



Taxi and Private Hire Newsletter May (2) 2020



Welcome to the second newsletter of May. As we progress through the second month of 'lockdown' there is lifting of some restrictions and the beginning of government planning to exit the current situation.

We are acutely aware that it will be many weeks still until more and more businesses will begin to open and the public start to venture out, and that it is these movements upon which the licensed taxi and private hire trade relies so heavily upon. We would again remind the trade that April's newsletter detailed advice to the licensed trade as to how to continue to make applications if necessary, and the financial assistance available from the government.

However, there is still a considerable amount of information to update the trade upon, including, importantly the re-opening of the Woking Road Depot for vehicle tests and an update for the trade from the Department of Transport.

Again, as always please do stay safe and well.

Latest Government advice

The government has set out its plan to return life to as near normal as we can, for as many people as we can, as quickly and fairly as possible in order to safeguard livelihoods, but in a way that is safe and continues to protect our NHS.

As part of this plan:

- People and employers should stay safe in public spaces and workplaces by following "COVID-19 secure" guidelines. This should enable more people to go back to work, where they cannot work from home, and encourage more vulnerable children and the children of critical workers to go to school or childcare as already permitted.
- You should stay alert when you leave home: washing your hands regularly, maintaining social distancing, and ensuring you do not gather in groups of more than two, except with members of your household or for other specific exceptions set out in law.
- You must continue to stay home except for a limited set of reasons but - in line with scientific advice - can take part in more outdoor activities.

The latest 'stay alert' guidance is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing#public-gatherings>

The government's plan is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/our-plan-to-rebuild-the-uk-governments-covid-19-recovery-strategy>

Department for Transport advice

The Department for Transport has published the following new guidance for transport operators on providing transport services safely during the COVID-19 pandemic which includes the taxi and private hire trade:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/884370/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-transport-guidance-for-operators.pdf.

Separate guidance has been published for passengers to outline who should be travelling and how social distancing rules should be observed across different points in journeys: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers#taxis-and-private-hire-vehicles>

It is important that you review and implement these guidance documents if you are operating a taxi or private hire vehicle business, or are a self-employed driver.

The Department for Transport has also published a Q&A list below:

What guidance has been published for the taxi and private hire vehicle sector?

The Government has published transport guidance on the safe provision of transport services during the COVID-19 pandemic. There are separate guidance documents for transport providers and for passengers. Both guidance documents cover all modes.

The guidance sets out government recommendations on who should be traveling and under what circumstances, and how social distancing rules should be interpreted. It also includes information about cleaning practices:

- Guidance for passengers:
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers#taxis-and-private-hire-vehicles>
- Guidance for operators:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/884370/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-transport-guidance-for-operators.pdf
- Guidance on clinically extremely vulnerable:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>
- Guidance for households with a possible coronavirus infection:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance>

Should taxi and private hire vehicle drivers or passengers wear PPE such as a mask?

There are some circumstances when wearing a face covering may be marginally beneficial as a precautionary measure. The evidence suggests that wearing a face covering does not protect you, but it may protect others if you are infected but have not yet developed symptoms. This is most relevant for short periods indoors in crowded areas.

We are advising passengers if they can, wear a face covering in an enclosed space where social distancing isn't possible, and where you will come into contact with people you do not normally meet - such as when travelling in a taxi or private hire vehicle.

A face covering is not the same as the surgical masks or respirators used by healthcare and other workers as part of personal protective equipment. These should continue to be reserved for those who need them to protect against risks in their workplace, such as health and care workers, and those in industrial settings, like those exposed to dust hazards.

Wearing a face covering is optional and is not required by the law. If you choose to wear one, it is important to use face coverings properly and wash your hands before putting them on and taking them off. Use the guidance on face coverings to understand how to wear and make a face coverings.

Other measures such as changing habits, social distancing, screens, cleaning and hygiene are also suggested in the guidance.

Should protective barriers be installed between drivers and passengers?

The installation of protective barriers is a decision for licensing authorities, PHV operators and firm/individual operating the vehicle to make based on their own assessment of risk.

