

Taxi Licensing in St. Helens

Convictions Policy

This policy has been produced in accordance with the Town Police Clauses Act 1847 and the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 (as amended). The purpose of this policy is to explain how the Council will carry out its licensing functions in relation to applications or renewals for Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Driver Licences in circumstances where the applicant/existing driver has criminal or other relevant convictions/offences (including motoring offences).

Decision making

The powers of the Council will be exercised in accordance with the Council's Constitution. Each application for a licence will be considered on their merits, and the Council will provide reasons for all decisions made when an application is refused.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Licences for drivers of hackney carriages / private hire vehicles may only be granted/renewed where the Council is satisfied that the applicant is a fit and proper person to hold such a licence.
- 1.2 This document is intended to give guidance on one aspect of whether a person is or is not a fit and proper person namely the situation where a person has committed a criminal offence.
- 1.3 This document aims to provide guidance to any person with an interest in public hire and private hire licensing. In particular, but not exclusively:
 - Applicants/Renewals for Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Driver Licences
 - Licensing or Authorised Officers
 - Members of the Licensing and Environmental Protection Committee
 - Magistrates hearing appeals against local authority decisions
- 1.4 This guidance will be used for the determination of applications or renewals in relation to Hackney Carriage Drivers / Private Hire Drivers.
- 1.5 Where Licensing Officers have delegated powers to grant licences they will utilise these guidelines when making a decision to grant a licence. In all other cases applications for licences will be referred to the Licensing and Environmental Protection Committee ('the Committee'). Whilst Officers and the Committee will have regard to the guidelines contained in the policy, each case will be considered on its individual merits and, where the circumstances demand, the Committee may depart from the guidelines. Offences not specifically identified in these guidelines may also be considered depending on the circumstances.
- 1.6 In exercising its powers the Council must ensure:
 - That a person is a fit and proper person.
 - That a person does not pose a threat to the public.
 - That the public are safeguarded from dishonest persons.
 - The safeguarding of children, young and vulnerable persons.

2 DISCLOSURE AND BARRING SERVICE (DBS) CRIMINAL RECORD CHECK

- 2.1 The Council can consider all convictions, including spent convictions as appropriate, in accordance with the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) (Amendment) Order 2002.
- 2.2 The information given will be treated in confidence and will only be taken into account in relation to the relevant application to assist the Council in determining whether the applicant is a fit and proper person to hold a Driver Licence for the purposes of sections 51 and 59 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976.
- 2.3 Information received from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) will be kept in strict confidence while the licensing process takes its course and will be retained no longer than is necessary and in any event will be destroyed in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 and in accordance with good practice after the application is determined or any appeal against such determination is decided.

- 2.4 The disclosure of a criminal record or other information relating to criminal matters will not necessarily debar an applicant from obtaining or renewing a Driver Licence. The Council will however consider all information on an enhanced DBS and will take a serious view of any special Police warnings contained therein. Whether or not an applicant will be granted a licence will depend upon whether or not they can satisfy the Council that they are a fit and proper person to hold such a licence.
- 2.5 The Council may not be satisfied that an applicant is a fit and proper person to hold a Driver Licence for any good reason. If adequate evidence that a person is a fit and proper person is not produced or if there is good reason to question or doubt the evidence provided, then that could amount to good reason to refuse a licence.
- 2.6 In considering evidence of an applicant's good character and fitness to hold a Driver Licence, where previous offences or other information relating to criminal matters is disclosed, the Council will consider the nature of the offence or incident, the date of offence or incident, the applicant's age when the offence was committed, the penalty imposed and any other factors which might be relevant.

