

Please note that the information provided within this frequently asked questions (FAQ) document which relates to licensed vehicles including private hire and hackney carriage vehicles licensed by Luton Borough Council, is not intended to supersede legislation or provide legal advice, nor is it intended to form part of our policy and procedural matters and is merely an initial information document. Further information can be found within our policy on the information provided below.



Luton Borough Council's licensed vehicle Private Hire & Hackney Carriage FAQ's

Can I get a new licence for a private hire vehicle?

Yes, there are no limits on the numbers of private hire vehicles that can be licensed.

Can I get a new licence for a hackney carriage vehicle?

No, there is a limit on the numbers of hackney carriage vehicles that can be licensed and this is capped at 170. It is for an applicant to demonstrate there was an additional demand for further hackney carriage vehicles in the Borough, and then this would be considered against the policy.

The Authority contracts an independent company to carry out a survey which evaluates whether there is an unmet demand for hackney carriage vehicles licensed in Luton.

Is there an age limit to licence a vehicle?

Yes, a private hire and hackney carriage vehicle cannot be any older than 5 years on the day from date of first registration. Please see the application pack for further information. Once the vehicle is licensed and is over 5 years old the vehicle must remain in a good condition and continue to maintain the certificate of compliance.

How long is a licence issued for?

A licence for a private hire and hackney carriage licences are issued for one year, after 6 months the vehicle is required to attend a vehicle safety check at the depot. This appointment will be pre booked when an application is processed.

How much does a licence cost?

The cost for a grant and renewal of vehicle licence can be found online and on the vehicle application form. Applications can be submitted online via <https://www.luton.gov.uk/Applicaton>.

What sort of vehicle can be licensed for private hire purposes?

Saloon cars, hatchbacks, estates or people carriers can be licensed providing they have four doors. Purpose-built London style hackney carriages are not permitted for licensing for private hire purposes. Licensing of novelty vehicles will be considered on a case by case basis.

What sort of vehicle can be licensed for hackney carriage purposes?

The licensed vehicle shall be: "London type taxi; or a wheelchair accessible people-carrier type minibus which must be of a form and design approved by the Council in accordance to the General Conditions for Alternative Vehicles.

How many passengers can a private hire & hackney carriage vehicle carry?

The maximum number of passengers that a private hire and hackney carriage can be licensed for is up to carry 8 passengers (not including the driver)

Can I licence a left hand drive vehicle?

No, left hand drive vehicles are not permitted.

Does my Private Hire vehicle need to be fitted with a meter to calculate the fare for each journey?

No, there is no requirement for a meter to be fitted in your vehicle. The fares you charge will be set by your operator, who allocates work to you, not by the Council.

Do I have to display a roof sign on my vehicle?

There is no longer a need for private hire vehicles to display a roof sign for new or renewal applications received after 01st April 2018.

Hackney Carriage: The roof sign must display the word "TAXI" and must clearly illuminate when available for hire.

Am I allowed dark tinted windows/ privacy glass on my vehicle?

All windows, which are designed to open and close, must operate correctly. No dark 'privacy' tinted windows will be accepted, only lightly tinted manufactured safety glass. After market kits will not be acceptable.

For the avoidance of doubt, inline with the construction and use regulations for front windows issued by VOSA. At least 75% of light must pass through the front window, and at least 70% of light through ALL other windows. This is considered an essential safeguard in the protection of the travelling public. This enables passengers to see into the vehicle prior to entering and ensure that the view of travelling passengers is not obscured and also for drivers to be seen for their own protection.

In certain circumstances some passengers may request vehicles with tinted windows. The Council will consider applications for the exemption of display of licence plates in respect of vehicles with tinted windows. The applicant must provide sufficient evidence with such an application to demonstrate to the Council that it should depart from its standard policy. Evidence should include full reasons why tinted windows are required. The fact that a vehicle is manufactured with tinted windows is not itself sufficient reason for an exemption to be granted. Applicants are strongly recommended to seek approval based on the exact model and specification of a vehicle prior to purchase. Aftermarket kits will not be acceptable.

Does my vehicle have to have door signs displayed?

Yes, the licensed private hire vehicle must carry on the outside of the two front doors of the vehicle a sign to the size of 560mm by 210mm and be black lettering on a yellow background. This is a condition that has to be complied with. The door sign must contain the words 'Advance Bookings Only to Validate Insurance', and the operator's company name and/or telephone number. No other wording is permitted. Should you wish to change the look of the door sign this must be approved by Licensing Service Manager before displaying the signs on the vehicle. You can request an exemption to display door signs; you need to complete an exemption request application.

