feel safe. We are looking for views on the following proposals:

- To make CCTV in licensed vehicles a mandatory requirement.
- To introduce random drug testing for drivers.
- To ensure that licensed vehicles and drivers are clearly identifiable by items such as in-car signage, armbands or taxi badges.

- To have annual Disclosure and Barring Service checks (checks which help employers make safer recruitment decisions and prevent unsuitable people from working with vulnerable groups) instead of every three years.
- All licence applicants to undergo awareness training to assist in the prevention and reporting of sexual exploitation.
- All licence applicants to undergo basic numeracy and literacy testing in addition to the knowledge test they have already undertaken so that they can understand passenger requests and communicate fares effectively.

Age policy for vehicles and engine emission standards

To improve vehicle standards and help improve local air quality through the reduction of exhaust emissions from taxis, we are considering the introduction of vehicle age limits for new vehicle applications and vehicle renewals. This could replace or supplement the emission criteria that are currently in place. If introduced, vehicles would need to meet the prescribed age limits if they are to be licensed.

Suspension of licensed vehicles

All licence holders are required to present their vehicle for regular testing. We are considering introducing a condition to immediately suspend a licence where a vehicle is not presented for test at an appointed date and time.

Other changes being considered

Other proposed policy changes are:

- Inclusion of a deadline for accessible vehicle training to be carried out.
- Inclusion of offences involving animal cruelty to the list of relevant offences.
- When an applicant has previously been disqualified from driving, changing the time period from two to five years following the date of conviction for the granting of a taxi driver licence.
- Inclusion of a new relevant offence of battery to the list of relevant violent offences.
- Inclusion of an additional condition relating to roof carriers and access to seats.
- Special vehicles to undertake MOT test twice yearly instead of annually.
- Reviewing the policy every five years instead of every three years.
- Updates to the list of traffic offences where a licence will not normally be granted.

A comprehensive list of all the proposed changes can be found in the document 'Table of changes' which is attached to the [Cabinet report of 15 April 2015](#).

Further information

If you require further information on any of these proposals, please contact the Licensing Team on 03000 261016.

Taxi Licensing Consultation Survey

Vehicle top signs

Hackney carriages are currently required to display a taxi top sign (on the roof) of a design approved by the council which is illuminated when the vehicle is available for hire. We are considering changing this condition to state exactly what such a sign would look like, including the wording displayed on it.

Q1 Do you agree or disagree that the policy should state exactly what a top sign for hackney carriages should look like, including the wording displayed on it?

- Strongly agree.....
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
- If you disagree with this, please state why.

We are considering stopping private hire vehicles using top signs so people can distinguish between a hackney carriage and a private hire vehicle.

Q2 Do you agree or disagree that only hackney carriages should be allowed to display a top sign?

- Strongly agree.....
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
- If you disagree with this, please state why.

Safeguarding of drivers and passengers

We are considering a number of options to help ensure that drivers and passengers of taxis in County Durham feel safe and secure. Taxis include both hackney carriages and private hire vehicles.

Q3 One option we are considering is to make CCTV in taxi vehicles compulsory. This condition would be enforceable, clear and robust to ensure recorded material is used properly and it will be applied in line with both the Data Protection Act 1998 and the guidance of the Information Commissioner. Any improper use or re-broadcast of

recorded material would result in severe disciplinary action being taken against offenders. Do you agree or disagree that CCTV in taxis should be compulsory?

- Strongly agree.....
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

If you disagree with this, please state why.

Q4 Do you agree or disagree that taxi drivers should be required to have random drug testing?

- Strongly agree.....
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

If you disagree with this, please state why.

Q5 Do you agree or disagree that taxis and their drivers should be clearly identifiable by the display of items such as in-car signage, armbands or taxi badges?

- Strongly agree.....
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

If you disagree with this, please state why.

Q6 Currently, taxi licence holders are subject to a three yearly Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check to ensure they are suitable to hold a licence. We are considering the introduction of annual checks for all taxi licence holders. Do you agree or disagree that checks should be carried out annually instead of every three years?

- Strongly agree.....
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

If you disagree with this, please state why.

Q7 Do you agree or disagree that all taxi licence applicants should undergo awareness training to assist in the prevention and reporting of sexual exploitation?

- Strongly agree.....
- Agree

Neither agree nor disagree
Disagree
Strongly disagree
If you disagree with this, please state why.

Q8 Do you agree or disagree that all new taxi licensing applicants should undergo basic numeracy and literacy testing to ensure customer requests are understood and fees communicated effectively?

Strongly agree.....
Agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Disagree
Strongly disagree
If you disagree with this, please state why.

Age policy for vehicles and engine emission standards

To improve vehicle standards and help improve local air quality through the reduction of exhaust emissions from taxis, we are considering the introduction of vehicle age limits for new vehicle applications and vehicle renewals. This could replace or supplement the emission criteria that are currently in place. If introduced, vehicles would need to meet the prescribed age limits if they are to be licensed.

Q9 Do you agree or disagree that there should be an age policy for vehicles?

Strongly agree.....
Agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Disagree
Strongly disagree
If you disagree with this, please state why.

Q10 If an age policy for vehicles is introduced, what in your view would be an appropriate maximum age in years for...

a)...a newly licensed vehicle?

b)...a vehicle licence renewal?

Suspension of licensed vehicles

All taxi licence holders are required to present their vehicle for regular testing. We are considering introducing a condition to immediately suspend a licence where a vehicle is not presented for test at an appointed date and time.

Q11 Do you agree or disagree that licensed vehicles not presented for test at an appointed date and time should be suspended immediately?

Strongly agree.....

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

If you disagree with this, please state why.

Other comments

Q12 Is there anything else you think should be added to the policy or do you have any other comments on the proposed changes?

About you

Our aim is to involve as many people as possible in local decision making and, as such, we would like to make sure everyone has the opportunity to become involved. We also have specific responsibilities to ensure that certain groups protected by equality legislation are protected. If you could answer a few questions about yourself it will help us to monitor our performance. Your answers will be confidential and we will only use the information for this consultation.

These questions are entirely optional.

Q13 Are you responding as?

Taxi customer.....

Taxi driver.....

Taxi company

Other.....

If other, please specify.

Q14 Are you:

Male.....

Female

Q15 What is your age?

- Under 16.....
- 16-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75+
- Prefer not to say

Q16 Do you consider yourself to be a disabled person?

(This may include any long-standing illness, disability or infirmity which has a substantial effect on your day-to-day life. Long-standing means it has lasted, or is likely to last, for at least a year).

- Yes
- No.....

Q17 What is your religion or belief?

- Buddhist
- Christian
- Hindu.....
- Jewish
- Muslim.....
- Sikh
- None.....
- Other
- If other, please specify.

Q18 How would you describe your sexual orientation?

- Heterosexual/straight.....
- Gay woman/lesbian
- Gay man.....
- Bisexual.....
- Other
- If other, please specify.

Q19 What is your ethnicity?

- White British.....
- White non-British.....
- Asian or Asian British
- Black or Black British
- Arab or Middle Eastern.....
- Mixed Race
- Travelling Community.....
- Other.....
- If other, please specify.