3 FAILURE TO DISCLOSE A CONVICTION

- 3.1 When completing an application form for a Hackney Carriage / Private Hire Driver Licence it is an absolute requirement:
- To disclose **ALL** offences, including driving offences and all spent convictions, cautions, Police warnings, reprimands, notice of intended prosecutions, speed awareness courses and fixed penalties in the relevant box on the application form.
 - To inform the Council if you are under investigation in respect of any criminal offence, if you are on police bail pending the outcome of a police investigation or whether any criminal proceedings in the Magistrates, Crown Court or other Tribunal/Court have been commenced against you.
 - To inform the Council if you have had any anti-social behaviour orders (or other orders/injunctions made by a court) issued against you, including details of any sentences upon breach relating to anti-social behaviour.
- 3.2 Failure to fully disclose any of these matters may lead to an application being refused.
- 3.3 The Council has a responsibility to protect the public and, in this regard, may use information provided to prevent and detect fraud, to enforce legislation and to comply with statutory obligations, and may share the information, for the same purposes, with other organisations.

4 LICENSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION COMMITTEE

- 4.1 In circumstances where an applicant has convictions which are outside of the timeframes referred to in this guidance and/or if there are any concerns about an applicant being 'fit and proper', the application will be referred to the Committee who will consider the application. Applicants will be advised of the procedure which will enable their attendance before the Committee and they will be able to attend the Committee to present their case. Any person refused a licence has a right of appeal to the Magistrates Court against the Council's decision within 21 days of being notified of the Council's decision.

- 4.2 Each applicant referred to the Committee will be considered on their individual merits. In those circumstances the Committee will decide whether the applicant is a fit and proper person to hold a licence. In certain cases, the Committee may consider it appropriate to grant a licence before the relevant period has elapsed, for instance where an offence is isolated and the circumstances of its commission are such that the Committee consider it is not relevant to the applicant's suitability as a Private Hire/Hackney Carriage Driver. Alternatively, the Committee may consider that, notwithstanding the applicant being free of offences for the relevant period, it would not be appropriate to grant a licence.
- 4.3 The overriding consideration of the Committee will always be to protect the public. Applicants/Persons should be aware that the grant of a licence places a **significant responsibility on the holder** which by the nature of close contact with members of the public requires the holder to be a person proven to be capable of fulfilling the trust placed in them by the hirers of vehicles
- 4.4. Being a licensed Hackney Carriage / Private Hire Driver is a **responsible position** and the Committee takes its public protection role very seriously. The Committee will only issue a licence if satisfied that a person is 'fit and proper'. If in doubt then a licence will not be issued.
- 4.5 The Committee can consider all offences, including spent convictions, speed awareness courses and will also take in to consideration cautions, police warnings and reprimands, fixed penalties and any anti-social order (or other order) issued by a court, plus any previously undeclared offences. The Committee will also consider factors such as whether someone is on police bail pending the outcome of an investigation or whether any criminal proceedings in a court have commenced.
- 4.6 Whilst an applicant/person may have a number of offences that, individually, meet the Council's policy guidelines, the overall offending history will be considered when assessing suitability for a licence. The Committee may depart from these guidelines at its discretion subject to the circumstances. The policy guidelines provide a general guide to new applicants or renewal applications on various types of offences.

5 GUIDELINES ON THE RELEVANCE OF PREVIOUS CONVICTIONS

- 5.1 The Council has adopted the following guidelines relating to the relevance of convictions to which it refers in determining applications/renewals for Driver Licences.
- 5.2 The guidelines do not deal with every type of offence, and do not prevent the Council from taking into account offences not specifically addressed in the guidelines, or other conduct, which may be relevant to an individual's application.
- 5.3 If an applicant has a conviction for an offence not covered by the guidelines, regard will be had to the nature of the offence or incident, the date of offence or incident, the applicant's age when the offence or incident was committed, the penalty imposed and any other factors which might be relevant when deciding whether to grant an application. Offences described in the guidelines and similar offences, though differently entitled in any statutory provision, modification or re-enactment, will be taken into account in accordance with the guidelines.
- 5.4 An applicant with a current criminal conviction will not be permanently barred from obtaining a licence, but an applicant will generally be expected to be free from convictions for a number of years, depending on the nature of their particular offences, before a licence will be issued. Each case will be decided on its own merits.

