

# Taxi and private hire

August 2024 update



Tamworth  
Borough Council

Welcome to the August edition of our updates to all taxi and private hire drivers, vehicle proprietors and private hire operators in Tamworth. In these updates, we'll highlight current issues and information to help support your work. If there is something you'd like us to include in a future update, please contact us at [taxi-licensing@tamworth.gov.uk](mailto:taxi-licensing@tamworth.gov.uk).

## Reminder of contact details

All applications and administration are now be dealt with by the licensing team. We hope that this has cut down on any delays that some of you had been experiencing. Please remember to email [taxi-licensing@tamworth.gov.uk](mailto:taxi-licensing@tamworth.gov.uk) for all correspondence. Please do not email officers directly. Your main points of contact are still Jodie and Giles. If you need to call us, please use the number 01827 709709.

## Licensing committee

At the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on the 25 July 2024 it was resolved that Cllr Ben Price be elected Chair and Cllr Margaret Clarke be elected Vice Chair.

## Taxi and private hire licensing policy

Tamworth Borough Council's taxi & private hire policy became effective from April 2023. We recently made some minor amendments to the policy following the inform review. Details outlining the amendments can be found at:- <https://democracy.tamworth.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=4816&Ver=4>

We recommend you take time to read the policy. If you have any queries in relation to the policy please email [taxi-licensing@tamworth.gov.uk](mailto:taxi-licensing@tamworth.gov.uk)

Licensing policies and fees webpage can be found here: [www.tamworth.gov.uk/licensing/licensing-policies-and-fees](http://www.tamworth.gov.uk/licensing/licensing-policies-and-fees)

## Online applications

You can now apply online for New/Renewal Badge and New/Renewal Plate applications. The forms have been designed to capture all the information we require in order to process your applications. Please make a note of the reference number provided in case we require it. Feedback on the forms is always useful, so please email [taxi-licensing@tamworth.gov.uk](mailto:taxi-licensing@tamworth.gov.uk). Renewal letters will still be sent to you 2 months before your expiry date. It is your responsibility to apply in plenty of time to allow enough time for officers to process your application. If you still require a paper form these will still be available on our website.

Do it online webpage can be found here: [www.tamworth.gov.uk/council/do-it-online](http://www.tamworth.gov.uk/council/do-it-online)

## Medicals

You will recently have received an email informing you that Aldergate Medical Practice was increasing the price of a medical examination to £85 with effect from the 1 July 2024.

We therefore took the decision to make a minor amendment to the Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Policy and will allow a medical examination to be carried out by any General Practitioner (GP) who is registered with the General Medical Council (GMC). This amendment will apply from the 1st July 2024. You can of course continue to use Aldergate Medical Practice if you choose to do so.

We have also taken this opportunity to ensure all medicals are done to a group 2 standard. A copy of the new form is available at [www.tamworth.gov.uk/licensing/taxis-and-private-hire/all-forms-and-guidance](http://www.tamworth.gov.uk/licensing/taxis-and-private-hire/all-forms-and-guidance). It is then your responsibility to return this form to the Licensing Team. The new medical form is available on our website.

The frequency of when medicals are due has not changed and the Licensing Team will send you a reminder.

Should you have any queries or questions in relation to this matter, please email [taxi-licensing@tamworth.gov.uk](mailto:taxi-licensing@tamworth.gov.uk) in the first instance and an officer will respond as soon as possible.

## Cyclists

**We have been asked to remind all our licensed drivers that they need to be aware of other road users.**

### ● Respect other road users

Remember that cyclists are road users too and have the same rights as drivers of motorised vehicles.

### ● General Driving

Concentrate on your driving and do not use your mobile phone. Avoid loud noise in your vehicle.

### ● Cycling feels hazardous when drivers are too close, so give cyclists space and be patient.

Always use your indicators, even if you do not think there's anyone there! Indicate early, when cyclists are still behind you and most able to see your indicators. Check your mirrors and keep checking, especially when turning.

### ● Road position

Legally, a cyclist can use the entire lane and will often take a mid-lane position to deter overtaking by vehicles at particularly vulnerable locations, for example where the road narrows, junctions and blind bends.

Expect cyclists to move out in the road to avoid potholes/drains or to be seen by oncoming traffic or vehicles waiting at junctions.

