

Our Ref: GB1Whitesides

Your Ref:

Date:

Please ask for: Giles Bridge

**Sent by email only to:  
Licensing at Fylde BC**

Mr Chris Hambly  
Licensing Department  
Fylde Council

Dear Mr Hambly

### **Expediting DBS Checks**

I am writing on behalf of Daniel Whiteside of Whitesides to explore the possibility of amending the means by which Fylde Borough Council carries out DBS checks of prospective private hire and hackney carriage drivers.

Mr Whiteside's feels the difficulties are as follows: 1) it is increasingly difficult to recruit new drivers of suitable quality and commitment, 2) a large proportion of excellent potential drivers are lost to the trade because of the length of time it is taking to become licensed. Obtaining a DBS certificate is the biggest cause of delay to the process of obtaining a licence. Potential drivers are generally looking to change career and explore the possibility of joining the taxi trade whilst at the same time as looking at other potential jobs, very often driving and delivery work.

The difficulties in recruiting good quality drivers has an effect upon the service which the trade as a whole and Whitesides in particular are able to provide to customers. This year Mr Whiteside has had 30 potential drivers, of whom only 4 have actually become licensed drivers. Whitesides has contacted the potential drivers and found that the length of time it takes to get licensed is a significant cause of them not pursuing their application.

Whitesides are attempting to expand their operations because they know that to succeed as an operator it is necessary to be able to provide a reliable service based upon excellent customer relations. This requires investment in an expanding number of excellent drivers and also in new technology to improve customer service. These improvements are costly

and come at a time of increasing costs for operators, including an increase in £10,000 on car fleet insurance. Whitesides' ability to improve the quality of their service to customers is being put in jeopardy by the difficulties in recruiting drivers.

Mr Whiteside fully understands and appreciates the necessity of obtaining the enhanced DBS check prior to the council deciding whether or not to licence a particular driver. The difficulties that Mr Whiteside faces are replicated in other local authorities and affect other operators. Other local authorities, such as Liverpool, have reduced these problems and successfully involved operators more closely in the recruitment and licensing process.

Fylde council's taxi licensing policy at paragraphs 5.3 and 5.4 seems to indicate that it would be possible for the driver to present to the council an enhanced DBS check which is up to 3 months old. This would seem to allow for the possibility of the prospective driver and/or operator to obtain the DBS certificate. Appendix D of the policy makes clear that it is necessary for the driver to obtain a DBS certificate through the council. A DBS certificate can only be obtained for the question of considering an application for a private hire or hackney carriage licence, by a local authority. It is not open to Mr Whiteside to obtain enhanced DBS checks other than through the council.

The difficulty faced by Mr Whiteside is that many potential drivers are deterred by the length of time it will take to obtain a licence. These candidates need to obtain employment reasonably quickly because of their own financial commitments. Very often these potential drivers are the best prospects, but for that very reason they are attractive to other potential employers. As a consequence, Mr Whiteside believes that were Fylde to adopt a different approach to obtaining DBS certificates that the process could be expedited thus assisting him in recruiting the most suitable drivers.

As licensing consultants, we have experience of other operators experiencing similar difficulties in recruiting good quality drivers. These difficulties can be minimised by speeding up the process for obtaining DBS checks. A system which works well in Liverpool is where the obtaining of certificates is outsourced to a company, Personnel Checks, who specialise in providing enhanced DBS checks. The scheme is set up to minimise the administrative hold ups which create avoidable delays. Firstly, operators are accredited to carry out the ID checks, ensuring that they are done correctly first time. Secondly, the application is completed online with assistance of the operator, again ensuring that it is completed correctly first time. Thirdly given the fact that the Personnel Checks are completing large numbers of applications, they benefit from online access to DBS, which reduces delays in them administering the process and DBS issuing the certificate. It is important to point out that neither Whitesides nor a2z licensing have any connection to Personnel Checks.

Our existing client in Liverpool, where the local authority use Personnel Checks, have completed over 100 such checks this year. This is a significant number and provides a representative sample. Of those checks 10% were returned within a week, 30% within 2 weeks, 70% within 3 weeks and 95% within 4 weeks. I understand that such figures would compare very favourably with the times taken under the existing procedures used by Fylde Council.

Moving to a similar system would greatly help Mr Whiteside in his efforts to recruit the best drivers into the trade, which is becoming increasingly difficult as the unemployment rates have declined and employees have greater bargaining power in the labour market. Such

an approach would ensure that operators are more closely involved in the application process, helping to improve the recruitment of the best drivers as quickly as possible.

If possible I would like to discuss the possibility of moving to such a system, which would enable the council to meet statutory commitments to support the growth of regulated business in line with the purpose of the Regulators' Code<sup>1</sup> and the Council's Corporate Plan to create a 'thriving economy' by supporting job creation and the improvement of standards in a key local service by employing the best local talent

Yours sincerely,

**Giles Bridge**

Licensing Consultant

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/300126/14-705-regulators-code.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/300126/14-705-regulators-code.pdf)