

## **Crohn's & Colitis UK evidence submission: Taxi and private hire vehicle: best practice guidance to assist local authorities**

[June 2022]

### **1. About this submission**

- 1.1. **Crohn's & Colitis UK**<sup>1</sup> is the leading charity for people affected by Crohn's and Colitis in the UK. We work to improve diagnosis, treatment, and care, to fund research into a cure, to raise awareness, and to provide information and support.
- 1.2. Over 500,000 people in the UK have Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD), the two main forms of which are Crohn's Disease and Ulcerative Colitis.<sup>2</sup> These are lifelong diseases of the gut. They can affect almost every part of the body and every aspect of life: from digestion and joints to energy levels, mental health, education and the ability to work. There is no known cure.
- 1.3. Crohn's and Colitis causes the intestines to become swollen, ulcerated and inflamed. Symptoms include significant abdominal pain, extreme fatigue and nausea. People also have to live with bowel incontinence, an unpredictable, frequent and urgent need to access a toilet because of multiple bouts of diarrhoea. In addition, many people experience chronic joint pain. The nature of these symptoms means that Crohn's and Colitis is classified as an invisible disability and can make walking any distance and undertaking journeys safely, very difficult.
- 1.4. This submission outlines our response to the Department of Transport's taxi and private hire vehicle licencing guideline with a focus on the guidance's accessibility section.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.crohnsandcolitis.org.uk](http://www.crohnsandcolitis.org.uk)

<sup>2</sup> Crohn's & Colitis UK (2022). [New research shows over 1 in 123 people in UK living with Crohn's or Colitis](https://www.crohnsandcolitis.org.uk/news/new-research-shows-over-1-in-123-people-in-uk-living-with-crohns-or-colitis) ([crohnsandcolitis.org.uk](http://crohnsandcolitis.org.uk))

## 2. Summary of key points and recommendations

- 2.1. Approximately 6.5 million people in the UK have problems with their bowels.
- 2.2. A range of disabilities and long-term health conditions present with bowel urgency and incontinence that require people to have quick access to suitable toilet facilities. These include Crohn's and Colitis.
- 2.3. Three in four people with Crohn's or Colitis experience bowel incontinence. Incontinence is sometimes debilitating, often embarrassing and can be a life-changing problem, affecting all parts of daily life including travel. Consequently:
  - Almost 9 in 10 people (87%) with Crohn's or Colitis plan journeys based on access to toilets.
  - 70% of people with Crohn's or Colitis worry about toilet facilities whilst travelling.
  - 63% of people with Crohn's or Colitis worry about toilet facilities at their travel destination.
- 2.4. People living with Crohn's or Colitis has a right to feel confident and comfortable when travelling on public transport or taxi and private hire services, just like everyone else. This is a matter of personal and public health, equality and social inclusion.
- 2.5. We welcome the Department of Transport's commitment to ensuring taxi and private hire vehicle services are accessible to people with 'less-visible impairments'. We also agree that licensing authorities should introduce Inclusive Service Plans (ISP) for taxi and private hire vehicles. This recognition formalises the campaign ran by the Department of Transport back in 2020, which we had supported.
- 2.6. We recommend that people living with Crohn's and Colitis are included as part of the 'less-visible impairments' definition and are involved in the development and update of ISPs.
- 2.7. We also recommend that measures to improve toilet accessibility should be included in ISPs.
- 2.8. Finally, we recommend that drivers and operators are trained in the needs of and reasonable adjustments for people with Crohn's and Colitis.

## 3. Accessibility

3.1. Approximately 6.5 million people in the UK have problems with their bowels. A range of disabilities and long-term health conditions present with bowel urgency and incontinence that require people to have quick access to suitable toilet facilities. These health conditions include Crohn's and Colitis, as well as diabetes, Parkinson's disease, Multiple Sclerosis, and Muscular Dystrophy. In some cases, bowel incontinence may result from a health condition such as dementia or a severe learning disability that causes the person to lose bowel control.

3.2. Three in four people with Crohn's or Colitis experience bowel incontinence. Incontinence is sometimes debilitating, often embarrassing and it can be a life-changing problem, affecting all parts of daily life including travel.

*"As someone with Ulcerative Colitis, I fully rely on public toilets in order to leave my house."*

*"I suffer from Crohn's disease and need access to public toilets in order to carry out my everyday life."*

3.3. Understandably, people experiencing incontinence often suffer from considerable anxiety about using transport, limiting their destinations to places close to an accessible toilet, or allowing time for toilet stops along a journey. The vast majority (87%) of people with Crohn's or Colitis told us that they plan their journeys based on access to toilets and admitted not starting a journey due to fear of not being able to reach a toilet in time.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, 70% of people living with these conditions worry about toilet facilities whilst travelling and 63% worry about toilet facilities at their travel destination.<sup>4</sup>

*"I struggle to go on journeys like I'd want to without having to worry about when I'll have to go to the toilet again."*

3.4. People living with Crohn's or Colitis has a right to feel confident and comfortable when travelling on public transport or taxi and private hire services, just like everyone else. This is a matter of personal and public health, equality and social inclusion.

3.5. People with Crohn's or Colitis who are making a journey using a taxi or private hire vehicle may require multiple toilet breaks on the way to their destination. It is essential that drivers are understanding and accommodating of these needs.

3.6. We welcome the Department of Transport's commitment to ensuring taxi and private hire vehicle services are accessible to people with 'less-visible impairments'. We also agree that licensing authorities should introduce Inclusive Service Plans (ISP) for taxi and private hire vehicles. This recognition formalises the campaign ran by the Department of Transport back in 2020, which we had supported.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Toilet Consortium UK survey (2018). Survey size was 989 participants.

<sup>4</sup> Crohn's & Colitis UK (2017). *Travel with IBD survey*. Survey size was 1,776 participants.

<sup>5</sup> <https://crohnsandcolitis.org.uk/news-stories/news-items/its-everyones-journey-transport-more-inclusive>

- 3.7. To ensure that taxi and private hire services are accessible to people living with Crohn's and Colitis we recommend that:
- 3.7.1 Licensing authorities and ISPs include people with Crohn's and Colitis within the definition of 'less-visible impairments'.
  - 3.7.2 People with Crohn's and Colitis are included in licensing authority's ISP assessment of demand for accessible services and the extent to which accessibility needs are being met.
  - 3.7.3 ISPs include measures to improve toilet accessibility, for example by:
    - a) increasing signage of the location of toilets in/near transport hubs and taxi ranks.
    - b) installing accessible signage<sup>6</sup> on all toilets in/near transport hubs and taxi ranks.
    - c) ensuring new taxi ranks are located close to publicly available toilets.
  - 3.7.4 Licensing authorities collaborate with Crohn's & Colitis UK to ensure that:
    - a) the needs of people with Crohn's and Colitis are represented in the production and update of ISPs.
    - b) taxi and private hire drivers and operators are trained in the needs of and reasonable adjustments for people with Crohn's and Colitis.

This submission has been written by Amy Deptford, Policy Manager at Crohn's & Colitis UK. For further information, please write to [policy@crohnsandcolitis.org.uk](mailto:policy@crohnsandcolitis.org.uk)

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<sup>6</sup> For example: [Toilet-Sign-Final-Signage\\_190409\\_131635.png \(1890x1339\) \(crohnsandcolitisuk.s3.amazonaws.com\)](#)