- 5.5 Multiple offences or a series of offences over a period of time are likely to give greater cause for concern and may demonstrate a pattern of behaviour, which may be taken into account despite being outside the timeframes referred to in these guidelines. Such cases will generally be referred to the Committee for determination.
- 5.6 For the purpose of clarity, the timeframes referred to in these guidelines start from the date of the offence/incident, the date of conviction (or speed awareness course) or the end of the term of imprisonment (meaning the date the offender would have been released from custody had they served the full term of imprisonment imposed by the Court whether or not the term of imprisonment was suspended), whichever is later.

6 SEXUAL AND INDECENCY OFFENCES

- 6.1 Licensed drivers often carry unaccompanied and vulnerable passengers and young people. Applicants/Renewals who have committed an offence at any time for indecent exposure, indecent or sexual assault, importuning, rape or any sexual offence, will generally not be granted a Hackney Carriage or Private Hire Driver Licence. Existing drivers are likely to be referred to the Licensing and Environmental Protection Committee for consideration of action against their licence or their renewal application.

7 VIOLENT OFFENCES

- 7.1 Licensed drivers have close regular contact with the public and for that reason, violent offences are viewed very seriously. An application or renewal or incident during the issue of the licence will generally be refused if an applicant has a conviction for an offence that involved significant harm or loss of life or an act of terrorism. If an applicant has committed more than one violent offence then it is likely that the application will be refused. An applicant who has committed a violent offence will generally not be considered for licence until a period of at least five years has passed since either the offence or the date of conviction or, if a term of imprisonment was imposed, ten years free of convictions from the end of the term of imprisonment (meaning the date the offender would have been released from custody had they served the full term of imprisonment imposed by the Court) whichever is later. Given the range of offences that involve violence the Council will carefully consider the nature of the offence and the sentence imposed when determining an application.

Offences involving violence include:

- Assault occasioning actual bodily harm
- Assault on police
- Assault with intent to rob
- Battery
- Robbery
- Violent disorder
- Grievous Bodily Harm
- Common assault
- Wounding
- Wounding with intent
- Arson
- Riot

8 POSSESSION OF AN OFFENSIVE WEAPON

- 8.1 An applicant with such an offence on their record will, depending on the circumstances of the offence, generally be precluded from obtaining a licence for a period of at least 5 years after either the offence, the date of conviction or the end of the term of imprisonment (meaning the date the offender would have been released from custody had they served the full term of

imprisonment imposed by the Court), whichever is later. An applicant who has committed an offence relating to a firearm will generally be refused.

9 PUBLIC ORDER OFFENCES

9.1 Applicants/ renewals who have committed public order offences will generally be refused a licence for a period of 3 years from the date of the offence, the date of conviction or the end of the term of imprisonment (meaning the date the offender would have been released from custody had they served the full term of imprisonment imposed by the Court), whichever is later. An applicant with more than one such offence in the previous 10 years will be expected to show a period of at least 5 years free of such offences from either the offence, the date of conviction or the end of a term of imprisonment (meaning the date the offender would have been released from custody had they served the full term of imprisonment imposed by the Court), whichever is later. A licence holder who commits such an offence in the duration of their licence is likely to be referred to the Licensing and Environmental Protection Committee for consideration of action against their existing licence.

Public order offences include:

- Affray
- Criminal damage
- Using threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour
- Drunk and disorderly
- Disorderly behaviour
- Causing harassment, alarm or distress

10 DRUG OFFENCES

10.1 A serious view is taken of any drug related offence, in particular offences involving possession with intent to supply.

10.2 Where an applicant/renewal has committed an offence relating to the supply of drugs or for the production or cultivation of drugs the application will generally be refused for a period of at least 10 years from either the offence, the date of conviction or the end of a term of imprisonment (meaning the date the offender would have been released from custody had they served the full term of imprisonment imposed by the Court), whichever is later. A licence holder who commits such an offence in the duration of their licence is likely to be referred to the Licensing and Environmental Protection Committee for consideration of action against their existing licence.

