

Dear sir/madam

I am the operator of XXX in Barnstaple, North Devon.

As you are aware the Covid-19 pandemic has substantially changed the dynamics of all industries nationally, and this has changed the way the businesses operate and are able to recruit to meet demands.

At XXX we are currently at breaking point regarding income generated to support the costs of the business, XXX income is generated from drivers paying rent to the business in return for controllers, vehicles, support, and fares generated for the drivers, so as you can see XXX requires drivers to pay rent for its income to cover costs.

Over the Pandemic and various lockdowns have resulted in drivers leaving the trade as there was limited earning potential or were not able to renew their Council Badges as it was too costly for them, considering there was hardly any work for them out there in the taxi trade. Our driver numbers have fallen to a third of what they were before the pandemic, this has resulted in a decline of bookings we are able to take due to the number of drivers.

Due to the restrictions being lifted, the flow of taxis required by the public has increased dramatically across all our shifts particularly the evenings, with this increase and not enough taxis, we are seeing that the public are loitering in our town centres looking for taxis. This in return will increase the demand on our emergency services.

To alleviate these recruitment problems, it is required that any potential individual who wants to join the taxi trade, is looking at the trade as an attractive option, this is where we need the support of our local authorities to allow us to recruit efficiently and be cost effective.

Currently to be a taxi driver is not attractive to most candidates, as it's costly and can take many months to complete all the required tasks to achieve the required skills necessary to become a licenced taxi driver in North Devon.

The support I am asking for consists of:

- Reduce the cost of the process to be a licenced taxi driver i.e., Torbay Council have reduced cost of licencing for 12 months
- Make the process considerably more efficient i.e., issue temporary licences after satisfactory DBS and Medical checks have been completed and allow candidates to complete the remaining components to be completed over 12 Months, for example like Torbay Council have achieved to help operators to recruit.
- Our North Devon Council licencing webpage and various media need to promote for more taxi drivers.

If these steps are not taken as soon as possible, we will ourselves and others, who operate fleets of taxis are it currently unviable to operate a taxi company in the current climate, and it won't take long to cease trading if things don't change very soon. That would great shame to long standing operators, staff and drivers who support and serve local towns across Barnstaple and North Devon. I feel we have been neglected and unsupported by our local authority, whereas other licencing

authorities have seen the concerns and problems and taken initiative and provided support to their licenced drivers and operators.

Please can you help me raise these concerns and help our licenced Taxi Fleets.
Your prompt response would be much appreciated.

I have added link to Torbay Councils website for your reference:
<https://www.torbay.gov.uk/business/licensing/taxis/>

Regards

XXX