Hackney carriage vehicles do not need to comply with this condition.

Do I have to display a licensed plate on the vehicle?

An identity plate issued by the council is to be fixed to the rear of the private hire vehicle in an easily-visible position, determined by the Licensing Service Manager. This will usually involve a bracket affixed behind the registration plate. You may be required to remove or reposition existing fittings to install this.

Hackney carriage vehicles do not need to fix the plate to a bracket.

The vehicle licence plate must be permanently fitted to the rear of the vehicle during the time the vehicle is licensed as a private hire/hackney carriage. It must be clearly seen and must not obstruct the number plate or lights of the vehicle.

Can I display advertising on my vehicle?

Advertising can only be displayed on a hackney carriage or private hire vehicle with the written permission of the Licensing Service of the Council. If you wish to seek permission for advertising you should e-mail licensing@luton.gov.uk

There is an advertising procedure and policy that will need to be met and requested and a charge for this process.

Do I need a spare wheel?

You must ensure you have appropriate equipment and/ or tools to change or repair a punctured tyre. These tools/ equipment must be in good condition and must be securely stowed in the vehicle. Equipment or tools will be a spare wheel, a space saver wheel or a canister which fills the damaged tyre in order to affect a temporary repair to allow it to be driven to a garage for repair.

Is smoking allowed in a private hire car?

Smoking is **never** permitted in a licensed vehicle. Even when the vehicle is not being used as a hackney carriage / private hire car and no passengers are present, smoking is not permitted. No smoking signs must be displayed on at least one near-side (passenger-side) and one off-side (driver-side) window to be clearly visible to passengers before entering your vehicle.

Are PDAs & Sat Navs allowed in licensed vehicles?

The council have no jurisdiction over the use of PDA's or Sat Navs in licensed vehicles however it is important to note that the law states It's illegal to hold a phone or sat nav while driving or riding a motorcycle. You must have hands-free access.

The device must not block your view of the road and traffic ahead. You must stay in full control of your vehicle at all times.

The Highway Code states that there is a danger of driver distraction being caused by in-vehicle systems such as satellite navigation systems, congestion warning systems, PCs, multi-media, etc. You **MUST** exercise proper control of your vehicle at all times. Do not rely on driver assistance systems such as cruise control or lane departure warnings. They are available to assist but you should not reduce your concentration levels. Do not be distracted by maps or screen-based information (such as navigation or vehicle management systems) while driving or riding. If necessary find a safe place to stop.

The police can stop you if they think you're not in control because you're distracted and you can be prosecuted.

The law still applies to you if you're:

- stopped at traffic lights
- queuing in traffic
- in a drive through takeaway.

I have lost/had stolen my vehicle licence plate, what do I need to do?

If a licence plate and/or mounting bracket is lost, stolen or damaged you should advise the licensing team immediately in writing or by e-mail to licensing@luton.gov.uk stolen plates should be reported to the police. Upon receipt of an e-mail a member of the licensing team will make contact with you to arrange to provide you with a replacement. There is a charge for replacement mounting brackets and plates details of which can be found on our website www.luton.gov.uk/licensing

I have been involved in an accident in my vehicle, what do I need to do?

You must report any accident within 72 hours. You are required to provide photos of all four sides of your vehicle, please remember to include your registration plate in at least one of your photos so your vehicle can be identified.

Your accident notification and photos will be assessed by a licensing officer and they will determine whether or not your licence will need suspending until such times the vehicle damage is repaired.

Can I have dual plating? Be licensed with Luton Borough Council and another council at the same time?

No we do not allow dual plating in any circumstances.

I have moved house/changed address, what do I need to do?

You should tell us about your change of address within 7 days in writing as per your standard conditions and or code of conduct.

I want to become a licensed driver with Luton, what do I need to do?

You will need to undertake and pass the knowledge test. The knowledge tests are electronic and are multiple choice questions. If you fail your test, you will be required to pay the test fee again. Further details can be found on this in our licensing policy.

I have sold my private hire/ hackney carriage vehicle what do I do?

You have to inform the licensing service that you have sold your vehicle within 7 days of selling your vehicle in writing. You can find the change of ownership notification on the reverse side of your vehicle licence; this notification will need to be completed by yourself and the new owner.

