

Title of Report: Medical Standards for Drivers of Taxis

Item 5

Report to be considered by: Licensing Committee

Purpose of Report:

To confirm the Council's position on the application of Group 2 Medical standards and to include Group C1.

Recommended Action:

To agree the continuing application of Group 2 Medical Standards including Group C1.

List of other options considered:

None

Key background documentation:
(bulleted list format)

- Department of Transport - Taxis and private hire vehicles – consultation on draft Best practice guidance

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Supporting Information

1. Background

- 1.1 In June 1999 the Public Protection Committee considered a report which asked Members to introduce a requirement for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire drivers to submit to a medical examination. This examination was to be carried out by the West Berkshire Occupational Health Consultant.
- 1.2 The new requirement was for all taxi drivers (hackney carriage and private hire) both new and existing, to take a medical every three years. In the case of a driver who has attained the age of 65, the medical would be annually after their 65th birthday. In all cases, if the doctor recommended, medicals could be more frequent. No licences to be issued without the applicant passing the medical.
- 1.3 The examination would be conducted in accordance with the Class 2 Public Service Vehicle licence requirements within Group 2 Medical standards, in accordance with the DVLA guidance entitled "FOR MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS" AT A GLANCE GUIDE TO THE CURRENT MEDICAL STANDARDS OF FITNESS TO DRIVE", issued by the Drivers Medical Unit of DVLA Swansea in July 1999.
- 1.4 The medical arrangements were to be phased in over three years, with all new applicants and drivers renewing licences, being required to have the medical. The fee for such medicals to be paid to the Licensing Authority as part of the application fee, with the Occupational Health Service billing the Authority. These arrangements have carried on to date with few problems arising.

2. Current Medical Standards

- 2.1 The Department of Transport have recently (02 August 2005) issued "Taxi and Private hire Vehicles - Best Practice Guidance 2005". The guidance follows the publication in November 2003 by the Office of Fair Trading of a market study of the regulation of taxi and private hire vehicles in the UK.
- 2.2 Section 42 of this guidance relates to Medical Criteria and the use of category C1 as an addition to a DVLA driver's licence.
- 2.3 C1 is a standard that applies to drivers of vehicles up to 7.5 tonnes and allows for exceptional arrangements to exist for drivers of C1 vehicles, who can meet a series of medical criteria. The guidance goes on to cite the Secretary of State's Honorary Medical Advisory Panel and it suggests that best practice would be to apply the C1 standards to taxi drivers with certain medical conditions.
- 2.4 Section 42 states, "It is clearly good practice for medical checks to be made on each driver as a condition for the initial grant of a licence and thereafter for each renewal. It is common for licensing authorities to apply the Group 2 medical standards applied by DVLA to the licensing of lorry and bus drivers. This seems best practice. The Group 2 standards preclude the licensing of drivers with insulin treated diabetes. However, exceptional arrangements do exist for drivers of C1 vehicles who can meet a series of medical criteria. In the light of the latest advice from the Secretary of State's Honorary Medical Advisory Panel on Diabetes Mellitus and Driving, it is suggested that best practice is to apply the C1 standards to taxi and private hire drivers with insulin treated diabetes".
- 2.5 The Specialist Registrar in Occupational Medicine at the West Berkshire Occupational Health Service has been consulted on this guidance and he considers that the application of C1, where the criteria for medical conditions is met, will balance the increased risks involved with commercial driving (longer hours and involvement of the public) and the need to be fair to the applicant. In his and officers opinion there will be no increased risk to those people who use taxis and private hire vehicles.

Appendices *(in list format)*

None

Implications

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| Policy: | Acceptance of the recommendations in this report will further enhance the existing policy |
| Financial: | None |
| Personnel: | None |
| Legal: | None |
| Environmental: | None |
| Equalities: | The adoption of C1 will ensure that every applicant is assured of a fair and equal assessment of their ability to drive taxis and private hire vehicles. |
| Property: | None |
| Risk Management: | None |
| Community Safety: | All taxi drivers will be medically assessed as being fit to drive proportionate to the type of vehicle being driven. |

Consultation Responses

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| Local Stakeholders: | West Berkshire Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Operators Association |
| Officers Consulted: | Liz Howlett, Mike Trevelyn |
| Trade Union: | None |