

Taxi Licensing Frequently Asked Questions

Question 1 Can I attend the office without an appointment?

Answer No, we only operate an appointments system so if you wish to see an officer please either call the office on 0121 569 6655 or email taxi_licensing@sandwell.gov.uk to make an appointment.

Question 2 The online application process says that I can pay later – can I pay in the office and collect my plates and badges?

Answer Until you have made a payment, your application will not be submitted to the taxi licensing team, and you will not be given an appointment if an application has not been submitted. You will only be asked to make a payment in the office if there has been an issue paying on line or there are other payments outstanding. You will need to make an appointment to collect your plates from the office as there is no longer a drop in service.

Question 3 I am renewing my licence and I have been asked to submit my tax code, what does this mean and what does it look like?

Answer In April 2022, H M Revenues and Customs introduced a new requirement that all existing drivers had to prove they were registered to pay tax and in the event that they could not produce the code, then the Licensing Authority can not renew the licence. To obtain a code please visit the following website: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-a-tax-check-for-a-taxi-private-hire-or-scrap-metal-licence>

Please note that only codes obtained from the above website are acceptable, we can not accept your individual tax codes which we have received in a number of cases. The code produced is 10 digits and contains a mixture of numbers and letters. Don't worry about there being the ability to enter more digits on the online application form, just enter the code produced from the above website. The code is valid for 100 days and can be used multiple times and for more than one Licensing Authority.

Question 4 I want to renew my licence, but have not received an application form

Answer You will still receive a renewal letter to tell you your licence is about to expire, but as applications now have to be made online, there will be a website address in the letter that you will have to type into your internet browser to apply. You will need to create an account and will be able to upload any required documents straight into the application. Once you have completed your application and paid the licence fee, the taxi licensing staff will receive a notification that your application is ready for processing. Please note that they will not check your application until it is complete and you have paid and clicked on the submit button.

Question 5 I have received an email to say that I need to upload more documents, how do I do this?

Answer There will be a link in the email that notified you of the documents required that will take you back into your application to upload the documents, so please use that link. Only send documents to the taxi licensing in box if you are unable to upload them.

Question 6 Can I apply for a private hire/taxi driver's badge with more than one Council?

Answer Yes, you can, but please be aware each Council sets their own fees and has it's own conditions and own policies that will be available on their websites.

Question 7 How do I apply for a taxi/private hire badge and can I apply for a vehicle licence at the same time?

Answer Applications should be made on line and you should not apply for a vehicle licence until you have a driver badge as once a vehicle is licensed, only a licensed driver can drive a licensed vehicle. To apply for a badge please visit the following web page which details some of the courses that you will need to book and pass to apply to be a driver <https://licensing.sandwell.gov.uk/apply/TaxiDriver/begin/>

Question 8 I have received a letter that says my name is to be added to the National Register of Revocations and Refusals, why are Sandwell Council doing this?

Answer All Licensing Authorities are now required by law to sign up and use this register. This means that we have to add the names of any drivers whose applications we either refuse or revoke. Also each time we receive an application for a drivers licence both for new licences and to renew existing licences, we have to check the applicants name on this register to see if they appear as part of the fit and proper checks. Further information regarding the information that is saved on the register and how any information will be used can be found on the taxi licensing pages and in the Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Licensing Policy.

Question 9 Who can access the information on the NR3 (National Register of Refusals and Revocations) Register and if my name is added, does this register give details of why my licence was refused or revoked?

Answer The NR3 Register is held on a secure password protected site that can only be accessed by Local Licensing Authorities. The entry does not contain any information on why a licence was refused or revoked, only information that will allow a driver to be identified e.g. Name, Date of Birth, Address, Telephone Number etc. If information on why a licence was either refused or revoked is required, the person who is checking the information/driver name on the register will have to make a data request to the authority that added the applicant information to the register to request the information.

Question 10 I have convictions, can I still apply for a licence?

Answer All applications will be considered on their merits so whilst you can submit an application, you are advised to look at the Council's Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Licensing Policy with regard to acceptable rehabilitation periods for offences. The Policy gives guidance on how much time should have passed since an offence was committed before an applicant would be deemed "fit and proper" to hold a licence. Section 7 of the policy gives guidance on offences and rehabilitation periods. The policy can be accessed: - https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/info/200176/business/359/taxi_and_private_hire_licences/2

Question 11 I am looking to licence a vehicle that has been written off, do the Council licence vehicles that have been written off?

Answer If the vehicle has been written off, then no the Council will not licence the vehicle. Further information on the vehicle criteria that the Council will accept is detailed in the Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Licensing Policy

Question 12 I have a wheelchair accessible vehicle, but am due to have surgery that may stop me assisting wheelchair users for a period of time but am fit to continue working, am I able to apply for an exemption for a period of time?

Answer Yes, there is a Section in the Equality Act that allows drivers to apply for an exemption in certain cases. Please contact the Licensing Office on 0121 569 6655 or by email taxi_licensing@sandwell.gov.uk for further advice.

Question 13 My licensed vehicle has just failed the MOT test, can I continue working?

Answer No, if you have failed the MOT, you should not be operating as a taxi or private hire vehicle until such time as you have had the vehicle retested and the vehicle has passed the MOT.

Question 14 I have been told that my application will be referred to Committee, what does this mean.

Answer Applicants and existing drivers can be referred to Committee for a number of reasons which include that they have not provided all of the information required in the application, they have committed a recent offence that is named in the policy or a complaint has been received and consideration needs to be given as to whether the driver is fit and proper to continue with their licence. The Licensing Committee consists of at least 3 Councillors and it is the Councillors that will make any decisions on your licence. The Licensing Team will prepare a report and include any supporting documents and you will get a copy of all these documents 7 days before the meeting. You are entitled to bring a legal representative with you to the meeting or a friend for support. Interpreters are not provided for committee, so if you do require an interpreter you will need to bring them with you and this can be a family member. A member of the Licensing Team will present the report and then the applicant will be asked to respond and the Councillors may ask you

questions. If you have any information that will help your case or if you have any notifications from the court please try and send them into the taxi licensing office before the meeting. It is still possible to bring them with you on the day if you are not able to send in before the meeting. The Council's Solicitor will give legal advice during the meeting and will give a short summary of the case before you are asked to leave the room with the licensing officer and any people that attended the meeting to support you whilst the Councillors make their decision. When the Councillors have made their decision, everyone will be asked to come back into the meeting room for their decision to be read out. You will then receive a copy of the decision in writing within 14 days and this letter will also detail your right to appeal should you be unhappy with the committee decision.

Whilst you will be given a time to attend the meeting, please be aware that your case is most likely not the only case that will be heard that day so the times given are approximate and you may have to wait until the previous case has been completed. Committee meetings are mostly held monthly, but that are some months that no meetings are scheduled so on some occasions there may be a delay in your case being heard. Please also be aware that if you have been asked to provide any information for the hearing and you do not provide it in a timely manner, this may also delay your case being heard.