

Licensed driver application process

It is the council's responsibility to license all taxi drivers, vehicles and operators to ensure the public receive a safe and reliable service.

Please read these notes and the relevant parts of the hackney carriage and private hire Licensing Handbook before beginning your application.

The hackney carriage and private hire Licensing Handbook can be viewed online at http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/business/regulation_and_licensing/licensing/taxi_licensing/

1. New drivers

1.1. There are a number of requirements which must be satisfied before an application can be considered:

- You must have held a full UK or EU drivers licence for a minimum of 12 months which shows your current address.
- You must be able to demonstrate that you have the right to live and work in the United Kingdom.
- You must satisfy us that you are a 'fit and proper person' to hold a driver's licence. This is a wide-ranging requirement covering previous convictions, cautions, motoring offences, health and any other such matters as the council considers appropriate. If you have any concerns regarding convictions, please contact our Licensing Department.

2. Stage One – Driver theory assessment or document check

2.1 The first step in obtaining a driver's licence is to pass a theory assessment and document check. You must bring with you your driving licence, passport, residence permit or any other document that proves your entitlement to work in the UK. There is a fee of £20 per assessment and is booked through West Suffolk college.

- The assessment consists of a written test of ten questions. The pass mark is 80%. The questions will cover subjects such as the Highway Code, taxi legislation, maths, local geography and routes.
- Your driving licence will be checked.
- Your right to work in the UK will be checked. We will follow the general advice given by the UK Border Agency, available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/613415/A_Licensing_authority_guide_to_right_to_work_checks_-_England_and_Wales.pdf

You will be notified of the result by email and a pass certificate issued which must be produced when you make your full application (please see check list on the application form). Anyone who fails can retake the test up to two more times (total three attempts).

To book your place for stage one, please contact 01284 716246. You can pay over the telephone whilst booking your place. You can also book your driver assessment and complete them both at the same time.

3. Stage Two - Practical driver assessment

- 3.1. All new drivers must pass a practical driving assessment equivalent to a Driving Standard Agency test for taxi and private hire drivers. West Suffolk College are offering the test and you can book a place by selecting this link <http://www.westsuffolkcollege.ac.uk/employers/taxi-driving-practical-assessment.aspx> and can be completed at the time of your theory test.
- 3.2. Other providers are available and acceptable, but the test must have been taken within 12 months of your driving application:
 - Priority Driver Training <http://www.prioritydrivertraining.co.uk/taxi-assessments/>
 - ROSPA <http://www.rospace.com/safety-training/>
 - Institute of advanced motorists <https://www.iamroadsmart.com/iam-business/overview>
 - Total Driving <http://www.totaldriving.net/advanced-car/taxi-phv-driver-training/>
- 3.3. Drivers of Wheelchair accessible vehicles **must also** have a DVSA approved practical disability awareness course (DSA previously). The certificate of attendance must be presented to the council on application or renewal of their licence. To book your course contact <https://dmptraining.co.uk/wheelchair-assessments.html> or call 01359 408090.

4. Stage Three – completing your Level 2 Certificate

Level 2 Certificate

Introduction to the Role of the Professional Taxi and Private Hire Driver

- 4.1. All new drivers are required to pass this qualification before they apply for a three-year licence.
- 4.2. This course is available at West Suffolk College and will be delivered over two full days by the College, payment option via three monthly instalments is available. You will need to pass the assessment before the certificate is awarded.

Follow this link for information on the course content and how to book:
<http://www.westsuffolkcollege.ac.uk/courses/course-search.aspx?ke=driver>

Course content

- 4.3. Course content may be subject to change depending on legislation or other factors but currently includes the following units:

- Health and safety in the taxi and private hire work environment
- Road safety when driving passengers in a taxi or private hire vehicle
- Professional customer service in the taxi and private hire industry
- Taxi and private hire vehicle maintenance and safety inspections
- The regulatory framework of the taxi and private hire industry
- Taxi and private hire services for passengers who require assistance
- Routes and fares in the taxi and private hire vehicle industries
- Transporting of parcels, luggage and other items in the taxi and private hire industries
- Transporting of children and young persons by taxi or private hire vehicles (safeguarding).

