

**Equality Impact Assessment**

**Basic**

This basic impact assessment is an initial screening process to help identify if a full Equality Impact Assessment is required and, if it isn’t, to record the reasons why.

It considers positive, negative or no impact on each of the 9 protected characteristics in relation to addressing the 3 aims of the Equality Duty that we as a public body must give due regard to;

* Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
* Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
* Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Environment

Directorate

Service

Food, Health & Safety and Licensing

Title of policy, strategy, project or service

Removal of current quantity restriction – Taxi Licensing

Is the policy, strategy, project or service;

Existing New/proposed Changed/Reviewed

X

Q 1. Aim of the policy, strategy, project or service

*In accordance with section 16 of the Transport Act 1985, The Council may set quantity restrictions on the number of Hackney Carriage (taxi) licences it issues, but only if it is satisfied that there is no significant ‘unmet demand’ in its area. Braintree District Council currently restricts the number of taxi licences it issues to 84 with 81 issued i.e. three are not issued. 17 taxis are currently wheelchair accessible. Two taxi licences due to be issued in March 2023 will bring the allocation of wheelchair accessible vehicles to 19.*

Following a period of public and key stakeholder consultation and in accordance with Government guidance, it is proposed to remove the quantity restriction which will allow anyone who meets the Council’s qualifying criteria to obtain a taxi licence.

Q 2. Who is this policy, strategy, project or service going to benefit or have a detrimental impact

on & how?

The change to existing policy will benefit the travelling public by facilitating the potential increase in the number of available taxis including wheelchair accessible vehicles. The increase in available taxis may also create more choice and competition, including the possible downward pressure in fares. It is intended that this proposed change will have no detrimental impact to the travelling public or a protected characteristic.

Any impacts identified which could benefit or be detrimental to the licensed taxi trade have not been identified within this assessment.

Q3. Is this policy, strategy, project or service aimed at one of the protected characteristics?

If so, what justification is there for this?

This change of policy is not aimed at any one of the protected characteristics, however it is likely to have a positive impact for the travelling public who rely on taxi services as a means of transport.

Q 4. Thinking about each of the protected characteristics does or could the policy, strategy,

project or service have a negative or positive impact?

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Group** | **Negative** | **Positive/**  **No impact** | **Unclear** |
| Age |  | **X** |  |
| Disability |  | **X** |  |
| Gender reassignment |  | **X** |  |
| Marriage & civil partnership (only in respect of eliminating unlawful discrimination). |  | **X** |  |
| Pregnancy & maternity |  | **X** |  |
| Race |  | **X** |  |
| Religion or belief |  | **X** |  |
| Sex |  | **X** |  |
| Sexual orientation |  | **X** |  |

**If the answer for any group is ‘negative’ or ‘unclear’ do a full EIA**

Q5. Thinking about each of the protected characteristics does or could the policy, strategy,

project or service help to support the 3 aims of the Equality Duty?

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Group** | **Yes** | **No** | **Unclear** |
| Age | **X** |  |  |
| Disability | **X** |  |  |
| Gender reassignment | **X** |  |  |
| Marriage & civil partnership (only in respect of eliminating unlawful discrimination). | **X** |  |  |
| Pregnancy & maternity | **X** |  |  |
| Race | **X** |  |  |
| Religion or belief | **X** |  |  |
| Sex | **X** |  |  |
| Sexual orientation | **X** |  |  |

