

## **2D CUSTOMER CARE STANDARDS AND GENERAL INFORMATION**

As a joint hackney carriage and private hire driver you are providing a public service and there are service standards that must be maintained if the service provided is to meet the standards expected by East Cambridgeshire District Council.

In this section we will provide you with the information necessary for you to carry out your role as a licensed driver. The information provided includes:

- service provision and customer care
- attitude and awareness of disability issues
- tips on how to carry disabled passengers safely
- further information

Often hackney carriage and private hire vehicles are the only means of transport available to certain sections of the population such as disabled and elderly persons. Not only does the taxi trade offer the possibility of a door-to-door service but also acts as an accessible transport link that can be used to increase the accessibility of the transport network in general.

### **Service provision and customer care**

Passengers have varying expectations of the service and will make different demands of you as a driver. Customer service is an important part of the job and one which must be taken seriously.

As a licensed driver you are expected to assist your passengers to your utmost ability. The safety and well being of your passengers should be your main concern and you should take pride in your work and endeavour to make the journey as safe, comfortable and stress free as possible.

There are a number of steps which can be taken to ensure the safety of your passengers:

- Ask if the passenger needs any assistance before trying to help. Do not assume anything of your passenger, whether able bodied, disabled, elderly, etc. Instead you must ask what assistance the passenger needs, if any.
- Ask your passengers to wear a seat belt.
- Never take more passengers than your vehicle is licensed to carry.
- Be polite at all times – remember that the passenger is paying you to provide a service.
- Do not patronise the passenger in any way – use the appropriate language and be careful not to offend the passenger in any way.
- Communicating to your passenger in an appropriate way is one of the most important aspects of being a taxi driver. If you are able to communicate effectively you will be able to meet the needs of all passengers you carry in your vehicle.
- Ask the passenger if they would like to listen to the radio – do not assume that

they do.

- Remember that using your horn to alert passengers of your arrival is illegal.

Drive safely, adhering to road safety laws at all times. Care must be taken when accelerating, braking and manoeuvring the vehicle, for example when taking a corner.

### **Attitudes and awareness**

The Equality Act 2010 places a duty upon all drivers to ensure that all services available to able-bodied people must also be available to disabled people. It is necessary for licensed drivers to have an awareness of those issues facing disabled people and to have the confidence to carry these people in their vehicles both comfortably and safely.

As disabled people use the hackney carriage and private hire service approximately 67% more than able-bodied people, if you ignore this sector of society then you will lose custom and disabled people will lose a major source of mobility for them.

Without the hackney carriage and private hire service many disabled people are excluded from employment, education, health care and social activities. As a modern society these institutions are a basic right of all that live in our country. As licensed drivers you must acknowledge this and play your role in a modern and inclusive society.

Disabled people believe the attitude of licensed drivers is a main concern when undertaking a hackney carriage or private hire journey. They believe that drivers with a good attitude can make up for a lack of disability awareness. For this reason drivers must provide as good customer service for disabled people as they would able-bodied people. In order to provide a good service to disabled passengers follow the same procedures as in the customer care section previously.

For drivers to have a greater understanding of how to address disabled peoples' needs, below is a list of procedures that should be followed when picking up passengers with various disabilities.

### **Wheelchair user as a passenger at the beginning of the journey**

- If the driver has an Exemption Certificate it should be displayed so that potential passengers know that the driver does not have to take people who require assistance.
- Safety is extremely important. A licensed driver should be aware of his/her own safety as well as that of the passenger. Great care should be taken to avoid injury while pushing, pulling and especially lifting and lowering a wheelchair user.

The driver should know:

- How to use the ramp or ramps fitted to an adapted vehicle. How exactly this is done varies between vehicles.
- When to use the ramp extension. If passenger is on pavement level, shorter ramp can be used but, if on a flat surface, the ramp can be too steep without the extension.
- How to handle a manual wheelchair up the ramp.

- How to handle a manual wheelchair off and onto a kerb.

### **Getting into the taxi**

- Make use of any accessibility equipment that has been added to your vehicle, following the proper procedure as outlined by the accessibility equipment's manufacturer.
- If your vehicle has not been adapted to include some accessibility equipment, manoeuvre your vehicle so that it is as close to the curb or wheelchair user as possible.

