

**In partnership with  
MOBILITY SERVICES LIMITED  
And  
CheckedSafe**

**Initial White Paper (February 2026)**

**IMPROVING SAFETY & COMPLIANCE IN  
TAXIS AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES  
SIMPLY AND CHEAPLY**



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**Version 2**

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## 1. SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF DOCUMENT

This document provides analysis of a series of recent Freedom of Information (FOI) requests to 40 councils and licensing authorities who license two thirds of England's taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (PHVs). The report is not being made public and is only being distributed to the councils who participated in the FOI process together with a small number of umbrella organisations who advise councils and licensing authorities.

The councils are deliberately not named in this report as the point is not to sensationalise the analysis or embarrass individual councils but to provide councils and licensing authorities with evidence of the scale of the issue and identify tools to address what is obviously a serious public safety risk.

The overall purposes of the white paper is to promote better compliance and improve the safety of the vehicles licensed as either Taxi's or private hire vehicles.

## 2. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Licensed taxis and PHVs are normally subject to one comprehensive compliance test per annum. It is sometimes referred to as a compliancy MOT or Taxi MOT.

It is also the case that some licensing authorities require six monthly MOTs or indeed six-monthly inspections. These measures may be augmented by on-street enforcement which involves physical inspection of vehicles. The level, and indeed existence of on-street inspections is dependent upon the council having the resources to commission on-street inspections.

The prevalence of cross border working further exacerbates the risk as licensing enforcement officers can normally only stop licensed vehicles that are licensed by and are operating in their own licensed area. Where a vehicle is licensed in one area and the driver(s) habitually works in another licensing area it is possible that the only time the vehicle is checked is at the annual inspection. In summary it is possible that a driver uses a vehicle with serious faults and is non-compliant with regulatory requirements such as vehicle signage for many months prior to an annual inspection.

The majority of PHVs are family saloons and these can be used in some areas for up to 17 years. Recent Best Practice Guidance from the DfT to licensing authorities states:

*'Licensing authorities should not impose age limits for the licensing of vehicles instead they should consider more targeted requirements to meet their policy objectives on emissions, safety rating and increasing wheelchair accessible provision where this is low'<sup>1</sup>.*

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<sup>1</sup> [Taxi and private hire vehicle licensing best practice guidance for licensing authorities in England - GOV.UK](#) Section 8.4



This guidance will mean in practice that the taxi and PHV fleet in England will steadily become older.

An ageing fleet driving 20k-40k miles per annum should not rely on an annual inspection to ensure its safety, this, in case there is any doubt, is proven by the responses to the recent exercise where 20 licensing authorities responded to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests.

### **3. WHAT DID WE WANT TO FIND OUT?**

The FOI's covered the topics below:

#### **Question 1**

During enforcement stops or routine checks what are the top reasons for Taxi and Private Hire Vehicles being considered unsuitable to continue to be used and/or where remedial action is needed e.g. worn tyres.

#### **Question 2**

How many private hire/taxi vehicles/what percentage of those stopped have either to be taken off of the road or the driver/owner required to carry out remedial work.

#### **Question 3**

During annual vehicle examinations to renew private hire/taxi vehicle licences what are the top reasons for Taxi and Private Hire Vehicles failing to pass first time e.g. worn tyres.

#### **Question 4**

How many private hire/taxi vehicles/what percentage fail to pass the annual test first time.

### **4. WHAT LICENSING AUTHORITIES TOLD US**

Below is a summary of the responses from the councils who were sent FOI's

#### **4.1 Question 1 Response Summary**

Question 1 asked about stops and routine checks and what the main reasons for vehicles to be taken off the road or where remedial action was required. The highest number of incidences in the responses are summarised below:

- a) Tyres
- b) Brakes
- c) Steering
- d) Lights

The AA reported that:



*Defective brakes were by far the most common defect causing 750 casualties, including 10 fatalities. Tyres came second with 491 casualties, but caused more fatalities with 12 people needlessly losing their lives. Faulty steering and suspensions complete the top three, contributing towards 255 casualties with six fatalities<sup>2</sup>.*

A disturbing aspect of this data is that a daily check of each vehicle could have significantly reduced the number of such failures. No doubt this is why such checks are explicitly mandated for HGV vehicles.