Even if there is a cycle path or cycle lane, sometimes cyclists need to be on another part of the road to make a turn or to make themselves visible.

### ● Observation

Always check your mirrors and blind spot, whether you are stationary or moving.

Always look for cyclists, especially at junctions. Look out for all types of cyclist. Not every cyclist will be wearing high visibility clothing.

Cyclists can be hard to see from a side view as they turn into or out of junctions, especially in the dark or wet. Be aware that the window pillars can obscure cyclists and pedestrians from view so move your head and look around the pillars to be sure.

Cyclists may not always give a signal, especially mid-junction or on a roundabout, as they need both hands for steering and braking. If you are unsure of a cyclist's intention, wait for them to make their manoeuvre.

When turning right across a line of slow moving or stationary traffic, look out for cyclists on the inside of the traffic you are crossing. Make sure you check mirrors and blind spots before turning.

### ● Overtaking

Overtake a cyclist in the same way you would another vehicle.

Plan ahead and wait until the opposite carriageway is clear.

Give cyclists at least 1.5m clearance in slow moving traffic. At higher speeds a full car width's clearance is recommended.

Do not overtake near a junction, pedestrian crossing, on a roundabout or at pinch points, such as keep left bollards, pedestrian refuges and traffic calming features. Never overtake just before a left turn you plan to make.

Do not drive close behind cyclists or sound your horn.

### ● Park with care

Do not park in cycle lanes, as you could be forcing cyclists into dangerous situations.

Look carefully all around you before opening your door to make sure it does not swing into the path of a cyclist.

## Walkaround checklist

Included in the recent review of the Taxi & Private Hire Policy we have included the requirement for a walkaround check of your vehicle. This is following a recommendation contained in the DFT best practice guidance 2023. Those that are involved in school transportation will be familiar with the checks, however this will be a new requirement for those not involved. A checklist is available at [www.tamworth.gov.uk/licensing/taxis-and-private-hire/all-forms-and-guidance](http://www.tamworth.gov.uk/licensing/taxis-and-private-hire/all-forms-and-guidance). These checklists should be completed at the start of every shift and be available for inspection.

## Refusing Fares on Hackney Carriage Ranks

It is an offence to refuse any fare without a reasonable excuse, and this would normally be in a case of concern regarding your own or public safety. It is an offence under the Town and Police Clauses Act 1847 to refuse a fare without reasonable excuse. Some drivers have raised concerns that this was regularly taking place on the Bolebridge Street rank and the Train Station Rank. The licensing team will fully investigate any allegations that are received and there will be a possibility that penalty points may be awarded

## Sight Loss Councils - Guidance for Taxis, mini cabs and PHV

Sight Loss Councils have launched new English and Urdu audio and written guides for taxi, private-hire vehicle and staff to ensure they feel confident when travelling with blind and partially sighted people with their guide dogs. The Pocklington Trust, a charity for blind and partially sighted people, wrote to licensing authorities, saying:

*"Throughout the year, we run projects with our Sight Loss Council members to advocate the needs of visually impaired people in their communities and work to improve access to goods and services at a local and national level.*

*"Accessible taxis, mini cabs and private hire vehicles (PHV) are a vital form of transport for blind and partially sighted people. This is because we are unable to drive, and often face barriers accessing public transport. They can also provide us with essential assistance and door-to-door services.*

*"Drivers refusing to transport guide dogs is a criminal offence, unless staff have an exemption certificate from their licencing authority. We hope this guide will help build driver confidence in transporting guide dogs and help raise awareness and understanding of living with sight loss."*

Transcripts for the English and Urdu guides are also available.

## Guide Dogs campaign to end taxi access refusals for assistance dogs

Taxi, Private Hire Vehicles and the door-to-door service they provide are an important mode of transport for people with disabilities. It is important that disabled people who use guide and other assistance dogs have confidence that they can hire a taxi, which will carry them and their dog at no extra charge.

## Your legal obligations

Since 2001, drivers of licensed taxis and private hire vehicles have a duty to carry any guide or other assistance dog travelling with a disabled person, at no additional cost.

