



L i c e n s i n g

Guidance to Applicants wishing to become Private Hire or Hackney Carriage Drivers

Introduction

This guidance is published to assist applicants in lodging their application and understanding what information is required of them. It will also explain the process that will be followed in determining it.

This authority is under a duty to protect the public funds it administers, and to this end may use the information you have provided for the prevention and detection of fraud. It may also share this information with other bodies responsible for auditing or administering public funds for these purposes.

The Council reserves the right to undertake such relevant checks that it deems necessary on the suitability of applicants. This would include checks with DVLA, Motor Insurers and other agencies, partners and Councils. Checks may also be carried out with the UK Border Agency to ascertain an individual's right to work in the UK.

Why Be a Licensed Driver

If you want to drive either a private hire or public hire (hackney) vehicle, at any time, you must first obtain the appropriate licence.

Licensing Objectives

The Council has set objectives in relation to the licensing of Drivers, Vehicles and Operators. They are: -

- (a) Ensuring passengers have safe journeys at a transparent price;
- (b) Ensuring vehicles are safe, accessible and reducing their impact on the environment;
- (c) Ensuring drivers are safe and know what they are doing.
- (d) To provide a quality service to the public within the Borough.

The Application

Applications for new drivers must now be submitted online, separate guidance on how to do this is available on the licensing webpages at www.oldham.gov.uk/licensing

Although applications are submitted online, you must attend the licensing office to collect an application for a criminal records check.

Once you have submitted your application online, you must phone the licensing office on 0161 770 4730 to make a 'new driver' appointment.

You must attend your new driver appointment with the following:-

- Original Photo Driving Licence
- Two Colour passport size photograph (recent)
- Criminal Records Bureau Disclosure Form (Every 3 years for renewals)
- Certificate of Good conduct for applicants who have lived outside the UK.
- Group 2 Medical Form (In respect of new applications, this may be submitted at a later date but must be produced before the badge is issued). (See notes below on frequency of medicals)
- Your pass certificate for your driven assessment from an approved contractor. (see below).
- DVLA driver check service mandate
- Proof you are cleared to work in the UK. (Passport/Visa)
- Proof that you have completed, or enrolled on, the Level 2 VRQ – Introduction to the Role of Professional Taxi and Private Hire Driver.

You must also meet the following criteria:-

- That for a new Applicant you have held a valid GB or EU Driving Licence for at least two years or 1 year GB/EU and 1 year foreign.
- The Applicant must have successfully passed the prescribed knowledge /proficiency test.
- Applicants must be at least 21 years of age.
- Be entitled to work in the UK.

PLEASE NOTE – You MUST attend your appointment with all forms completed and with all your documents, failure to do so, WILL mean your appointment will not proceed and a new appointment having to be made; this may result in a significant delay in your application being accepted.

The address on your application form must be supported by documents containing the same address. Failure to do so will result in your application being rejected.

Driving Licence

You must have held a GB or EU driving licence for at least two years when you apply for a licence. If you do not fall into the category above and you have a foreign driving licence you must have held a valid licence for at least two years of which twelve months must have been GB or EU. The two years commences from the date of issue of the licence rather than the date of test passed.

Declaration of Previous Convictions

Every time you submit an application for a new licence or renewal online you must, as part of that process, declare any and all previous convictions; please read the explanatory notes before completing the declaration.

Every offence, caution, bind over, fixed penalty and anti social behaviour order must be recorded. Spent convictions must also be recorded, as the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act no longer applies to licensed drivers.

Should you not declare all matters asked of you on your declaration your application may be suspended and the applicant interviewed under caution in relation to failing to disclose information requested. The Licensing Manager will then decide what action to take. This could be no action, a written warning, a caution or prosecution.

Applicants who have lived outside the UK

Where an applicant has not resided in the United Kingdom consistently the Council may direct the applicant to obtain a Certificate of Good conduct authenticated and translated into English by the relevant Embassy or Consulate in order to assess suitability and review previous convictions.

Fees

A notice is published annually prescribing the fees set in relation to licences, these fees are available online.

Photograph

It is important that when you apply for a badge two recent passport size photographs are submitted. Upon renewal, if your appearance has changed, a new photograph may be requested.

