



## **Guide to driver licensing**

This guide is intended to guide prospective licensed drivers through the application process.

All information is correct at the time of amendment: April 2022.

The content and information within this document may be referred to in the event of a committee hearing.

Please take some time to read the guidelines before submitting an application.

# Tax Compliance

From 4 April 2022 applicants for taxi driver, private hire driver, or private hire operator licences must show they are aware of their tax responsibilities if a brand new applicant, or complete a tax check where they are renewing an existing licence or applying for an additional licence with another authority.

## Renewal applications

The Government guidance can be found here for renewal applications:

You must complete a tax check to renew a taxi, private hire or scrap metal licence, or to apply for the same type of licence with a different licensing authority.

[Complete a tax check](#)

## New applications

For new applications:

You must confirm you are aware of your tax responsibilities when you apply for a taxi driver, private hire driver, private hire vehicle operator or scrap metal dealer licence for the first time.

[Confirm your tax responsibilities](#)

## Do I need a licence?

If you intend to provide the services of a car and driver to transport passengers for profit, the driver will need to hold a vocational licence. Depending on what type of vehicle is being used, the licence will be issued either by VOSA or Birmingham City Council.

The only exception is for drivers engaged solely in the provision of cars for weddings and funerals.

## What type of licence do I need?

If your vehicle has more than nine seats including the drivers, you will need a Passenger Carrying Vehicle (formerly known as PSV) licence, these licenses are issued following a test carried out by the Drivers Standards Agency (DSA). PCV drivers must operate under the authority of an operators licence issued by VOSA. For more information, visit [PSV \(Public Service Vehicle\) operator licences](#)

Smaller vehicles (up to 8 passengers) can be licensed as a **Private Hire Vehicle** (in some places known as 'mini cabs') or a **Hackney Carriage Vehicle** (also known as a taxi or 'black cab').

### What is a private hire vehicle?

A Private Hire Vehicle may be used to respond to bookings made through a licensed operator. The driver is not allowed to make or take his or her own bookings.

Generally, the driver is allocated a job from the operator and the passenger pays the driver at the end of the journey. In return, the driver pays the operator by different means for passing the job to him. A large number of vehicle types can be licensed as Private Hire vehicles.

### Is a limousine a private hire car?

Yes, if it is provided on a hire or reward basis and carries eight or fewer passengers. These vehicles must also be driven by a licensed private hire driver.

### What is a Hackney Carriage Vehicle?

A Hackney Carriage Vehicle is operated by the owner/driver. The driver may arrange his own work, operate in some areas in the same way as a private hire car (some councils will place restrictions on where the vehicle may operate), ply for hire in the street or designated taxi stands or accept 'flag downs' in the street. All Hackney Carriage Vehicles are required to be wheelchair accessible.

# What do I need to do?

In order to obtain Private Hire or Hackney Carriage driver's licence, you must:

1. Prove you have the right to live and work in the United Kingdom.
2. Prove you have held a full driving licence for the relevant class of vehicle for over two years.
3. Produce proof of your place of residence.
4. Pass the relevant knowledge test.
5. Complete convictions disclosures check (DBS) and/or prove previous good character by other means.
6. Pass a medical examination.
7. Pass a Birmingham City Council driving test.
8. Attend a Disability Awareness Course.
9. In the case of Private Hire, provide evidence of an offer of work from a licensed operator.

## How do I prove that I have the right to live and work in the United Kingdom?

When you submit your application form you will be required to produce a current UK or EU passport, a UK or EU birth certificate/identity card, or a valid certificate showing your status issued by the UK Border Agency.

You must also produce documentation to prove your National Insurance number.

Any document produced must be an original in an undamaged and unaltered condition.

## How do I prove that I have the relevant driving licence?

On submitting your application you must produce a full valid UK or EU driving licence. In the case of a licence issued by DVLA, you must produce either your one part paper licence or your photocard AND a check code issued by DVLA. This can be obtained at [View or share your driving licence information](#)

Please ensure your 'photocard' licence has not expired (i.e. by being more than 10 years old).

## How do I prove my place of residence?

On submitting your application, you must produce two original documents posted to your home address. The documents must contain your full name as shown on your identity documents/driving licence, and no more than 10 weeks old.

Acceptable documents include council tax statement, utility bills (water, gas or electricity), bank/credit card statements. We cannot accept mobile phone bills as proof.

# What is the knowledge test?

The knowledge test ensures that any prospective driver is able to communicate in English to a reasonable standard, and is aware of the rules governing how licensed drivers work.

## Hackney Carriage test

You are allowed 2 hours for a verbal test, which most successful candidates complete with time to spare, or 3 hours for a written test. Statistically about 50% of candidates fail to complete the written test and about 10% fail to gain marks because their handwriting is illegible.

