

# Rights of Disabled Passengers Using Taxis and Minicabs



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HELP YOU WE ARE  
WATFORD**



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BOROUGH  
COUNCIL**



This leaflet is to help you. The leaflet tells you what kind of service and assistance you can expect when travelling by taxi or minicab. The advice in this leaflet was written by Watford Borough Council but it applies whenever you take a taxi or minicab in any place.

# Type of vehicle you may hire

Each local council in England and Wales sets the standards for what type of vehicles can become licensed taxis or minicabs.

In Watford there is no requirement for taxis to be of one design, such as a London style taxi. This is because some passengers find it easier to use a saloon car and a large vehicle can be difficult for them to access. To offer as much choice as possible, Watford allows a mixed fleet for taxi licensing.

Under the Equality Act 2010, all drivers must make reasonable adjustments to the service they provide. This means they must have a helpful approach to offering their services and to make sure they do not put disabled people at a disadvantage or treat them differently to any other passenger.

Reasonable adjustments for taxis and minicabs include:

- The driver guiding or helping you into the vehicle. This should include assisting you from your pick up point rather than the driver waiting in the vehicle or sounding a horn

- The driver approaching you at a rank to ask if you need assistance. This is helpful of the driver and is not 'touting' which is where a driver asks you for your business.
- The driver helping you to get out of the vehicle at your destination and giving guidance for where to go next. If you request further assistance in to a building or to the door of a building the driver should offer this to you.
- There should not be any extra charge for drivers helping you to the building or door.
- The taxi or minicab firm having a WBC recognised standard of Passenger Assistance Training for drivers
- Not making any charge for loading or unloading a wheelchair - the meter should start when the journey starts and should stop when the vehicle stops.
- Charging a lower rate for a larger vehicle if a passenger is unable to use a smaller car (for example, a wheelchair user).
- Charging a saloon car rate for a larger vehicle if a passenger has no choice in vehicle size (for example, where a person must travel seated in their wheelchair).

# Assistance Dogs

Drivers of licensed taxis and minicabs must allow you to travel with any registered assistance dog free of charge. It is a criminal offence to refuse to carry an assistance dog and a driver can be prosecuted for refusing or for charging extra to carry the dog.

In cases where a person is refused a journey it is the council who prosecutes the driver for a criminal offence.



It is important that the dog can be identified as an assistance dog, so owners of assistance dogs may carry the dog's identification papers. However, they do not have to do this.

Dogs can also be identified in other ways such as by the harness or livery they are wearing and these vary depending on the dog's role. Drivers should ask if they are unsure about identifying a dog and they should not simply assume that the dog is not an assistance dog.

A driver may be able to get an exemption certificate for carrying assistance dogs. Drivers with an exemption certificate do not have to carry assistance dogs due to a medical reason, for example the driver may be allergic to dogs. Certificates are only issued on medical grounds. Drivers must display this exemption certificate and must show it to you if you ask to see it.

## **Wheelchair Users**

Some taxis and minicabs licensed by the council are listed as being fully wheelchair accessible. This means you can travel in the vehicle while you are sitting in your wheelchair.



This list is available to view online or you can check a vehicle by calling the council licensing department.

Drivers of vehicles on this list must carry a person in their wheelchair without charging any more money than they would usually charge for a person who is not a wheelchair user.

They must provide reasonable assistance to help you in and out of the vehicle and they must make sure you are comfortable and safe before setting off.

If the driver of a vehicle on this list refuses to do this they are committing a criminal offence and this is something the council can investigate for you.

A driver of a wheelchair accessible vehicle may be able to get an exemption certificate for carrying passengers

using a wheelchair. Drivers with an exemption certificate do not have to carry wheelchairs due to a medical reason, for example the driver may have an injury that stops him from pushing the wheelchair. Certificates are only issued on medical grounds. Drivers must display this exemption certificate and must show it to you if you ask to see it.

