



Taxi company fined for refusing to take guide dog

We have successfully prosecuted a local taxi company for refusing to take a booking from a passenger with a guide dog.

Rainbow Travel, who have a booking office at Apsley railway station, initially agreed to dispatch a vehicle to the passenger, but when advised that they would be travelling with an assistance dog the firm said that all of their cars were busy.

Company director Imtiaz Ahmed pleaded guilty to charges under the Equality Act 2010 at St Albans Magistrates' Court on 26 April 2017. The firm was ordered to pay more than £900 in fines, costs and victim surcharge, and will now face a review of its operating licence.

Under the law, private hire operators, private hire drivers and taxi drivers cannot refuse fares which involve carrying assistance dogs, nor charge extra for the journey. Doing so is a criminal offence, and can be punished with fines of up to £1,000. Drivers with genuine and serious medical conditions affected by dogs can apply to us for a medical exemption certificate, but will only be exempted from the legal duty to carry assistance dogs if the certificate is on display in the vehicle – to date, no exemption certificates have been issued to any Dacorum driver.

Responding to the conviction, Ross Hill, Licensing Team Leader, said: "Taxis and private hire vehicles provide a vital service for people with disabilities, and it is wholly unacceptable that a taxi company should discriminate against any passenger with an assistance dog by refusing a booking.

"Incidents of this type can cause significant distress to passengers, and we trust that this penalty will act to deter any future occurrences.

"We are committed to ensuring that our licensed taxis and private hire vehicles are accessible to all, and we will not hesitate to take action against any such discrimination."

The conviction comes as we are preparing to introduce new legal requirements for designated taxis that are constructed and equipped to carry passengers in wheelchairs, with new specific criminal offences and penalties if drivers refuse.

If you have been refused a journey by a taxi, private hire vehicle or private hire operator due to a disability or presence of an assistance dog, please contact us with the details, so that we can investigate and take appropriate enforcement action against those responsible. Please email licensing@dacorum.gov.uk, or report the matter using our online taxi complaint form.