#### **4.2 Question 2 Response Summary**

Question 2 asked about how many private hire/taxi vehicles/what percentage of those stopped have either to be taken off of the road or the driver/owner required to carry out remedial work. The highest number of incidences in the responses are summarised below:

The councils who were able to respond to this question provided either a percentage or a number of suspensions/revocations;

Percentages:

- a) 15% of roadside stops resulted in suspension/revocation
- b) 4.9% of roadside stops resulted in suspension/revocation
  
- c) 118 vehicles per annum of roadside stops resulted in suspension/revocation
- d) 30 vehicles per annum of roadside stops resulted in suspension/revocation

Although we cannot analyse the above data more fully to ascertain what the percentages in a) and b) represent numerically they appear significant. The numerical data in c) and d) appear substantial given they are from regional licensing authorities.

This percentage/number of on-street stops resulting in vehicles being suspended/revoked is indicative of a serious compliance and therefore safety issue. It is unknown from the data whether the suspensions/revocations were based on a single fault or multiple faults. As well as underlining the importance of on-street compliance checks there is a need to appreciate the role drivers should play in identifying faults, particularly serious faults early and taking remedial action.

#### **4.3 Question 3 Response Summary**

Question 3 asked about the reasons for failures at the annual inspection. Not all councils keep records of the reasons for failures of those that do the main reasons are below:

- a) Tyres
- b) Brakes
- c) Lights
- d) Windscreens

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<sup>2</sup> [Road Casualties Caused By Defective Vehicles | AA](#)



e) Suspension

The RAC made some important observations about the annual check on vehicles, the MOT which is not dissimilar to the annual inspection for licensed taxis and PHVs.

*'Vehicles can fail an MOT for more than 600 different reasons. Some of these might well be difficult for owners to spot ahead of time but what's concerning is that drivers are taking cars for a test with such obvious defects as missing brakes.*

*It might be that some people are taking a car to be tested just to check quite how many things will need to be fixed before it will get through, but others look like they are turning up with vehicles displaying faults that are impossible to miss.*

*This should be food for thought for those who suggest we don't need an annual roadworthiness check – what's really worrying is how many people might be taking a chance by continuing to drive cars with potentially lethal faults just because their next MOT isn't yet due<sup>3</sup>.*

These observations by the RAC are important as they can be directly correlated to the annual taxi and PHV inspection. Vehicles have been driving around for periods of time with faults that could have been identified by a simple daily check.

The important point being that neither a yearly or half yearly check is adequate to ensure the roadworthiness of a vehicle.

#### 4.4 Question 4 Response Summary

Question 4 concerned the number of taxis/PHVs that failed the annual inspection the first time they presented their vehicle. Not all licensing authorities keep a record of this, from those that were able to provide the data is listed below:

- a) 49%
- b) 25%
- c) 23%
- d) 21%
- e) 14%
- f) 3%

One licensing authority provided the type and numeric value of each fault that resulted in a fail. NB we do know if some fails were as a consequence of multiple or single failures:

- g) Tyres 168x
- h) Brakes 140x
- i) Suspension 71x
- j) Lights 34x

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<sup>3</sup> [MOT data reveals extent of unroadworthy vehicles](#)



- k) Shock absorbers 35x
- l) Windscreens 30x
- m) Oil 21x
- n) Registration plates 22x

The concern about both the percentages in a) to f) and the breakdown of failure reasons in g) to n) is that these faults were obviously present prior to the vehicle being presented for the annual inspection. This means that in one area 49% of the licensed vehicles in one licensing area were driving around presumably carrying passengers with faults serious enough for vehicles to fail their annual inspection.

