

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)



1. Why do I need a licence?

Anyone who wants to drive a hackney carriage or a private hire vehicle must hold a driver's licence issued by the Council. Someone who is licensed as a hackney carriage driver can only driver hackney carriages and a private hire driver can only drive private hire vehicles.

However, you can apply for a licence to drive both types of vehicle and there is no extra charge to do this. Once you have your licence it should be clearly displayed at all times whilst you are working.

2. What is the difference between Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles?

In Hartlepool hackney carriage vehicles (most commonly known as taxis) are yellow, have a roof sign, door stickers stating the licence number of the vehicle, which should be displayed at all times, and have a meter inside which calculates the fare. They are also the only vehicles which can legally ply for hire (i.e. can be flagged down on the street) and use designated taxi ranks located throughout the town. Private Hire vehicles can be any colour other than yellow, have door stickers stating the licence number of the vehicle but do not have a roof sign. Private Hire vehicles must be pre-booked, cannot wait in designated taxi ranks and cannot be flagged down in the street.

3. How do I obtain a drivers badge?

A driver must :-

- a) Complete an application form
- b) Have a Class II medical examination carried out by their GP or by someone who has access to their medical records.
- c) Have an 'Enhanced' Police check carried out by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).
- d) Undertake and pass an online training course relating to child sex exploitation (CSE)
- e) Undertake and pass a knowledge test based on legislation and locations.
- f) Provide proof that you have the right to work in the UK

4. Why must I have a medical?

The Council's job is to ensure the safety of the general public and will only issue a driver's licence to people who are considered fit to drive. For the Council to be satisfied that someone is fit, it requires the applicant to provide a medical

certificate that has been completed by a doctor who has had access to their full medical records and which includes a statement from the doctor that the individual is fit to the requires 'Group 2' standard.

The Council cannot accept an HGV medical assessment as this does not include any statement from the doctor that the applicant is fit – it is simply a record of someone's current medical condition and will be issued whether the applicant is fit to drive or not.

5. Why do I have to go to my own GP for a medical certificate?

Your GP has access to your medical history/records and as such can complete the declaration on the back of the medical certificate.

You may go to a different GP but only if he has access to your medical records

6. Is there a charge for the medical and, if so, do I have to pay?

Unfortunately whoever completes your medical certificate will charge you a fee. How much this will be depends on your doctor.

7. I have been diagnosed with diabetes. Will this stop me being a licensed driver?

As with any medical condition, it is for your GP to determine if you are fit to drive a licensed vehicle. If there is any doubt your GP will probably consult the guidelines for completing Group 2 medical certificates before making a decision.

8. I have had a heart attack in the past, will this stop me being a licensed driver?

See 7 above.

9. Do I require a DBS Disclosure?

Yes, please see Guidance for DBS Disclosure applicants.

10. What happens if my DBS Disclosure reveals a conviction?

Hartlepool Borough Council is committed to treating all applicants fairly. If previous convictions are disclosed, it may be necessary for your application to be considered by the Council's Licensing Committee.

The Council uses some published guidance to help it decide whether previous convictions are relevant to a driver's fitness to hold a licence. This guidance can be found on the Licensing Team's website at www.hartlepool.gov.uk/licensing.

11. I have failed my knowledge test, is there a limit on the amount of times I can sit my knowledge test?

Yes. You must pass your knowledge test within 5 attempts. If you do not, your application will be terminated and you will have to wait at least 6 months before you can re-apply.

12. I have arranged a knowledge test but cannot keep the appointment.

You must cancel the appointment as soon as possible. Failure to attend an appointment without prior notification will result in a non-attendance fee of £20 being payable.

13. I have only held a full DVLA licence for 10 months, is that a problem?

The law states that an applicant must have held a full driving licence for a minimum period of 12 months. Therefore you would have to wait until you have held this licence for 12 months.

14. I have penalty points on my licence

It is for the Council to decide whether an applicant is suitable to hold a licence.

