

Local Government OMBUDSMAN

10 January 2011

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Private Hire Consultation
TfL London Taxi and Private Hire
4th Floor Palestra
197 Blackfriars Road
London SE1 8NJ

**If telephoning please contact Deborah Carrigan on 020 7217 4642
email address: d.carrigan@lgo.org.uk**

Dear Sir / Madam

Consultation on Private Hire - October 2010

I am writing as Local Government Ombudsman in response to your consultation on private hire arrangements. The Ombudsmen investigate complaints of administrative fault, or service failure, against local authorities, or those working on their behalf, causing a personal injustice. We are grateful for the opportunity to comment on TfL's proposals to improve private hire procedures.

I have recently investigated a complaint against a London Council concerning transport arrangements for vulnerable children with special needs which had been contracted out to an independent organisation. During my investigation it became apparent that much reliance is placed on TfL's vetting of drivers and that this gives confidence to both councils and contractors that the driver is an appropriate person to hold such a licence. While the Ombudsman takes the view that councils and their contractors should have proper safeguarding procedures in place, nonetheless it is also important to make the vetting system for the licensing of drivers as robust as possible.

With this in mind, I would comment on the proposal in 4.3 of the consultation document concerning the residency criterion. The current licensing system, as I understand it, effectively relies on the honesty of the applicant.

I consider that Driver Proposal 1 concerning a minimum three year residency would be an appropriate way to achieve the objective of improving the overall quality of data and information with regards to an applicant's criminal background. The Ombudsman also considers that an applicant should have to provide proof of residency during the above period.

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Jane Martin
Local Government Ombudsman
Nigel Ellis
Deputy Ombudsman

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I expect to publish a report on the complaint referred to above, within the next fortnight.
I will forward a copy to you as soon as it is available.

I trust that this is helpful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Martin', with a horizontal line underneath.

Dr Jane Martin
Local Government Ombudsman