



Taxis, minicabs, and private hire vehicles: frequently asked questions

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General

How can I tell that a minicab is properly licensed and safe?

The most important point to bear in mind when hiring a minicab or private hire vehicle (PHV), is that it must be hired through a licensed PHV operator. The hiring can be arranged over the telephone or in person at the operator's office, but a PHV must never be hired by approaching the driver directly.

All PHV operators, drivers and vehicles require licences issued by the relevant licensing authority (the district council/unitary authority outside London or Transport for London in London). The relevant licensing authority carries out suitability checks as part of the licensing process. If the relevant licences have not been obtained, the minicab is being operated illegally and should not be used.

Outside London, the vehicle will display a licence plate (normally on the rear of the vehicle). Inside London, the vehicle will display a green disc in the rear window and in the windscreen.

Both inside and outside London, drivers are normally required to wear badges.

What is the difference between a taxi and a private hire vehicle?

A taxi is a public transport vehicle with no more than 8 passenger seats, which is licensed to "ply for hire". This means that it may stand at ranks or be hailed in the street by members of the public. Private hire vehicles too must have no more than 8 passenger seats but they need to be booked in advance by customers through an operator and may not ply for hire in the street. (For vehicles with more than 8 passenger seats the [Public Service Vehicle Regulations](#) apply).

Who is responsible for licensing taxis and private hire vehicles?

Local authorities (district/borough councils, unitary authorities or [The Public Carriage Office](#) in London) are responsible for licensing taxis and private hire vehicles in their areas. A list of all local authorities is available [here](#).

Who should I contact if I have a complaint?

You should report any problems to the local licensing authority (part of district or borough councils, unitary authorities or [The Public Carriage Office](#) in London). A list of all local authorities is available [here](#) and you should ask for the taxi or private hire vehicle licensing section. It would be helpful if you could supply the vehicle registration number and taxi/private hire licence number, the taxi driver's badge number or the private hire operating firm name when contacting the licensing office.

Where can I find information about disability awareness training?

There are numerous organisations that offer awareness training tailored for taxi and private hire drivers. A good starting point is the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee's recently published '[Making Private Hire Services More Accessible to Disabled People - A Good Practice Guide](#)'. This contains information on how to set up a training scheme, examples of best practice and details of some training providers.

What is a Taxicard scheme?

Broadly speaking, a Taxicard scheme allows disabled people to travel in licensed taxis at substantially reduced fares. Taxicard can effectively complement or provide an alternative to Dial-a-Ride (Ring-and-Ride) schemes which, whilst providing a valuable service, are inappropriate for certain trips that cannot be scheduled. Taxicard draws on the availability of taxis as a pre-existing, flexible, on demand service.

The decision to introduce a Taxicard scheme is down to individual local authorities and will depend on a number of factors such as the availability of funding and the number of accessible taxis within a given locality.

A large scheme operates in London and the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee has published 'Guidance for the Establishment of Taxicard Schemes'.

Accessibility Regulations

Why will it take so long to introduce accessibility regulations for taxis?

Ministers made a statement in 2003 about the intention to regulate in this area. Since that time, the Department has received a number of representations making the case for a broader range of disabled people's needs to be met in any regulations.

This is a complex issue and the Department needs to do it properly. That means catering for a range of disabilities and how this is reflected in the design of vehicles. But we also need to consider the make up of the industry. Many drivers are self employed or employed by operators with small fleets, particularly in rural areas for example. Any changes have to be fair on them as well so that they can respond to them.

Until regulations are introduced, it will remain for individual licensing authorities to determine their accessibility policies in consultation with the local trade and disabled people. The Department has issued guidance to authorities advising those who wish to introduce such policies about the factors they will want to consider.

Will I have a chance to comment on the proposals?

The proposals are still being developed but consultation on the full package of measures, including the technical requirements, will follow in the summer of 2008.

This website will be regularly updated with information as the proposals are progressed. If, however, you would like to log your interest in receiving the consultation paper now, please e-mail us (at [email address]@dft.gsi.gov.uk) with your postal address and a contact telephone number and we will ensure you receive a copy when it is published.

Carriage of Assistance Dogs

What are my rights?

Drivers of licensed taxis have been under a duty to carry, free of charge, any guide, hearing and certain other assistance dogs travelling with a disabled person. Since 31 March 2004, a similar duty has applied to the drivers of licensed private hire vehicles (PHVs). In addition, PHV operators will be under a duty to accept a booking made by, or on behalf of, a disabled person and will not be allowed to make an additional charge for carrying an assistance dog.

It is important to note that drivers of licensed taxis and PHVs can still refuse to accept a fare for the same reason that they might refuse any other passenger, for example, if your destination is outside their licensing area.

Publications explaining the duties aimed at licensing authorities, the trade and disabled people themselves have been produced (see '[Publications and other resources](#)' section for further information).

What types of dog are covered?

Guide Dogs: those trained by the [Guide Dogs for the Blind Association](#);

Hearing Dogs: those trained by the [Hearing Dogs for Deaf People](#); and

Other Assistance Dogs: those trained to assist other disabled people by Dogs for the Disabled, [Support Dogs](#) or [Canine Partners](#).

Taxi and private hire vehicle drivers have been told how to identify these animals, so it is important that guide dogs wear a harness and other assistance dogs wear a jacket with the name of the charity that trained them. If an identification card was issued for the dog, this should also be carried. Dogs should remain on the floor and under control at all times.

What happens if a driver won't take a dog?

A driver who refuses to carry an assistance dog, or makes a charge for carrying it, is guilty of an offence and could be fined up to £1,000 unless he or she has an exemption (see below for an explanation of which drivers are exempt from the duty).

Some drivers are exempt from the duty, how will I know which ones?

Drivers of taxis or private hire vehicles who can prove to their licensing authority that they have a medical condition, such as severe asthma, which is aggravated by contact with dogs may apply for an exemption. A driver who has been granted an exemption will display a 'Notice of Exemption' on the windscreen or dashboard of their vehicle. Examples of the different types of Notice are available [here](#).

There are no exemptions available for operators.

Who should I contact if I have a complaint?

You should report any problems to the local licensing authority (part of district or borough councils, unitary authorities or [The Public Carriage Office](#) in London). A list of local authorities is available [here](#) and you should ask for the taxi or private hire vehicle licensing section. It would be helpful if you could supply the vehicle registration number and taxi/private hire license number, the taxi driver's badge number or the private hire operating firm name when contacting the licensing office.