



Hello Drivers!

May 2024 marks my 8th year as your Taxi Cop. In my 7 years I've really got to know the trade and have a good appreciation for the issues that you face. Having stopped and checked thousands of vehicles, looked at hundreds of crimes, and attended many meetings, I know that the vast majority of drivers are honest and deliver a great service.

There are over 4,500 licensed Bristol and South Gloucestershire drivers plus those who are licensed by other Councils working in our area. Around 10% of those have come to my attention because of issues but less than 1% cause me real concern for public safety.

One of the great successes of my role is the WhatsApp service which all drivers are welcome to join. Hundreds of drivers are on the Groups and receive information about law and licensing topics, traffic problems and updates on my work. These messages are often picked up by the national trade press. It also provides drivers a way to let me know about problems and ask for help. As of today (23/4/24) I have received 2,838 messages from drivers since we started the service in 2017. Of course, I'm not able to deal with every single issue and I have to make a decision about which jobs to progress but I am proud to have helped many drivers.

A disappointment of my role is that I've not been able to end Hackney Carriage drivers failing to use the meter/overcharging/cherry picking. I know how to do it, and I'm confident I can do it – but to do so needs resources from the Council which they have



not been able to supply yet. Hopefully in the future they will be able to make available what I need to deal with this. It's one of the main issues which damages the reputation of the trade, and also makes the issue of Private Hire drivers illegally plying for hire worse.

A benefit to drivers of my role is the education and information service. For example I have produced 19 Information Sheets so far which helps drivers understand topics such as Police Powers, Runners, Signage and Lost & Found Property.

A driver asked me the other day "What would make your job easier?". There are three things drivers could do which would make a real difference:

- 1. Private Hire Drivers** – do not park on taxi ranks.
- 2. All drivers** – do your checks, are all of your lights working, is your badge on display?
- 3. All drivers** – tell the Council about your education courses, tickets and points.

If I didn't have to deal with these issues I would have more time to support drivers.

I love being your Taxi Cop. The most important thing is to keep you and the public safe and the next most important thing to me is to have your support. Every wave, thumbs up and complimentary message is appreciated!

PC Quinton, Taxi Compliance Officer
The Bridewell police station
0746 940 0832

Police officer of the year

Patrick is the taxi compliance officer based at Bridewell Police Station, covering the Bristol and South Gloucestershire areas. He is seen as a nationally respected authority on taxi compliance and taxi-related matters.

As you would expect, there are more drivers in Bristol than anywhere else in Avon and Somerset so there are many more reports of crime in our area.

Patrick works hard to promote the work of taxi compliance through organising numerous police and partnership operations, and he consistently achieves exceptional results. He can regularly be seen and heard stopping vehicles and dealing with safety issues.

He has worked hard to gain the respect of the taxi community by fostering better relations between the police and taxi drivers. Notably, his use of social media to promote his work is extensive and far-reaching.

Jon Martin, Licensing Manager as part of nomination said Patrick has embraced all the challenges of his unique role: "When appointed none of us had any appreciation just how valuable Patrick would become on so many levels. In short, Patrick and the organisation should be immensely proud of the work he does."



Government Consultation

You may be aware that the High Court handed down a judgement in relation to how VAT should be calculated on Private Hire services.

Following this ruling the Government are consulting on the potential tax impacts on the private hire vehicle sector and its passengers. You can read the documents and comment on the consultation on the [Government website](#).

The consultation ends on 8 August 2024.



Fleet services

From August 2021 all drivers have been required to show their current private hire or hackney carriage badge when presenting a licensed vehicle for a vehicle inspection check.

This is because only drivers who hold a valid Bristol City Council Driver Licence can drive a vehicle which is currently licensed by Bristol City Council. If your licence has expired, or you do not hold a licence with us, you are unable to drive a licensed vehicle even for personal use. If you do not bring your badge to the appointment the compliance check will be cancelled, and you will lose the fee for that booking.

Sandy Park runs a non-recording of person policy, as such you must not to record the tester whilst you are waiting unless the tester was asked and given permission to do so.

Licensing in Bristol and South Gloucestershire

Who should you be licensed by and why?

The purpose of this message is to ensure that drivers and potential new taxi driver applicants fully understand the consistent high standards for taxi/private hire licences that are operated by both South Gloucestershire and Bristol City licensing authorities.

Both authorities' primary purpose for issuing licences is safety of the travelling public. With this in mind work has been undertaken over a number of years to ensure a broadly consistent approach in terms of conditions of licensing.

Whilst there are still some differences, officers are continuing to work to harmonise conditions where appropriate, allowing for the geographical and demographic differences.

A comparison of the licensing conditions and fees for South Gloucestershire and Bristol City licensing authorities for obtaining a range of taxi/private hire licences has been undertaken, that show it is more expensive to obtain vehicle and driver licences with South Gloucestershire.

