



Private Hire Regulations Update: Changes to English Language and Telephone Requirements

In [Notice 10/16](#), we announced that Transport for London (TfL) had approved regulatory changes to raise standards in London's private hire industry, improving safety and convenience for customers.

These changes included the introduction of a new requirement for private hire drivers to be able to communicate in English at an appropriate level and a requirement for private hire operators to make someone available for a passenger to speak to during a journey.

Today TfL has amended both of these requirements.

English Language Requirement

It is essential for public safety that all licensed private hire drivers are able to communicate in English at an appropriate level. Drivers need to be able to communicate with passengers to discuss a route or fare, as well as read, understand and respond to important regulatory, safety and travel information sent by TfL.

The requirement for applicants for private hire drivers' licences to be able to communicate in English came into force on 14 October 2016 and it applies to all applications (whether new applications or renewals) received by TfL on or after that date.

Applicants were given until 31 March 2017 to satisfy TfL that they met the requirement, whether by sitting a Secure English Language Test with one of our appointed test providers or providing evidence of a qualification.

The English Language Requirement is the subject of ongoing legal proceedings and TfL has decided to extend the time available for applicants to prove that they can communicate in English at the appropriate level to **30 September 2017**.

Extending the deadline means that the precise scope of the requirement will be clear, after the proceedings are concluded, and it will also allow drivers more time to comply. Any licence holder, who made an application received by TfL

on or after 14 October 2016, and fails to comply by the new 30 September 2017 deadline, may face licensing action.

For applications received on or after 30 September 2017, all applicants will need to provide evidence that they meet the English Language Requirement as part of their application **before** a licence will be issued.

Telephone Requirement

TfL introduced a licence condition requiring private hire operators to ensure that customers can speak to a person acting on behalf of the operator in 'real time', in the event of a problem with their journey or if the passenger wishes to discuss the booking.

Enabling a passenger to speak to the private hire operator makes an important contribution to public safety and, in particular, the interests of disabled or vulnerable passengers. The provision of contact facilities also produces safety benefits for drivers and gives rise to real customer convenience benefits.

TfL has today changed **where** operators can fulfil the telephone requirement.

Whereas previously a passenger had to be able to speak to a person at the operating centre in London, operators will now be required to ensure that passengers can speak to a person at the operating centre, or other premises with a fixed address in London or elsewhere (whether inside or outside the United Kingdom). Passengers will still be able to make a complaint or discuss any other matter about the carrying out of the booking with the operator and the obligation will still apply at all times during a operator's hours of business and at all times during a journey

The Telephone Requirement is also the subject of an ongoing legal challenge, and enforcement of the requirement is **currently suspended** until the proceedings are concluded or the court orders otherwise.

TfL will remain in contact with operators and ensure that they have sufficient time to make arrangements to meet the requirement, once the legal position becomes clear. We will shortly be publishing guidance to assist licensees, including the standards expected for taking calls.

Please check our website for further information including the regulations themselves and supporting materials and guidance at tfl.gov.uk/tph.

If you need further information please email us at tph.enquiries@tfl.gov.uk or call our Licensing Team on 0343 222 4444 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm).

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H Chapman', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Helen Chapman
General Manager
London Taxi and Private Hire

09 February 2017

For previous Notices visit tfl.gov.uk/tph