



### **Advice to taxi drivers/private hire drivers/PH Operators regarding assistance dog access refusals**

Taxis and the door-to-door service they provide are an important mode of transport for people with disabilities. It is important that disabled people who use assistance dogs have confidence that they can hire a taxi, which will carry them and their dog at no extra charge.

#### **Your legal obligations**

Since 2001, drivers of licensed taxis and private hire vehicles have a duty to carry any guide dog or other assistance dog travelling with a disabled person, at no additional cost.

In 2006, further duties were introduced to make it unlawful for taxi providers to refuse or offer a lower standard of service to a disabled person, for a reason relating to their disability. For example, a taxi operator making a guide dog or other assistance dog owner wait longer for a vehicle than a passenger without a disability, because some drivers prefer not to carry an assistance dog.

The Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Disabled Persons) Act 2022 amends the Equality Act 2010 to place duties on taxi and PHV drivers/operators. Any disabled person has specific rights and protections to be transported and receive assistance when using a taxi or PHV, without being charged extra. This requires drivers to provide reasonable adjustments for passengers with a disability (please see below for more information).

Breaches of these duties can be reported to local licensing authorities, who can take appropriate action.

#### **Cultural beliefs**

Cultural beliefs can raise sensitive issues relating to dogs. However, religious grounds cannot be used to exclude assistance dog owners. The Equality and Human Rights Commission successfully reached agreement on this with several religious groups. Assistance dogs are working animals, not pets. They are trained to provide independence and mobility to their owners. Assistance dog owners are trained to maintain a high grooming standard of their dog, with attention to cleanliness.

## **Exemptions**

The only grounds for any driver to decline to carry an assistance dog is through the approved medical exemption process. Drivers cannot refuse to take a person travelling with their assistance dog, unless they have a valid medical exemption certificate from the appropriate licensing authority, to show that they are unable to carry an assistance dog for health reasons. An exemption notice must be displayed in the vehicle when it is being driven by the exempted driver.

## **Reasonable Adjustments**

Providers must make reasonable adjustments for disabled people in the way they provide their services. [This does not include physical adjustments to the vehicle.]

In relation to taxis, reasonable adjustments may include:

- Ensuring that booking apps are accessible (with an option to state whether the customer has any access requirements.)
- Meeting a passenger with sight loss at their front door or other collection point, letting them know that you have arrived (rather than expecting them to find you) and introducing yourself (use the customer's name, if known).
- Assisting the passenger to safely enter/exit the vehicle and guiding them to a safe location/destination point before departing.
- Asking where the assistance dog owner would prefer their dog to be accommodated.
- Requiring that all taxi and PHV drivers complete mandatory disability awareness training.

### **Useful Resources**

For more information on sighted guide training, please visit:

<https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/how-you-can-help/sighted-guide-training/>

For more information on supporting customers with sight loss, please visit:

<https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/research/policy-and-guidance-for-businesses/guidance-for-taxi-staff/#practical-things-that-drivers-and-other-staff-can-do>

For more information on the law and carrying guide or other assistance dogs, please visit:

<https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/-/media/project/guidedogs/guidedogsdotorg/files/how-you-can-help/campaigning/open-doors-information-for-taxi-and-phv-operators.pdf/>

Sharing this information with colleagues will ensure that all disabled people are made to feel welcome and want to give you their business.