The overall view was that both authorities operate to a high standard and many conditions were similar, particularly in relation to the convictions policies. There only a few largely small policy differences as follows:

- **Age of vehicles at first licensing** – Bristol City has a 3-year 6-month limit for the age of private hire vehicles at first licensing: South Gloucestershire having a 5-year age limit.
- **Interim testing frequencies** – Bristol City require 6 monthly vehicle inspections after 8 years: South Gloucestershire require 6 monthly inspections after 3 years
- **Pre application testing for new drivers** – Both authorities operate rigorous pre application procedures including requirements for Enhanced criminal checks, Group 2 driver medicals DVLA checks as a minimum. As part of any application additional testing to ensure all applicants are capable of carrying out their duties as a licensed driver are undertaken.



Acceptance of vehicles that have been declared a “write off” South Gloucestershire will not licence a vehicle that has been declared a write off for insurance purposes i.e. Cat A,B,S,N. It is possible subject to stringent conditions to licence certain vehicles with BCC.

- **Tinted windows condition** – South Gloucestershire currently do not permit any tinted windows other than provided by original manufacturer, Bristol City Council is currently reviewing this as a public safety matter
- **Time allowed to change EU driving licence to a UK licence** – Bristol City allow up to 3 years or next renewal: South Gloucestershire allow 3 months.
- **Licence renewals** – Both authorities encourage applicants to submit their renewals in good time, South Gloucestershire has now stopped accepting late applications for renewal of licence. All applications must be submitted in full prior to the licence expiry, or they will be considered as a new application and must meet all conditions and ore application requirements for new applicants.

Whist, individual applicants can submit an application to any local (licensing) authority in the UK. The licensing conditions that operate in South Gloucestershire and Bristol City licensing authorities are of a consistently high standard to ensure public safety.

The current position of private hire vehicles licensed by other authorities working within Bristol City is one that is permitted under current legislation and at present neither authority is aware of any Government plans to amend this. Bristol City Council and South Gloucestershire will therefore endeavour to ensure that the standards adopted for both new and existing drivers will be where possible harmonised and enforced to ensure protection of the travelling public as a whole.

Licence fees

The Private Hire and Hackney Carriage application and renewal fees increased in April 2024. Our website has been updated with the new fees on the relevant pages.

Video guides

Following on from feedback from the trade we have developed video guides which detail how to complete a [DVLA mandate](#), completing a [medical](#), and applying for a [DBS check](#).

Licence lengths

When you apply for a licence, you can select the length of the licence you wish to apply for.

If you have a DVLA mandate due on renewal you will only be able to apply for a one-year licence. If you wish to apply for a longer licence you may submit a new DVLA Mandate via a contact form when you receive your reminder letter three months before your licence expires. We can update our records so you can apply for a two- or three-year licence depending on when any other check is due. Medicals cannot be done early.

DBS

All licensed drivers are required to sign up to, and maintain a subscription to, the DBS Update Service at all times that they hold a Hackney Carriage or Private hire Driver's Licence and retain the DBS Certificate used to sign up to the DBS Update Service.

If you have already signed up to the DBS Update Service, we need to make sure we have seen a copy of the certificate you used when signing up. To do this we will ask you to provide us with a photo of the front and back of the DBS Certificate you used to sign up to the Update Service on your next renewal, along with an Update Service Authorisation from which you can find on our [website](#). This gives us permission to check your DBS status.

If you haven't signed up to the Update Service, you'll need a new DBS check. You'll need to contact us so we can complete a new DBS check with you. You'll then need to sign up to the DBS Update Service within 30 days of the certificate being issued. If you do not sign up in this time frame you will be required to complete another DBS Check.

If you have not signed up to the DBS Update Service, we won't be able to renew your licence until you have.

All vehicle proprietors must provide a basic DBS on application, this must be less than three months old. If the vehicle proprietor is also a licensed driver, we do not need a basic DBS and instead can accept your subscription to the DBS Update Service. If a proprietor is not a licensed driver, we can only accept a basic DBS, we cannot accept a standard or enhanced DBS. If a proprietor has multiple vehicles, we only need a DBS annually, but that DBS must be provided for each licence application.

Using different names

You must use your full legal name on all applications, if you have any aliases these must be declared on application, and on your DBS.

This includes shortening of names where it has been used in a legal capacity. Any documents you provide, such as your passport and vehicle insurance should match your legal name.



Safeguarding

Most drivers have now attended and passed the safeguarding training. Anyone who hasn't attended or has not passed will need to complete and pass a training session prior to the renewal of their licence.

If you have not passed the safeguarding training, we are unable to renew your licence. We will update the [website Safeguarding training for taxi drivers](#) with future dates.



Vehicle plates

The below video details how to attach your vehicle licence plate to your vehicle.

- [>Bracket for licence plate](#)

Any vehicle renewals issued after May 2023 have been issued with front and side plates with no expiry date, this means that any vehicle licences issued after May 2024 will only receive a new rear plate, you must keep the front and internal plates for as long as the vehicle is licensed by us.

- [>Watch video](#)



No-Drill Bracket
Fitting Guide