### **Getting into the taxi in vehicles adapted for wheelchair access**

- The driver must always use the ramps to help get a wheelchair user into the vehicle.
- Some vehicles have folding back seats – on these vehicles the seat needs to be folded out of the way to allow room to manoeuvre inside.
- Ask an electric wheelchair user if he/she wants to drive up the ramp him/herself or if they would like assistance.
- Drivers should assist the manual wheelchair user up the ramp as far forward as the wheelchair can go.
- Fold up or remove the ramp before putting the wheelchair in place and fitting the belts and restraints. In some vehicles you cannot do it afterwards.
- Wheelchair user then reverses and turns into position inside the vehicle. Note that when turning the chair around the footplates can catch and get jammed and the driver may have to help free them.
- Fit the restraints or belts. Different vehicles have different fixings and all can be awkward but for the passenger's safety they must be used on every journey.
- Ensure that the wheelchair brakes are securely applied.
- Ask the wheelchair user if they need any assistance transferring from their wheelchair into the vehicle. If they need assistance ask exactly what assistance they need and then provide it to the best of your ability.
- Ask if they need any assistance in fitting seat belts. If they need assistance, help to fit the belts. Different vehicles have different fixings and all can be awkward, however for the passenger's safety, they must be used on every journey.
- Fold up the wheelchair and place securely in the boot or in the rear of the vehicle.
- Ask destination, hackney carriage drivers must only then turn on meter and drive to destination.

### **During the journey**

- Drive gently and bear in mind that the wheelchair user may feel discomfort if you are driving erratically.
- Sometimes it feels scary for the passenger as manual wheelchairs move from side to side when you still strapped in at the back.
- When the vehicle goes round a bend the wheelchair may tip.
- Drive gently – remember the passenger is facing backwards so cannot anticipate changes in speed or direction.
- Do not accelerate hard or corner suddenly.
- Remember that the passenger is facing backwards so cannot give directions.

### **At the end of the journey**

The procedure is essentially the same as that at the beginning of the journey, but here are a few extra notes:

- Hackney carriage drivers should switch off the meter before assisting the passenger to get out of the vehicle or setting up the ramps.
- For adapted vehicles, drivers must make sure that the ramps are in the right place for the wheelchair to get out again.
- Ensure wheelchair is positioned on ramp properly – in particular that all the wheels are in the ridges of the ramps.
- Wheelchair user will come backwards down the ramp.
- Retrieve the wheelchair from the boot or rear of the vehicle and assemble the wheelchair.
- Again ask what if any assistance is needed. If assistance is required, assist to the best of your ability and make sure everything is done safely.

### **Passenger with a mobility impairment**

There are 4.3 million people with mobility problems in the UK. The majority of these are elderly.

Mobility impaired people include those who have difficulty using steps, bending, reaching, standing for long periods, walking without resting and carrying heavy objects.

Mobility impairment may also include those who are pregnant, carrying heavy luggage or pushing a pram. We have all been mobility impaired at some time.

### **At the beginning of the journey**

Sometimes it will be obvious that the passenger has mobility impairment and the passenger will have clear difficulty in movement or be using some type of walking stick or other aid.

Sometimes however, disabilities may be “hidden”, such as a passenger may have a heart condition or breathing difficulties.

Some passengers who look fit and healthy may have very painful joints and/or limbs with very little muscle strength or grip.

It will not always be possible for you as the driver to provide assistance. The decision must be yours. Some people feel embarrassed to approach people with disabilities but it is best just to talk to your customers and ask them if they need any help or support.

If required, help with the passenger’s luggage and with securing the seat belt.

### **During the journey**

Going over speed bumps and potholes too fast can cause unnecessary additional discomfort for people with painful joints so try to slow down at speed bumps. The driver sits above the wheel so the impact of road bumps is not the same as for passengers.

### **At the end of the journey**

Passengers with disabilities affecting their hands may take longer to pay their fare because of difficulty in handling coins and notes quickly. Be patient with these passengers.

If asked to give physical support, do not grab the passenger by the elbow and apply a vice-like grip as this can be very painful for the passenger. Offer your arm for the passenger to hold which effectively turns you into a mobile grab rail.

### **Passenger with hearing impairment**

The main consideration with a deaf or hearing-impaired passenger is communication.

