

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.