How can I get exemptions on my vehicle?

Only private hire operators can apply for exemptions. There is an exemptions policy, which you will need to adhere to. To apply for exemptions a licensed private hire operator will need to complete an application and demonstrate the business need for such exemptions and a fee to the licensing service.

How does the council make sure that the taxi metres are accurate?

All taxi meters are tested by the council's licensing team. Meters are date and time controlled and charge single fares at all times. All meters are calibrated over a measured distance and given an approved seal by the council to show they have been tested and to prevent tampering.

How is the taxi fare tariff set?

When the fares change, consultation is carried out to assess the level of support for the proposal. The proposal is advertised. Anyone that objects to the change can make written representation to the Council. Comments will then be considered by the committee before a final decision is reached. If no objections are received the new Table of Fares automatically comes into force on the date stated.

How are the fares calculated for Hackney Carriage metres?

All HC vehicles are fitted with taxi metres. These calculate the fare based on the distance travelled and 'waiting time' which includes time when the taxi is stopped in traffic. The Council sets a maximum tariff but taxi drivers can charge less for journeys to offer special promotional discounts. They also offer fixed fares for journeys to destinations; these are decided before journeys sets off. PH fares are not subject to Council regulation and you should agree a fare (or rate per mile) with the operator when booking the journey.

Does my vehicle have to be wheelchair accessible?

All hackney carriage vehicles need to be wheelchair accessible; however some private hire vehicles can accommodate wheelchairs to, but this is not a requirement.

Can I have a screen between me and the passengers?

Hackney Carriage vehicles have a screen separating the driver and passengers. Private hire vehicles that wish to have a screen will need to put in writing why they wish to have the screen, and provide details of the full specification of the screen they wish to purchase at the drivers cost. The Licensing Service Manager will view the screen and either approve or refuse the request. If approved, once fitted the vehicle will be checked to ensure it is fitted correctly and safely.

How do I get CCTV in my vehicle?

To have CCTV in either a hackney carriage or private hire vehicle, you will be required to put a request in writing to the Licensing Service Manager. You need to state all the specification of the CCTV including what model and specification the camera you are proposing to be installed, state where the cameras cover? E.g. internally or view the road. You will need to give details whether signed up with the ICO (information commissioner's office). If approved, you will be given this approval in writing.

Can I change my 6 monthly vehicle date?

Yes you can change your 6 monthly date, however you can only move it 7 days either side of the original date.

I want to apply for an operator's licence, what do I do?

Please see the application form for information on what documents you will be required to submit. You can apply for a 1 year (request to have only a 1 year licence needs to be put in writing) or you can apply for a standard duration of a 5 year licence.

I have a badge with a different authority can I work in the borough of Luton?

No. You need to hold a Luton Borough Council licensed drivers licence.

Can I use my hackney carriage vehicle that is licensed outside of the borough as a private hire vehicle within the borough or Luton?

The licensed private hire operator will need to put a request into the Licensing Service Manager requesting authorisation to work in the borough of Luton. The private hire company that you will work for as a private hire vehicle needs to submit this request in writing stating your details and how you meet luton borough council's conditions including policy requirements.

Can I use my hackney carriage vehicle that is licensed by Luton borough council outside of the borough as Private Hire in a different borough/district?

You would be required to contact the authority in which you would wish to work as a private hire to comply with their requirements

Why does the licensing service have to check my proof of right to work in the UK?

The UK Government has changed the law regarding private hire, hackney carriage driver's and private hire operator licences which came into effect on 1 December 2016. These changes will affect:

- Anyone that applies for a driver's or operator's licence on or after 1 December 2016; or
- Any person that already holds a driver's or operator's licence and they apply to renew their licence on or after 1 December 2016.

The legislation does not affect applications for vehicle Licences currently.

The changes mean that, from 1 December 2016, the council as a licensing authority is under a new legal duty to ensure that driver and operator licences are only issued to applicants who have the right to licence in the UK. In order to comply with this duty the council has to check that all applicants on or after 1 December 2016 have the right to work in the UK. By law this applies to everyone regardless of where they were born, how long they have lived in the UK and, if they already hold a driver or operator licence and how long they have held that licence.

For applications received on or after 1 December 2016 applicants will be required to provide original and valid evidence of their right to work in the UK before their licence will be issued. Should they fail to do so, The Licensing Authority will be unable to issue their Licence

A full list of acceptable documents can be found within the application pack located on our website:

www.luton.gov.uk/licensing

Where do I apply for my DBS and DVLA mandate?

