

MANDATORY SAFEGUARDING TRAINING FOR LICENSED HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE DRIVERS

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Monica Stringfellow
Portfolio Holder Consulted	No
Relevant Director	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 awareness and refresher training for all Redditch Borough 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 JULY 2025, each time a licence holder renews their Redditch Borough Council issued Driver Licence, they must undertake safeguarding and refresher 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:
- Redditch Borough Council licensed drivers, vehicle proprietors and private hire operators.

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- 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 33 responses received to the online survey. Of the 33 respondents, 28 were holders of a taxi/private hire driver licence, 3 were users of hackney carriage and private hire vehicles, 1 was from a local councillor. There was also 1 other response from a Portfolio Holder for Regulatory Services.
- 3.3 In response to question 3, 27.27% of respondents indicated that they agree with the Councils proposal to introduce mandatory safeguarding and refresher awareness training for all existing hackney carriage and private hire drivers as a requirement for renewing their licence. 72.73% disagreed.
- 3.4 There were 21 detailed responses received in relation to making the training mandatory, with the majority of respondents questioning the implementation of the Safeguarding Refresher Training. Six of the nineteen respondents were in favour, and some held a neutral opinion.
- 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 July 2025. When asked directly should the proposed refresher training be implemented, 27.27% were in favour; 72.73% were opposed.
- 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, advice and new cases.
- 3.7 The cost of this mandatory safeguarding and refresher 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 creates a consistent approach across the county.

4.0 Key Outcomes

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 and refresher 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 October 2024 proposing the following amendment to the taxi policy:

With effect from 1 July 2025 each time an existing licence holder renews their licence they must undertake safeguarding training delivered by the Council's approved training provider prior to submitting their renewal application.

4.3 In October 2024 this Committee approved the undertaking of 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 amendment 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.

4.5 Additionally, Members requested that a comparison exercise be undertaken and presented to establish whether other local authorities were looking to implement or have implemented safeguarding and refresher training for taxi drivers across the Country.

Results of which can be found here:

Authority	Safeguarding for Initial Application	Safeguarding on Renewal	Cost
Worcester City	Yes	Yes	£20
Wychavon	Yes	Yes	£20
Wyre Forest	Yes	Yes	£20
Bromsgrove	Yes	Yes	£20
Malvern	Yes	Yes	£20
Solihull	Yes	Yes	£30
Wolverhampton	Yes	Considering implementation	Tbc
Birmingham	Yes	In process of implementing	In process of implementation
Blue Lamp Trust (Represents 168 Councils)	Yes	Yes	£30
Tewkesbury	Yes	Yes	£40
Cheltenham	Yes	Yes	£40
NE Derbyshire and Bolsover Council	Yes	Yes	£30
South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse	Yes (Also for operators)	Yes (Also for operators)	£55

5.0 Summary

- 5.1 Officers note that a significant proportion of the responses have voiced their opposition to the implementation of the Safeguarding and Refresher Training. These comments have been made mostly by licensed drivers who are directly affected by this proposal.
- 5.2 Officers acknowledge and note the reasons provided for the apprehension of implementing this change and understand there are concerns. Officers want members to note the value of the comments which have been put forward in favour of the proposal, the training will be continuously updated to reflect both changes in guidance and legislation. Costs will be kept to a minimum, but the value added will be significance to the drivers, vehicle users and the local community. It also provides both personal and professional development for individual licence holders.

- 5.3 The same training has been received by drivers across the County in other districts and officers have received positive feedback from drivers.
- 5.4 It is accepted that the most vulnerable members of our society that regularly use private hire services. The most common demographics are those with mobility issues, young single mothers, and unaccompanied children.

The introduction of the safeguarding training is intended to:

- protect vulnerable adults, young people, and children
 - Identify sources of advice and pathways for reporting concerns
 - Identify possible victims of abuse or exploitation by understanding indicators of risk
 - Understand their roles and responsibilities in relation to personal safety and security
- 5.5 An excerpt from the Government Statutory Standards for Taxi Drivers provides the justification that officers have relied upon in support of their recommendation to this Committee:

Licensing authorities should consider the role that those in the taxi and private hire vehicle industry can play in spotting and reporting the abuse, exploitation or neglect of children and vulnerable adults. As with any group of people, it is overwhelmingly the case that those within the industry can be an asset in the detection and prevention of abuse or neglect of children and vulnerable adults. However, this is only the case if they are aware of and alert to the signs of potential abuse and know where to turn to if they suspect that a child or vulnerable adult is at risk of harm or is in immediate danger.

All licensing authorities should provide safeguarding advice and guidance to the trade and should require taxi and private hire vehicle drivers to undertake safeguarding training.

- 5.6 Additionally, officers have considered the Government provided 'Best Practice Guidance' as well as the 'Statutory Standards', the content of both of which further confirm to officers that the recommendation set out above is expected and supported from central Government.

6.0 Financial Implications

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

Legal Implications

- 6.2 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.
- 6.3 Consultation on the proposals 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.
- 6.4 Appropriate consultation on any proposals to amend the Council's policies minimises the risk of legal challenge if the proposals are subsequently implemented.
- 6.5 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"

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 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.
- 7.2 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.

8. APPENDICES

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

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1 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/guidance/statutory-taxi-and-private-hire-vehicle-standards)

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