10.3 Where an applicant/renewal has committed an offence relating to the possession of drugs the application will generally be refused for a period of at least 5 years from either the offence, the date of conviction or the end of a term of imprisonment (meaning the date the offender would have been released from custody had they served the full term of imprisonment imposed by the Court), whichever is later. A licence holder who commits such an offence in the duration of their licence is likely to be referred to the Licensing and Environmental Protection Committee for consideration of action against their existing licence.

10.4 If there is evidence of persistent drug use or dependency a specialist medical examination or a drugs test may be required at the applicant's expense. If an applicant/renewal was an addict then they would generally be required to show evidence of seven years free from drug taking after detoxification treatment. A licence holder who commits such an offence in the duration of their licence is likely to be referred to the Licensing and Environmental Protection Committee for consideration of action against their existing licence.

11 DISHONESTY OFFENCES

11.1 Licensed drivers are expected to be honest and trustworthy. Drivers deal with cash transactions and valuable property may be left in their vehicles. Drivers often deliver unaccompanied property which indicates the level of trust that is placed in licensed drivers. Drivers must not defraud the public by demanding more than the legal fare. For all these reasons, a serious view is taken of any offence involving dishonesty. An applicant/renewal with a dishonesty offence will generally be refused a licence for a period of at least five years since either the offence, the date of conviction or the end of the term of imprisonment (meaning the date the offender would have been released from custody had they served the full term of imprisonment imposed by the Court) whichever is later. Offences involving dishonesty include:

- Theft
- Fraud
- handling or receiving stolen goods
- conspiracy to defraud
- taking a vehicle without consent
- Burglary
- benefit fraud
- forgery
- obtaining money or property by deception

An applicant who has committed the offence of perverting the course of justice will generally be refused a licence for a period of five years. A licence holder who commits such an offence in the duration of their licence is likely to be referred to the Licensing and Environmental Protection Committee for consideration of action against their existing licence.

12 RACIALLY AGGRAVATED OFFENCES

12.1 Applicants/renewals who have committed racially aggravated offences will generally be refused a licence for a period of at least 5 years from either the offence, the date of conviction or the end of a term of imprisonment (meaning the date the offender would have been released from custody had they served the full term of imprisonment imposed by the Court), whichever is later. Offences involving racial aggravation include:

- Racially-aggravated criminal damage (s.30 Crime and Disorder Act 1998)
- Racially-aggravated s.4 Public Order Act 1986 offence (fear of provocation of violence) (s.31(1)(a) Crime and Disorder Act 1998)
- Racially-aggravated s.4A Public Order Act 1986 offence (intentional harassment, alarm or distress (s.31(1)(b) Crime and Disorder Act 1998)
- Racially-aggravated s.5 Public Order Act 1986 offence (harassment, alarm or distress) (s.31(1)(c) Crime and Disorder Act 1998)
- Racially-aggravated s.2 Protection from Harassment Act 1997 offence (harassment) (s.32(1)(a) Crime and Disorder Act 1998)
- Racially-aggravated s.4 Protection from Harassment Act 1997 offence (putting people in fear of violence) (s.32(1)(b) Crime and Disorder Act 1998)

A licence holder who commits such an offence in the duration of their licence is likely to be referred to the Licensing and Environmental Protection Committee for consideration of action against their existing licence.

13 HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE LICENSING OFFENCES

- 13.1 A serious view will be taken of any offences committed by an applicant/renewal who has previously been licensed while working as a Hackney Carriage or Private Hire Driver, Proprietor or Operator.

14 MOTORING OFFENCES

- 14.1 An applicant's/drivers driving record will be taken into account and the Council will consider the nature and number of motoring offences when considering applications. A poor record of driving will raise concerns about an applicant's fitness to hold a licence and may indicate disregard for the law and in particular, motoring offences and including attendance at Speed Awareness Courses. The Council has put motoring offences into four categories ranging from extremely serious offences (category A) to less serious miscellaneous offences (category D). The Council will use its discretion when considering the seriousness of motoring offences. A list of motoring offences together with their likely category is attached at Appendix 1.
- 14.2 Any person that is an existing licence holder with 6 penalty points on their DVLA driving record will receive a letter of warning, new applicants will be referred to the Committee. Any person with more than 6 penalty points on their DVLA driving record will be referred to the Committee.
- 14.3 When considering motoring offences the Council will consider the nature and seriousness of the offence(s) and will have regard to the following:

14.4 CATEGORY A TRAFFIC OFFENCES - DRIVING OFFENCES INVOLVING LOSS OF LIFE

An extremely serious view is taken of a driving offence resulting in the loss of life. Such offences include causing death by dangerous driving, causing death by careless driving whilst under the influence of drink or drugs, or other similar offences. In such circumstances an application will generally be refused.