**If the answer for any group is ‘no’ do a full EIA**

Q 6. What evidence has been used (e.g. data, feedback, consultation & engagement, surveys) that may influence the policy, strategy, project or service?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Group** | **Evidence** |
| Age | * Taxi and private hire vehicle best practice guidance DFT 2022 consultation draft Pages 46-48 * Competition & Markets Authority review of licensing conditions on taxis and private hire vehicles imposed by Licensing Authorities 2017, Pages 7-8 * Results Public consultation * Results Trade consultation * Licensing Committee report 21st March 2023   The above evidence applies to all sections.  Public transport, including taxis, play a key role in helping people to stay connected and maintain independence when they are unable to drive. This could include older people (age not determined) and younger people under the legal age of being able to drive. Older people are more likely to have a disability or longer-term health problem which sees this group facing many of the similar needs of people with a disability. Those in rural areas, which often have a higher proportion of older people, are often dependant on car journeys to travel when they want/need to. Furthermore, aging is linked with a reduction in personal car use and people being more reliant on public transport, taxis and ‘lifts.  Younger people are more likely to rely on all forms of public transport, including taxis, for access to education, training, employment as well as recreation. Children generally lack the ability to travel independently due to their age, and some rely on taxis to get to school/nursery. The availability of public transport is also as important for extracurricular activities if parents do not have a car. As a result, removal of the quantity restriction may increase service provision. |
| Disability | Taxis are a particularly important method of transport for people with a disability because of the door-to-door nature of the service. A number of respondents to the public consultation stated that that they had difficulty obtaining a wheelchair accessible vehicle and some were unable to travel either when they wanted or not at all. This problem can be exacerbated at certain times and some respondents reported having problems with obtaining an appropriate vehicle instantly either at a rank or in advance. i.e at school drop off and pick up times or at evenings/weekends.  More taxis that are capable of conveying wheelchairs may increase the likelihood of disabled people being able to obtain a vehicle and be able to travel when they want to. |
| Gender reassignment | Discrimination is part of daily life for trans people and generates ‘behaviours of avoidance’, particularly to using public transport. This can potentially reduce this group’s pool of wider employment, educational, health and recreational opportunities. Removing the quantity restriction with more licensed taxis available may improve confidence in travelling safely. |
| Pregnancy & maternity | Taxis are a common form of transport used to attend appointments relating to childbirth. Furthermore. Public transport plays a vital role in supporting social inclusion for many parents with young children. Taxis can be a preferred choice of travel for parents of children under three because of the ability to use a car seat. Parents in rural areas are more likely to use public transport, including taxis. Removing the quantity restriction may benefit this group. |
| Race | Fear of safety, from racially motivated attacks, is reported to be a barrier to using public transport networks. Removing the quantity restriction by making more taxis available may assist. |
| Religion  or belief | Certain groups of people may face an increasing risk of being victims of religious hate crime. For people who have a marked religious identity through clothing there is a heightened risk for harassment or discrimination. It is reported that this is particularly true for women who are already more vulnerable regardless of the way they dress. Taxis also transport some children to attend particular schools which accord to their religion or belief. Removing the quantity restriction with more licensed taxis may help in this regard. |
| Sex | Taxis provide a safe method of transport for males and females alike. In comparison to the total number of passenger journeys made, the Council receives relatively few complaints directed towards taxi drivers.  However there remains a perceived apprehension with some use of taxis by some passengers. The public survey attached to the main report, identified that at least two respondents felt unsafe using taxis or had concerns waiting for taxis late at night even to the extent of changing their preferred method of travel to ensure taxis are available at a particular location. One respondent asked whether there is any way of highlighting female taxi drivers or helping women to feel safer hiring a taxi. The respondent stated they don't like to use taxis much because they make them feel nervous/anxious. Even though they know they're licenced and vetted.  A Women’s Safety Survey completed in 2021 by Essex County Council revealed that when asked, amongst many other things; actions to help women feel safer in public spaces; a response included ‘*Women friendly cabs or initiatives to get help’ and when asked behaviours to increase feelings of safety 33% of males and 14% of females stated they would take taxis at certain times.*  A Public Transport Survey completed by Essex County Council in 2021 asked 311 respondents, 78% female, 20% male throughout Essex a number of questions regards the use of public transport. More respondents feel somewhat or very unsafe on trains than on buses or taxis.  More specific to taxis, when asked what is it that makes passengers feel unsafe using a taxi; 30% felt it was the driver (not the driving), 30% Don’t ever feel safe in taxis, 24% felt it was the lack of other passengers, 24% Lack of CCTV. 20% stated that they don’t trust private taxis and 18% There is no defined route, whilst 15% provided other as a reason and finally 6% stated that they generally don’t feel safe in public places.  12% of passengers have had an experience in a *taxi* that has made them feel unsafe, 88% of those had it happen to themselves.  Those that had experienced or seen an incident on transport themselves were more likely to feel unsafe in general on public transport and they were far more likely to be female. A fear of public transport from women is likely to be rooted in experience.  When asked what would make respondents feel safer, 58% stated someone knowing where you are and the route you are taking, 41% stated knowing there was a female driver before boarding, 38% stated better street lighting at waiting areas, 36% better street lighting on walk home, 31% stated more Police on foot patrol, 25% stated having a personal alarm, 19% stated having phone charging points, 12% stated other measures and 12% stated neighbourhood watch in the area.  199 votes through a Essex County Council led Facebook poll in 2021 asked do you feel unsafe when using any of the below forms of public transport, 10% referred to taxis. When asked If you feel unsafe when using taxis, when do you feel the most unsafe, 97% stated in the evening and 3% said they never felt safe.  Further historic anecdotal evidence from a very small pool of subjects supports this assertion that women, in particular young women are less likely to use the services of a taxi within the Braintree District alone, especially at night.  Removal of the quantity restriction may mean more taxis and could provide an opportunity for more female drivers or female orientated businesses. It is particularly important for female passengers who may otherwise use less safe methods such as walking alone late at night, sharing a taxi with strangers, or using unlicensed vehicles. Increasing the number of easily recognisable taxis should have a positive impact in this regard. |
| Sexual orientation | A 2018 LGBT survey pointed to public transport as the most common place where respondents avoided being open about their sexual orientation and that it may even be avoided altogether. Removing the quantity restriction may assist here.  Transport for London found that LGBTQIA+ passengers are three times more likely to encounter unsolicited sexual behaviour on London's public transport compared to heterosexual people.  Fear of violence and crime encountered on and around public transport is also a pivotal factor in the travel choices or lack thereof amongst the LGBTQIA+ community, forcing them to limit their options and apply self-policing behaviours; this inevitably makes LGBTQIA+ people pay hidden costs to travel safely. |

Q 7. Using the responses to questions 4 & 5 should a full EIA be carried out on this

policy, strategy, project or service?

x

Yes No

Provide your reasons for your response showing how you have considered due regard.

As the proposal aims to increase the number of taxis by removing the quantity restriction currently in place, there are no obvious reasons why one of the protected characteristics would be adversely affected.

More competition could provide improved customer choice and in turn provide positive outcomes for those protected characteristics.

Completed by (Print name):

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Daniel Mellini

Signature :

Josie Falco

Approved by Head of Service (print name):

J Falco

Signature :

9th March 2023

Date: