



## Taxi and Private Hire Newsletter June 2020



Welcome to June's newsletter. It has been another unprecedented month as the country moves out of 'lockdown' with the planned opening of 'non essential' retailers from 15 June.

The trade may also be aware of the government announcement this week for all passengers using public transport to wear face masks. The Department for Transport has specifically not mentioned the taxi and private hire industry in this guidance. As such drivers may wish to follow this guidance voluntarily and we have discussed this in the newsletter.

For members of the trade returning to work and looking for signage and PPE, Experience Guildford the town centre business improvement district have details of local suppliers at: <http://experienceguildford.co.uk/>

We would remind the trade that our previous newsletters, including details of the financial and other support available to the licensed trade are available under the 'Information for Current Licence holders' section of our website at: [www.guildford.gov.uk/taxi](http://www.guildford.gov.uk/taxi)

The latest advice is available at: [www.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus). Please do stay safe and well.

### Government remains committed to taxi guidance

The Government has said it remains committed to publishing the taxi statutory guidance "shortly".

Rachel Maclean, Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Department for Transport, was responding to Parliamentary questions from Labour MP Florence Eshalomi who asked the Under-Secretary about the government's plans for reform of the taxi and private hire licensing regime.

In particular, Ms Eshalomi put the following questions to the Secretary of State for Transport:

- when he plans to bring forward legislative proposals to introduce national minimum standards for taxi and PHV licensing.
- when he plans to bring forward legislative proposals on cross-border working in the PHV industry.
- when the Government plans to respond to the public consultation on Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing: Protecting Users that was published in February 2019.

Responding to these questions, Ms Maclean said: "The Government will continue to engage with the sector on our plans for reforming the regulation of taxis and private hire vehicles, including options to introduce new legislation. The Department is supporting licensing authorities to make use of their extensive existing powers through statutory taxi and private hire vehicle standards, which will be issued shortly. The Department will consult on updated best practice guidance on other matters later this year."

## Woking Road Depot open for vehicle tests

We would like to remind the trade that the Woking Road Depot is now open again for vehicle test appointments, and if your vehicle test was or is due then this must now be completed.

**Vehicle tests can be booked by calling Customer Services on 01483 505050.**

We would like to take this opportunity to confirm the safety procedures in place for both staff and public at the Woking Road Depot:

- Social distancing to be maintained at all times.
- Customers are asked to arrive **not** more than 5 min before their booked time and **not** more than 5 min late. (the test may not be complete if more than 5 min late but still charged as fail to show)
- **No** passengers allowed on site. (test will not be completed but charged if cars arrive with passengers)
- Customers to stay in car and sound horn on arrival at testing station
- Testing station staff will give clear instruction to the driver regarding site rules, waiting area, Toilet and hand washing facilities
- Testers will wear disposable gloves at all times and disposable seat covers will be used.
- All areas of the car interior touched in test procedure will be wiped down on arrival and again on exit of the test lane
- At the end of test cars will be parked with the keys on driver's seat
- Customers will be invited to make payment once the tester has all paperwork ready.
- Pay station will be wiped clean before and after use.

## Reminder about delaying renewals

As we have previously communicated, we are currently allowing the trade the option to delay renewing a licence for a period of up to 3 months. This means that licences can expire and provided we would have granted the renewal application when the licence expired, we will then accept a late renewal application, for a period of up to three months. We envisage that this will remain available for licences expiring before the end of June.

If any members of the trade wish to delay a renewal for longer than 3 months; or if members of the trade expire after June and wish to delay a renewal then please contact us.

Please note that if you allow your licence to expire, when wishing to resume work you would still need to apply in good time to allow the application to be processed before you wished to resume using the licence and obviously if a licence has expired it cannot be used again until it is renewed

## Guide Dogs Guidance for Taxi Drivers During Coronavirus

Guide Dogs have created guidance to help the taxi trade support customers with sight loss through good communication skills while maintaining social distancing in order to meet their duty under equalities legislation to provide reasonable adjustments for passengers.

The guidance is available at: <https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/research/Policy-and-guidance-for-businesses/Guidance-for-taxi-staff>

## **Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Policy Update**

As members of the trade may be aware, the Taxi and Private Hire Policy approved in December 2015 was scheduled for review.

The Licensing team have been working to review and update the Policy and on 27 May the Licensing Committee received an update regarding the work being undertaken. The Committee had previously agreed at its meeting in November 2019 that the policy should include additional measures to improve driver, vehicle and private hire operators' standards, which were based upon draft Statutory Guidance consulted upon in 2019 following the publication of the Government Response to the Task and Finish Group report.

The Committee were advised that as the draft guidance consulted upon had not been published in final form, the Lead Councillor and officers felt that it was appropriate to wait until these were published before finalising a new draft policy for consultation. The coronavirus pandemic had also involved the redeployment of officer time in responding to the provision of key services to residents. In addition, the licensed trade had experienced a significant reduction in trade during this period and may therefore not fully engage with consultation on a new policy at this time.

