

Our Ref:
Your Ref:

19 May 2010

Lynne Featherstone MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Dear

Enhanced criminal records checks

London TravelWatch is the statutory watchdog representing transport users in London.

London's black cabs and private hire vehicles are an important part of London's passenger transport. They are used by all sorts of passengers for all sorts of journeys and are especially useful when public transport is not an option. Passengers of black cabs and mini-cabs rightly place great trust in drivers when, often alone, they hail a cab or call a licensed mini-cab.

However, maintaining Londoners' trust requires the highest vigilance of the licensing authority in its vetting of drivers. This will be the case particularly for those who entrust their children or elderly relatives to the care of a driver of a black cab or mini-cab. To enable Transport for London (TfL) to maintain the highest standards it needs access to all the police background checks that are available.

We understand that there is a question mark over the present system of allowing TfL confidential access to enhanced criminal record bureau checks as legislation forbids the general disclosure of this information to the licensing authority. This is of concern to us as it may well allow drivers of poor character to gain these positions of trust and undermine passengers' confidence in black cabs and mini-cabs.

I am therefore writing to ask that you review this issue and if necessary seek a change in the law to allow taxi and mini-cab licensing authorities access to this information, with, of course, any necessary protections.

I have copied this letter to Norman Baker, Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Department for Transport.

Yours sincerely

Sharon Grant
Chair, London TravelWatch
Cc Norman Baker MP