5. Stage 4 - Completing your application form

5.1. Incomplete applications will not be accepted. Before we will consider your application, you must submit to the council electronically:

- a fully completed application form together with the following supporting documents:
 - payment to be made by card
 - West Suffolk Driver Theory Assessment Certificate
 - one passport size colour photograph (no head gear of any form unless for religious reasons)
 - full DVLA driving licence
 - completed DVLA Check Code
 - evidence of an appropriate practical driver assessment
 - current passport or birth certificate or other proof of entitlement to work in the UK
 - Group II medical pass certificate
 - DVSA Approved Practical Disability Awareness course certificate (if applicable)
 - Enhanced DBS certificate less than one month old
 - Level 2 certificate in Introduction to the Role of the Taxi and private hire driver
 - or an equivalent Level 2 qualification such as City & Guilds or BTEC, or confirmation of enrolment at West Suffolk College
 - if applicable, a medical exemption where the driver shows a medical condition will be aggravated by exposure to dogs
 - if applicable, a medical exemption is required for not being able to assist passengers with luggage.

5.2. For applicants that have less than five years residency and/or holders of non-EU or non-United Kingdom passports after we leave the EU, additional documentation is required:

- a national identify card
- a residence permit, registration certificate or a document certifying or indicating permanent residence (this should contain the persons National Insurance number)
- a biometric immigration document
- a certificate of good conduct or character from the relevant embassy

- a UK driving licence counterpart from DVLA (see form D9).

Issue of licence

- 5.3. Once your application has been processed, you will be contacted with an appointment where you will need to bring along with you the original documentation for verification by an authorised officer. Photocopies etc are not acceptable. Where applicable the applicant must provide, at their own expense, a written English translation of relevant documents or certificates, together with documentary proof that the translation is correct.

6. DVLA Validation Check Code – ‘View Driving Licence Code’

- 6.1. This allows the council to check your driving licence status, issue number and validity dates, vehicle codes and disqualifications or penalties.
- 6.2. Driver consent is captured through a unique ‘check code’ generated by the driver using DVLA View Driving Licence Service www.gov.uk/view-driving-licence. The code generated must be valid for at least 14 days on the date you apply for your licence. The code must be submitted with your application form.
- 6.3. Please submit the code or the results sheet with your application, as this will speed up the process. Please write the code clearly making sure upper and lower case letters are clear and easy to distinguish.

7. Medical examinations

- 7.1. A group 2 medical will be required for all new applications. The council follows the DVLA group 2 medical guidelines for the purposes of hackney carriage and private hire licensing.
- 7.2. A group 2 medical will be valid up to the applicant’s 45th birthday. Thereafter, a further group 2 medical will be required every five years until the age of 65. The medical will then be required every year thereafter. The council will not accept Medics on Wheels Group 2 Medicals after the age of 45.
- 7.3. In addition, medical certificates may also be required in any case where the council thinks it appropriate should there be reason to believe that a new medical condition has emerged.
- 7.4. Medical forms are obtainable from the council website <https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk>, and completed forms must be submitted at application.

8. Insulin treated Diabetes

- 8.1. Drivers with insulin dependent diabetes are required to hold a DVLA C1 category Group 2 licence (that is one issued after 1 January 1998). This licence must be produced to the council annually for inspection.

9. Disclosure and Barring Service (enhanced criminal records check DBS)

- 9.1. The council is obliged to be satisfied that any licensed driver is fit and proper to hold a driver licence and the enhanced disclosure is one of our means of establishing this. New applicants will need to obtain an **enhanced** DBS disclosure which includes child and adult workforce, prior to their application being determined. Licensed drivers will need to complete a new enhanced disclosure, or have their status checked, every three years.
- 9.2. The DBS has now introduced an update service, to which you are required to subscribe: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/disclosure-and-barring-service-update-service-now-available> . For more guidance on the update service, and how to apply, follow this link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-update-service-applicant-guide>
- 9.3. When you subscribe to the update service, and you have had an enhanced DBS disclosure which includes the category child and adult workforce, which has been issued since 17 June, 2013, then please provide your **original DBS certificate**. The council will then be able to check your status online free of charge.
- 9.4. If you do not subscribe to the DBS update service a DBS certificate can be obtained from GB Group by following the instructions below.

10. Registration with GB Group

To be able to sign in and complete the disclosure application, you first need to register at - <https://gbg.onlinedisclosures.co.uk/Registration/Registration>

To self-register use the following:

- PIN: 168952
- **User word: Drive**

You will be sent an activation email, follow the instructions in the email to create your password. Now you will be able sign in whenever you like and complete your DBS application online. You will then be required to subscribe to the DBS update service.

11. Verification of ID documents

- 11.1. Your ID documents will need to be verified at a Post Office. The nearest Post Office to you, offering this service can be found during the application process. Currently in this area Newmarket, Haverhill, Bury St Edmunds and Thetford Post Offices offer this service.
- 11.2. In order to have your ID verified, you must print out the ID verification form and take this to the Post Office, along with the ID documents you have listed.