## **Complaining about poor service from taxis and minicabs**

We understand that making a complaint is not always easy to do. Some passengers feel that they may be prevented from travelling again if they complain about a driver or company.



However, it is important that any poor standards are reported so that we can improve service to all passengers.

You should make your complaint to Watford Borough





Council licensing department who deal with taxi and minicab licensing within Watford. If you are unsure about where the vehicle was licensed, you can still call Watford Borough Council and we will help you to identify the vehicle where possible. Details of how to contact us are at the end of this leaflet.

## **Help for making a complaint**

When you make a complaint about a taxi or minicab, you will need some of the following facts to trace the driver:

- The vehicle's registration number. This will be on the back and front of the car on the number plate.



- The taxi or minicab licence number which is on a small, rectangular shaped plate on the back of the car.
- The taxi drivers badge number - which you can get from their badge, by asking the driver or from the minicab firm.
- Any photographs you may have of the registration number, licence number, badge number or receipt.
- Take note of the details of the journey including the date, time, place or location of where the driver picked you up and dropped you off.

It is a condition of a driver's licence that they must offer passengers a receipt after every journey. The receipt must contain the following details: Date; Fare they charged you; Driver's badge number

You should not have to ask for a receipt. If you do, you should report this to the licensing department. A driver's badge number is a four digit number and should match with the number on his identification badge. If possible make sure the driver is giving the correct details.

From 1 October 2016 all driver badges have been printed to include a Braille overlay with the driver's number.

## **What can the council do?**

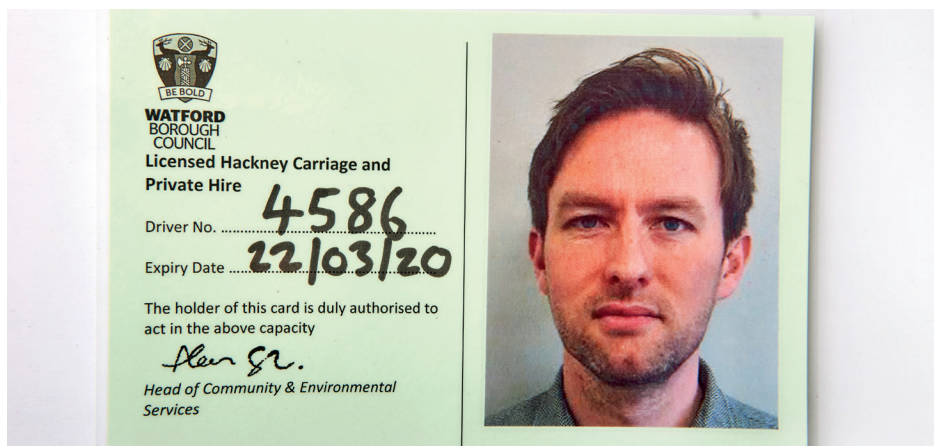
The council is responsible for ensuring that businesses comply with the law. Where a business does not comply the council can take action by prosecuting offenders for criminal offences.

