

MANDATORY SAFEGUARDING TRAINING FOR LICENSED HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE DRIVERS

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Kit Taylor
Portfolio Holder Consulted	No
Relevant Head of Service	Simon Wilkes – Director of Worcestershire Regulatory Services
Wards Affected	All Wards
Ward Councillor Consulted	N/A
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 To inform Members of the outcome of the recent 12-week consultation with relevant stakeholders and members of the public on the proposal to introduce mandatory safeguarding refresher training for all Bromsgrove District Council licensed hackney carriage and private hire drivers and ask that the recommendation as set out below be considered and approved.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **Members are asked to:**

Approve an amendment to the existing Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Driver Licensing Policy, as set out below and in Appendix 2:

That with effect from 1st April 2025 each time a licence holder renews their licence they must undertake safeguarding training delivered by the Council's approved training provider prior to submitting their renewal application.

3. KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 Consultation on the proposed policy amendment took place over a 12-week period. It comprised of a survey which was available to complete online via the Council's website and was promoted by the Council's Communications Team, across a range of channels. Information on the consultation, along with details on how to respond were sent directly to:

- Bromsgrove District Council licensed drivers, vehicle proprietors and private hire operators
- National Private Hire and Taxi Association

- Licensed Private Hire Car Association
 - West Mercia Police
 - Safer Roads Partnership
 - West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner
 - Worcestershire County Council - Relevant contacts at Worcestershire County Council, including those responsible for safeguarding children and adults and arranging home to school transport
 - Relevant interest groups, including those that represent people with disabilities and the elderly
 - Relevant local business groups
 - District, Town and Parish Councillors
- 3.2 In total there were 22 responses received to the online survey. Of the 22 respondents, 12 were holders of a taxi/private hire driver licence, 1 response was received from a user of hackney carriage and private hire vehicles, 5 were from local councillors. There were also 4 other independent responses from external bodies which included responses from West Mercia Police, the Crime Commissioner and a Police Licensing Officer.
- 3.3 In response to question 3, 40.9% of respondents indicated that they agree with the Councils proposal to introduce mandatory safeguarding awareness training for all existing hackney carriage and private hire drivers as a requirement for renewing their licence. 54.6% disagreed.
- 3.4 There were 11 detailed responses received in relation to making the training mandatory, with seven of the respondents opposed to the implementation of Safeguarding Refresher Training. Four of the eleven respondents welcomed the proposal believing it offers protection to transport users. The majority of concerns raised were around the training having already been received by the drivers albeit many years ago. The recommendation for the proposal took into consideration the comments regarding taxi drivers are our eyes and ears and deal with the most vulnerable in our society therefore knowing what to do in various situations comes with many benefits.
- 3.5 In summary, the consultation results from those who expanded on their responses, highlighted a mixed reaction to the introduction of safeguarding awareness refresher training for all existing licence holders from 1 April 2025. When asked directly should the proposed refresher training be implemented, 40.9% were in favour; 45.5% opposed; and 13.6% had no firm opinion.

- 3.6 Officers are aware that some drivers will have undertaken safeguarding training previously and the proposed 3-yearly update will reflect changes in guidance and legislation. The cost of the updated provision to supply these important updates would be kept to a minimum, improving standards for our drivers, service users and the Council.
- 3.7 The cost of this mandatory safeguarding training is £20.00 per applicant and will cover the 3-year licensing period. This is considered very good value, and therefore any consideration of the Council subsidising the cost of this training has been discounted. This also creates a consistent approach to applying this policy to all drivers.

4. **Summary**

- 4.1 In September 2022, in response to the publication of the Department of Transport's "Taxi & Private Hire Standards" the Council adopted and published a new Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy ('taxi policy'), which introduced a requirement for all new drivers to undertake appropriate safeguarding awareness training, as part of a wider programme of driver training, entitled the 'Competency Certificate'.
- 4.2 Following further consideration of the "Taxi & Private Hire Standards" in relation to driver training, members of this Committee received a report in July 2024 proposing the introduction of refresher training and this Committee supported the principle of undertaking a 12-week consultation exercise with trade members, key stakeholders, and the public, with the results being presented to Committee for consideration.
- 4.4 This report now presents the results of the consultation exercise, which can be found at **Appendix 1** and recommends to Members that the amendments as set out in the revised extract from the Council's current Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy, which can be seen at **Appendix 2** be approved and implemented.

5 **Financial Implications**

- 5.1 The costs of the safeguarding awareness training itself will be met by the licence holder. Officers are working closely with the training provider to keep costs to a minimum and at cost recovery.

Legal Implications

- 5.2 The Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Standards have been published by the Department for Transport under the powers set out in section 177 of the Policing and Crime Act 2017.

- 5.3 Consultation on the proposal referred to in this report to amend this Council's policy was undertaken with licence holders, relevant stakeholders, and the general public over a 12-week period.
- 5.4 Appropriate consultation on any proposals to amend the Council's policies minimises the risk of legal challenge if the proposals are subsequently implemented.
- 5.5 The Department for Transport "Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing: Best Practice guidance" further states:

"It is good practice for local authorities to consult about any significant proposed changes in licensing rules. Such consultation should include not only the taxi and PHV trades but also groups likely to be the trades' customers. Examples are groups representing disabled people, or Chambers of Commerce, organisations with a wider transport interest (eg the Campaign for Better Transport and other transport providers), women's' groups or local traders"

6. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 There is a possible reputational risk to the Council, as the new hackney carriage and private hire licensing policy, introduced in September 2022, only introduced the Competency Certificate to new drivers. Although it was not intended to cause any issues the Council may want to mitigate any risk by ensuring all drivers are in some way exposed to safeguarding awareness training to protect the travelling public.
- 6.2 Having considered the above a full 12-week consultation has taken place with licence holders, key stakeholders and the general public, with the results being considered by Members prior to the amendment of the Council's Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Driver Licensing Policy.

7. APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 – Consultation responses
- Appendix 2 – Amended Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy extract

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 Department for Transport guidance under section 177 of the Policing and Crime Act 2017 entitled "**Statutory Taxi & Private Hire Standards.**" [Statutory taxi and private hire vehicle standards - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/614222/statutory-taxi-and-private-hire-vehicle-standards.pdf)

AUTHOR OF REPORT

Name: Michelle James – Principal Licensing Officer
Worcestershire Regulatory Services

E Mail: michelle.james@worcsregservices.gov.uk

Tel : 01562 738058