

Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy

Key Changes

Introduction

The following information highlights the key changes that are proposed in the draft policy, but is not comprehensive, so should not be relied upon as such in lieu of reviewing the full draft policy to review the amendments that we are considering.

Key Changes

1. Drivers are required to sign up to the DBS Update service as part of their application. This saves the driver money compared to starting a new DBS each application, prevents their DBS from needing to be applied for when they renew their licence (which is the most common reason for their licence being delayed) and allows us to carry out checks when it is appropriate to do so, rather than waiting 3 years for renewal. In addition to this, we will request information directly from the local Police in order to establish if there is any information available that should be considered as part of determining whether an applicant is fit and proper to hold a licence.
2. We will no longer allow drivers to continue to work where applicants for renewal of driver licences have not applied in sufficient time to have their application dealt with to avoid a break in them holding a valid licence. The need is not justifiable when balanced against public safety. Licence holders must accept personal responsibility for maintaining their licence, and renewing in good time is a significant aspect of this.
3. The introduction of safeguarding and equality training as a requirement for existing has also been included. Previously existing drivers could choose to undertake the training. This will now be mandatory for all licensed drivers. Drivers will also be required to refresh their training every licence renewal. This is common good practice across other authorities. Operators will also be required to undertake the training every licence renewal.
- 4 The draft Policy proposes the use of the new NR3 National database for refused and revoked drivers. Once in use, this will enable us to check whether new and renewal applicants have been refused or revoked by other councils, which will identify any applicant fraudulently completing their application form on this matter, and also enable us to make further enquiries with the relevant council to consider any such action and whether the details of this would lead us to consider that the applicant is not fit and proper to hold a licence.
5. English proficiency requirement has been updated to reflect the requirements in the Department for Transport's Statutory Taxi & Private Hire Vehicle Standards. All new existing drivers will need to ensure they meet this English language standard.

6. Basic Disclosures are now required for all vehicle licence applications where the applicant is not already a licensed driver. The requirement for a private hire operator to provide a Basic Disclosure certificate is now annual. Operators are also required to keep a register of all staff that will take bookings or dispatch vehicles and ensure they see a Basic Disclosure from all staff who have access to records, bookings and contacts.

7. We have introduced a Code of Conduct which we expect licence holders to follow. This code of conduct serves to promote our licensing objectives in respect of the hackney carriage and private hire trades. This Code of Conduct is an integral part of the 'fit and proper' assessment.

8. We have introduced a Penalty Points Scheme which allows minor breaches to be recorded and considered in context while referring those with persistent or serious breaches to the Business Compliance Manager. This has the benefit of consistency in enforcement.

9. Increasing our digital services in order to improve the efficiency of the licensing service is important, and as such the draft policy looks to move to replace paper based procedures as far as is reasonable with the systems we currently have available.

10. Conditions for driver, vehicle and operator licences have also been updated to modernise wording and to reflect the revised policy and the Department for Transport's Statutory Taxi & Private Hire Vehicle Standards.

11. The final notable addition to the policy is a strong emissions policy (Section 18 of the draft Policy 31). This is to reflect the climate emergency declared by St Albans District Council. In the interests of the environment, tougher emissions standards should be introduced for all licensed vehicles. We have considered that the responsibility to protect the environment is a predominate factor within licensing Policy.