14.5 CATEGORY B TRAFFIC OFFENCES - DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF ALCOHOL OR DRUGS

A serious view is taken of any motoring offence for driving, attempting to drive, being in charge of a motor vehicle whilst under the influence of alcohol or drugs, and failure to supply a specimen. A person who has been disqualified from driving as a result of such an offence is likely to be refused a licence for a period of at least two years after the restoration of their DVLA driving licence. More than one offence of this type will generally preclude a person from being licensed.

14.6 CATEGORY C TRAFFIC OFFENCES - OTHER SERIOUS OFFENCES

Generally, the Council class a serious traffic offence when six or more penalty points have been imposed on a DVLA driving licence in respect of any single offence. However, some offences where less than six penalty points are imposed may, subject to the circumstances, be classed as a serious offence. Offences leading to a driving disqualification (except those offences falling within categories A and B) will be treated as a serious offence. Subject to the circumstances an applicant will generally be refused a licence for a period of at least two years after the most recent conviction, or two years after restoration of the DVLA driving

licence in the event of a disqualification. Types of offences classed as a serious offence include driving without insurance, dangerous driving, failure to stop after an accident and a driving disqualification under the 'totting up' procedure.

14.7 CATEGORY D TRAFFIC OFFENCES - MISCELLANEOUS OFFENCES

Generally individual traffic offences where less than six penalty points are imposed on a DVLA driving licence will not prevent a person from being issued a licence. A person with more than 6 'live' penalty points for such offences must generally show a period of 12 months free from conviction. A 'totting up' conviction following a number of separate offences will be considered as a serious offence.

- 14.8 Speed Awareness Courses. All offers and attendance at Speed Awareness Courses taken in lieu of intended prosecution **MUST** be declare on your application either for new or renewal of licences.
- 14.9 All new applicants or existing licence holders are reminded that you should report these and any other incidents or offences during the course of your licence as required under the reporting of the '7 Day Rule' and the 'Notification of Offences form'.

MOTORING OFFENCES

Code	Offence	Penalty points	Council category
Accident offences			
AC10	Failing to stop after an accident	5 to 10	C
AC20	Failing to give particulars or to report an accident within 24 hours	5 to 10	C
AC30	Undefined accident offences	4 to 9	C
Disqualified driver offences			
BA10	Driving while disqualified by order of court	6	C
BA30	Attempting to drive while disqualified by order of court	6	C
Careless driving offences			
CD10	Driving without due care and attention	3 to 9	C or D*
CD20	Driving without reasonable consideration for other road users	3 to 9	C or D*
CD30	Driving without due care and attention or without reasonable consideration for other road users	3 to 9	C or D*
CD40	Causing death through careless driving when unfit through drink	3 to 11	A
CD50	Causing death by careless driving when unfit through drugs	3 to 11	A
CD60	Causing death by careless driving with alcohol level above the limit	3 to 11	A
CD70	Causing death by careless driving then failing to supply a specimen for analysis	3 to 11	A

Construction and use offences

CU10	Using a vehicle with defective brakes	3	D
CU20	Causing or likely to cause danger by reason of use of unsuitable vehicle or using a vehicle with parts or accessories (excluding brakes, steering or tyres) in a dangerous condition	3	D
CU30	Using a vehicle with defective tyre(s)	3	D
CU40	Using a vehicle with defective steering	3	D
CU50	Causing or likely to cause danger by reason of load or passengers	3	D
CU80	Using a mobile phone while driving a motor vehicle	3	D