Disclosure & Barring Service Form (formerly CRB)

Applicants will be required to complete an Enhanced Disclosure Form which allows the Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) (an agency of the Home Office) to disclose to the Council an applicant's criminal record. This requirement replaces the previous Police vetting check. Complete the relevant parts of the form carefully in black ink and hand it to an Officer for it to be countersigned.

You must also submit the following original documents to verify your identity:-

- Passport
- Two proofs of address i.e. credit card statement, recent utility bill or bank statement
- Driving Licence

The following will also speed up your application if you produce them:-

- Birth Certificate
- Marriage Certificate
- National Insurance Number

The DBS form will then be sent off for processing. Your application will not proceed until its return. **You will need to produce your DBS certificate to the Licensing Team as soon as you receive it.** It can take up to eight weeks for it to be returned. To check its progress you may contact DBS direct by phoning 0870 90 90 844 quoting Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council Licensing Team's reference 24426500009 stating 'Enhanced Level'.

Information received from the DBS will be kept strictly confidential while the licensing process takes its course and will be retained no longer than is necessary. Having a criminal record will not necessarily bar you from applying for a hackney carriage or private hire driver's licence. Any information disclosed will not be used unfairly. The Council reserves the right to consult with the Police or other relevant agencies in order to gain sufficient information to make an informed decision in relation to your application.

A disclosure will normally be valid for three years and therefore won't need to be applied for each year. Upon receipt of your DBS Certificate you must register for the online service within 19 days and maintain it via a yearly direct debit.

Immigration Checks

Your right to work in the UK will be checked as part of your licence application, this could include the licensing authority checking your immigration status with the Home Office. We may otherwise share information with the Home Office. You must therefore provide a document or document combination that is stipulated as being suitable for this check. The list of documents is set out in the attached list. You must provide the original document(s), such as your passport or biometric residence permit, as indicated in the published guidance, so that the check can take place. The document(s) will be copied and the copy retained by the licensing authority. The original document will be returned to you. Your application will not be considered valid until all the necessary information and original document(s) have been produced and the relevant paid has been paid.

If there are restrictions on the length of time you may work in the UK, your licence will not be issued for any longer than this period. In such circumstances the check will be repeated each time you apply to renew or extend your licence, If, during this period, you are disqualified from holding a licence because you have not complied with the UK's immigration laws, your licence will lapse and you must return it to the licensing authority. Failure to do so is a criminal offence.'

Medical

Applicants must be medically examined to the Council's approved Group 2 standard of medical fitness. A medical form (for completion by your own GP) will be issued. This form need not be completed straight away, you may decide to wait until your DBS has been returned and you have passed your knowledge test before paying out for a medical. You must pay the fee for the medical which will be set by your own GP.

Your medical need not be renewed until you are 45 years of age. After this age you will need to submit a medical every five years until you reach the age of 65 after which time you must submit a medical annually.

Test of the Drivers Knowledge

Prior to being granted a licence you must pass a test in relation to your knowledge of destinations within the Borough of Oldham together with questions on the conditions of a licence. The test cannot be taken until your DBS has been returned.

Tests must be booked in advance. Should a driver fail to attend a test and hasn't made contact with the Licensing Office at least 48 hours prior to the test to re-arrange it the re-test fee must be paid as Officer time will have been wasted.

Test of Driving Ability

New applicants must undertake a Driving Standards Assessment. The cost of this must be covered by the applicant and the application cannot be progressed until a pass certificate is produced.

The Assessment generally covers:

- An eyesight test
- A taxi specific manoeuvre as if to turn the car to travel in the other direction
- Approximately 10 minutes of independent driving
- 2 normal stops as if to set down/pick up passengers
- A hill start
- 1 in 3 tests involves an emergency stop
- 35-40 minutes driving
- Traffic signs (5). Highway code(3), Cabology questions (2)
- A maximum of nine driver faults that are not classed as serious or dangerous are allowed. One serious or dangerous driver fault will constitute a failure.
- At the end of the test (pass), the driver receives a pass certificate, a copy of the assessment sheet and the offer of a debrief. At the end of a failed test the driver receives a copy of the assessment and the offer of a debrief.

