# Template for Councils to send to taxi/PHV Operators regarding assistance dog access refusals

# Letter version

**Notes:**

* A copy of EHRC’s “Take the Lead” information leaflet should be printed and sent with letter version - [www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/take-the-lead-welcoming-customers-with-assistance-dogs\_0.pdf](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/take-the-lead-welcoming-customers-with-assistance-dogs_0.pdf)

Dear [taxi/PHV operator],

The Licensing Team at [INSERT NAME] Council is writing to remind you of the law in relation to assistance dogs. We ask that you circulate this information with all independent and/or employed taxi and private hire vehicle drivers.

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 guide and other 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 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 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 RightsCommission 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 your drivers will ensure that all disabled people are made to feel welcome and want to give you their business.

Yours sincerely,

[Signed]

[Name, Job title]

# Email version

Dear [taxi/PHV Operator],

The Licensing Team at [INSERT NAME] Council is writing to remind you of the law in relation to assistance dogs. We ask that you circulate this information with your taxi and private hire vehicle drivers.

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## Your legal obligations

Since 2001, drivers of licensed taxis and private hire vehicles have a duty to carry any guide 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 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. For more information on providing reasonable adjustments for customers with sight loss, please visit this [**link**](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).

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

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## Useful Resources

## Please visit the following links for more information:

* [Supporting](https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/research/policy-and-guidance-for-businesses/guidance-for-taxi-staff/%22%20%5Cl%20%22practical-things-that-drivers-and-other-staff-can-do) **[customers with sight loss](https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/research/policy-and-guidance-for-businesses/guidance-for-taxi-staff/%22%20%5Cl%20%22practical-things-that-drivers-and-other-staff-can-do)**
* [Sighted guide training](https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/how-you-can-help/sighted-guide-training/)
* [The law: carrying assistance dogs by taxi/PHV](https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/-/media/project/guidedogs/guidedogsdotorg/files/how-you-can-help/campaigning/open-doors-information-for-taxi-and-phv-operators.pdf/)
* [EHRC guide to welcoming customers with assistance dogs](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Cleau562%5CAppData%5CLocal%5CMicrosoft%5CWindows%5CINetCache%5CContent.Outlook%5CX6BIR95S%5C%E2%80%A2%09www.equalityhumanrights.com%5Csites%5Cdefault%5Cfiles%5Ctake-the-lead-welcoming-customers-with-assistance-dogs_0.pdf)

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

Kind regards,

[INSERT SIGNATURE]

[INSERT NAME, JOB TITLE]