They may also wish to consider:

- Eliminating the use of face-to-face passenger seating
- Use of ventilation
- Reducing occupancy to individual passengers in the back left-hand seat for vehicles that do not enable 2 metre separation; considering reducing occupancy in a larger vehicle

Can a taxi or PHV driver refuse to admit a passenger who is not wearing a face covering?

Taxi and PHV drivers are advised to make an assessment of risk as outlined in the transport operator guidance published on 12 May. The acceptance of a booking request by a PHV operator is a decision made based on the operator's own assessment of risk. Any requirements for face coverings should be made clear to the passenger before the operator accepts the booking. Taxi drivers can use this assessment to determine whether or not it is reasonable to admit a passenger who is not wearing a face covering, considering other mitigations they put in place from their risk assessment. This does not however absolve them of their duties under the Equality Act 2010.

What support is the Government providing to the taxi and PHV sector?

The Self-employment Income Support Scheme will allow taxi and PHV drivers to claim a taxable grant worth 80% of your trading profits up to a maximum of £2,500 per month for the next 3 months. This may be extended if needed.

The Chancellor has set out a package of temporary, timely and targeted measures to support public services, people and businesses through this period of disruption caused by COVID-19.

Why are taxi and PHV drivers not considered critical workers?

Taxi and private hire drivers should not generally be considered critical workers. Those undertaking Home to School transport or the transport of 'extremely vulnerable' people may be considered critical workers on a case-by-case basis. Critical workers should make suitable arrangements for their children to stay at home where it is safe for them to do so; the need for children to attend school should be discussed with the school.

Can taxis and PHVs transport workers to and from hospitals?

Yes.

Can taxis and PHVs transport passengers of ill health in and out of hospital?

Yes, but individuals should not use taxis or PHVs if:

- They have symptoms of COVID-19 – a new, continuous cough or a high temperature
- Any of your household are self-isolating due to experiencing symptoms of COVID-19.

Can taxi and PHV drivers support passengers with accessibility issues while maintaining social distancing?

Taxi and PHV drivers are still under the same obligation to provide reasonable assistance and make reasonable adjustments for disabled passengers. The guidance includes advice on measures that workers and passengers can take when it is not possible to maintain the recommended social distance

Woking Road Depot to re-open

We are pleased to confirm that the Woking Road Depot will reopen for GBC taxi and PH vehicle tests and MOT's from Tuesday 26 May.

To make a booking we request that you call the **test centre directly on 01483 445095**. You will then be allocated a time slot. The phone line will be open for bookings from **Monday 18th May at 08:30am**. Due to the number of vehicle tests which need to be completed, timeslots will be allocated on a first come, first served basis.

To ensure the safety of both staff and public and to maintain social distancing at all times, only one test lane will be operating and the following procedures will be in place:

- Drivers are asked to arrive not more than 5 minutes before booking time. If drivers are more than 5 minutes late the test may not be completed and you may still be charged.
- When arriving at test centre drivers are asked to remain in their vehicle and sound horn, the tester will come out to meet them.
- The tester will wipe the car down on entry and again at end of test before returning keys.
- Payments can only be made by card.
- Regrettably we are unable to open the waiting room or provide toilet facilities at this time, although seating will be available.

As the Depot will be re-opening shortly, proprietors are reminded that if they have a vehicle test which was due which they completed a 'declaration' for, they will now need to complete the vehicle test. The test must be completed if the vehicle is still licensed, regardless of whether you are working or not. If you a genuine reason you cannot complete the vehicle test (for example you are isolating or shielding) then please email the Council to advise.

Removal of hackney carriage stand at Guildford Park Road

On 21 April at a meeting of the Council's Executive, plans to remove the taxi rank on Guildford Park Road (outside the station) were agreed following consultation and consideration of the objection received.

The removal of the rank is part of a wider redevelopment of transport links around Guildford. The current rank lining will be removed in due course however until this is repainted we would ask the taxi trade that this rank is no longer in use.

New Lead Councillor for Licensing

Following a re-shuffle of the Council's Executive, Councillor James Steel, the lead Councillor for Environment, has taken on responsibility for the licensing portfolio.