Any payment required should be made at the Post Office once they have verified your ID.

12. GB Group contact details

Helpdesk: 0845 251 5000

Opening times – Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5.30pm

Email: onlinedisclosures@gbgplc.com

13. How to submit your application

- 13.1. Once you have received your DBS certificate, passed your driving test, course and your medical you should prepare your application by getting all the required documents together.
- 13.2. Make sure that all the questions on the application form are completed and submit with all required supporting documents and the correct fee payment should be made by card. Your completed application should be submitted electronically to licensing@westsuffolk.gov.uk
- 13.3. We do not accept incomplete applications under any circumstances.

Please note: We are required by law to protect the public funds we administer. We may share information provided to us with other bodies responsible for auditing or administering public funds in order to prevent and detect fraud.

14. Renewal applications

An electronic reminder will be sent out to the last contact details we hold for drivers two months prior to expiry date of licences.

If for any reason you do not receive a reminder, it remains your responsibility to make sure a renewal application is received in plenty of time and at least two weeks prior to your expiry date.

Before we will consider your application, you must submit to the council:

- a fully completed application form together with the following supporting documents:
 - payment of the fee
 - passport size colour photograph less than one month old (no head gear of any form unless for religious reasons)
 - full DVLA driving licence
 - completed DVLA Check Code
 - current passport or birth certificate or other proof of entitlement to work in the UK
 - Group II medical pass certificate (if required this will be sent with the renewal pack)

- Enhanced DBS certificate less than one month old unless not yet update service
- if applicable, a medical exemption where the driver shows a medical condition will be aggravated by exposure to dogs
- if applicable, a medical exemption is required for not being able to assist passengers with luggage.

Please note: Where applicable the applicant must provide, at their own expense, a written English translation of relevant documents or certificates, together with documentary proof that the translation is correct.

Once your application has been processed, you will be contacted with an appointment for you to return your badge and provide your original driving licence and birth certificate or passport for verification. Photocopies will not be accepted.

It is an offence to drive a licensed vehicle without the appropriate licence, for which the maximum fine is £1,000. **If you allow your licence to lapse, any subsequent application will be treated as a new application.**

15. DVLA Validation Check Code – ‘View Driving Licence Code’

As per new driver application.

16. Medical examinations

- 16.1 The council follows the DVLA group 2 medical guidelines for the purposes of hackney carriage and private hire licensing. You will be contacted electronically when you are due a medical and the form is available on the website. In addition, medical certificates may also be required in any case where the council thinks it appropriate should there be reason to believe that a new medical condition has emerged.

17. Disclosure and barring service (criminal records check)

As per new driver application.

If you were issued a licence before 22 September 2020 and had not subscribed to the DBS update service, make sure that you obtain your DBS check via the online system before making your application to renew. Allow up to 60 days for return of your DBS. Once you have received your DBS you must subscribe to the DBS update service for your licence to be considered for renewal in the future.

A subscription to the DBS update service must be made when making a new application. This means that all drivers must be subscribed by July 2023.

18. How to submit your application

As per New driver application at point 13.

We do not accept incomplete applications under any circumstances.

Please note: We are required by law to protect the public funds we administer. We may share information provided to us with other bodies responsible for auditing or administering public funds in order to prevent and detect fraud.

19. Licensed driver conditions – applies to all drivers

Driver badge or licence

- 19.1. The driver must at all times, when driving a licensed vehicle for hire or reward, wear the driver's badge issued by the council in a prominent visible place on the outer clothing. The badge must be clearly visible to passengers and made available on request.
- 19.2. The driver's badge remains the property of the council. The badge must be returned to the council immediately if the licence is suspended or revoked. Upon expiry the badge must be returned to the council within seven days.
- 19.3. Hackney carriage and private hire vehicles shall not be driven by unlicensed drivers under any circumstances, the only exception being a qualified person testing a licensed vehicle or its taximeter.
- 19.4. The driver of a hackney carriage or private hire vehicle shall submit the original private hire vehicle driver's licence to his/ her employer (private hire vehicle Operator) before commencing employment as a driver of private hire vehicle. The employer (private hire vehicle Operator) shall retain the original private hire vehicle driver's licence until such time as the driver ceases to be so employed.

