



Eich cyf/Your ref  
Ein cyf/Our ref

Assembly Members

16 July 2014

Dear Assembly Member

In our debate about transport in Plenary on 12 March, Mohammed Asghar AM raised an important issue about disabled people's access to taxis and private hire vehicles in Wales. Particular reference was made to overcharging, with some passengers reportedly being charged up to twice the fare of non-disabled passengers as a direct consequence of their disability.

I gave a commitment that I would ask my officials to look into this issue, working with the Equality and Human Rights Commission in Wales and representatives of local government.

I am pleased to report that our preliminary investigation into the issue revealed that none of the responding licensing authorities set a premium rate on their regulated taxi fares for the carriage of disabled people.

Whilst private hire vehicle operators are able to set their own charges, there were no instances reported where it was considered that operators were charging excessive fares for the carriage of disabled people.

Of the local authorities that responded to the call for information, 16 reported that there had been 41 complaints over the past two years about taxis and private hire vehicles. In the majority of cases, the complaints related to the non availability of suitably equipped vehicles with ramps and restraining straps, rather than overcharging.

However, the review highlighted some further anecdotal evidence that operators in some parts of Wales may be reluctant to carry disabled

people and that the availability of suitably accessible taxis and private hire vehicles is variable across Wales. It appears that this is may be a more significant problem than overcharging at present.

On this basis, I have written to leaders of local authorities in Wales reminding them about:

- the guidance issued by the Department for Transport in 2010 about licensing of taxis and private hire vehicles with particular reference to charging and accessibility for disabled passengers
- requirements imposed on public authorities in Wales that functions should be exercised in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011, with specific reference to the need to include objectives as part of their strategic equality plans and the collection of relevant information
- the need to improve public awareness about how to complain if passengers feel that they have been charged inappropriately for their journey by taxi or private hire vehicle

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'C. M.', is located at the bottom left of the page.