

Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration Screening



As a public authority we need to ensure that all our strategies, policies, service and functions, both current and proposed have given proper consideration to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration.

A **screening** process can help judge relevance and provides a record of both the **process** and **decision**. Screening should be a short, sharp exercise that determines relevance for all new and revised strategies, policies, services and functions.

Completed at the earliest opportunity it will help to determine:

- the relevance of proposals and decisions to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration.
- whether or not equality, diversity, cohesion and integration is being/has already been considered, and
- whether or not it is necessary to carry out an impact assessment.

Directorate: Resources	Service area: Licensing & Registration
Lead person: Kate Coldwell	Contact number: 2143057

1. Title: The Application Process for new applicants to both the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire trade.

Is this a:

Strategy / Policy

Service / Function

Other

If other, please specify

2. Please provide a brief description of what you are screening

In England (outside London), Hackney Carriage and Private Hire licences are issued by local Councils who have a statutory responsibility to make sure drivers are a 'fit and proper' person to drive a Hackney Carriage (Taxis) and Private Hire vehicle (hired through a local Operator) being used for hire or reward.

In Leeds, licensing and enforcement matters are dealt with by the Councils Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Section.

The following areas are pre-requisites to an individual being granted either a Hackney Carriage and/ or a Private Hire drivers licence;

- passing a Driving Standards Agency test
- passing a Group 2 Medical
- passing an English Comprehension test
- passing an Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau disclosure
- passing a Local Knowledge test

3. Relevance to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration

All the council's strategies/policies, services/functions affect service users, employees or the wider community – city wide or more local. These will also have a greater/lesser relevance to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration.

The following questions will help you to identify how relevant your proposals are.

When considering these questions think about age, carers, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and any other relevant characteristics (for example socio-economic status, social class, income, unemployment, residential location or family background and education or skills levels).

Questions	Yes	No
Is there an existing or likely differential impact for the different equality characteristics?	√	
Have there been or likely to be any public concerns about the policy or proposal?		√
Could the proposal affect how our services, commissioning or procurement activities are organised, provided, located and by whom?		√
Could the proposal affect our workforce or employment practices?		√
Does the proposal involve or will it have an impact on <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eliminating unlawful discrimination, victimisation and harassment• Advancing equality of opportunity• Fostering good relations	√	

If you have answered **no** to the questions above please complete **sections 6 and 7**

If you have answered **yes** to any of the above and;

- Believe you have already considered the impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration within your proposal please go to **section 4**.
- Are not already considering the impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration within your proposal please go to **section 5**.

4. Considering the impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration

If you can demonstrate you have considered how your proposals impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration you have carried out an impact assessment.

Please provide specific details for all three areas below (use the prompts for guidance).

- **How have you considered equality, diversity, cohesion and integration?**

It is the Taxi and Private Hire Sections job to make sure the Taxi and Private Hire trade in Leeds is operated in a professional manner and that the correct standards of public safety are met by drivers and Operators and all vehicles are safe and meet a reasonable standard of comfort. We are committed to providing a quality transport service within the Taxi and Private Hire trade and our overriding principle is the safety of the travelling public. The Council is alert to public expectations of passenger care and comfort.

To meet these requirements a driver must undertake a Driving Standards Agency driving test, an Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) disclosure and pass a Group 2 Medical. These are essential pre-requisites in every case and ensure that the licensee is a 'fit and proper' person to transport passengers with particular care being taken with unaccompanied children and vulnerable adults. The necessity to undertake both the enhanced CRB and Group 2 Medical is also in line with Best Practice Guidance.

To explain these vigorous checks, the Council issues 'A Guide to Obtaining a Licence' which is free and included within all new application packs. The Guide is written in plain English and sets out the requirements placed upon applicants before any fee is taken. In addition, applicants are given a one hour appointment with a Licensing Officer to submit their application form and complete and submit the CRB form. At this appointment, Officers explain the application process in more detail, making the applicant aware of, and checking their understanding of, each stage of the process. We also place our guidance on the Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Sections internet site.