Conduct of driver

- 19.5. Drivers shall at all times when the vehicle is being driven for hire be clean and smartly dressed. Drivers must maintain a high standard of personal hygiene and dress in clothing and footwear suitable to the public service, which is clean, tidy and inoffensive. Flip-flops, cropped shorts and tight-fitting vest tops are not considered professional attire.
- 19.6. The driver shall not at any time behave in an abusive, aggressive or threatening manner to any passenger, officer of the council or any officer authorised by the council.
- 19.7. Private hire vehicle drivers shall not:

- a. park the vehicle on any hackney carriage stand for any reason
- b. stand or ply for hire or offer the private hire vehicle for immediate hire while on a road or other public place, or
- c. accept an offer for the immediate hire of the private hire vehicle while the driver or the vehicle is on a road or other public place unless the offer is first communicated to him by his or her private hire operator. (In this condition 'road' means any highway and any other road to which the public has access).

19.8. The driver shall take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety and welfare of all passengers driven by him or her.

19.9. Drivers must at all times when working with vulnerable passengers comply with the below detailed safeguarding principles set out on our website:

A vulnerable passenger is a passenger whose age or disability means that she/he is more susceptible to harm than a typical passenger. Vulnerable passengers include children, elderly persons or somebody with learning difficulties. In addition, an individual should be considered vulnerable if he or she does not fall within one of the above categories, but whose condition is such as to render him/ her more susceptible to harm than may otherwise be the case (for example as a result of being under the influence of alcohol).

The following safeguarding principles aim to promote good safeguarding practice for drivers and staff working with vulnerable passengers in the hackney carriage or private hire trade. The following safeguarding principles must be complied with and embedded into driver working practice:

- Drivers must carry photo ID at all times and wear it in accordance with the conditions of the licence.
- A lone vulnerable passenger must not be transported in the front passenger seat of the vehicle.
- The driver or operator must confirm that appropriate provision has been made for the vulnerable person prior to accepting the booking or commencing the journey. This does not necessarily mean that the driver/operator is responsible for the provision of appropriate measures, however if appropriate measures are not in place then the driver/operator must not undertake the journey.
- Drivers should always ask if a vulnerable passenger needs help and should not make assumptions.
- Drivers must remain professional at all times and should not:
 - touch a person inappropriately
 - make offensive or inappropriate comments (such as the use of swearing, sexualised or discriminatory language)
 - behave in a way that may make a passenger feel intimidated or threatened
 - attempt to misuse personal details obtained via the

business about a person; these standards are equally applicable when working with vulnerable and non-vulnerable passengers.

- Drivers and operators must remain alert to issues around the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults. Drivers should ensure that children and vulnerable adults leave the vehicle directly onto the kerb and immediately outside their destination (if it is safe and legal to do so). If a driver or operator is concerned about the safety, welfare or behaviour of a vulnerable person, the driver must report this to the police by telephoning 101 (or in appropriate cases by calling 999).

If a driver/operator is concerned about someone else's conduct, they should report any concerns to the Council's Licensing Department; licensing@westsuffolk.gov.uk , Police (101) or Crimestoppers (0800 555111)

- 19.10. Where a vehicle is constructed or adapted for the transportation of disabled persons, the driver shall convey the disabled passenger and any aids including assistance animals, (such animals to be carried free of charge), unless the driver has a council dispensation displayed in the vehicle, or an exemption certificate. Drivers must afford reasonable help to a disabled passenger to aid getting in and out of the vehicle and to or from any building if requested. Medical exemption can be applied for.
- 19.11. The driver will ensure that all plates, labels and stickers supplied by the council are displayed and legible at all times. The licence plate must be securely attached to the rear of the vehicle.
- 19.12. The driver will only take refreshment in the vehicle at times when it is parked and not in service.
- 19.13. The driver will turn any entertainment off or down at the request of any passenger.
- 19.14. Licensed drivers must carry a reasonable quantity of luggage when requested by any passenger. Licensed drivers must afford all reasonable assistance with passenger luggage and shopping as may be required when loading and unloading. Licensed drivers must, following the setting down of passengers, ascertain if any property belonging to the hirer(s) has been left in the vehicle and if not immediately able to return any such property, must deliver the item to the local police station within 24 hours, unless an alternative arrangement has been made with the owner of the property.
- 19.15. Licensed drivers must, when aware that the vehicle has been hired to be in attendance at an appointed time and place, or when otherwise instructed by the operator or proprietor of the vehicle to be in attendance at an appointed time and place, punctually attend at the appointed time and place unless delayed or prevented by sufficient cause. The driver must take the shortest available route

to the destination unless an alternative route is requested by the passenger whilst observing all relevant highway and traffic laws.