In 2006, further duties were introduced to make it unlawful for taxi providers to refuse or offer a lower standard of service to a disabled person, for a reason relating to their disability. For example, a taxi operator making a guide or other assistance dog owner wait longer for a vehicle than a passenger without a disability, because some drivers prefer not to carry an assistance dog.

The Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Disabled Persons) Act 2022 amends the Equality Act 2010 to place duties on taxi and PHV drivers/operators. Any disabled person has specific rights and protections to be transported and receive assistance when using a taxi or Private Hire Vehicle, without being charged extra. This requires drivers to provide reasonable adjustments for passengers with a disability (please see below for more information).

Breaches of these duties can be reported to local licensing authorities, who can take appropriate action.

## Cultural beliefs

Cultural beliefs can raise sensitive issues relating to dogs. However, religious grounds cannot be used to exclude assistance dog owners. The Equality and Human Rights Commission successfully reached agreement on this with several religious groups. Assistance dogs are working animals, not pets. They are trained to provide independence and mobility to their owners. Assistance dog owners are trained to maintain a high grooming standard of their dog, with attention to cleanliness.

## Exemptions

The only grounds for any driver to decline to carry an assistance dog is through the approved medical exemption process. Drivers cannot refuse to take a person travelling with their assistance dog, unless they have a valid medical exemption certificate from the appropriate licensing authority, to show that they are unable to carry an assistance dog for health reasons. An exemption notice must be displayed in the vehicle when it is being driven by the exempted driver.

## Reasonable Adjustments

Providers must make reasonable adjustments for disabled people in the way they provide their services. [This does not include physical adjustments to the vehicle.]

In relation to taxis, reasonable adjustments may include:

- Ensuring that booking apps are accessible (with an option to state whether the customer has any access requirements.)
- Meeting a passenger with sight loss at their front door or other collection point, letting them know that you have arrived (rather than expecting them to find you) and introducing yourself (use the customer's name, if known).
- Assisting the passenger to safely enter/exit the vehicle and guiding them to a safe location/destination point before departing.
- Asking where the assistance dog owner would prefer their dog to be accommodated.
- Requiring that all taxi and Private Hire Vehicle drivers complete mandatory disability awareness training.

## Useful Resources

For more information on sighted guide training, please visit:

<https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/how-you-can-help/sighted-guide-training/>

For more information on supporting customers with sight loss, please visit:

<https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/research/policy-and-guidance-for-businesses/guidance-for-taxi-staff/#practical-things-that-drivers-and-other-staff-can-do>

For more information on the law and carrying guide or other assistance dogs, please visit: <https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/-/media/project/guidedogs/guidedogsdotorg/files/how-you-can-help/campaigning/open-doors-information-for-taxi-and-phv-operators.pdf>

## Identify and safeguard victims of County Lines

Thousands of children and teenagers, some as young as 12 are being exploited by criminal gangs to carry drugs from urban areas to coastal and market towns. Many of these children travel between the city and rural towns in taxis or private hire vehicles in a criminal activity known as 'county lines'.

To help safeguard these vulnerable children and protect them from gangs, the Home Office, Institute of Licensing and CrimeStoppers are working to increase awareness among taxi and private hire vehicle drivers, and licensing staff, of the signs to spot a potential victim.

Taxis are a popular form of transport for children being exploited by 'county line' gangs. Children may make the whole journey between the city and rural town in a private hire vehicle or taxi, or else use one for part of the journey.

The signs to spot are:

- a child, normally 14-15 years old, but can be as young as 12 travelling a long train journey alone
- they may be from another area, so may not be familiar with an area (may look lost) and may have a distinct urban accent
- they may be travelling during school hours or unusual hours (for example, late in the evening)
- an obvious relationship with controlling, older individuals

- suspicion of self-harm, physical assault or unexplained injuries
- excessive receipt of texts or phone calls

If you have any information on County Lines drugs networks, you can contact CrimeStoppers anonymously on 0800 555111 or via the anonymous online form.

## Contact us

For further information, advice, or to make a complaint, please contact:

### **Tamworth Borough Council**

Marmion House, Lichfield Street, Tamworth, Staffordshire, B79 7BZ

Tel: 01827 709709

Email: [taxi-licensing@tamworth.gov.uk](mailto:taxi-licensing@tamworth.gov.uk)

[www.tamworth.gov.uk](http://www.tamworth.gov.uk)

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