



CHELTENHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

ENFORCEMENT / COMPLIANCE OFFICER – SUMMARY OF CASE

Uniform Case No: 22/04957/LHCDCO Officer: Matt Morris
Subject: Mr Ionut-Georgian STOICA (HCD252)

Details of Complaint:

Mr STOICA (IGS), a licensed Hackney Carriage Driver, is alleged to have committed an offence of failing to carry an assistance dog in a taxi from The Promenade, Cheltenham on Saturday 17th September 2022. (Contrary to Section 168 of the Equalities Act 2010)

Investigation:

1. The complainant, X is a disabled wheelchair user with an Assistance Dog (a dachshund named C). X states that she was in her wheelchair accompanied by her husband and C when her fare was refused by Mr STOICA (IGS) because he does not transport dogs. X told IGS that C was an Assistance Dog but IGS laughed and said it couldn't be because it was not wearing a "Hi-Vis" jacket. C was wearing a blue "Support Dogs" jacket but IGS still refused the fare after X showed him relevant photo ID. X subsequently arranged transport with the next Hackney driver in line (Mubeen SAJJAD).
2. During a PACE interview after caution, IGS agreed he did refuse X's fare because she had a dog; however, he states he was not told C was an Assistance Dog nor was C wearing any identifying jacket. He could not remember X being in a wheelchair and states he was not shown any photo ID card. He continued that he only became aware that C was an Assistance Dog when X was arranging the fare with the next taxi driver in line. He then immediately approached X and agreed to take them. (X has subsequently confirmed this but understandably declined the offer, due to the way she felt she had been treated). During interview IGS displayed a good knowledge of the law in relation to Assistance Dogs. He completed relevant training, provided by CBC, in December 2019.
3. Witness Mubeen SAJJAD (MS) was the taxi driver who took X's fare. MS states he was aware of a disagreement between X and IGS about carrying a dog but was not aware that C was an assistance dog. He states that he was not made aware that C was an Assistance Dog nor did he see any jacket or ID. He states he accepted the fare because X was disabled and was upset, he does not usually take dogs. MS confirms he has spoken to IGS about the incident but states this has not influenced his statement.
4. Support Dogs have provided a letter stating that C is an assistance dog in training. She is due to gain her full qualification in early 2023.
5. There is no CCTV available for this incident.