The English comprehension test was introduced as a result of concerns raised by both the public and the trade, that some licence applicants have difficulty speaking, reading or writing English where it is not their first language. Applicants are permitted to re-sit the test once. The current training organisation, who administers the test on the Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Sections behalf, is able to offer support in the numeracy (to English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Entry Level 3 which is the level at which the UK Citizenship test is set) and A to Z map referencing aspects of the test. If however, applicants are struggling with the English Comprehension aspect of the test they can have a free assessment to establish whether there is an ESOL learning need. The applicants can then be referred to a local college to undertake an ESOL course – either Skills for Life or Skills for Work. Applicants are not permitted to undertake a further English Comprehension test unless they provide evidence that they have successfully completed the applicable course.

Applicants are not permitted to sit the Local Knowledge testing until they have passed the English Comprehension test. Upon being invited to attend a Private Hire Seminar or Local Knowledge test, applicants are given support throughout the process by a Service Development Officer and/ or Enforcement Officer who explains each area of the seminar/

test.

Consultation

Prior to the introduction of English Comprehension testing in 2006 and Local Knowledge testing, pre-2006 for Hackney Carriage and 2008 for the Private Hire trade, extensive consultation was undertaken with the Taxi and Private Hire trade, the Council's Equality Team and Thomas Danby College, along with the Access Committee for Leeds. This consultation informed the requirement to attain a certain standard of English comprehension and knowledge.

As part of the review of all of the Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Sections policies and Conditions, a wider consultation project was undertaken in 2011, whereby the general public, the trade and Elected Members were asked to review the current application process and provide feedback.

- **Key findings**

The safe licensing and monitoring of licensed drivers is a statutory responsibility for the Council and contributes significantly to the safety of the travelling public and it is recognised that those who are licensed by the Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Section are the biggest providers of transport in the evening and night time economy.

There are three important elements in the licensing regime; the information stage to let potential applicants make an informed decision; the scrutiny stage of the application (the 'fit and proper person' test); followed by training drivers to the expected standards of service. These three areas contributes not only to safer communities but also add favourably to the image of Leeds by emphasising the ambassadorial role of drivers within a key passenger service industry.

The information we have available for potential applicants allows them to make informed decisions about their chances of being granted a licence at no cost.

English comprehension is a very important part of the checking process because it is essential that drivers can communicate easily with a wide range of people, often in difficult or challenging situations; making emergency phone calls, responding to information or instructions given by radio, reading street signage, using simple maps and street plans. Some spoken communication with passengers is likely to take place while the driver is concentrating on the roads, with little face-to-face interaction. It is essential that drivers have a clear understanding of their responsibilities, the legislation and their responsibilities to the Council and this can only be achieved by good English comprehension skills.

The comments received as part of the most recent consultation process supported the current policy that all licence holders are expected to have a basic grasp of the English language.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions (think about how you will promote positive impact and remove/ reduce negative impact) <p>Ensure that our forms and publications continue to be written in plain English and that support is offered via Licensing Officers prior to applications being submitted.</p> <p>Ensure that training needs continue to be evaluated at the English Comprehension assessment centre and that support continues throughout any identified training requirements.</p> <p>Ensure that we continue to consult fully regarding any proposed changes to our application process.</p> <p>Ensure any changes to our application process are communicated widely and appropriately.</p>
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<p>5. If you are not already considering the impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration you will need to carry out an impact assessment.</p>	
Date to scope and plan your impact assessment:	
Date to complete your impact assessment	
Lead person for your impact assessment (Include name and job title)	

<p>6. Governance, ownership and approval Please state here who has approved the actions and outcomes of the screening</p>		
Name	Job title	Date
Kate Coldwell	Service Development Officer	26.07.2012

<p>7. Publishing This screening document will act as evidence that due regard to equality and diversity has been given. If you are not carrying out an independent impact assessment the screening document will need to be published.</p> <p>Please send a copy to the Equality Team for publishing</p>	
Date screening completed	Kate Coldwell
Date sent to Equality Team	26.07.2012
Date published (To be completed by the Equality Team)	

