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**PRESS RELEASE**

**59 per cent of councils can’t enforce new law offering equality for disabled taxi users**

* *Full local breakdown of regions and councils is available* [*here*](http://www.kingqueen.org.uk/s167)

Only 11 per cent of councils are able to enforce a new law ensuring equal treatment for disabled taxi users.

A change in the Equality Act enacted in April this year means that taxi drivers face a fine of up to £1,000 if they refuse to transport wheelchair users or attempt to charge them extra.

However, the law only applies to drivers registered on council lists of wheelchair accessible taxis, known as Section 167 lists. The Department for Transport has recommended that councils have them complete by this October, but less than half plan on doing so.

Disability activist Doug Paulley conducted Freedom of Information research with all councils in England, Scotland and Wales. Of them, only 11 per cent of councils have created a list, with a further 30 per cent intending to do so this year. That means 59 per cent have no firm plans to hit the deadline, including 26 per cent who have no plans to create a list at all.

Paulley and charity Muscular Dystrophy UK, which campaigns for disability rights, are calling on the government to make councils take their responsibilities seriously, and for all councils to set a deadline for creating a list.

The research found that many councils were not aware of the role of the Section 167 lists and many were completely unaware of their responsibilities, even those with otherwise good track records on disability provision. Transport for London, which is responsible for licensing in the capital, said that as all licensed vehicles must be wheelchair accessible that they had no need for a list. However, without the list, drivers cannot be held accountable if they discriminate against disabled passengers.

**Nic Bungay, Director of Campaigns, Care and Information at Muscular Dystrophy UK, which lobbied for years for the law change, said:**

“Taxis are not a luxury for disabled people – they often represent the only way to get from A to B when public transport isn’t accessible. Doug’s research comprehensively demonstrates how many councils are failing to ensure that disabled passengers are penalised. We need them all to implement lists now as per the government’s recommendations, and for the Department for Transport to promote the lists as a matter of urgency.”

**Doug Paulley carried out the research following a Select Committee report into the Equality Act 2010 on disability. He says:**

“It is disappointing that the Government’s intent in bringing in this legislation is being undermined by the failure of many councils to undertake the required office work, meaning that taxi drivers can continue to discriminate against wheelchair users with impunity. While conducting this research, it became clear that many councils simply didn’t think to create them until prompted. I recommend disabled people and their allies raise the issue with their local council.”

Paulley’s research also found that:-

* Two fifths of councils have under 10 per cent of their vehicles registered as wheelchair accessible, with 15 having no wheelchair-accessible taxis registered at all
* Only 30 per cent of councils require taxi drivers to take part in disability awareness training.

[Research by Muscular Dystrophy UK](http://www.musculardystrophyuk.org/app/uploads/2015/04/End_of_the_line_2016_FINAL.pdf) in 2016 has indicated that a quarter of disabled people have been refused service by a taxi driver, purely because they are disabled.

**ENDS**

**Notes to Editors**

[**Equality Act 2010 – Section 167 lists**](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/167)

Taxi and private hire vehicle drivers who are on local Section 167 lists are obliged by law to do the following or face fines of up to £1,000:

* transport wheelchair users in their wheelchair
* provide passengers in wheelchairs with appropriate assistance; and
* charge wheelchair users the same as non-wheelchair users.

Drivers may also face having their taxi or Private Hire Vehicle (PHV) licence suspended or revoked by their licencing authority.

**Doug Paulley’s research**

Doug Paulley’s research in full is available at [www.kingqueen.org.uk/s167](http://www.kingqueen.org.uk/s167), including full licensing authority breakdowns.

Paulley sent Freedom of Information requests to all taxi licensing authorities in England, Scotland and Wales. (Councils are the responsible authorities in all areas apart from London, where Transport for London is.) Responses were received from 97% (347) of them. The results show that:

* 11% (38/347) of licensing authorities currently have a Section 167 list, as per government guidance
* 30% (105/347) plan to produce a list this year, meeting government guidance
* 15% (53/347) plan to produce a list but have no specified deadline
* 18% (62/347) are undecided on whether to produce a list
* 26% (89/347) have no current plans to produce a list.

The research also shows that 39 per cent of licensing authorities have under 10 per cent of their vehicles registered as wheelchair accessible. 15 councils have no accessible taxis at all: Barrow-in-Furness, Ryedale, South Derbyshire, Rutland, Staffordshire Moorlands, Broadland, East Cambridgeshire, Epping Forest, Uttlesford, South Bucks, Lewes, Wilden, Tewkesbury and Pembrokeshire.

**Doug Paulley**

Doug is a wheelchair user and disability rights campaigner, most known for his legal action including his case against [Firstbus.](https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/firstgroup-plc-v-paulley)

**Muscular Dystrophy UK**

Muscular Dystrophy UK is the charity for 70,000 children and adults living with muscle-wasting conditions. We provide vital information, advice and support to help people live as independently as possible. We accelerate progress in research and drive the campaign for access to emerging treatments.

**About muscle-wasting conditions**

Muscle-wasting conditions cause muscles to weaken and waste over time, leading to increasingly severe disability. Some affect the heart and muscles vital for breathing, cutting lives short.