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Discussion Session

- What has the impact been on the Taxi trade?
- Changes Licensing Authorities faced?
- What challenges were overcome?
- Were there any barriers?
- What does the current COVID space look like?
- Are there any changes here to stay?
- Further ideas for change?

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What has the impact been on the Taxi trade?

- Almost overnight huge loss in work (March 2020)
- Reduced income
- Unprecedented changes to lifestyle and ways of working
- Inconsistency in implementing changes by LA's
- Differences in grants available, if any
- Closure of Council Offices

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Changes Licensing Authorities faced?

- Overnight closure of Licensing Offices
- No contingency plans for forced home working or what to do when offices closed
- Move to paperless applications
- Challenges for vehicle testing
- How to get a medical and DBS
- Communicating with the trade
- Extending licences

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What challenges were overcome?

- Online solutions developed
- Extension of licences
- Waiving vehicle tests
- Delaying fee payments

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Were there any barriers?

- Lack of plans for such situations
- Shortage of staff due to illness
- ICT issues – working from home
- Communication channels not working so trade couldn't contact Council in some cases

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What does the current COVID space look like?

- Gradual return to workplaces but not all
- Hybrid working becoming the norm
- Night time economy growing again
- Trade still struggling financially

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Are there any changes here to stay?

- Online applications
- Reduced accessibility to Council Offices and phone systems

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What has the impact been on the Taxi trade?

Catastrophic!

Driver losses – caused by

- Deaths, Retirements and Industry Exit
- Loss of vehicles (unable to pay)
- Lack of financial support (government)
- Increased costs (just about everything)
- Licensing delays & new statutory requirements
- New vehicle standards - EV, ZEC & ULEZ aspirations
- The inability to get medicals
- Inconsistency of standards, training & requirements

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What has the impact been on the Taxi trade?

Out of Licensing Authority Control / Influence

Driver losses – caused by

- Deaths, Retirements and Industry Exit
- Loss of vehicles (unable to pay)
- Lack of financial support (government)
- Increased costs (just about everything)

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What has the impact been on the Taxi trade?

Within Licensing Authority Control / Influence

Driver losses – caused by

- Licensing delays & new statutory requirements
- New vehicle standards - EV, ZEC & ULEZ aspirations
- The inability to get medicals
- Inconsistency of standards, training & requirements
- All of the above due to minimum not absolute standards and different interpretations of guidance

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Further ideas for change?

Licensing delays & new statutory requirements

Licensing delays post pandemic can be reduced by pragmatic & sensible measures – like grandfather rights, remote testing and transitional arrangements.

Statutory requirements should, due to catastrophic driver shortages, be set a level that is safe and not overburdensome on the regulator and the regulated.

Light touch but strong requirements.

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Further ideas for change?

New vehicle standards & EV, ZEC & ULEZ aspirations

Requirements post pandemic in some cases are at best extremely burdensome, at worst unachievable.

As a former engineer I am against Age limits and pro Air Quality (Euro) standards as the basis for licensing.

Sensible transitional arrangements and exemptions are needed to enable high cost wheelchair & other accessible special needs vehicles to be licensed.

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Further ideas for change?

The inability to get medicals

More and more licensing authorities are moving to the same DVLA group 2 medical providers that the Road Haulage Association, PCV / PSV and bus companies use. The practice of seeking full medical records (sometimes hundreds of pages) is not helping the NHS nor drivers and can take months.

Medicals delivered by General medical council doctors and summary records are more than appropriate, will speed up the licensing process and be a massive help to drivers, the NHS and regulators.

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Further ideas for change?

Inconsistency of standards, training & requirements

Hundreds of licensing authorities delivering differing standards, different levels of training and different regulatory requirements is not a sound basis to move forward on.

For example English should be appropriate to the job and the benchmark should be consistent as a licensing requirement.

The English requirement should primarily also be based on oral competence as many people can converse orally and be competent taxi and PHV drivers.

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Further ideas for change?

Stopping Private Hire Knowledge Tests?

With the very serious loss of PHV drivers in particular, the pandemic has brought about serious delays, one of the most prevalent is the inability to provide knowledge tests.

Today's PHV driver, in the main works with a licensed office controller and has an array of assistance to help the pre-planning of pre-booked journeys. Sat navs, in car digital mapping, Google Streets and what3words technology.

In 2014 the Law Commission Review P107 - 7.21 recommended stopping local knowledge tests for PHV Drivers. This is something that could be done immediately to increase PHV driver supply.

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Further ideas for change?

Summary

Post pandemic, there is a grave shortage of taxi and in particular PHV drivers, which is now compromising public safety.

Licensing delivery that is efficient and consistent can help the industry recover from its very worryingly declining driver levels.

There has been some great examples of innovation during the pandemic, but we have serious licensing backlogs and the industry needs licensing authorities to urgently assist in its recovery.

Lack of available taxi & PHV drivers is now compromising public safety, so the LPHCA hopes that the good practice developed by many licensing authorities during the pandemic can be shared by all.

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