

**CHANGE TO HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE LICENSING POLICY –
ENGLISH LANGUAGE COMPETENCY**

REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, NEIGHBOURHOODS

1. Reason for report

The Licensing Authority recognises that to offer a reasonable standard of service and safety to the customer a basic knowledge of spoken English Language is required for all Taxi and Private Hire drivers licenced by Calderdale Council. This approach has been adopted by Neighbouring Authorities as an essential requirement. In January 2017 it was resolved by the Committee that the ESOL Entry Level 3 be adopted as part of all new driver applications.

2. Need for a Decision

The current policy relating to applications for Taxi and Private Hire driver licences does not allow those applicants with an English taught Level 1 or above qualification to satisfy the test for the agreed standard of English language.
Any changes to existing policy require Committee and Council approval.

3. Recommendation

It is recommended that members:

- 3.1. Note the Report
- 3.2. Resolve that Calderdale Council continues to request an ESOL Entry Level 3 English test for all Taxi and Private Hire driver new license applications as part of a consistent approach across West Yorkshire authorities but also to accept an English taught qualification of Level 1 or above.

4. Background

- 4.1. Currently all new applications to become a licensed Taxi and Private Hire driver in Calderdale require the applicant to complete the following tests:
 - Advanced Driving Taxi Test
 - DSA wheelchair test (if driving Hackney Carriage accessible vehicle)
 - Knowledge Test
 - Professional Standards Training
 - Pass an English Test at ESOL Entry 3

- 4.2. Professional Standards Training is in place to cover subjects like Child Sexual Exploitation, Drug and Alcohol Misuse, Antisocial behaviour, Hate Crime, Domestic Abuse and Personal Safety.
- 4.3. The Knowledge Test covers questions on the local area and how to get from A to B examples and the driver licence conditions.
- 4.4. Licensing Authorities recognise that to offer a reasonable standard of service and safety to the customer a basic knowledge of spoken English language is required. Neighbouring authorities have adopted this as an essential requirement. Wherever possible we are seeking to implement consistent service standards across the region.
- 4.5. A new duty was placed on all public authorities to ensure all workers can speak fluent English (or in Wales, fluent English or Welsh) within the Immigration Act 2016. Although this is not directed at our licensed drivers, it does suggest a direction for those carrying out services within and on behalf of the public sector.
- 4.6. To support this approach officers have required the ESOL Entry 3 as part of all new driver applications since 2018.
- 4.7. Since the implementation of the current policy and in part due to Covid restrictions it has been noted by officers and the sector that local providers of ESOL have not been able to keep pace with the numbers of applications to take the test. There has also been an anecdotal increase in the requests for exemptions from applicants with Level 2 qualifications and above looking to enter the sector. This is either as fulltime drivers or work alongside studies or supplementing other employment.
- 4.8. It is recognised that there are logistical issues for verifying qualifications with third party organisations, particularly when those qualifications are overseas. In cases where officers are unable to verify the qualification or through third party delay, an ESOL Entry Level 3 qualification can still be requested and provided.

5. Consultation

No consultation has been carried with respect to this proposed change.

6. Financial Implications

There are staff resource issues involved in the changes to any requirement but these can be managed through existing budgets and internal processes.

7. Corporate Implications

None that are apparent.

8. Conclusion

Members can;

- 8.1. Approve the proposed amendment to application procedures and continue to request an ESOL Entry Level 3 English test for all new license applications but also to accept English taught qualifications of Level 1 or above, or
- 8.2. Retain the current system

10. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Requirements of the ESOL Entry 3 English Test

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON THIS REPORT CONTACT:

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DOCUMENTS USED IN THE PREPARATION OF THE REPORT:

None

DOCUMENTS ARE AVAILABLE FOR INSPECTION AT:

Licensing Unit, Town Hall, Halifax. HX1 1UJ