

Hackney carriage and private hire newsletter November 2022

Welcome to the West Suffolk Council November 2022 hackney carriage and private hire newsletter containing updates on changes to the hackney carriage and private hire policy and application processes.

Changes to the hackney carriage and private hire policy

The new policy changes that will come into effect on the 23 November 2022 are:

- the removal of a requirement for all new or replacement hackney carriages to be wheelchair accessible vehicles
- the merger of the two former Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury taxi zones into a single West Suffolk zone
- an increase to the maximum age of vehicle allowed from April 2025 to 15 years old. The age limit previously set was 10 years old.

Below are some more details on how each of these changes will be implemented.

Hackney zones

You will keep your current vehicle plate, and these will be updated upon re-licence. All vehicles due to be licensed or re-licensed from 23 November 2022 will receive a plate which no longer displays a zone.

Applications forms have been updated removing any reference to zones which will be available on the website from 23 November.

Removal of wheelchair accessible vehicle requirements for hackney carriage vehicles (HCV)

All new hackney carriage vehicle licence applications will no longer have the requirement to be a wheelchair accessible vehicle. Vehicles still cannot be more than five years old.

If you have a current private hire vehicle licence (PHV) that you would like to change to a hackney carriage vehicle licence, you will need to surrender your current PHV licence immediately upon submitting a new application for an HCV licence.

A new application form has been created called 'Change of licence type' and this will be available on our website from 23 November. If the vehicle is currently licensed, and the licence has not expired or lapsed, it will not need to meet the five-year age requirement. Providing all the documentation for your current PHV licence is up to date, you will only need to supply a new vehicle inspection carried out at an approved garage (this is to capture the extra signage and meter requirements), a hackney carriage meter certificate and an insurance certificate detailing use for public hire. There will be a period where the vehicle will not be able to be used as a licensed vehicle and the timeframe will depend on how quickly you arrange for a taxi meter and roof sign to be fitted, the removal of the pre-booked only signage, updated insurance and a new vehicle inspection.

The same process applies should you wish to change your HCV licence to a PHV licence where the HCV must meet the policy requirements of a PHV.

Other policy changes

There have been some wider changes to the policy which also come into effect from 23 November 2022. The full updated policy will be available on our website where you must ensure you have reviewed it. Some of the main changes are summarised below, however, this list is not exhaustive, and the full policy should be referred to. If you have any queries relating to the policy update and would like to discuss these, drop-in sessions will be held at West Suffolk House or email licensing@westsuffolk.gov.uk

Drop-in sessions

The drop-in sessions at West Suffolk House will take place on Wednesday 23 November and Tuesday 29 November between 10am and 1pm.

Applications to re-licence

All re-licence applications, including combined drivers, hackney carriage vehicles, private hire vehicles and operator licences, must be submitted **at least 28 days** before your licence expires with effect from 23 November.

Reminders letters will be sent but it remains your responsibility to apply at least 28 days before your licence expires.

Professional taxi and private hire safeguarding training

[West Suffolk College - Find your perfect course](#)

Drivers

Since 1 June 2022 all drivers have been required to complete the Safeguarding Refresher Course with West Suffolk College before the expiry of their licence. You can complete the course up to three months before your current licence expires. Please check the college website for the course dates and ensure you book in advance to prevent any delays in submitting your licence application.

Operators

From 1 January 2023 safeguarding training is required for private hire operators who have not already undertaken the training as a licensed driver within the last three years.

For a new private hire operator, all people named on the licence, must undertake the course at their own cost.

Existing private hire operators who are not licensed drivers will be required to complete the course up to three months before the expiry of their licence. The licence will not be issued until this training is completed.

If you are an existing licensed private hire operator, not a licensed driver, and you have had your licence issued or renewed during the two years prior to 1 January 2023, you will be required to undertake this course by 1 June 2023.

Disciplinary code

The Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Disciplinary Code has been updated and is located under Appendix E of the policy.

Changes have been made to the penalty points scheme for drivers or operators that breach the conditions of their licence. Please make sure you are familiar with the disciplinary code as any breaches could result in penalty points being issued and that in turn may result in the suspension or revocation of your licence.

Accidents or incidents

It is the responsibility of a driver to update the council when a licensed vehicle is involved in an accident or incident involving damage to a vehicle, property, and/or injury to any person or animal. This is regardless of how minor the accident/incident was and/or who was at fault. The driver must inform the council in writing within 72 hours using the incident report form available on our website ([West Suffolk Council – Taxi licences](#)) which must be completed and submitted to the council by email (licensing@westsuffolk.gov.uk). Photographs of the damage must be sent through with the form, or within 24 hours of the accident/incident being reported.

The report must be made as soon as possible after the accident or incident except in exceptional circumstances, for example, where the driver is incapacitated due to the accident or incident and as such is physically unable to make the notification. (Please note whiplash will be regarded as an injury.)

An authorised officer of the council shall review the extent of the damage to a licensed vehicle following an accident or incident to determine whether the vehicle is fit for continued use or requires suspension. If the vehicle is fit for continued use but requires repair, the timescale for this repair must be agreed with an authorised officer of the council.

If the vehicle is not deemed fit for continued use, the vehicle will be suspended until such time as a full compliance test is passed by one of the council's approved garages and documentation submitted to the council.

A licensed vehicle which has suffered major accident damage or requires substantial mechanical repair may be temporarily replaced by a hire vehicle, provided:

1. the damage to, or defect in, the vehicle has been reported
2. an application is made in the prescribed manner
3. the replacement vehicle meets the requirements of the council's policy.

Vehicle categories

Category A, B, N and S vehicles will not be licensed.

Mobility bill

All licensed drivers are under a legal duty to provide mobility assistance to disabled passengers. A licensed driver may only refuse to do so where the driver has a medical exemption.

Section 164 of The Equality Act 2010 as amended by The Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Disabled Persons) Act 2022, places duties on drivers of hackney carriage or private hire vehicles which have been hired by or for a disabled person, or by another person who wishes to be accompanied by a disabled person. The updated policy reflects the changes – please familiarise yourself with the act: [Legislation.gov.uk - Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles \(Disabled Persons\) Act 2022](https://legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2022/12/section/164)

Applications process

Electronic signatures

We can now accept typed signatures on all application forms.

Sending us emails

Please ensure all emails state the following information in the subject line: type of application or document you are submitting and your licence number, where applicable. Here are a few examples:

- Vehicle Re-Licence PV9999
- New Driver Application
- Mid Term Taxi Test HC9090
- New Insurance Certificate PV9876

We are currently experiencing a high volume of calls and applications for all licence types, not just hackney carriage and private hire. To allow urgent matters to be prioritised, if you have a more general enquiry, please consult our website in the first instance.

Please continue to submit all applications and supporting documentation by email to licensing@westsuffolk.gov.uk. Customers will receive an automatic acknowledgement on receipt of submission. You will receive an acknowledgment to an email or voicemail within five working days. Please only call or email if you do not receive an acknowledgement within this time frame.

Licensing team contact details

Email: licensing@westsuffolk.gov.uk

Website: [West Suffolk Council - Taxis](https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/taxis)

Phone: 01284 758050 Customer Services Licensing

Please continue to check our webpage for regular updates.