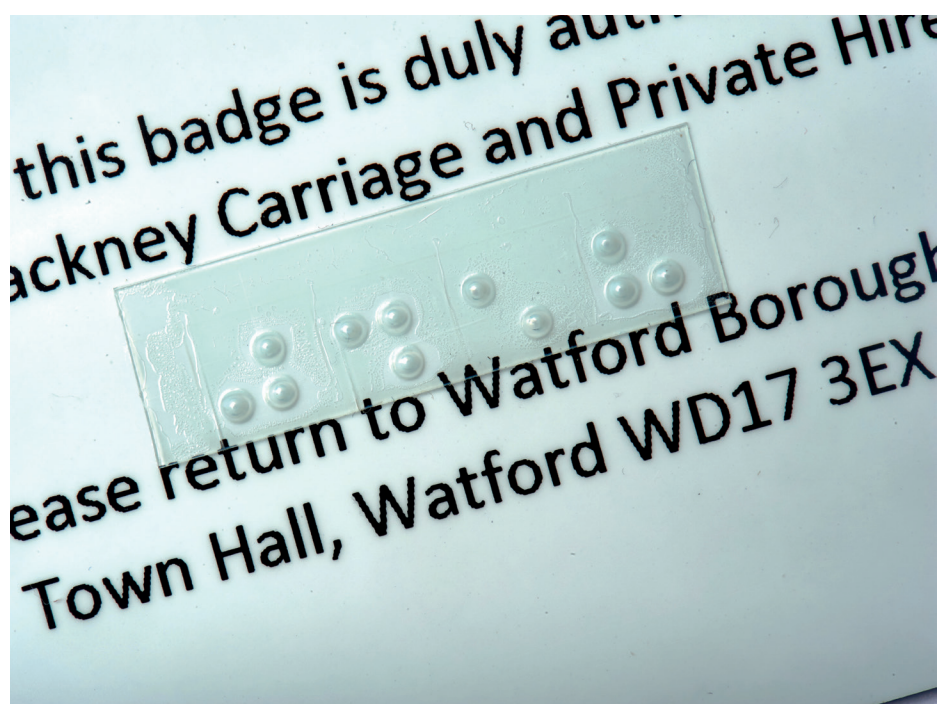


The council also has a general duty to ensure that businesses are treating people equally in line with the Equalities Act 2010. Most offences in the Equalities Act 2010 are not criminal offences. The one exception to this is the law concerning the carrying of assistance dogs. Where the council can take action, we will. Where we are unable to take direct action, i.e. in civil matters, we will assist you to find support to take your case further if you want to do this.

## Make a complaint without giving your name

Because we understand that making a formal complaint can sometimes be a stressful experience, where customers would rather not do this, we have introduced a separate way of making a complaint.





You can make a complaint without giving us your name or any other contact details. Complaints received in this way will still be investigated as far as possible.

It may be that independent evidence is available that allows us to take action even when you do not provide a formal complaint. Even if we cannot take formal action, your reports help us to build a picture of the character and behaviour of drivers. This is essential when making future decisions about whether a driver should be licenced.

# Checklist

Use this checklist to make sure you are being treated fairly:

- You should not have to wait for any longer than any other passenger would. There is no need for a purpose built vehicle to carry you unless you have asked for this – do not put up with being told that a driver must be found to carry your assistance dog or fold-up wheelchair. All vehicles can do this.
- There should be no extra charge for a specialist vehicle – all customers should pay the same rate for the same vehicle.
- The meter starts when the journey starts, not when you are being assisted in to the vehicle.
- The meter stops when the vehicle stops. The driver can then assist you out of the vehicle and to your destination. There should be no charge for this.
- The driver must make sure you are safe and secure before driving – this is his legal responsibility. A wheelchair must be properly secured – just using the brake is not enough.
- The driver must make sure you are wearing the correct seatbelts.
- The driver must not use a mobile phone whilst driving.
- The meter must start from the correct rate – ask to see the tariff chart to make sure a higher rate is not being used

- There is no soiling charge for an assistance dog that sheds some fur or hair.
- When booking a minicab, ask for a quote from the company and do not agree a fare that is higher than the tariff would allow – this is especially important for wheelchair users who have to travel in a purpose built vehicle
- When hiring a taxi on a rank, ask the driver for an estimate before you set off. If you can, check this against the tariff chart.
- Make sure you know which type of vehicle you are booking, hackney carriage (taxi) or private hire vehicle (minicab).
- Different councils have different fares. This may explain why a journey from one town costs less or more than a journey in Watford. If you are unsure, call the council to check.

## Contact us

You can contact us in different ways.



Telephone us: **01923 278476**



Email us: **licensing@watford.gov.uk**



Write to us: **Licensing Department, Watford Borough Council, Town Hall Watford, WD17 3EX**



Go online: **watford.gov.uk/forms/form/191/en/taxi\_driver\_complaint**

If you would like us to help you make a complaint, you can contact us first and one of our staff will help you to do this.



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