You are required to apply to TaxiPlus (previously known as Personnel Checks) to obtain a DBS Certificate (formally known as a CRB Disclosure) and a DVLA Driving Licence check prior to submitting a Licence application.

TaxiPlus can be contacted on **01254 355669** or www.personnelchecks.co.uk/taxis/luton and will be able to take you through the process of obtaining a DBS Certificate and DVLA Driving Licence check.

My badge is expiring, I have applied for my DBS but it hasn't come back what do I need to do?

The council has adopted a best practice guide for renewing / maintaining driver's licences. We advise as best practice that application forms, all supporting information and appropriate fees to be submitted at least twenty eight days prior to the expiry of the current licence issued.

If an applicant has applied for their enhanced DBS at least 28 days prior to the expiry of the current licence issued but has not yet received their completed enhanced DBS they can write to the Service Manager requesting to submit their application pending the DBS, the applicant should ensure they provide evidence to support their request showing when the DBS was applied for. Applicants are encouraged to submit this request at least 7 days prior to the expiry of the current licence issued.

My badge is expiring, I have not yet applied for my DBS what do I need to do?

If your badge is due to expire and you have not yet applied for your DBS due to reasons that are out of your control you are required to submit a request in writing to the service manager outlining the circumstances in which you could not meet the best practice timescales highlighted above.

It is advised you engage with the licensing service as soon as reasonably practicable to highlight your concerns so that the matter can be considered by the service prior to the expiry of your current licence issued.

How long will my licence last for?

In most cases a licence will be issued for a period of no more than 3 years as standard practice however a shorter term licence may be issued if considered appropriate. If you wish to apply for a lesser licence period this request must be submitted in writing at the time of application. In addition following receipt of your licence application the Council may provide a Licence for a lesser period if a specific issue is identified that requires this e.g. a medical condition.

It should be noted that within the law private hire / hackney carriage licences can be issued for a maximum of three years. Once a licence has been issued for three years it cannot be extended. It is your responsibility to ensure that any application to renew a licence is made with sufficient time to allow it to be fully processed and issued prior to the expiry of your current Licence. If sufficient time is not provided and determination made prior to the expiry of your licence you will be unable to work as a private hire / hackney carriage driver from the expiry of your current licence until such time as a new licence is issued

I am a licensed driver and have received DVLA points on my licence, what do I need to do?

Please go to <https://www.gov.uk/check-driving-information> you will need to have your DVLA driving licence and national insurance number to hand, once you follow the steps and input the information, you will be generated an authorisation code. Please send this to Licensing via email (licensing@luton.gov.uk) with details of your name and address and that you obtained points.

How will I know when my medical is due?

Existing licence holders, having presented a medical certificate upon first being granted a licence, will be required to be re-examined at specific ages during their driving history. Drivers aged **46, 52 or 58** years old during the duration of the new licence, will be asked to have a medical form completed by their GP. Over 60 years old will be asked to submit a medical each year. More frequent checks may also be required if, in the opinion of the medical practitioner, it is necessary.

I have been diagnosed with a medical condition; do I need to inform the licensing service?

Licence holders must advise the Council of any deterioration in their health that may affect their driving capabilities. For the avoidance of doubt, the following medical conditions must be notified to the council as soon as reasonable practicable; however, this list is not exhaustive:

- Any heart-related condition;
- Abnormal blood pressure;
- Diabetes (Type 1 or Type 2);
- Insulin dependant requires annual medical check plus specialist consultant assessment.
- Epilepsy;
- Sudden attacks of giddiness or fainting;
- Conditions causing excessive daytime sleepiness such as sleep apnoea;
- Alcohol or drug dependency;
- Mental or psychological disorders; or
- Any other condition that may affect the ability to drive.

Where there is any doubt as to the medical fitness of the applicant, the Council may require the applicant to undergo further medical examination by a Doctor appointed by the Council. This will be at the applicant's own expense. Where there remains any doubt about the fitness of any applicant, the Council will review the medical evidence and make any final decision in the light of the medical evidence available.

How safe is the taxi or private hire vehicle?

