

working together

Trade Newsletter Winter 2021

Welcome to our latest trade newsletter. Please take a few minutes to read through to keep up to date with taxi and private hire matters.

We welcome your feedback so please email the Licensing team at licensing@basingstoke.gov.uk if you would like to make any comments.

Licence On-line Forms

Testing has now taken place for on-line forms which will go live in January 2022. Your renewals will contain the link to the form where you can complete and pay all in one place. Additional documents required for new applications and renewal can also be uploaded and attached to the form.

Penalty Points

As part of the council's aim to offer fair and transparent enforcement of its statutory functions, we are introducing a penalty points scheme.

Points can be issued to licence holders for breaches of licensing conditions or non-compliance with the law as an alternative to prosecution.

A total of 12 points accredited to individual licence in any 12 month period will result in a review of their licence by the Licensing Sub-committee. The full scheme can be found in the HC and PH Policy.

Enforcement action will be taken to

- Ensure public safety
- Support the policies of the council
- Respond to individual public and trade complaints
- Support partnerships with other agencies like the Police and vehicle inspectorate
- Complement the council's enforcement policy

D4Drivers

Since the COVID-19 pandemic restriction began in March 2020, the NHS has been under enormous strain which has affected services local medical practices have been able to provide.

With GP's unable to carry out taxi related medicals, drivers were temporarily permitted to self-certify to confirm if there were no symptoms or changes to their health which might have affected their fitness to act as a private hire/hackney carriage driver and

meet DVLA group 2 medical standards. Since May 2021 we have commenced a trial medical service with 'D4Drivers'.

D4Drivers operate as a specialist medical examination provider for vocational driving professions and operate over 200 trained GMC registered doctors across 85 sites in the UK.

If you are unable to obtain a medical with your own GP, you may use D4Drivers. Please note, you will have to request and obtain a summary of your medical records from your GP surgery (which you are legally entitled to) which you would need to take to the medical with the councils medical examination form. Payment for the medical (£55) is made to D4Drivers.

Drivers book their own appointments either via a call centre or online booking. Basingstoke's closest clinic is Reading <https://d4drivers.uk/locations/reading/>.

Once completed, the medical examination form needs to be returned to the Licensing Team with the £33 payment for the Council's independent medical advisor to certify driver fitness.

Adhesive Vehicle Plates

The Licensing Team has been exploring options of providing adhesive plates for licensed vehicles. This involves providing the plate details to a third-party supplier to print and post the plates and other vehicle signage directly to our licence holders.

The security features are a hologram on the vehicle plates and a QR code which customers can scan to provide the registration number of the licensed vehicle which can be checked against the vehicle the plate is attached to. Once the plate is peeled off the vehicle, it cannot be re-used.

The sample plates have now been created and tested as you can see from the photos below. These plates can be stuck onto existing plates/mounts or directly onto bodywork. They will fit even on heavily contoured bodywork.

The final image shows what happens when you try to remove the plates. The sticker is designed to tear and therefore not be transferable. The body finish is unaffected by the adhesive.





Tax Conditionality - New requirements on licensing bodies

The Finance Bill 2021 contains a clause introducing tax conditionality to taxi and private hire driver licence applications and private hire vehicle operators from 4 April 2022.

The Licensing Authority will need to direct NEW applicants to HMRC's published guidance about their tax obligations, which will be on www.gov.uk

A tax check will be carried out at renewal to confirm whether an individual or company is appropriately tax registered and whether income from the licensed activity has been reported on tax returns. HMRC is developing a simple digital service that will enable licence applicants to complete the tax check and will provide assistance for applicants who are digitally excluded. This service will also enable licensing bodies to confirm that a tax check has been completed. The licensing body will need to obtain confirmation that the applicant has completed a tax check before they can determine renewal applications.

Further information may be found at www.gov.uk

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/help-and-support-for-the-hmrc-personal-tax-account>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/use-hmrCs-business-tax-account>

Safeguarding and Disability Awareness Courses

Licensed drivers play an important role in the community and have a vital role in spotting and reporting abuse, exploitation or neglect of children and vulnerable adults.

It is important for drivers and operators to have sound awareness about the signs of potential abuse and who concerns should be reported to. All new driver applicants have to undertake safeguarding and disability training before their applications can be determined.

Existing drivers will need to complete this training before the end March 2022.

Licensed drivers are required to book their own courses (Disability Awareness and Safeguarding) online directly with the council's approved course provider, the Blue Lamp Trust here: <https://bluelamptrust.org.uk/>

If you have any issues you may call them on 0300 777 0157

PHO licence conditions

The primary objective in private hire licensing matters is to promote public safety and those using licensed services. New operator licence applicants are required to provide an up to date basic DBS disclosure.

We use existing enhanced disclosures where operators also hold a driver licence. Where private hire operators trade as a limited company the council may also require the directors and company secretary to undertake a satisfactory basic DBS check.

Private hire operators need a good working knowledge of the area for which they are licensed. The law requires customers to be transported by the shortest and cheapest route.

In order to maintain the high standards expected of operators, the council will not grant an operator's licence until the applicant has passed the knowledge test and satisfied the team they are 'fit and proper'. The test will cover:

- Local geography
- The highway code
- hackney carriage and private hire licensing law and the council's policy
- basic mathematics for handling money

An additional condition of the private hire operator's licence will include a register of staff, updated regularly to reflect changes in personnel. The operator will need to obtain a basic DBS check on all staff and maintain records of those checks.

6 monthly DBS checks for drivers

In line with the Statutory Taxi & Private Hire Vehicle Standards issued in July 2020, all licensed drivers are now required to undertake an enhanced DBS check every 6 months.

It is therefore imperative that all drivers are signed up to the DBS update service otherwise you will be required to submit an application form, all your documents and pay £40 every 6 months.

No driver's licences will be issued or renewed without a current Enhanced DBS certificate or one checked through the Update service. See www.gov.uk/dbs-update-service

Once registered, officers will be able to undertake future criminal checks online saving drivers having to visit the offices which will represent a time and cost saving.

From 2025 all NEW vehicle emissions must be less than 50g/kms

The council has declared a Climate Emergency. From 1 January 2025 all vehicles being licensed for the first time must have CO2 emissions of less than 50 g/km. All vehicles licensed prior to this date will be relicensed provided they have been continuously licensed. Vehicles licensed before 1 January 2025 whose emissions are 50 g/km or above will not be licensed after the council policy upper age limit has been reached.

Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter and the important updates it provides. If you require any further clarification to any of the articles, please contact the licensing team.