

Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Advice

As the current situation with the Covid-19 outbreak continues to develop, the council is constantly keeping the matter under review, following government advice and looking at its own business continuity arrangements to ensure we can continue to deliver the service and to enable firms, vehicles and drivers to continue providing vital public transport where it is safe to do so.

We have collated the current advice on taxi and private hire licensing below. Note please that the situation is constantly changing and some of the information may be subject to change. We will do our best to keep you informed but we appreciate your understanding and patience at this time.

Applications

In line with government advice, officers are working from home as much as possible. The offices are closed and you are not permitted to attend the office to drop off any paperwork, payments etc. Knowledge tests and all appointments are cancelled until further notice.

As we are very busy trying to process as many electronic applications as possible, please do not contact us unless it is absolutely necessary. In the first instance, please check the website for any updates or changes to procedures.

Please do not apply more than 4 weeks before the expiry of your licence. Renewal applications will be prioritised by expiry date. We will do our best to process your application as quickly as possible but please bear in mind it will very likely take longer than usual.

If your licence does lapse, you will be unlicensed and you must not drive a vehicle for the carriage of passengers for hire and reward until you have received a new licence.

See below for specific guidance by licence type. If you cannot send your application form by email, please contact us to discuss.

Medicals

We are aware that drivers may face difficulties with getting medicals done as surgeries are cancelling non-urgent appointments. There has been no official advice from the government and at present we will consider any licences where medicals are expiring on a case by case basis. You will be asked to provide any proof that you had an appointment which has been cancelled, and any evidence to confirm your medical condition has not changed since your last medical.

Any drivers who require annual medicals should bear in mind that they are likely to fall into the category of person who should be self-isolating or more stringent in following social distancing measures. Please see [here](#) for guidance on social distancing and [here](#) for guidance on protecting people who are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19.

Compliance Tests and Insurance

At present, compliance tests are still required, and new insurance documents should still be provided on expiry. Any vehicle proprietor with difficulties in getting a compliance test should email us at licensing.unit@whitehorsedc.gov.uk. Insurance documents should be forwarded through to show the thread from your broker or insurer.

Other

- Panel hearings have been postponed until alternative arrangements can be put in place
- We will deal with complaints and compliance issues as normal.
- If you have an application pending with us and need to submit additional documents, please do this via email and ensure you include your badge/plate number in the subject of the email to assist us in linking it with your application.

Contacting the Team

- In the first instance, please use email as a means of contacting us. Our email address licensing.unit@whitehorsedc.gov.uk will be monitored throughout the day and we will respond as soon as we are able.
- If you do not have access to email, please call our office on 01235 422556. It is likely that we will not be able to take your call at the time, so please be prepared to leave a message with your name, phone number and the reason for your call.
- We will endeavour to return any calls and respond to emails within 5 working days.

Precautions for Driver and Passenger Safety

We would like to also take the opportunity to provide advice with a view to protecting you and your passengers:

- If you are vulnerable either due to your age, suppressed immunity or pre-existing health conditions, please consider whether it is in your interest to work.
- We would recommend you only take bookings for essential trips – such as medical appointments, key workers going to/from work, and people doing food shopping.
- We would recommend you limit the number of passengers to a maximum of 2 at any one time and would suggest they should both sit in the rear of the vehicle wherever possible.
- If you believe you may have been exposed to the virus, either through a passenger or anyone/where else, please follow the official advice to self-isolate, particularly if you are displaying symptoms.

- Regularly clean touch points (such as steering wheel, door handles both inside and outside etc.) with alcohol (minimum 60%) wipes or bleach based cleaning products.
- Regularly clean the inside of your vehicle with warm water and soap.
- Consider carrying tissues in your vehicle and a receptacle for disposing of used tissues/wipes.
- Please wash your hands regularly. As an interim measure, use hand sanitising gel with alcohol of a minimum 60%.
- If you have an operational office, you should maintain the 2 metre separation distance – including in any passenger waiting area.
- Read the [COVID-19: guidance for staff in the transport sector](#) and the [guidance on social distancing](#)

Support

The government has recently put in place measures to support businesses affected by the virus. There are grants and loans available as part of this package. Please [follow developments on the government website](#) as ways to access these will be announced shortly.

Driver applications

We are currently only able to accept renewal applications. If you had an appointment that was cancelled and your licence lapsed as a result, you will be treated as though you applied to renew before the expiry date.

If you meet the following criteria, and have unlimited leave to remain in the UK, the licence will be granted for the usual 3 year period:

- You are signed up to the DBS Update Service AND
- You are able to send us a scan of the full DBS certificate AND
- The Council saw your original DBS certificate at the last application AND
- The Council has satisfactory proof of current right to work in the UK on your file from a previous application.

If you meet the above criteria and have limited leave to remain and work in the UK, subject to us being able to confirm any required checks with the Home Office, the licence will be granted as per their direction (usually 6 months).

For those not on the DBS Update Service, applications will be reviewed on a case by case basis to consider whether a temporary licence can be issued for 3 months.

- You will need to print off the application form and complete as normal, including signing and dating the form. Please take care to complete the application form in full. Any incomplete or illegible applications will be rejected and will not be processed.
- You need to scan this application and email the form to us at licensing.unit@whitehorsedc.gov.uk with any supporting documents, ideally in one email. If you do not have access to a scanner, you could try to photograph each page of the form but please note it must be clear and legible or we will not be able to process it.
- When we are ready to process your application, we will call you to take payment over the phone. If there are any issues with the phone payment system, you will be required to send us a cheque made payable to Vale of White Horse District Council.
- When we have a completed correct application and payment, we will process the application and issue the licence and badge. We will then post this licence out to you by first class recorded delivery (someone will need to be in to sign for this). You will not be able to collect the badge from the office.

Vehicle Applications

- You need to print off the application form and complete as normal, including signing and dating the form. Please take care to complete the application form in full. Any incomplete or illegible applications will be rejected and will not be processed.
- You need to scan this application and email the form to us at licensing.unit@whitehorsedc.gov.uk with any supporting documents, ideally in one email. If you do not have access to a scanner, you could try to photograph each page of the form but please note it must be clear and legible or we will not be able to process it.
- When we are ready to process your application, we will call you to take payment over the phone. If there are any issues with the phone payment system, you will be required to send us a cheque made payable to Vale of White Horse District Council.
- When we have a completed correct application and payment, we will process the application and issue the licence. We will then post the licence and plate out to you by first class recorded delivery (someone will need to be in to sign for this). You will not be able to collect anything from the office.

Operator applications

Applicants who do not hold a current hackney carriage/private hire driver licence will need to be considered on a case by case basis in respect of the required DBS and Right to Work checks. Please contact the team by email if you fall within this category so an officer can review and contact you to discuss.

- You need to print off the application form and complete as normal, including signing and dating the form. Please take care to complete the application form in full. Any incomplete or illegible applications will be rejected and will not be processed.
- You need to scan this application and email the form to us at licensing.unit@whitehorsedc.gov.uk with any supporting documents, ideally in one email. If you do not have access to a scanner, you could try to photograph each page of the form but please note it must be clear and legible or we will not be able to process it.
- When we are ready to process your application, we will call you to take payment over the phone. If there are any issues with the phone payment system, you will be required to send us a cheque made payable to Vale of White Horse District Council.
- When we have a completed correct application and payment, we will process the application and issue the licence by email – so please ensure you provide an email address on your application. You will not be able to collect the licence from the office.