

60005 Taxi & Private Hire Covid Grant Schemes

I am seeking confirmation of who was eligible and the conditions required to be awarded City of Edinburgh Council Covid Taxi PHC Grants.

Please can you provide me with full details of the CEC financial support and eligibility requirements to the taxi and private hire sector throughout the Covid period.

Does the taxi driver or owner have to apply to CEC for said Grant?

Yes. This was by application only.

How did they apply?

Licence holders were made aware of the grant process and advised how they could apply. Applications were made via a web portal.

Does the taxi driver or owner have to produce any documentation to CEC proving that they were actively working right up to Covid Restrictions?

No, however licence holders needed to provide valid licence information to prove they were eligible for the grant, and certify that Taxi or Private Hire Drivers required to be licensed for the period 9 October 2020 to at least 31 January 2021 and the applicant needed to confirm that they had, up to 31 December 2020, experienced loss of income (50% of turnover, compared with 2019), incurred overhead costs and expenses, and that they were working or available for work as a Taxi or Private Hire Driver.

If a taxi owner/driver sold their taxi business in December 2019 would they still be entitled to the Grant?

The grant scheme was available to licence holders only; therefore, this is dependent on whether the business owner remained a licence holder.

If a taxi driver stopped working in December 2019 would they still be entitled to the Grant?

The grant was conditional on having a valid driver or vehicle licence, and the licence holder needed to certify that they had experienced a loss of income compared to December 2019 as above at A3.

If the person was not working from 1 January 2020 as a taxi driver/owner, would they be entitled to receive the CEC Grants?

As above at A3.

If the taxi owner and/or driver was not actively working/receiving an income in the 3 months prior to Covid, then they did not suffer any loss or income during the covid restrictions which appears to be an essential condition of the Covid 'Grant schemes, would they still be eligible?

No, the licence holder needed to certify a loss of earnings in comparison to December 2019, therefore in this example they would have been ineligible.

What checks did CEC carry out to ensure that every taxi driver/owner's eligibility was correct?

Applicants were asked to self-certify that they were eligible, and separately the City of Edinburgh Council carried out a range of checks to ensure the driver was licensed, and the applicant's details including bank and National Insurance details matched those on record.

Did CEC only check if the person was the holder of a Taxi PHC licence and/or an Owner and award the Grant?

No, a range of checks were carried out as per A8.

Did CEC check that the person was actually still driving/operating in the (e.g. 2) weeks prior to the Covid restrictions?

No, drivers were required to self-certify that they were eligible and met the criteria.

Did CEC ask applicants/persons eligible to provide proof of loss of income/earnings/expenses for said Covid Grants?

E.g. provide proof of earnings in March 2020.

No, this was not a requirement of the grant scheme.

What was the maximum Grant award to a driver?

A driver was eligible for up to a maximum of £2,500 over both grant schemes.

What was the maximum award to an owner?

An owner was eligible for up to £15,000 depending on the number of licensed vehicles owned.

What periods were the Grants awarded?

There were two lockdown periods - was it only for both these periods or longer? Please provide details of the exact periods said Grants were awarded.

The Taxi grant schemes were available for application between March of 2020 and April of 2022. They were not available outside these specific dates.

My enquiries appear to raise questions that clearly, the Covid Taxi/PHC Grant system was open to abuse.

Has CEC found any fraudulent Taxi/PHC Covid Grant claims?

If yes, what action has CEC taken?

Yes.

In the first instance, fraudulent claims were not paid and the applicant made aware of the outcome. Additionally, any Taxi or Private Hire Car licence holder needs to meet the "fit and proper" test set out within the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982, and so any fraudulent applications were considered against this test for further enforcement action.

Finally, as a Scottish Government grant scheme which was administered by the City of Edinburgh Council, the relevant grant scheme data was shared with the Scottish Government and HMRC which is a requirement of any such grant scheme.

Please provide the CEC Covid Grant answers to the above general questions. Additionally, please confirm the following information:

My online enquiries have found information for the schemes below to help income loss and maintain Taxi/PHC industry.-

Driver Support Grants (funded by the Scottish Government). (£1,500 + £1,000 top-up) (max driver grant was £2,500)

Who it was for –

Taxi/PHC licence drivers

Drivers actively working or normally working before the pandemic.

Drivers who suffered loss of income

Total support per driver £2,500

Vehicle Owner/Operator Grants (up to £10,000)

Owner of Taxi PHC at time of covid restrictions

Intended to help cover ongoing business costs such as insurance, maintenance, etc. loss of income from rental to drivers?

Please confirm if the above online information is accurate for awarding the Grants.

As we are not aware of the online information you are referring to, we cannot comment on this query.

However, if this relates to confirming the above information, I can confirm it is mostly correct, however the maximum grant for a Vehicle Owner/Operator was up to £15,000 depending on the number of licensed vehicles owned/operated.

Please provide a definition of what 'actively working or normally working before the pandemic' means, e.g. if person not working as a taxi driver or owner and no income/running costs from e.g. January 2020 would the person be entitled to claim the Grant?

Please refer to A3 above.

Was it an automatic system to award the said Grants without checking if the person was actually still working as a taxi driver and/or owner days prior to said Covid restrictions?

No, as above. Applicants needed to be licensed Taxi or Private Hire Car drivers or operators.

Did they have to produce proof of loss of income and/or ongoing business costs for the Covid Period?

No, as above.

When did said grants stop being awarded?

The last payments for the Taxi and Private Hire Car Operators Support Fund were processed by the end of June 2022.