



Taxis and minicabs -

Our report on whether the laws should change



Easy Read version of:
Law Commission report number 347

About this paper



The Law Commission wrote this report.



We are independent (not part of the government).



Our job is to say if laws need changing to make them fairer and easier to understand.



This report is about the law in England and Wales for taxis and minicabs. Minicabs are also called private hire vehicles.



In May 2012 we asked people if there were problems with the law and how things could be made better.



We travelled across England and Wales, spoke with hundreds of people and got over 3,000 written replies.



This report is about what people told us and what we think the Government should put into a new law.



There is a longer paper and other information on our website:
www.lawcom.gov.uk

What we looked at



Only drivers and vehicles with certain licenses can carry paying passengers.



There are 2 types of licences for:

1. taxis that can pick up passengers in the street or at a taxi rank. You can also book a taxi with the driver.



2. minicabs that can only pick up passengers who book through a company that has a proper licence.



A taxi or minicab business is breaking the law if they work without getting a licence.

In general, they can only take work in the area where the licence was given.

Problems with the law at the moment



The laws about taxis and minicabs are complicated and old fashioned. Some of them were written over 150 years ago.

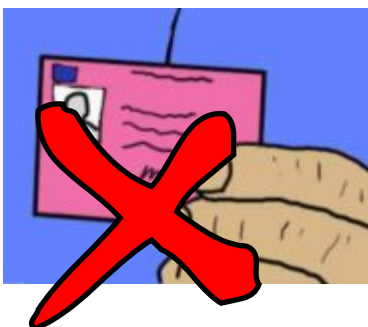


Most people told us they think the law needs to change.



The rules do not deal with important things, like:

1. driver training about the needs and safety of disabled passengers
2. how to deal with new ways of booking using mobile phones and the internet
3. punishing drivers licensed in one area and working in a different one





4. it is not clear if some vehicles are covered by the law or not, things like stretch limos and pedicabs or cycle taxis



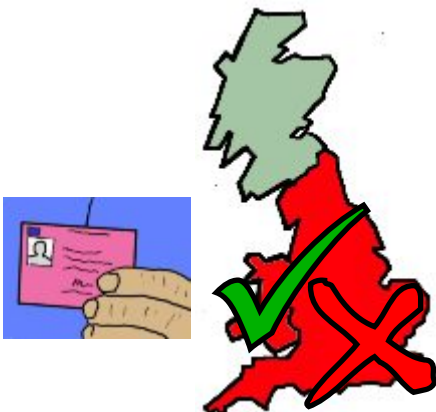
5. Allowing people that need to carry passengers in their car as part of their job, like carers for example, to do so without having to have a minicab licence.



There are lots of different rules about taxis and minicabs in England and Wales but no common rules for the whole country.

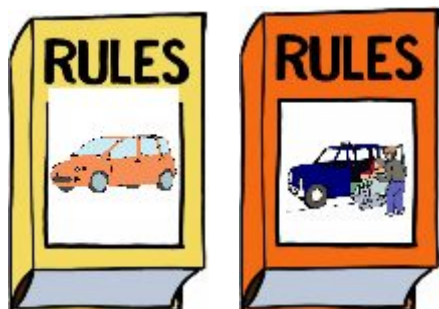


This can mean that in some areas services are more expensive.



Or drivers that might not get a licence in one area, might get one in another.

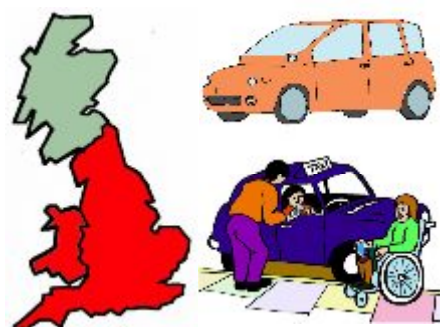
What we will tell the Government



There should still be different rules about how taxis and minicabs work.



Minicabs would still have to be booked through a company that has a proper licence.



We think the government needs to make some national rules for taxis and minicabs about the most important things.

These are things like:



- having safe drivers and vehicles



- making sure people with a disability can use taxis and minicabs and be safe in them.



The Government should ask people what these rules should be before they decide.



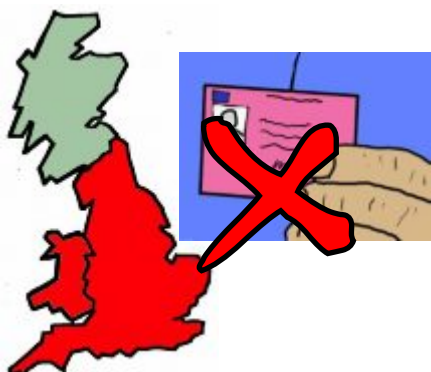
For example, it would be very important to find out what disabled users and drivers think.