- 19.16. Licensed drivers must at all times when driving a licenced vehicle ensure the vehicle is clean, roadworthy and well maintained and meets the councils vehicle licence conditions.
- 19.17. Throughout the duration of the licence, licensed drivers must notify the council in writing within forty-eight hours providing full details of any arrest and release, charge or conviction of any sexual offence, any offence involving dishonesty or violence and any motoring offence. An arrest will result in a review of their license.
- 19.18. Throughout the duration of the licence, licensed drivers must notify the council **in writing** within forty-eight hours (unless they are medically considered too unwell to do so within this timeframe, then a seven-day timeframe applies) providing full details of any:
 - a. material change to their medical condition since their most recent Group 2 medical submitted to the council
 - b. change of their address
 - c. change in their operator.

Failure to notify the council of the above will result in enforcement action being taken.

- 19.18. If at any time the vehicle is involved in an accident, however minor, the driver must inform the council of this fact as soon as possible and in any event within 72 hours (by telephone or email). An accident report form (available on the council website) must then be completed and submitted to the council within 24 hours of reporting the accident (except in exceptional circumstances when the report must be made as soon as possible after the accident – an example of an exceptional circumstance would be that the driver is incapacitated due to the accident and physically unable to make the notification).
- 19.19. The driver must not:
 - a. use any two-way radio equipment unless an appropriate licence from the Office of Communications is held by the operator and available for inspection
 - b. use any scanning equipment
 - c. use a mobile phone whilst driving as per the current legislation
 - d. carry any other person in the vehicle without the express consent of any other passengers carried in the vehicle
 - e. provide any alcoholic drinks within the vehicle unless there is an appropriate licence in place

Duty to carry guide dogs and assistance dogs

- 19.20. Drivers must not fail or refuse to carry out a booking by or on behalf of a person with disabilities who is accompanied by an 'assistance

dog' unless the driver has a Medical Exemption granted by the council and the Notice of Exemption is displayed in the approved manner by it being fixed in a prominent position facing outwards on the dashboard.

- 19.21. Any animal belonging to or in the custody of any passenger should remain with that passenger and may be conveyed in the front or rear of the vehicle.
- 19.22. Drivers hired to carry a guide dog must ask the owner where he or she would prefer the dog to be. Most dogs are trained to lie in the front passenger footwell between the feet of the owner. If the vehicle is fitted with front and side air bags, it is essential that the dog is lying down at all times. Drivers must let the visually impaired person know that this applies.
- 19.23. If the front foot well is not large enough to accommodate the dog, the guide dog owner must be advised to travel in the rear of the vehicle with the dog in the footwell behind the front passenger seat. The seat should be pushed forward to make room for the dog

Duty to assist passengers in wheelchairs

- 19.24. Licensed drivers must provide all reasonable assistance to passengers and especially those with a disability. The Equality Act 2010 places the following duties on licensed hackney carriage/private hire vehicle drivers:

Duty to assist passengers in wheelchairs

- 19.25. Designated wheelchair accessible vehicles are those listed by the council under section 167 of the Equality Act 2010 as being a 'wheelchair accessible vehicle'. (a list can be obtained on request).

Section 165 of the Equality Act 2010 places a duty on the driver of a designated wheelchair accessible hackney carriages and private hire vehicles to:

- carry the passenger while in the wheelchair
 - not to make any additional charge for doing so
 - if the passenger chooses to sit in a passenger seat to carry the wheelchair
 - to take such steps as are necessary to ensure that the passenger is carried in safety and reasonable comfort, and
 - to give the passenger such mobility assistance as is reasonably required.
- 19.26. The driver must surrender his licence to the council within seven days if they receive a driving ban through a conviction.

Fares

- 19.27. Licensed drivers must not, if driving a licensed vehicle fitted with a

taximeter, cause the fare to be cancelled or concealed until the hirer has had the opportunity of examining it and has paid the fare.

- 19.28. Licensed drivers must not demand from any hirer of a licensed vehicle a fare in excess of any previously agreed for that hiring between the hirer and the operator or if the vehicle is fitted with a taximeter, and there has been no previous agreement as to the fare, the fare shown on the face of the taximeter.
- 19.29. Licensed drivers must, if requested by the hirer, provide a written receipt for the fare paid. The receipt must bear the name and address of the proprietor of the vehicle together with the badge number of the driver.
- 19.30. The driver must complete any mandatory training as directed by the council.
- 19.31. The driver must not smoke tobacco a similar substance, or e-cigarettes or vaping cigarettes in the vehicle at any time.

Disclosure and Barring Service online update service and online DVLA System

- 19.32. Licensed drivers must subscribe to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) online update service. Any costs associated with maintaining this subscription must be met by the licensed driver.
- 19.33. Licensed drivers must give permission for the council to undertake checks of their DBS and DVLA status should the council consider it necessary to do so. The councils will use the DBS online update service to monitor the criminal record of licensed drivers.