East Cambridgeshire District Council

Taxi and Private Hire Licensing
Inclusive Service Plan



Licensing Team
East Cambridgeshire District Council

Effective: TBC

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East Cambridgeshire District Council
Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Inclusive Service Plan

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1. Introduction

East Cambridgeshire District Council recognises the important role that hackney carriage and private hire vehicles play in providing accessible transport for residents and visitors.

Taxi and private hire services are often relied upon by disabled persons, older people, individuals with temporary mobility impairments, those living in rural communities and those who may be unable to access conventional public transport services.

The Department for Transport's Best Practice Guidance for Licensing Authorities encourages licensing authorities to develop an Inclusive Service Plan to identify barriers to access and set out measures designed to support a safe, accessible and inclusive transport service for all passengers.
This Inclusive Service Plan supports the Council's Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy and demonstrates the Council's commitment to:

- Promoting equality of opportunity.
- Improving accessibility.
- Eliminating discrimination.
- Supporting independent travel.
- Working collaboratively with the licensed trade and local communities.

This Plan should be read alongside the Council's Hackney Carriage and Private Hire licensing policy, Equality, diversity and inclusion policy and the Corporate Plan.

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2. Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of this Inclusive Service Plan is to:

- Identify barriers that may prevent individuals from accessing taxi and private hire services.
- Promote accessible transport services across the district.
- Establish clear expectations of drivers, operators and vehicle proprietors.
- Encourage best practice throughout the licensed trade.
- Support compliance with relevant legislation.
- Monitor and improve service provision over time.

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3. Legislative and Policy Context

This Plan has been prepared having regard to:

- Equality Act 2010.
- Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976.
- Town Police Clauses Act 1847.
- Department for Transport Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards.

- Department for Transport Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing Best Practice Guidance for Licensing Authorities in England.
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The Council also has duties under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to:

- Eliminating discrimination.
- Advancing equality of opportunity.
- Fostering good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

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4. Our Vision

To ensure that all passengers, regardless of age, disability, medical condition, communication needs, sensory impairment, mobility needs or personal circumstances, can access safe, reliable and respectful licensed transport services within East Cambridgeshire.

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5. Understanding Accessibility

The Council recognises that accessibility extends beyond wheelchair provision and includes a wide range of physical, sensory, cognitive and communication needs. Passengers may experience barriers due to:

Physical Disabilities

- Wheelchair use.
- Reduced mobility.
- Arthritis.
- Injuries.
- Use of walking aids.

Sensory Disabilities

- Blindness.
- Visual impairment.
- Deafness.
- Hearing impairment.

Hidden Disabilities

- Autism spectrum disorders.
- Learning disabilities.
- Dementia.
- Mental health conditions.
- Neurological disorders.

Temporary Conditions

- Short-term injury.
- Recovery following surgery.
- Pregnancy-related mobility limitations.

Other Accessibility Needs

- Assistance dogs.

- Language barriers.
- Anxiety relating to travel.
- Additional support requirements.

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6. Accessibility Challenges

The Council recognises that a range of barriers may be experienced by passengers.

Physical Barriers

Examples include:

- Limited availability of wheelchair accessible vehicles.
- Difficulties loading mobility equipment.
- Inadequate space for wheelchairs.
- Insufficient assistance at the start or end of journeys.

Communication Barriers

Examples include:

- Difficulty communicating with drivers.
- Limited awareness of hearing or visual impairments.
- Lack of accessible booking methods.

Confidence Barriers

Examples include:

- Fear of being refused service.
- Previous negative experiences.
- Concerns regarding safety or dignity.

Information Barriers

Examples include:

- Lack of information regarding accessible vehicles.
- Lack of awareness of passenger rights.
- Difficulty identifying suitable services.

These barriers have been recognised within the Department for Transport's Best Practice Guidance.

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7. Strategic Objectives

The Council has adopted five strategic objectives.

Objective 1

Promote Accessible Transport Services

The Council will seek to encourage an appropriate level of accessible transport provision across the district.

Actions include:

- Monitoring the number of wheelchair accessible vehicles.
- Reviewing accessibility provision annually.
- Engaging with the licensed trade regarding accessibility needs.
- Considering accessibility when reviewing licensing policies.

Objective 2
Improve Awareness and Understanding
The Council will seek to ensure that licence holders understand the needs of diverse passenger groups.
Actions include:

- Promoting disability awareness training.
- Providing guidance to licence holders.
- Sharing best practice information.
- Encouraging a customer-focused culture within the licensed trade.

Objective 3
Promote Equality and Dignity
The Council will work to ensure that passengers are treated fairly and respectfully.
Actions include:

- Investigating complaints of discrimination.
- Taking enforcement action where appropriate.
- Promoting awareness of Equality Act duties.
- Encouraging professional standards of conduct.