All vehicles that are presented to us to be licensed are comprehensively tested to ensure that they are safe. In fact, we test more thoroughly than the MOT. Our vehicles are subject to:

- 2 mechanical inspections each year
- police and enforcement officers carry out roadside checks throughout the year
- tyre depth is stricter than the legal regulations
- vehicle condition is monitored for untidy paintwork or body damage
- Seat width and length, headroom, luggage space is measured to meet council specifications
- Vehicles must be clean and tidy inside and out at all times
- As the council we monitor who is driving the vehicle and the driver maintains the correct insurance which is above and beyond social domestic and pleasure.

Is my driver safe to drive me?

Yes, if your driver has a badge issued by Luton Borough Council with a picture of them displayed for you to see, then he is licensed by us, the driver should be wearing this badge. Rigorous checks have been carried out before the badge and licence is granted which include:

- Enhanced Criminal record Check now a (DBS) check;
- Valid group 2 DVLA standard medical certificate for professional drivers.
- Driving licence endorsement check
- Resident check
- Knowledge test.

Complaints about my driver who should I contact?

- Members of the public who wish to make complaints or comments about a licensed driver, vehicle or operator should contact the licensing service on licensing@luton.gov.uk . Full details such as description of the driver, date, time, journey details and what happened etc.
- The council can only deal with breaches of legislation or conditions of a licence and NOT complaints about customer service. Customer service complaints may need to be dealt with through the operator, unless they are a hackney carriage vehicle and then contact the council.

I have left my possession(s) in the taxi or private hire vehicle, what should I do?

- The driver has to immediately after the termination of any hire, search the vehicle for any property which may have been accidentally left and within 24 hours attempt to return the property to the rightful owner or take to the nearest police station where they should obtain a receipt for leaving the property.

Should my taxi / private hire driver provide a car chair for my child?

- No, the driver does not need to provide a car chair for a child.

My driver took the long way round, when I know a shorter route. Hackney carriage only.

- As the hirer of the vehicle you are able to direct the driver on your preferred route. Otherwise, the driver must take the shortest route available, as on a metered tariff, subject to roadworks.

Will I be charged extra because I have an assistance dog?

- The driver **must** allow the assistance dog in the vehicle at no extra charge. Your dog should always be able to sit next to you during your journey. If you have experienced a driver who has refused to allow the assistance dog into the vehicle or have been charged extra due to having the dog, please contact the council who will investigate the matter fully.

I need to take my pet (other animal) with me in the taxi or private hire vehicle can the driver refuse?

- When you call the operator please ensure that you advise them that you wish to carry a dog or other animal. This will allow the operator to allocate the job to a driver who is willing to transport your pet.

What do we do if we see vehicles other than Luton borough licensed hackney carriages using ranks?

- If you see anyone (other than a Luton licensed hackney) using the ranks, make a note of the vehicle make and registration number along with the plate number (if any) and let us know. If possible take a photo of the vehicle and driver. It is illegal for other vehicles to use the ranks and where there is sufficient evidence and we can trace the driver we will take appropriate compliance / enforcement action. As a witness you will have to be prepared to give a statement, to attend a hearing, or appear in court if needed.

If when I'm looking for a (HC) cab I see a private hire vehicle dropping someone off, can I use it?

- No, that is considered 'Plying for hire' and is illegal.

Is it true that using a private hire vehicle which hasn't been booked is uninsured for the journey?

- Yes, Private Hire vehicles are uninsured for any journey which hasn't been pre-booked

Who employs the hackney carriage and private hire drivers?

- Hackney carriage drivers work for themselves, not for an operator.
- Private hire vehicles work for a luton borough council licensed operator and must display windscreen plates and door stickers showing the name and telephone number of the firm.

Can hackney carriages and private hire vehicles use bus lanes?

- Hackney cabs can use lanes stating bus/ taxi.
- Private hire vehicles must not use bus/ taxi lanes.

I received really good service who do I contact to let them know?

- We're always pleased to hear about good service from our licensed drivers and operators, please use our Compliment or Complaint form on our website or email: licensing@luton.gov.uk with the full details.

I am unhappy with the service I have received from a taxi / private hire driver, who can I contact about this?

- It is always important to let the Private Hire company know about any complaint you have. You should contact the Private Hire company and ask for them to deal with any issues. If they do not help you please let us know by using our Compliment or Complaint form.

Why won't the driver use his horn to let me know he's arrived?

- Hackney carriage and private hire vehicles must not use horns to let you know that they have arrived.

To view our policy please click on the link [Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy 2018](#)