### **Communication tips**

- Ensure you approach the person from the front and that you have the person's attention. Look directly at the person and do not cover your face or turn away when you talk.
- Facial expressions and gestures are important when communicating with a deaf or hearing-impaired person.
- Shadows or strong sunlight on the driver's face can make lip reading more difficult.
- Point at destinations, etc.
- Take care to speak clearly but without exaggerating your sounds or lip movements and preferably without having chewing gum or a cigarette in your mouth.

Sometimes a deaf person will motion for a pen and paper. However, not all deaf people can read written English as their first language is British Sign Language rather than English.

### **At the beginning of the journey**

- Always look at the deaf person when you are talking to them as it is important that they can see your face.
- A pen and piece of paper are handy to help with communication. If you want to get the deaf person's attention, tap them on the shoulder.

### **During the journey**

The driver can switch the lights on and off as a way of getting the deaf person's attention. A deaf person can feel vibrations but can get a shock when the vehicle stops suddenly.

### **At the end of the journey**

For the fare the private hire driver can write it down. A hackney carriage driver can point to the meter or write it down.

### **Communication tips for passengers with a visual impairment**

- Identify yourself as the driver and let the customer know that you are speaking to them.
- When you talk to someone who uses a guide dog, speak directly to the person not the dog.
- Speak to the person in a normal tone and normal volume.
- Be patient when the person is paying the fare as she or he may take longer due to having to identify coins and notes quickly.
- Drive as smoothly as possible.
- Do not assume that assistance is needed, ask the person first and what would be most useful for them.
- Do not ask a blind or partially sighted passenger to give directions as they may not be able to do this.

When you arrive to pick up the passenger do not sound the vehicle horn but go to the passenger's door and walk to the vehicle with them.

## **2E CARRIAGE OF ASSISTANCE DOGS**

Section 168 of the Equality Act 2010 imposes a duty on a driver to carry assistance dogs in your private hire or hackney carriage vehicle, and states that no additional charge may be levied. Section 169 enables a driver to apply for a medical exemption certificate from the duty placed on them by section 168.

If you obtain an Exemption Certificate, it must be clearly displayed in the vehicle all times.

### **Vehicle identification**

- The vehicle identification plate must always be clearly displayed on the outside rear of the vehicle showing the vehicle identification number and the maximum number of passengers the vehicle is licensed to carry.
- The vehicle identification plate should be secured to the vehicle in a manner which allows the plate to be removed should the appropriate authorities decide to do so.

### **Driver identification**

The law requires taxi drivers to wear identification badges. This serves to identify the drivers to customers, increasing their feeling of security when taking a taxi journey. Drivers must wear their identification badges at all times. Drivers must affix the laminated A5 copy of their badge to the dashboard of their vehicle in such a position as it is clearly visible to passengers travelling inside the vehicle.

### **Dress**

Drivers must be smart, with a well-groomed appearance and good personal hygiene. No hats, caps or similar head-wear must be worn, including tracksuits or sports shirts, such as football, rugby tops.

### **Cleanliness of vehicles**

Passengers are entitled to expect a clean, odour free vehicle on both the inside and outside. This also applies to the boot so as not to soil any luggage stored there.

### **Renewing your driver licence**

Complete the renewal application, and DVLA consent form D796 (unless completing e-consent) and bring them to the Council together with 1 passport colour photograph, no more than three months old, the renewal licence fee and, if applicable, a DBS disclosure form and medical certificate.

DBS checks are required every 3 years. The DBS form will be sent out to you in advance of when it is due so that it can be processed in time.

### **Lost or stolen licence**

This should be reported initially to the local Police and to the Council. A duplicate licence will be issued and a fee charged. **It is an offence** to work as a licensed driver whilst not in possession of your driver badge.

### **Change of name and or address**

The driver shall notify the Environmental Services Manager in writing of any change of his/her name or address during the period of the licence. This notification and the A4 size driving licence must be received within 7 days of such change taking place, together with the appropriate fee.

## **2F NEW CHILD CAR SEAT REGULATIONS**

From 18 September 2006 new regulations governing the use of child car seats come into force. With regard to hackney carriage and private hire vehicles it would be impractical to expect the right child seat or booster to be available unless parents brought one with them.