Reckless and dangerous driving offences

DD40	Dangerous driving	3 to 11	B
DD60	Manslaughter or culpable homicide while driving a vehicle	3 to 11	A
DD80	Causing death by dangerous driving	3 to 11	A
DD90	Furious driving	3 to 9	C

Drink or drugs' offences

DR10	Driving or attempting to drive with alcohol level above limit		B
DR20	Driving or attempting to drive while unfit through drink		B
DR30	Driving or attempting to drive then failing to supply a specimen for analysis		B
DR40	In charge of a vehicle while alcohol level above limit		B
DR50	In charge of a vehicle while unfit through drink		B
DR60	Failure to provide a specimen for analysis in circumstances other than driving or attempting to drive		B

DR70	Failing to provide specimen for breath test		B
DR80	Driving or attempting to drive when unfit through drugs		B
DR90	In charge of a vehicle when unfit through drugs		B

Insurance offences

IN10	Using a vehicle uninsured against third party risks	6 to 8	C
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Licence offences

LC20	Driving otherwise than in accordance with a licence	3 to 6	C or D*
LC30	Driving after making a false declaration about fitness when applying for a licence	3 to 6	C or D*
LC40	Driving a vehicle having failed to notify a disability	3 to 6	C or D*
LC50	Driving after a licence has been revoked or refused on medical grounds	3 to 6	C or D*

Miscellaneous offences

MS10	Leaving a vehicle in a dangerous position	3	D
MS20	Unlawful pillion riding	3	D
MS30	Play street offences	2	D
MS50	Motor racing on the highway	3 to 11	C or D*
MS60	Offences not covered by other codes	Various	As appropriate*
MS70	Driving with uncorrected defective eyesight	3	D
MS80	Refusing to submit to an eyesight test	3	D
MS90	Failure to give information as to identity of driver etc	6	C

Motorway offence

MW10	Contravention of special roads regulations (excluding speed limits)	3	D
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Pedestrian crossings' offences

PC10	Undefined contravention of pedestrian crossing regulations	3	D
PC20	Contravention of pedestrian crossing regulations with moving vehicle	3	D
PC30	Contravention of pedestrian crossing regulations with stationary vehicle	3	D

Speed limit offences

SP10	Exceeding goods vehicle speed limits	3 to 6	D
SP20	Exceeding speed limit for type of vehicle (excluding goods or passenger vehicles)	3 to 6	D
SP30	Exceeding statutory speed limit on a public road	3 to 6	D
SP40	Exceeding passenger vehicle speed limit	3 to 6	D
SP50	Exceeding speed limit on a motorway	3 to 6	D

Traffic direction and signs

TS10	Failing to comply with traffic light signals	3	D
TS20	Failing to comply with double white lines	3	D
TS30	Failing to comply with 'Stop' sign	3	D
TS40	Failing to comply with direction of a constable/warden	3	D
TS50	Failing to comply with traffic sign (excluding 'stop' signs, traffic lights or double white lines)	3	D
TS60	Failing to comply with a school crossing patrol sign	3	D
TS70	Undefined failure to comply with a traffic direction sign	3	D

Special code – ‘totting up’

TT99	To signify a disqualification under 'totting-up' procedure. If the total of penalty points reaches 12 or more within three years, the driver is liable to be disqualified
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Theft or unauthorised taking

UT50	Aggravated taking of a vehicle	3-11	C
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Aiding, abetting, counselling or procuring

Offences as coded, but with 0 changed to 2, for example LC10 becomes LC12.

Causing or permitting

Offences as coded, but with 0 changed to, for example LC10 becomes LC14.

Inciting

Offences as coded, but with the end 0 changed to 6, for example DD40 becomes DD46.

Offences remain on a DVLA driving licence for the following periods of time:

CD40, CD50, CD60, CD70, DR10, DR20, DR30 and DR80 - 11 years from date of conviction;

DD40, DD60, DD80 and offences resulting in disqualification - 4 years from date of conviction;

All other offences remain on the licence for 4 years from date of offence.

Source: www.direct.gov.uk