If you take a written test, you must also complete a verbal communication test.

An average of 65% of candidates pass the test on the first attempt with an average study time of 18 months.

## Legal questions

Hackney carriage drivers are required to answer in detail six questions about the law and conditions of licence. The questions are drawn randomly from a bank of questions in the knowledge folder.

All six questions must be answered correctly.

## Geographical questions

To pass the test, you must answer at least 90 of the 100 questions selected.

The test can be taken verbally, where the examiner asks the questions and records the answers, or in a written form where you are required to write out all the questions and answers.

## Route questions

You will be asked to describe in detail from memory, the shortest possible route between two locations in or near the city. The route must be the shortest distance route, not the quickest or easiest to follow.

Twenty routes will be selected randomly from a bank of 342 contained in the folder.

## Two point location questions

You will be required to describe in detail 80 premises in or near the city, from memory, and giving a minimum of two points of reference. These are known as 'two point locations'.

The questions will be drawn randomly from a bank of 1680 contained in the knowledge folder.

# Private Hire test

The private hire test now consists of three elements.

**Please note: the A to Z element of the test was removed as of 20 June 2018.**

## 1. Legal questions

You will be asked six questions about private hire driver and vehicle legislation. You must answer the questions accurately, especially where numbers or time limits are involved. You will be given the option of four answers in a multiple choice format. The answers to all the questions are included in the [private hire legal information document](#).

## 2. Licence conditions

You will be asked six questions about conditions imposed on private hire drivers by the council. The questions must be answered accurately, especially in regard to time limits. You will be given the option of four answers in a multiple choice format. The answers to all the questions are included in the text of the documents:

- [Private hire combined driver & vehicle licence conditions](#)

## 3. Plying for hire questions

You will be asked six questions where you have the opportunity to demonstrate to the tester that you have a sound, in-depth knowledge of the consequences of carrying out work that has not been properly booked and passed to you by your operator. You will be given the option of four answers in a multiple choice format.

**You must answer all of these questions correctly.** The answers to these questions are contained in the three documents you will have used to answer the first two sets of questions.

**You may make up to four mistakes in sections 1 and 2 as long as you do not get more than two wrong in any one section.**

## How do I book a Private Hire Knowledge Test?

Private hire knowledge tests are now being organised and conducted by TTC Driver Solutions.

New venues in and around the city have been identified and subject to Covid restrictions are due to start again in December 2020.

To book a private hire knowledge test, please contact TTC Driver Solutions by e-mail:

[birminghamcityprivatehire@ttc-uk.com](mailto:birminghamcityprivatehire@ttc-uk.com)

# Criminal Records (DBS)/Background Checks

**PREVIOUS CONVICTIONS OR CAUTIONS FOR SOME OFFENCES MAY BAR YOU FROM OBTAINING A LICENCE. IF YOU HAVE ANY PREVIOUS CONVICTIONS OR CAUTIONS PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION BEFORE YOU COMMIT ANY PAYMENT TOWARDS YOUR APPLICATION.**

The Licensing sub committee must be sure that anyone licensed is a 'fit and proper person' to hold such a licence as public safety is their main concern. All applicants will be subject to an enhanced police check in the same way as other people such as nurses, social workers and teachers are vetted.

Each application is considered individually and on its own merits.

If there is good reason to believe that the applicant is not a 'fit and proper' person to deal with vulnerable adults or children, a licence can be refused.

It should be noted:

Applicants are excluded from the effects of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 by the Rehabilitations of Offenders 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 (as amended). Therefore, no conviction would be considered spent. All convictions are live for all time.

Any previous conviction or caution by any enforcement agency i.e.: Police / Council / DWP / Revenues and Customs / VOSA / DVLA must be declared on your application form. Failure to disclose such a conviction or caution may lead to further offences being committed.

Many applications fail because the applicant does not declare previous offences. Sometimes this is due to misunderstanding the spent conviction rules, belief that the offence is not relevant to the application, or a belief that the offence as recorded does not reflect the applicant's perception of the events leading to the conviction.

The criminal records check MUST date back to your 18th birthday.

If you have lived outside the UK since your 18th birthday, you will have to provide an equivalent of a DBS check or a certificate of good conduct from that country. If you feel you are unable to obtain this information, contact the licensing office for advice.

**IF IN DOUBT, DECLARE ALL CAUTIONS OR CONVICTIONS ON INITIAL APPLICATION AND SEEK THE ADVICE OF A SENIOR LICENSING OFFICER.**

Senior licensing officers have the authority of the licensing committee to pass applications where previous convictions have been declared or revealed. Certain previous offences must be referred to the licensing committee to make a decision as to the applicant's suitability to hold a licence. It is possible to make an application to the committee for a decision before you invest any money or effort in your application.