If a driver has more than 6 points on their licence it is likely that their suitability will be called into question. This may mean having to attend a meeting of the Council's Licensing Committee where a decision will be taken as to whether a licence should be granted.

15. I was banned from driving because I was over the limit for alcohol.

Any applicant with one or more convictions for drink driving will have to attend a meeting of the Council's Licensing Committee where a decision will be taken as to whether a licence should be granted.

If you have a drink drive conviction you should contact the Licensing Team before you begin your licence application.

16. Do I have to include all my previous criminal convictions on the driver's application form?

Yes, include all convictions even if you consider them 'spent'. It is an offence not to provide these details (use additional sheet if necessary).

17. Is there a time limit on how quickly I must obtain a licence?

Yes, you must complete all elements of the application process and obtain your licence within 6 months of the date printed on your DBS certificate. If you do not, your DBS will be deemed to be out of date and you would be required to re-apply.

18. If I am granted a licence, am I allowed to smoke in my licensed vehicle?

No. Smoke free legislation introduced in 2007 makes it a criminal offence for anyone to smoke in a taxi or private hire vehicle – whether the vehicle is hired or not.

Council Policy also prohibits a driver from using “e-cigarettes” whilst driving, whether the vehicle is hired or not.

19. Can a Private Hire vehicle use bus lanes?

Private hire vehicles cannot usually use bus lanes. Any signage that refers to ‘Taxis’ only relates to hackney carriage vehicles.

20. How much can I charge for each journey?

Hackney Carriage fares are calculated by a ‘meter’ that is installed in each vehicle. The meter is set to a level approved by the Council each year. It can be a criminal offence to charge more than the meter price if the journey is entirely within the boundary of Hartlepool. The meter should be started as soon as you set off with a passenger.

For Private Hire vehicles the Council recommends that all fares are agreed *before* the journey starts. As Private Hire vehicles must be booked in advance this is the best time to do this.

21. Can I refuse to carry a passenger?

You can refuse to carry a passenger if you genuinely believe that your health and safety may be at risk or if the passenger is excessively dirty, abusive or drunk.

You may not refuse a passenger on the grounds of their gender, race, age, disability, religion or sexual orientation.

22. How should I behave towards my passengers and other road users?

It is the responsibility of any licensed driver to be polite and courteous to both their passengers and other road users at all times.

The Council could consider withdrawing someone’s licence if they have been found to be rude, impolite or have been inconsiderate to other road users.

23. I drive a Hackney Carriage vehicle and the meter is faulty. What should I do?

All taxi meters are checked by the Council before they can be used. If it becomes faulty the vehicle cannot be used until the meter is fixed. You must never use a taxi when the meter is broken and you must never alter the meter yourself without first speaking to the Council – this will allow them to check that it is accurate before you use it again.

24. What should I do if I change my address?

Any change of details must be reported to the Council in writing within 7 days.

25. What should I do if I am convicted or cautioned of any criminal or motoring offence once I have been licensed?

You must inform the Council within 7 days of receiving the conviction or caution.

26. Why do I have to prove my “right to work”?

Following the introduction of the Immigration Act in 2016 workers in certain occupations must prove they have a “right to work” - taxi driving has been identified as one of those occupations.

In order to do this, applicants must be able to produce:

- A Valid UK passport or
- Photocard driving licence and
- Full birth certificate and
- Document showing NI number.

27. What should I do if I lose my badge?

If a driver loses their badge they should inform the licensing unit straight away. They will be issued with a new badge at a cost of £15.

28. How do I let my passengers know I have arrived?

When collecting your passengers you should wait outside of their address for a short while. If nobody comes out you should then go and knock on the door to let them know you have arrived.

29. What is ‘Waiting Time’?

Waiting time is the time that a driver incurs from any delays after picking up a customer. So if a driver is sat in traffic after picking up a customer, waiting time would then come into force. The charges for waiting time can be seen on the Hackney Carriage fare card.