# TfL’s licensing chaos forces legal battle as Uber drivers face financial ruin



Transport for London (TfL) finds itself under mounting legal scrutiny from the so-called Independent Workers’ Union of Great Britain, which is wielding its influence on behalf of Uber and private hire drivers suffering from their systemic failures. Instead of addressing the ongoing chaos with competence, TfL’s mishandling of driver licences—delayed, incomplete, and often arbitrary—has resulted in countless livelihoods being effectively destroyed. Thousands of drivers, many of whom depend solely on this work to survive, have been left stranded or pushed into despair, with some facing financial ruin, homelessness, and grief—a tragic consequence of bureaucratic incompetence disguised beneath talk of 'systemic reform.'

Prominent among the those impacted is Raifu Akanmu, who diligently applied for renewal months in advance but remains unable to work, drained of savings and hope. Reports across the sector speak of drivers losing homes and vehicles—victims of a deeply flawed licensing process that seems more interested in bureaucratic control than in supporting the essential workers it is supposed to serve. The heart-breaking case of Robert Dale, a 65-year-old driver who died from a heart attack amid prolonged licensing stress, starkly underscores how damaging this failure has become. Instead of a government department stepping up to serve the public, TfL’s approach has been one of neglect, with evidence mounting of systemic dysfunction.

TfL’s feeble excuse—blaming technical glitches and cyber-attack fallout—struggles to justify their ongoing failure to deliver a functioning licensing system. Drivers report a litany of errors: documents uploaded only to be flagged invalid, repeated submissions, and an unmanageable bureaucratic maze. Such systemic failures reveal a lack of accountability rooted in bureaucratic inertia dressed up as ‘modernisation,’ harming the very workers who keep London moving.

The union representing drivers—that claims to be acting in their interests—characterises TfL’s licensing system as “not fit for purpose,” a damning verdict that speaks volumes about the state of this essential service. Reports are emerging of repossessed vehicles, mounting debts, and lives unraveling as a direct result of delays that seem to be more about red tape than public safety. Instead of quick reforms, TfL’s incremental measures, like offering temporary licences, are mere Band-Aids on a massive wound—designed to quiet critics rather than fix systemic flaws.

Faced with pressure from those who understand the depth of the crisis, TfL’s half-hearted policies are running out of time. They have recruited more staff and introduced temporary licences, but these are insufficient to confront the scale of the disaster. Many drivers see these measures as too little, too late—symbolic gestures that do nothing to address the core failures that have devastated livelihoods.

The legal challenge led by organised workers underscores a wider truth: this is not a case of isolated mistakes but of a fundamental betrayal by a public authority that has abandoned its duty to support its workers. The union’s president speaks plainly about the urgent need for systemic reform, highlighting the personal tragedies—drivers losing their homes or being forced out of work—caused by bureaucratic neglect. TfL’s ongoing failures have turned what should be a straightforward licensing process into a symbol of government failure, leaving many to wonder whether this is the kind of ‘public service’ we can trust.

While TfL claims to be ‘working urgently,’ the reality on the ground is one of frustration, hardship, and an unaccountable system that treats working people as disposable. The message from those impacted is clear: reform is long overdue, and ramming through bureaucratic delays and technical failures only deepens the crisis and exposes the sector to further harm—something that a responsible authority should never allow.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/jul/04/tfl-faces-legal-challenge-licence-uber-private-hire-drivers> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/jul/04/tfl-faces-legal-challenge-licence-uber-private-hire-drivers> - Transport for London (TfL) is facing an unprecedented legal challenge from the Independent Workers’ Union of Great Britain (IWGB), representing Uber and other minicab drivers. The union alleges that delays in issuing private hire driver licences have adversely affected drivers' livelihoods. While TfL has previously apologised for such delays, the IWGB argues that systemic issues persist. The union has a WhatsApp group with approximately 1,000 drivers reporting licensing problems. Drivers, many of whom are not high earners, have faced significant financial hardships due to these delays, including losing homes and having vehicles repossessed. The IWGB is seeking systemic change through this legal action.
3. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c204qpl0gn5o> - Hundreds of London drivers for taxi-hailing apps like Uber and Bolt are facing financial hardships due to prolonged licensing delays at Transport for London (TfL). The Independent Workers’ Union of Great Britain (IWGB) reports that over 500 drivers have been affected, with some unable to work for months, leading to debt and missed mortgage payments. TfL has acknowledged the delays, attributing them to issues with a new online system and compounded by a previous cyber incident. The union is calling for temporary licences to be issued while the problems are resolved.
4. <https://www.gmblondon.org.uk/news/tfl-private-hire-licensing-system-not-fit-for-purpose> - The GMB Union, representing a significant number of private hire drivers, has criticised TfL's licensing system as 'not fit for purpose'. Drivers have reported issues such as successfully uploading required documents only to find their private hire vehicle licences flagged as invalid hours later. Repeated requests from TfL for drivers to resubmit documents have also been reported. These persistent system failures are directly impacting drivers' ability to work and earn a living. The GMB has urged TfL to resolve these ongoing problems to prevent further hardship for drivers.
5. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cx27l7zzxv2o> - A technical glitch in Transport for London's (TfL) new licensing system has caused delays in processing private hire licence renewals, leading to financial hardships for drivers. The App Drivers and Couriers' Union (ADCU) reports that drivers have faced repossessions and debt due to these delays. TfL has apologised and is working to resolve urgent licensing issues. Drivers are calling for temporary licences to be issued while the problems are addressed.
6. <https://www.gmblondon.org.uk/news/temporary-licences-for-private-hire-drivers-welcome-progress-after-tfl-delays> - In response to ongoing licensing delays, Transport for London (TfL) has agreed to grant temporary licences to private hire drivers who meet certain criteria, including a DBS check. The GMB Union, which represents a large number of private hire drivers, views this as a positive step towards alleviating the financial pressure and stress caused by the delays. The union has been actively working with TfL to find a solution and has also been in contact with London's Deputy Mayor and Assembly Members to push for measures enabling drivers to return to work.
7. <https://www.taxi-point.co.uk/post/uber-and-other-private-hire-drivers-face-renewed-delays-and-lost-income-amid-tfl-licensing-system-fa> - Private hire drivers are experiencing renewed disruption due to faults in Transport for London's (TfL) licensing system, with drivers reporting lost income and repeated administrative problems. The GMB Union reports that members working for Uber are among those affected, with drivers successfully uploading required documents only to find their licences flagged as invalid hours later. In some cases, drivers attempting to apply for or renew their licences have been repeatedly asked to resubmit the same documents. The GMB has urged immediate intervention from TfL to resolve these ongoing issues.