A request for an early decision hearing must be made in writing; senior licensing officers will give you advice on this application.

Some previous offences will make your application difficult, please read the following page carefully.



## What is committee policy regarding previous convictions?

There is no automatic bar to holding a licence if convicted for any specific offence. The licensing sub committee will consider all applications on their individual merits. However, the sub committees are bound by policies which are reviewed on a regular basis.

The sub committee members must ask themselves the question “Is this person a fit and proper person to be trusted to hold a licence?”

The answer is usually qualified by the second question “Would I consider it safe to allow a vulnerable person i.e. my son / daughter, grandson / granddaughter, Grandmother / Grandfather, disabled relative to be entrusted into the care of this person?”

The licensing sub committees realise that applicants may have previous convictions which would normally cause an application to fail, may have rehabilitated. Many applicants appear before the committee with offences recorded years ago when they were young. These applicants frequently make successful applications by showing that their behaviour has changed.

If you have been convicted of any of the following offences, you will need to convince a licensing sub committee that you are a ‘fit and proper to hold a licence’.

### **Violence / Public Order offences**

Murder, Manslaughter, Wounding with intent (sec 18 Offences Against the Persons Act), Assault with intent to resist arrest (sec 38 Offences Against the Persons Act), Riot, Affray, Possession of prohibited weapons, Possession of Firearms / ammunition / explosives, offences connected with terrorism.

### **Drug offences**

Possession with intent to supply, Importation of controlled substances, Manufacture or cultivation of controlled substances.

### **Sexual Offences**

Rape, Assault by penetration, Grooming, Child pornography or Offences concerning prostitution.

### **Dishonesty**

Robbery, Burglary, Blackmail, Handling stolen goods, Fraud, Deception, Obtaining a pecuniary advantage, Certain offences against the Customs and Excise Management Act.

### **Serious driving offences**

Death by dangerous driving, Dangerous driving, Death by careless driving whilst under the influence of drink, Driving whilst disqualified, Driving with no insurance.

**This is not a full list of offences that may be considered. ANY previous convictions will have to be considered in the first instance by a licensing officer and may be referred to committee.**

## What happens if I have a previous disqualifications or adverse committee decisions?

If a licensed driver is disqualified from driving for any reason, current committee policy is that they should be suspended from driving a licensed vehicle for an additional 'rehabilitation period' equal to that of the court order. If they were disqualified for 12 weeks, the suspension period would be 12 weeks following the licence being returned. If the disqualification period were 12 months, the suspension period would be a further 12 months.

If you have recently been disqualified from driving, you may not be granted a licence if you have not completed the additional 'rehabilitation period'.

Birmingham City Council have information exchange protocols in place with neighbouring authorities and police forces to track the movement of licensed drivers who have had their licences refused or revoked.

If you have previously been revoked or had an application refused, this should be declared on your application form. Failure to disclose could cause you to be prosecuted for a further offence, which could adversely affect your application.

Generally any driver who has previously had their licence revoked or refused by another authority or by the traffic commissioner (in the case of PCV drivers) will need to convince the licensing sub committee they are 'fit and proper' to hold a Birmingham licence.

## How do I apply for a DBS certificate?

If you do not have an enhanced certificate that is less than 3 months old or an automatic update certificate go online to [complete your DBS application](#):

and click on [Start Application>>](#)

at the end enter      ORGANISATION REFERENCE...PHTAXIDRIVERS  
and                      ORGANISATION CODE...taxi2017

## What do I need to do if I have been resident outside the UK as an adult?

If you have been resident outside the UK since your 18th birthday, you must prove your good character in all countries where you have resided since your 18th birthday. An equivalent to a DBS/disclosure certificate can be obtained from any EU country; quite often these are multi-lingual. Most Commonwealth police services will issue a 'Certificate of Good Conduct' and most of these are printed in English. Residents of non EU/Commonwealth countries must provide a similar document from all previous countries of residence.

Any such certificate **MUST** be printed in English or be accompanied by a certified translation. It is suggested that if you need such a certificate that you contact the embassy or consulate for your previous countries of residence to obtain these documents before you commit payment to your application. Alternatively, if you still have family resident you can ask them to arrange the documentation from the local police.

For advice on obtaining certificates of good conduct follow the link below:

[How to obtain an Overseas Criminal Record Check](#)

It is accepted that some applicants who have settled in Birmingham having moved from countries whose government has failed or are in a state of civil war may not be able to obtain such documentation. Such applicants must produce a 'statutory declaration of good character' made with the assistance of a lawyer and provide a written character reference from an influential member of the community who is prepared to make the affirmation in person to the sub committee.