Following consideration of this update, the Licensing Committee approved the delay in the review of the Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Policy until September or later depending on publication of the national guidance and resource required to assist with the Council's response to the coronavirus pandemic.

## **New Measures for Town Centre from 15 June**

As many businesses make plans to reopen on 15 June the Council is working with a number of partners to implement town centre measures that will create a reassuring environment as visitor numbers begin to increase.

The hope is that all of the measures outlined will help to allow for social distancing guidelines to be adhered to as much as possible within the town centre.

PLEASE NOTE the following changes:

Extended road closure: High Street, 10.00am - 6.00pm 7 days a week

Extended road closure: Tunsgate, 10.00am - 1.00am 7 days a week

Pedestrian diversion: Milkhouse Gate, no access from High Street, diversion via Tunsgate

Pedestrian keep left: Recommended in Chapel Street, Swan Lane, Phoenix Court, Jeffries Passage and Angel Gate

External hard queue barriers: High Street, outside key retailers

Suspended parking bays with widened pedestrian footpath: Lower High Street (Vision Express side), Upper High Street (KFC side)

Signage in the form of wall and floor graphics will be installed to communicate these changes to members of the public.

These will be in place from Monday 15th June but will be reviewed on an ongoing basis.

## Reminder contacting the licensing service and application timeframes

When contacting the licensing service, we would again remind the trade to include your name, the relevant licence number and a brief reason for contacting us, as this will ensure that at this busy time we can respond efficiently.

We have also received a lot of applications to renew 'late' and would again remind the trade that we ask to allow a period of 10 working days from receipt of a full, valid application to process it.

Finally, by way of reminder that we are still unable to issue 'hard' plates and badges, but will do so as soon as the opportunity allows.

## Screens in licensed vehicles

We have received a number of enquiries about installing screens in licensed vehicles. Clearly there are some concerns about the use of screens, which for example may affect the safety of the vehicle, passengers or be used as a weapon against the driver. However we recognise that screens may provide some level of protection for drivers and reassurance to passengers which may outweigh some of the identified risks and encourage passengers back into using licensed vehicles, which is much needed by the trade at this time. The latest advice from the Local Government Association is that there is currently limited evidence about the effectiveness of temporary screens in reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19 and a lack of clarity about the safety of fitting these types of screens in vehicles.

The Council have previously approved screens which must:

- be installed and maintained to the manufacturers specification
- be clear, transparent and flexible;
- only be fitted across the rear of both front seats of a vehicle creating a partition between the front and rear seats;
- be fitted by way of temporary fixings, which can be removed from the vehicle when the screens are no longer permitted or required; and be removed at the request of the Council
- be fitted in such a way so as to not affect the structural integrity of the vehicle, or interfere with any manufacturer fitted safety equipment e.g. airbags, seatbelts;

The driver must clean the vehicle and screen thoroughly after each journey. The proprietor must notify their insurance company about the installation, and notify the Council if their insurer refuses to cover the vehicle following installation of the screen. The Council also does not accept any liability for approval of any screen.

Operators should encourage payment via telephone or contactless payment to minimise the risk of payment in the vehicle, and notify the customer at the time of booking the safety measures they require customers to undertake.

**Please note that this is not a blanket approval for screen installation in any licensed vehicle, and that each proprietor must seek the permission of the Council to install a screen in their licensed vehicle and provide the specification of such screen for consideration.**

# Face Coverings

The trade may also be aware of the government announcement this week for all passengers using public transport to wear face masks. The latest scientific advice suggests that, although face coverings are unlikely to prevent an individual from getting the coronavirus, they can help prevent someone who is infected from infecting others and therefore help control the virus. Face coverings are particularly important where two metre social distancing is hard to maintain, for example when travelling on public transport. While the Government advice doesn't explicitly cover the use of taxi and private hire services, the advice below is intended to mirror the arrangements put in place on public transport and we would ask the trade to consider implementing this voluntarily to promote public confidence in the service.

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.

Face coverings can be a simple cloth covering that covers the face and mouth. They can be made using many items found in the home or in many shops.

Information on how to wear and make a face covering can be accessed via these links: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering>

Alternatively, disposable or reusable face coverings can be obtained from a number of online or local retail outlets. Face coverings should not be used if they are no longer in good condition or become too damp.

Any drivers wearing a face covering should follow the Government guidance on the use of face coverings:

- A cloth face covering should cover your mouth and nose while allowing you to breathe comfortably. It can be as simple as a scarf or bandana that ties behind the head
- Wash your hands or use hand sanitiser before putting it on and after taking it off and after use. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth at all times and store used face coverings in a plastic bag until you have an opportunity to wash them, if they are reusable
- Do not touch the front of the face covering, or the part of the face covering that has been in contact with your mouth and nose. Once removed, make sure you clean any surfaces the face covering has touched
- You should wash a face covering regularly. It can go in with other laundry, using your normal detergent
- When wearing a face covering, take care to tuck away any loose ends

We also recommend that drivers carry a pen and paper to help communication with some passengers (e.g. someone who lip reads, someone who has a hearing impairment). Separate pen and paper should be available for the driver and passengers.