It should be remembered that the MOT test is the minimum standard a vehicle has to attain in order for it to be driven on the roads.

## 5. A DAILY CHECK WILL REDUCE THE PROBLEM

Organisations and institutions such as HSE<sup>4</sup>, FORS<sup>5</sup> and DVLA<sup>6</sup> recommend daily walkaround checks on vehicles. There are examples of licensing authorities requiring drivers to carry out daily walkarounds but how effective are they unless enforced and recorded?

The data in section 4 sets out a very clear picture of the seriousness of the problem of taxis and PHVs being driven around potentially for months with serious safety problems. The AA's report highlighted the substantial consequences of allowing large numbers of aging, high mileage vehicles across the UK being permitted to continue to drive around with serious faults (see Table 1 below)

Table 1 – AA Findings<sup>7</sup>

Fault	Casualties	Fatalities
Defective Brakes	750	10
Defective Tyres	491	12
Faulty Steering and Suspension	255	6

These are truly appalling figures concerning casualties and fatalities that could have been avoided if the vehicles involved were in good condition. Licensing authorities are not exercising a reasonable duty of care by requiring one or even two inspections per year. On road inspections are almost non-existent in some areas and best endeavours in many others. In any event with cross border working vehicles may be slipping through the net of even the most diligent of councils.

The regulatory requirement for a daily walkaround by the driver before starting work each day, that is properly scripted, recorded and reportable when it has not taken place would

<sup>4</sup> [Inspection, maintenance and repair - HSE](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Toolbox-talk-Check-your-vehicle.pdf](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Check your vehicle is safe to drive - GOV.UK](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Road Casualties Caused By Defective Vehicles | AA](#)



move vehicle safety in taxis and PHVs forward substantially. As well as the more serious safety related faults there would be a record of compliance with signage and other regulatory requirements. The evidence of the scale of this problem is very clear and licensing authorities should take action to mitigate the risk of vehicle faults causing preventable casualties and fatalities.

## 6. £1.00 PER WEEK TO IMPROVE SAFETY

Checkedsafe<sup>8</sup> can provide a customisable solution to any taxi or PHV driver who is required by regulation to carry out daily walkaround checks. Not only does the safety of the driver, his/her passengers and other road users and pedestrians improve but they have a clear record of having carried out the required walkaround checks.

Licensing authorities can choose to be alerted when a driver fails to carry out their walkaround. They can also choose to be alerted if a defect is identified to monitor the management of such defects.

The technology is smart enough to require photos, videos and provide GPS information so that any attempts at simply 'ticking boxes' just can't happen.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The evidence provided by licensing authorities who responded to our FOI requests clearly shows that there is a public safety risk due to the behaviour of some drivers/owners. Vehicles are not being maintained to the level passengers of licensed vehicles would expect nor to the level required by regulation and even in numerous cases to a point where they are in a condition where they cannot legally use the roads.

A simple regulatory change to require daily walkaround checks will have a substantial, beneficial impact on public safety and risk reduction in every licensing area. The technology provided by Checkedsafe is inexpensive (£1.00 per week which is claimable as a business expense), ensures that checks takes place and can report where checks are not taking place.

We all have a duty to reduce casualties and fatalities and as per rule 97 of the Highway Code, all road users are required to ensure "your vehicle is legal and roadworthy"

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<sup>8</sup> [Sponsored - Free Trial - CheckedSafe](#)

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This is an extract of the relevant part of the Highway Code

**97. Before setting off.** You **MUST** ensure that

- you have a valid licence and insurance to drive the vehicle you intend to use (see Annex 3)
- your vehicle is legal and roadworthy (see Annexes 3 and 6 for important vehicle maintenance and safety checks).

It is hard to argue against a requirement for mandatory daily pre-use checks. If just one life is saved by a pre-use check that identifies an unsafe defect then that would be justification enough.

END

