

PCO REVOKES PH LICENCE OF WIFE KILLER FOLLOWING REVIEW

Recent united trade demonstrations against the man convicted of manslaughter that was allowed to do the KoL and was also licensed as a private hire driver resulted in a full review of the licensing decision. The man has now had his ph licence revoked and is no longer on the KoL. The PCO is also carrying out a wider review of the licensing guidelines, and will use a panel of experts to advise on difficult cases in future. The panel will include experts in the fields of criminal justice, as well as senior representatives from the PCO.

GUIDELINES TIGHTENED FOR LICENSING TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE DRIVERS IN LONDON

TfL has announced plans to tighten the guidelines for licensing taxi and private hire drivers in the Capital. In future, taxi and private hire licences will not be granted to applicants who have been convicted for serious or violent offences, unless there are exceptional mitigating circumstances. This is a direct result of the huge amount of interest in the case and the pressure from the cab trade. Soon after the cab trade began to demonstrate its feelings, the PCO ordered a full review of the licensing decision. That review is now complete and has concluded that insufficient weight was given to the applicant's criminal history when a decision to grant them a private hire licence was made. As a result, the individual's private hire licence has been revoked and the person will not continue to study the Knowledge.

SAFETY IS OUR PRIORITY

The taxi trade were in unanimous agreement that this case was one which could have compromised the reputation of the trade; it also could affect the safety of the travelling public. Jeroen Weimar, the Chief Operating Officer for TfL Surface Transport, has stated that TfL understood these concerns. "We understand why this case caused concern and I would like to reiterate that safety is always our top priority. Taxi and private hire drivers are in a position of trust, and it's our job to ensure they deserve that trust.

"This was a difficult case, but following a thorough review, we believe that insufficient weight was given to the applicant's criminal history when the decision to grant them a private hire licence was made. We have therefore revoked this individual's licence and they will no longer be allowed to study the Knowledge.

"The PCO has robust processes in place to determine whether or not individuals are fit to become licensed taxi or private hire drivers, and in the overwhelming majority of cases I am confident the right decision is made. However, we have tightened our guidelines with regards to applicants' criminal histories as we seek to prevent such cases in the future."

VETTING WOULD BE DRIVERS

The PCO has a long established, robust process in place for vetting would-be taxi drivers. The vetting of private hire drivers in London began when ph licensing started. Anyone with a history of violence would not have been licensed

until they had a clean record for a minimum of three years, more if the original offence was of a serious nature, if it was racially motivated or if the individual had more than one conviction for a violent offence. The Licensing Authority made decisions on a case by case basis, in line with the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act, 1974. The change in guidelines aims to make the licensing decision more robust when considering individuals with criminal histories.

The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act, 1974, enables criminal convictions to become 'spent', or forgotten, after a rehabilitation period. The rehabilitation period depends on the penalty imposed. After this period, an ex-offender is not normally obliged to mention the conviction when applying for a job. However, Section 7(3) of the Act allows the Licensing Authority to take into consideration certain spent convictions in deciding whether or not to license an individual as a taxi or private hire driver, e.g. sexual offences, convictions for aggravated assault, etc.

The new PCO guidelines take this a step further and set out explicitly a set of offences which will, following conviction, rule out an individual's being considered for a licence. The PCO is putting together a list of those crimes for which a previous conviction will lead to a refusal unless there are exceptional mitigating circumstances. This will not be an exhaustive list but will indicate the type of crimes for which a previous conviction will lead to a refusal.

I AM SHAKING A TIN! *By Rob Woodford*

I need your help - not a lot - just a little - I am running (well, jogging and alternating with walking more likely) the New York City Marathon in just a few weeks time for a very worthy charity called 'Get Kids Going!'

Get Kids Going! is a National charity which gives disabled children and young people the wonderful opportunity of participating in sport. They help promote sports for disabled children by providing them with specially built sports' wheelchairs so they can do marathons, triathlons, tennis, athletics, mountain skiing, rugby, basketball etc. Get Kids Going! also helps and encourages British disabled children to compete by supporting them with their sports; training, physiotherapy, travel, design and development of sports' wheelchairs. With our help many could become record holders and Paralympic champions!



Get Kids Going! support children with all disabilities and make sure that any equipment which is out grown

is recycled to other children, so supporters' valuable donations are never wasted.

Yes, I know I've rattled the odd collection pot under your shnoz quite a few times since my first London Marathon in 1991, and over the years I've raised a sum approaching £50k for various good causes in my eleven previous marathons and countless half marathons, oh and the never to be attempted again 'Marathon de Sables'! But these old legs are now 53 years young so it may be my last!! And the training has gone really well; I have cut down on the Guinness and have found a treadmill in a gym that is positioned in front of a TV monitor showing Sky Sports.....

Seriously, it would be great to knock up a good haul here for Get Kids Going with this run - I don't care if you sponsor me 50p or £50 - if everyone bungs in a small amount I know I would have a very good fund raising campaign.