Applicants who have been granted political asylum in the UK will not be expected to contact their country of origin and should produce a statutory declaration.

A [list of persons](#) who may prepare a statutory declaration or are acceptable as references is on our website.

# Why do I need to have a medical examination?

All professional drivers are required to undergo regular medical checks to ensure that they are safe to drive in what can sometimes be tiring and stressful conditions.

Birmingham City Council sets the standard as required by drivers of large goods and passenger carrying vehicles.

This is known as Group 2 test. You can check details of what the doctor will base their assessment of existing conditions on when deciding if an applicant is fit to drive on [GOV.UK website](#).

In some circumstances, the medical examiner may require the applicant to undergo extra tests and or produce documentation about their condition from a consultant. This is done at the applicant's cost and is not included in the cost of the screening medical.

Qualified doctors at the council's occupational health department conduct all medical examinations. Applicants are advised not to pay for an independent examination or certificate unless specifically requested by a council official.

More information on the medical standards is available on [GOV.UK website](#).

To book a medical, please [read the information on our website](#).

## **I already have a full driving licence; why do I need to pass a driving test?**

All new applicants are subject to a driving assessment, which is based on the standard DSA test. Over a period time, a driver's skill can deteriorate or the development of bad habits can cause their driving to be dangerous.

Some applicants may not have had a professional independent assessment for many years, and some who have exchanged licences from other countries may not have been subject to such a rigorous test.

Some applicants may have taken some other form of driving test with another authority, but this may not have been of the same standard. Others may have taken a DSA 'Taxi' test. A pass on this test is not accepted as the test includes some manoeuvres that are specific for driving taxis in highly congested areas.

Some applicants may have held a higher standard of licence i.e. PCV/HGV/vocational advanced driver training. These licences and tests are specific to different vehicle use or handling characteristics; the council test is aimed at ensuring you are safe to drive a small vehicle.

Please bear in mind that if you have a standard driving licence the test must be taken in a manual transmission car that is suitable for private hire use and the test includes questions on the current [Highway Code](#).

It is recommended that you should undertake an assessment by an independent driving instructor before you take your test.

More information about how to book and prepare for your test can be found [on our website](#).

## What is the disability awareness course?

The Disability Awareness Course (or DAT) is a course that has evolved over a number of years. Initially the course taught prospective drivers how to help passengers with impaired functions, mobility or reliance on wheelchairs.

As legislation changed, the introduction of the Equality Act 2010 introduced legislation to replace the various 'Discrimination Acts' that had been enacted over a number of years. The current law says that all people must be treated equally irrespective of their age, gender, sexuality, physical ability etc.

The course introduces new drivers to this legislation, breaches of which can result in expensive prosecutions of a sole trader or result in the revocation of their licence. Many new applicants from across the social/cultural spectrum are unaware of these requirements or may have thoughts that are at odds with them. The course is intended to promote a realisation of diversity issues, which help the new driver contravening the legislation.

The new course will also include inputs regarding the safeguarding of passengers and child sexual exploitation.

More information about can be found [on our website](#).

## I already have an NVQ/PCV CPC; why do I have to attend DAT?

The NVQ or CPC qualification includes an element of dealing with 'disabled passengers' in the syllabus but is mainly centred on passenger care.

The Equality Act 2010 has 15 sections of law running to 16 pages of script dealing with 'taxi' issues alone. This legislation is not dealt with in depth at NVQ/CPC level as these courses are aimed more at bus drivers.

The course is tailored to take into account specific 'taxi' requirements and the direction of H.M. Coroner.

## How do I prove that I have an offer of work from an operator?

When you attend to collect your licence, you must produce an excerpt from the application form signed and stamped by a Birmingham private hire operator showing that you have an offer of work if not completed at the initial application stage.

## How do I apply for a licence?

Once you are sure what type of licence you need and you are confident that you can achieve all the above criteria you can attend the licensing office to purchase a folder for the hackney carriage test or download the information for private hire.

If you have any questions regarding documents or previous convictions, you should seek the advice of a senior licensing officer before you pay any money.

Once you are ready to take your knowledge test, you must phone the licensing office on 0121 303 8442 to make payment.

Private hire test appointments will be made once you have paid. The knowledge tester will contact hackney carriage applicants to make arrangements for the test.

**You** must arrange your other tests and courses yourself. Once you have done so, **you** must download an application form and submit it along with all your certificates to the licensing office.

Providing all your documents are in order, you will be contacted to make your payment and an appointment arranged for you to collect your badge.

**Please note, your licence may take several days to be processed and cannot be done whilst you wait.**

Any application which does not have the supporting documents included will be returned unprocessed.

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