Local Councils could add local rules of their own for taxis working in their area.



New rules would make it easier for minicab firms to work with drivers and vehicles from different areas. This would give passengers more choice.



We think there should be new powers to stop vehicles and take away their licence if they are unsafe, even if the driver is from a different area.



Taxi and minicab drivers could be able to use bigger vehicles with up to 16 passengers.



Some cars should not be included in the law.



These include cars used:

- by carers



- for weddings and funerals.



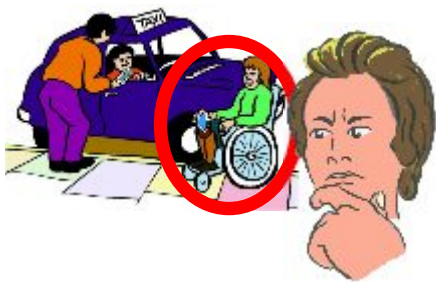
Cars like stretch limos and pedicabs should be included in the new law.



We agreed with people who told us it is important for local councils to decide how many taxis can work in their area.

This stops problems with too many in one place.

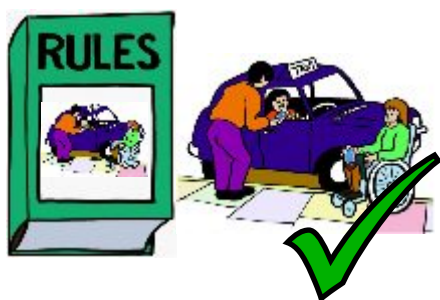
Access



We know that some disabled people have had problems using taxis and minicabs.



We think all drivers, of both taxis and minicabs, should have disability training to be able to get a licence.



To help stop drivers ignoring disabled passengers, the people giving licenses can make it a rule that taxi drivers must stop for disabled people in their area.



Complaining should be made easier and more accessible.



The people who give licenses should also give information about accessible taxis and minicabs in their area.

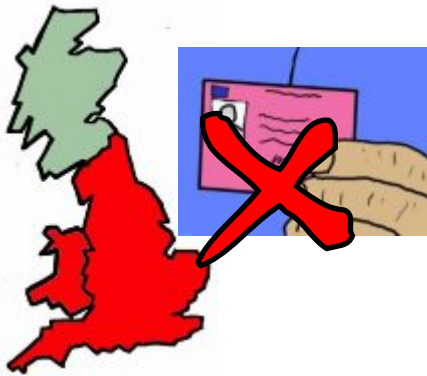
Larger minicab firms should have a certain number of accessible vehicles.

Making sure the rules are followed



If drivers break the rules it should be made easier to do something about it like:

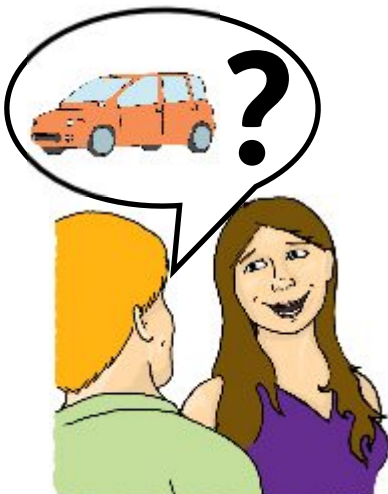
- allowing people who give licences, and are also specially trained, to stop the taxi or minicab on the road



- taking away a licence if there is an immediate danger to the public, even if the driver or vehicle is from a different area.



- taking the vehicle away and tougher fines for people that **tout**, in particular if they try to pick up vulnerable passengers.

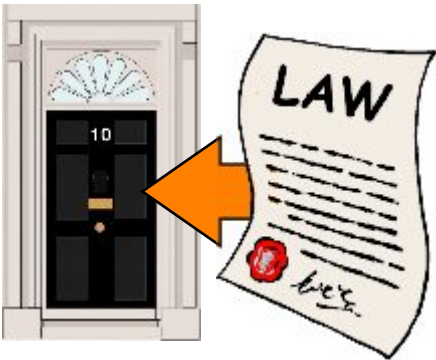


(**Touts** go up to people and ask them if they want to hire a car. It is against the law to tout.)

What happens next?



We have written a new draft law that includes all of the things in our report.



We have sent our report and the draft law to Government.



Government needs to decide if they agree with what we say and whether to change the law.



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