

Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy

Frequently Asked Questions

Vehicle top signs

Q. What is the new specification for hackney carriage roof signs?

A. Hackney carriage roof signs must display the word 'TAXI' and must be clearly illuminated when available for hire.

Q. Can a private hire vehicle use a roof sign?

A. Yes, the sign must not have the words 'TAXI', 'CAB' or 'FOR HIRE' displayed on it.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) awareness training

Q. Do new applicants need CSE training?

A. All new applicants must attend a CSE awareness training course prior to being licensed. Questions relating to CSE will be incorporated into the knowledge test for new drivers.

Q. I am an existing driver. Do I need CSE training?

A. Existing licensed drivers who have not already attended a CSE awareness course will be required to attend one by 1 September 2016. Failure to do so by this date may result in the suspension of the licence. Letters will be sent to those who have not already attended a course providing a list of dates future courses will be available.

Knowledge tests

Q. Will anything change on the knowledge test after 13 April 2016?

A. Two basic arithmetic questions will be added to the current knowledge tests for new drivers. This will not affect existing licensed drivers.

Emissions standards

Q. What emission standards does my vehicle need to meet?

A. Three months from 13 April 2016, new applications for vehicle licences will only be accepted for vehicles manufactured to Euro 5 emission standards or higher.

Q. How can I find out if my vehicle meets the standards?

A. Websites are available to check for euro emission standards for a car or van. These should be used as a guide only.

Car - <http://www.parkers.co.uk/cars/reviews/facts-and-figures/>

Van - <http://vanfueldata.dft.gov.uk/>

If you are still unsure whether your vehicle meets the standards please contact us.

Vehicle tests

Q. My car is 10 years old, how many times does it need to be tested?

A. Any licensed vehicle over 10 years old (upon the renewal application) will be required to be tested a minimum of three times each year.

Q. What if I am unable to make a council test at the appointment date and time I have been given?

A. Where licensed vehicles fail to present for a council test, the licence will be suspended. Where a vehicle proprietor wants to rearrange the council test for a later date the licence will be suspended, as it will be presumed that the vehicle may not be mechanically fit. However, if a proprietor wishes to bring the council test date forward, that would be acceptable.

Q. How many times a year should a 'special vehicle' be tested?

A. Licensed 'special vehicles' are required to be MOT tested twice per year.

Vehicle requirements

Q. How do vehicle licence plates and door crests need to be attached?

A. Vehicle licence plates must be securely attached with bolts or screws on the outside of the vehicle. Adhesive tape and/or magnets are not acceptable.

Vehicle door crests must be securely fixed in a central position on the front nearside and offside doors. The attachment by magnets will not be acceptable.

Q. Does my vehicle need a vehicle check book?

A. Yes, there is a requirement for vehicles to carry a vehicle check book, to be signed and dated by the driver declaring they have taken reasonable steps to ensure that the vehicle is roadworthy. The book must also record the mileage at the time of each check.

Driver applications

Q. The address on my application is not the same as the address on my driving licence – is this ok?

A. Applications for a new or renewed drivers licence will not be processed if the DVLA driving licence photo card does not display the correct address of the applicant. You will need to get your driving licence updated before submitting your application.

Q. At what age do I require a medical assessment for my application?

A. Licence holders must undergo a medical assessment to the DVLA group 2 standard at their first renewal following their 45th birthday. A renewal application will not be processed without a valid medical certificate (where required).

Further information on the increased frequency of criminal record checks

Under the previous policy a Disclosure and Barring Service check (DBS) was required every three years. This system relied on the licence holder informing the council of any changes to their criminal record and was considered to be unacceptable.

A system with more frequent checking that enables the council to more closely monitor DBS status of taxi licence holders is now being phased in.

The new DBS system explained:

- Following an initial DBS check, a driver/applicant will be required to subscribe to the DBS Update Service within a specified period. This will enable council officers to check on the DBS status of licensed drivers at increased frequency with no additional costs to the licensed drivers.
- Further full DBS checks would only become necessary should the driver's DBS record change as a result of e.g. a conviction caution, other relevant information disclosed at the Chief Officer's discretion, change in personal

details, removal of offences etc. An annual DBS Update Service subscription will be required.

- Failure to subscribe to the DBS Update Service after the DBS check would result in the suspension of a driver's licence until such time as the DBS check is performed and the DBS Update Service has been signed up to.

New Drivers: New applicants for a taxi driver's licence will be required to apply for a DBS check and sign up for the DBS Update service as part of their application. **This must be done within 19 days of the certificate being issued.**

Existing Drivers: The new system will be introduced in two stages, based on the date of a driver's last DBS check.

- **Stage 1: If a driver's last DBS check was dated on or between 1 April 2013 and 13 April 2015**, they will be required to subscribe to the DBS Update service by 13 April 2017 or by the date of the third anniversary of their DBS check if this occurs before that date.
- **Stage 2: If a driver's last DBS check was dated on or between 14 April 2015 and 13 April 2016**, they will be required to subscribe to the DBS Update Service by 13 October 2017.

FAQs- DBS Update Service

Q. Will a new DBS check be necessary in order to sign-up to the DBS Update service?

A. Yes, an initial, up-to-date DBS certificate will be needed before the update service begins. You will be given the form reference number allowing you to sign up to the update service straight away. Alternatively, once you receive your DBS certificate you will have 19 days from the certificate being issued to sign up.

Q. What happens if I do not sign up to the update service within 19 days of the certificate being issued?

A. You will need to apply for another DBS disclosure and pay the £48 fee.

Q. When will I need to get a new DBS check and sign up to the DBS Update Service?

A. This will depend when your current DBS check was dated – see above stage 1 and 2. We will contact you and arrange an appointment so that you can renew your DBS.

Q. Once I am signed up to the update service, will another DBS check have to be carried out in one or three years' time?

A. No, following signing up to the update service another DBS check would only be needed if the original one changed in any way e.g. as a result of a conviction, caution, other relevant information disclosed at the Chief Officer's discretion, change in personal details, removal of offences etc. or if the DBS Update Service was not subscribed to every year.

Q. So, will I need to do anything else?

A. Yes, to remain registered with the update service you need to pay a subscription renewal fee each year. You can sign up with the service for this renewal fee to be taken automatically from the card you used when you first registered with the service. If this is not done, a new DBS check will be needed and you will need register again with the update service.

Q. How much does DBS check cost?

A. £48

Q. How much does the update service subscription renewal cost?

A. £13 per year

Q. How much will this cost me and will it be cheaper or more expensive than the previous system?

A. At current prices, it will cost each person £61 in the first year and then £13 per year thereafter.

Under the previous policy a driver would have to pay £48 every three years. For example at current prices under the old system it would cost £192 over a ten year period. Under the new policy at current prices it would cost £178 over a ten year period. Therefore the new system will be a similar cost in the shorter term but cheaper the more years the driver is licenced.

Q. Where can I find more information about the update service?

A. <https://www.gov.uk/dbs-update-service>

If you have any queries on the policy please contact the licensing team on 03000 261 016 or email licensing@durham.gov.uk.