Whilst passengers are not required to wear a face covering in a taxi or private hire vehicle, we suggest that many will look to follow the advice to do so. It will be down to driver's and operators risk assessment and professional discretion as to whether they will require their passengers to wear a mask.

If a passenger is not wearing a face covering and the driver wishes them to, then taxi and private hire drivers may refuse to carry them, taking into account any mitigating circumstances.

The driver should explain to the passenger that they are required to wear a face covering while travelling in a taxi or PHV. Please note drivers still retain duties under Equalities legislation not to discriminate against any particular group and the legislation of refusing a fare only with reasonable cause still applies.

If drivers and operators will require passengers to wear face coverings, passengers that are making journeys that are booked through a private hire operator should be informed, in advance, of the requirement. In instances where a taxi is hailed on the street or at a rank, a passenger may not be aware that they should use a face covering if the driver requires this. In either instance, we would expect drivers to explain to the passenger that they need a face covering to be permitted to travel in the vehicle and to direct them to a nearby retail outlet or transport hub where face coverings can be obtained. For their own safety we recommend drivers avoid getting into a lengthy discussion with passengers.

## Modern Day Slavery Advice

We have been asked to distribute the following advice on being aware of the signs of modern day slavery and human trafficking at this time:

**NHS COVID-19: Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking / Rapid Read**

Modern slavery is a hidden crime, and its victims may be especially isolated during the coronavirus outbreak. It is not the health professional's job to decide if someone is a victim, but if you do have concerns, raise them with your safeguarding lead or contact one of the organisations below.

**WHAT IS MODERN SLAVERY?**  
Modern slavery encompasses slavery, servitude, forced and compulsory labour, and human trafficking. Traffickers prey on the vulnerable, and those who are alone or lack strong support networks.  
The 'Modern Slavery Wheel' illustrates the main types of Modern Slavery. It includes the key signs to look out for if you believe someone may be a victim. You can find it here: [www.rcn.org.uk/-/media/royal-college-of-nursing/documents/publications/2018/may/pdf-006745.pdf](http://www.rcn.org.uk/-/media/royal-college-of-nursing/documents/publications/2018/may/pdf-006745.pdf)

**THE NATIONAL REFERRAL MECHANISM**  
The NRM helps to identify victims of modern slavery, and refers them to the organisations that can help them. Victims receive safe and secure accommodation, financial support, and physical and psychological medical care.  
Healthcare staff cannot refer a person to the NRM directly; they should contact a First Responder organisation (such as the police), or the Modern Slavery Helpline (see below).  
To find out more about the NRM see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/human-trafficking-victims-referral-and-assessment-forms/guidance-on-the-national-referral-mechanism-for-potential-adult-victims-of-modern-slavery-england-and-wales>

**MODERN SLAVERY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**  
During the pandemic, criminal gangs may exploit people's vulnerabilities, such as sudden unemployment or loss of earnings, by drawing them in to Modern Slavery.  
Victims who are living in secure accommodation may be feeling particularly anxious and lonely, as a result of social distancing. Some of them may feel so desperate that they decide that life will be better if they return to the people who were exploiting them.

**SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS OF MODERN SLAVERY**  
**Adults**  
Adult victims can access a range of health services, including a GP, NHS 111, and A&E.  
If they give their consent to enter the National Referral Mechanism, they can access a wider range of support.  
**Children**  
Support for child victims of Modern Slavery is provided through Local Authorities. Any potential child victim must be referred to local children's services urgently, and a referral made to the NRM, once the child is safeguarded.  
The government's statutory guidance on the Modern Slavery Act (2015) gives full details of the support available and how it can be accessed: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/875281/March\\_2020\\_Statutory\\_Guidance\\_under\\_the\\_Modern\\_Slavery\\_Act\\_2015.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/875281/March_2020_Statutory_Guidance_under_the_Modern_Slavery_Act_2015.pdf)

**HOW TO GET HELP**  
If you, or someone you know, is in immediate danger, you should call 999 and ask for the police.  
If you are being trafficked, or suspect someone you know is being trafficked, contact a First Responder, such as the police.  
You can also call the 24 hr **Modern Slavery Helpline** on **08000 121 700**. The Helpline's trained Advisors can help you access services that can help.  
More information is available here: <https://www.modernslaveryhelpline.org>  
**Doctors of the World** offer health care to excluded people, such as asylum seekers and undocumented migrants. They also have advice on staying safe during the pandemic. <https://www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk>

@NHSsafeguarding #NHSsafeguarding  
APP | Tool