

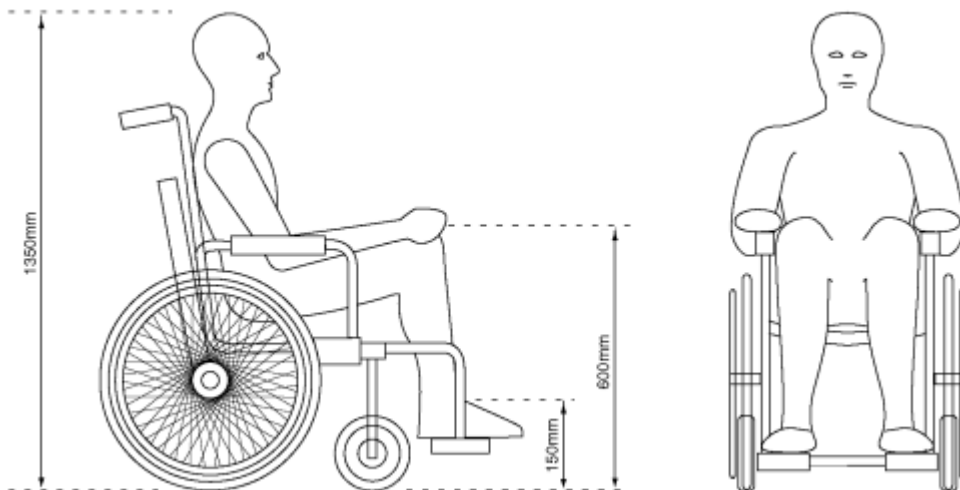


MEDICAL EXEMPTION POLICY FOR HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE DRIVERS UNDER THE EQUALITY ACT 2010

The Equality Act 2010 requires employers and service providers to make 'reasonable adjustments' or changes to take account of the needs of disabled employees and customers.

Southampton City Council is committed to an accessible public transport system in which disabled people have the same opportunities to travel as other members of society. Hackney Carriages and Private Hire Vehicles are a vital link in the accessible transport chain and it is important that people who use wheelchairs or assistance dogs can have confidence that drivers will accept them and their wheelchair or assistance dog and carry them at no extra charge.

Section 167 of The Act permits the Licensing Authority to designate Hackney Carriages and Private Hire Vehicles as being wheelchair accessible. The Department for Transport's Statutory Guidance on Access for wheelchair users recommends that vehicles should only be included in the list if it would be possible for the user of a "reference wheelchair" to enter, leave and travel in the passenger compartment in safety and reasonable comfort whilst seated in their wheelchair. A reference wheelchair is illustrated below:



Vehicles identified as such shall be included on a list of designated vehicles.

Inclusion of a vehicle on the designated list may be appealed under Section 172 to the Magistrates' Court within 28 days of the vehicles in question being published on the Licensing Authority's list. Proprietors of all vehicles included on the list will receive a letter detailing the new provisions of the Act and their right of appeal.

The Equality Act 2010 (Section 165) places the following duties on drivers of designated wheelchair accessible Hackney Carriages and Private Hire Vehicles;

- i. To carry the passenger while in the wheelchair;
- ii. Not to make any additional charge for doing so;
- iii. If the passenger chooses to sit in a passenger seat, to carry their wheelchair;
- iv. To take such steps as are necessary to ensure that the passenger is carried in safety and reasonable comfort;
- v. To give the passenger such mobility assistance as is reasonably required

In addition, Sections 168 and 170 places the following duty on drivers of Hackney Carriages and Private Hire vehicles;

- i. To carry the passenger's dog, allowing it to remain with the passenger and not make any additional charge for doing so.

A driver who fails to comply with any of the above is guilty of an offence and may receive a fine if convicted.

In some circumstances a driver of a designated Hackney Carriage or Private Hire vehicle may be unable to fulfil the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 for medical reasons, either short or longer term.

Section 166 of the Act allows licensing authorities to exempt drivers from the duties to assist passengers in wheelchairs if they are satisfied that it is appropriate to do so on medical grounds or because the driver's physical condition makes it impossible or unreasonably difficult for them to comply with the duties.

Sections 169 and 171 of the Act allow licensing authorities to exempt drivers from the duties to transport assistance dogs if they are satisfied that it is appropriate to do so on medical grounds.

To apply for a Medical Exemption Certificate a driver must submit to the Licensing Team an application form along with a medical report from their GP, dated no more than 28 days prior to submission of the application, detailing exactly what duties cannot be undertaken, why they cannot be undertaken and for how long they cannot be undertaken. This assessment will be at the applicant's expense as part of the application process.

Upon receipt the Licensing Manager will consider the evidence and may request further independent medical assessment to decide if the driver is:

- (i) Fit for work
- (ii) Temporarily unfit to carry passengers in wheelchairs and/ or assistance dogs
- (iii) Permanently unfit to carry passengers in wheelchairs and/ or assistance dogs

If the driver is declared fit for work no exemption certificate will be issued and a letter explaining the decision will be given to the driver. If the driver does not agree with the decision to refuse the application for a medical exemption, Section 172 of the Act gives the driver a right to appeal the decision to the Magistrates Court. The driver has 28 days from the date of refusal to appeal.

If the driver is declared temporarily unfit, a temporary exemption certificate of up to three months may be issued. Prior to the expiry of the temporary exemption certificate the driver will contact the Licensing Team to either;

- (i) declare themselves fit, return to normal duties and return the temporary exemption certificate; or
- (ii) arrange a further medical assessment to be submitted for the Licensing Manager to consider extending the exemption certificate.

If the driver is declared permanently unfit to carry passengers in wheelchairs and/ or assistance dogs an Exemption Certificate will be issued. The certificate will include a photograph of the driver who has been granted exemption and must be displayed prominently in the vehicle for public viewing.

The exemption may be reviewed at any time with reference to expert medical evidence, and each case will be reviewed on its own merits. This may result in a further referral to independent medical assessors to determine if the driver remains medically unfit to carry passengers in wheelchairs and/or assistance dogs.