Objective 4
Improve Communication and Information
The Council will seek to improve awareness of services and passenger rights.
Actions include:

- Publishing relevant information on the Council website.
- Maintaining information regarding wheelchair accessible vehicles.
- Promoting awareness of assistance dog requirements.
- Providing clear information regarding complaint procedures.

Objective 5
Continual Improvement
The Council will monitor performance and seek opportunities to improve accessibility across the licensed trade.
Actions include:

- Collecting and analysing complaints data.
- Reviewing accessibility-related issues.
- Engaging with representative groups.
- Reviewing this Plan on a regular basis.

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8. Expectations of Drivers

Drivers licensed by the Council are expected to:

- Read and observe the licence holder's "Code of Good Conduct" in the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire licensing policy
- Treat all passengers fairly and with respect.
- Provide reasonable assistance where required.
- Comply with all Equality Act duties.
- Carry assistance dogs, except where a lawful exemption exists.
- Assist wheelchair users, except where a lawful exemption exists.
- Maintain professional standards at all times.

- Demonstrate patience and understanding when dealing with vulnerable passengers.
- Take account of individual communication needs.
- Charge the same fare regardless of disability or accessibility needs.

The Council expects drivers to recognise that accessibility requirements vary significantly between individuals and that a flexible, respectful approach is essential.

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9. Expectations of Proprietors

Vehicle proprietors are expected to:

- Read and observe the licence holder's "Code of Good Conduct" in the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire licensing policy
- Maintain vehicles in a safe condition.
- Ensure accessibility equipment is maintained.
- Ensure ramps, restraints and associated equipment are fully operational.
- Address any accessibility-related defects promptly.
- Notify the Council of significant changes affecting vehicle accessibility.

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10. Expectations of Operators

Private hire operators play a significant role in ensuring accessibility.
Operators are expected to:

- Read and observe the licence holder's "Code of Good Conduct" in the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire licensing policy
- Accept bookings without discrimination.
- Make reasonable adjustments where appropriate.
- Accurately record accessibility requirements.
- Communicate relevant information to drivers.
- Promote accessible booking methods.
- Maintain awareness of accessible vehicle provision.

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11. Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles

The Council recognises the importance of wheelchair accessible vehicles in supporting independent travel.
The Council will:

- Maintain and publish a designated wheelchair accessible vehicle list, as required by legislation.
- Monitor availability of wheelchair accessible vehicles.
- Encourage proprietors to consider accessible vehicle options when replacing vehicles.
- Keep local provision under review.

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12. Assistance Dogs

The Council supports the rights of assistance dog users.
Licensed drivers are reminded that:

- Assistance dogs must be carried unless an exemption certificate has been issued in accordance with legislation.
- No additional charge may be imposed.
- Assistance dogs must be accommodated safely and appropriately.

Complaints relating to unlawful refusals will be investigated and may result in significant enforcement action being taken against any licensed party involved.

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13. Complaints and Enforcement

The Council takes accessibility issues seriously. Accessibility-related complaints may include:

- Refusal of service.
- Refusal to carry an assistance dog.
- Refusal to carry a wheelchair user.
- Discriminatory conduct.
- Inappropriate behaviour.
- Failure to provide reasonable assistance.

The Council will investigate complaints proportionately and take appropriate action where necessary.

Possible outcomes may include:

- Advice and guidance.
- Formal warnings.
- Additional training recommendations.
- Review by Licensing Manager or Licensing Sub-Committee.
- Suspension or revocation proceedings where appropriate.

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14. Engagement and Consultation

The Council acknowledges the value of engaging with:

- Disabled residents.
- Older persons' groups.
- Equality organisations.
- Community groups.
- The licensed trade.
- Service users.

Feedback received will assist the Council in identifying emerging issues and opportunities for improvement.

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15. Monitoring and Performance Measures

The Council will monitor:

Measure	Reporting Frequency
Number of licensed wheelchair accessible vehicles	Annual
Accessibility-related complaints	Annual
Equality Act related complaints	Annual
Enforcement action relating to accessibility	Annual
Accessibility improvements implemented	Annual
Review of stakeholder feedback	Annual

An annual review of performance will be undertaken as part of the Licensing Authority's service planning process.

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16. Review of the Plan

This Inclusive Service Plan will normally be reviewed every five years or sooner where:

- There are significant legislative changes.
- National guidance is revised.
- Local circumstances materially change.
- The Council identifies a need for earlier review.

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17. Equality Statement

East Cambridgeshire District Council is committed to ensuring that taxi and private hire services are available to all members of the community in a manner that is safe, fair, inclusive and respectful.

The Council will continue to work with licence holders, service users and stakeholders to improve accessibility and remove barriers wherever reasonably practicable.