The current approved contractors are:

Mitchells Driving School

Call: [0161 367 8929](tel:01613678929)

Mob: [07989 443 556](tel:07989443556)

Email: info@mitchellsds.co.uk

Or to request a call back text 'DRIVE' 07989 443 556

Full details and prices at www.taxidrivetest.co.uk/

Blue Lamp Trust

Book online at: https://www.bluelamptrust.org.uk/Driver_Training/taxi_driver_assessment.php

Tel: 0333 700 0157

Defensive Driver Training

Call: 01384 442233

Full details and prices at www.mytaxitest.co.uk

VRQ / NVQ

As part of the application process you must have completed the 'Level 2 VRQ – Introduction to the Role of Professional Taxi and Private Hire Driver', before a licence can be granted. At your new driver appointment you must provide evidence that you have completed the VRQ, or have enrolled on the VRQ. Please be aware, your new licence will not be granted until you have completed this training.

Once you are licensed, you will have to enroll on the Level 2 NVQ - in Road Passenger Transport. This training, and subsequent qualification, recognises the important role private hire and hackney carriage drivers play in carrying passengers effectively and safely. This qualification also recognises the ever changing and diverse nature of the

driver's role. To complete the training you will need to demonstrate you have the knowledge and understanding necessary for you to carry out these tasks effectively and in accordance with the relevant regulations.

You must complete the NVQ within two-years of obtaining your licence.

Details of how to enroll on the course are available from licensing.

Duration of Licence

A licence will generally last for 3 years and is not transferable. Requests for one year licences will be considered on their merits.

Dual Licences

The Council issues dual badges. Applicants will be required to apply for both licences and sit appropriate tests as required.

Renewal

You will be reminded that your licence is due to expire. This is done out of courtesy and it is your responsibility to ensure that you submit your application prior to the expiry of your licence. You may submit your application up to two months in advance. Failure to do so will result in your licence not being renewed.

If you fail to renew you will have to submit a new application. If you have not held a licence in the last 6 months you will have to complete a new knowledge test as specified by an Officer, whereas less than six months will merely be a test on the current conditions. Failure to renew will result in a new DBS Certificate being required prior to a new licence being issued. A medical certificate for a driver previously licensed in Oldham will still remain valid.

Process of Application

Once your application is submitted for either the grant or renewal of a licence various steps have to be followed to ensure that the applicant is fit and proper to hold a licence.

1. Application submitted online
2. DBS in force or new one submitted
3. Fee paid
4. Provided your pass certificate for the Private/hire driven taxi assessment.
5. Medical in force or new one submitted
6. Assessment made of convictions, information or conduct to establish whether application is referred to a hearing (see note below)
7. Written knowledge test passed (new applications only)
8. VRQ must be in place

Should your application be dormant for a six month period (i.e. you have not progressed it) you will be asked if you wish to keep it live. If you do not respond via the specified date the Licensing Authority may discontinue your application and mark it not proceeded with meaning you would have to re-apply in the future.

Referral to the Licensing Panel for convictions/conduct

When Officers consider the application they will refer to the Statement of Fitness and Suitability to be a licensed driver. If they feel that application should be dealt with by the Licensing Panel, made up of Councillors, a hearing will be arranged and you may be interviewed prior to that to establish the facts of the matters declared.

In certain circumstances the Trading Standards & Licensing Manager may consider applications for serious convictions in line with the standing scheme of delegation. Any decision to refuse a licence may be appealed to Tameside Magistrates' Court within 21 days.

Driver Awareness Training

You must attend the above training as a new or existing driver.

This training is aimed at making you more aware of your own personal safety, health and links to updates in licensing law and practice, looks at customer service and considers community cohesion, awareness of child sexual exploitation and race hate reporting issues.

Please ask a member of the Licensing Team to book on to the next session. Failure to attend may result in your licence being suspended.

Contact details:

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| In person or in writing to: | Licensing Team Oldham Council Sir Robert Peacock House Vulcan Street Oldham OL1 4LA 09:00 to 12:30 - Monday and Friday 09:00 to 12:30 and 1:30 to 4:00 - Tuesday to Thursday |
| By Phone: | 0161 770 4730 09:00 to 12:30 and 1:30 to 5:00 Monday to Friday |
| Fax: | 0161 770 4481 |
| Email: | licensing@oldham.gov.uk |
| Website: | http://www.oldham.gov.uk/licensing |