

FOI Request (received 30 September 2019) - Reference: DFI/2019-0357

From 2016 until now, how many complaints have you had about taxis?

What were the complaints about?

How many were for violence per cent?

How many of the complaints you received did you have to step into? I am aware you have this nonsense about taxi depots investing their own complaints and under the data law you can't tell the person who made the complaint the outcome crazy but true

How many drivers because of complaints you have taken or suspended their licences?

Response (issued 24 October 2019)

Thank you for your emails dated 30 September 2019 and 11 October 2019 requested information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 on information held by this office relating to taxi complaints, as above.

Details of complaints about taxis since 2016

In response to your request, I can confirm that the number of complaints received about taxi drivers/taxi operators from 2016 to present is 277.

- The complaints against taxi drivers/operators are categorised as follows:-
- Taxi blasting horn late at night;
- Taxi Driver behaviour - Aggressive/attitude;
- Fares - Excessive;
- Property – Damaged/stolen;
- Disputes over the use of taxi ranks by taxi drivers/operators;
- Dangerous driving;
- Lack of taxi availability during peak times;
- Taxi parked in residential areas; and
- Taxis operating illegally

The records indicate that there were no complaints received relating to violence.

The procedure for making a complaint about a taxi service is published on the website and can be accessed from the following link.

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/making-complaint-about-taxi-service>.

The procedure encourages customers who are unhappy with the fare, quality of vehicle, driving or behaviour of a taxi driver to make a complaint directly to the driver or taxi operator. Taxi Operators are legally required to have an established complaints procedure, section 7(7) of the Taxi Operators Licensing Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 refers. If the complainant is unable to get the complaint resolved directly with the service provider, then the matter is reported to the Passenger Transport Licensing Regulations Unit.

Each individual complaint is considered on its own merit and there are a number of options available to the Department in taking any action. When resolved, the detail of each individual complaint is scanned on and stored in the Department's computer system against the relevant driver and / or operator record.

The current system cannot easily facilitate a breakdown of taxi driver complaints. In order to obtain the information requested, each individual record would have to be scrutinised before this information could be collated. Under Freedom of Information legislation, if a substantial amount of work is involved in processing a request, a fee may be payable to us before we can retrieve and provide the information. Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act does not oblige a public authority to comply with a request for information if the authority estimates that the cost of complying with the request would exceed the appropriate limit. The estimated costs involved in sifting the information you requested would significantly exceed the statutory limit of £600. In addition, it would require the diversion of staff from their normal duties for an unacceptable period of time and this would have an adverse impact on service delivery. We have therefore decided that it would not be in the public interest to proceed further in relation to this request, however, I can provide an overview of the complaints process.

The Department can take a number of different actions, depending on the severity of the issue, which includes the option to refer the matter to the local council, TransportNI, DVA Compliance and Enforcement or PSNI. The Department also has the powers to suspend or revoke a taxi driver or operator's licence where it is no longer satisfied that the licence holder is fit to hold a licence.

The Department takes complaints seriously and will, in all cases, liaise directly with the Taxi Operator to seek a resolution of the issue.

Complaints about Bridge Cabs

In addition to your complaint about Bridge Cabs, the Regulation Unit has only received 1 other complaint relating to this company. The complaint received related to the vehicles being used by this operator and was referred to the Roadside Enforcement Team for further action.

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