

Guidance Notes for English Language Oral skills assessment

East Staffordshire Borough Council expect all licensed taxi and private hire drivers to have a sufficient command of the English language, so that they can communicate freely and clearly with passengers and officials, including in stressful and emergency situations. Drivers are also expected to be able to identify situations where there may be passenger safeguarding concerns and to possess sufficient communication skills to report those concerns. The ability to converse effectively in English also helps avoid job related misunderstandings such as wrong directions, fare disputes, collecting the wrong customer and misunderstanding a customer's assistance needs.

Applicants for private hire vehicle or hackney carriage drivers licences are therefore required to undertake an assessment of their communication skills, for which an additional fee will be payable.

In addition to new applicants, any current licensed driver may be required to undertake the assessment where the Licensing Service believe there are reasonable grounds to require assessment. Reasonable grounds would include instances where authorised officers have identified through enforcement activity or substantiated complaint that a driver may have insufficient command of the English language.

Candidates failing the assessment are permitted to retake the assessment at their own expense, however the Council would encourage the candidate to take steps to improve their English language skills in the first instance. Existing licensed drivers who fail the assessment may have their licence suspended or revoked.

The assessment consists of a 20-minute exercise, taken by telephone from our offices, during which candidates will be tested on various aspects of their speaking and listening ability. The assessment is provided by a specialist education and testing company, and consists of five sections:

1. Reading sentences from a printed list in the order instructed
2. Repeating back sentences that are read to you over the phone
3. Answering simple questions asked over the phone
4. Constructing sentences from fragments read to you over the phone (sentences divided into three or four parts)
5. Answering open questions asked over the phone (speaking for up to 30 seconds per question)

The test is entirely automated, and questions will be asked by a variety of voices. All of the questions will relate to normal life and your day-to-day activities, and there are no trick questions, although some will require you to think and compose an answer in a short space of time.

At the end of the test, a report will be produced (a copy of which will be provided to you), with a score indicating your overall ability. You will also be graded separately on sentence usage, vocabulary, fluency and pronunciation, all of which will contribute to the overall score.

For licensing purposes, we will require candidates to score at least **49 out of 80**. This indicates a good overall ability in use of the English language (equivalent to level B2 on the CEFR scale- (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages), where candidates will be able to speak fluently on a range of everyday topics, and be able to give and understand most instructions.

English Language Oral skills assessment Fee- £28.99

CARD/CHEQUE PAYMENT ONLY NO CASH

PLEASE NOTE: YOU NEED TO BRING PHOTOGRAPHIC ID TO THE VERBAL TEST

There is a facility to undertake a free “**practice test**” from the provider we use for this assessment.

Download the “Versant” app – **see logo below** and follow app instructions to undertake the practice test.



- It will ask if you have a Test Identification Number (TIN) – select – “Not Yet”
- Then select “Practice”
- Then select “Sample Test”
- Select “Sign In”
- Now follow all on screen instructions to complete the test

(This is just to give you an idea of the format and layout/pace of the assessment)

(Please note only go as far as the sentence rebuilds/re-structure as the sections after this do not relate to our test).