

MEETING:	General Licensing Regulatory Board
DATE:	Wednesday, 22 June 2022
TIME:	2.00 pm
VENUE:	Reception Room, Barnsley Town Hall

MINUTES

Present Councillors Green (Chair), Bowser, Clarke, Danforth, K. Dyson, Franklin, Greenhough, Lodge, Osborne, Risebury, Shepherd and Williams

1 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interest from Members in respect of the item on the agenda.

2 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 20th April, 2022 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

3 Driver Safeguarding Refresher Training

The Head of Legal Services submitted a report informing Members of a planned programme of driver safeguarding refresher training being rolled out to all Licenced Drivers by the end of 2022.

The report, in outlining the background to the proposal, indicated that in accordance with the requirements of the Policing and Crime Act 2017, the Department for Transport had issued statutory guidance on exercising taxi and private hire vehicle licensing functions which were designed specifically to protect children and vulnerable individuals from harm when using such services. According, a new Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Policy had been published in March, 2022 which had a key aim of protecting the public and safeguarding children and the vulnerable. For this reason, all applicants for a driver licence, and all existing licensed drivers, were required to undertake basic safeguarding training.

It was considered that those in the taxi and private hire industry could play a crucial role in spotting and reporting abuse, exploitation or neglect of children and vulnerable adults. They were also an asset in the detection and prevention of abuse or neglect of such individuals.

Safeguarding training was delivered on a monthly basis to all new drivers by the Local Authority Designated Officer for Safeguarding and, in addition, a programme of safeguarding refresher training was now provided for all existing drivers which would be completed by the end of December, 2022. The training would take two hours, and be provided free of charge and all drivers would be required to undertake the mandatory refresher training unless they had attended their original safeguarding training in the last 12 months.

The programme of training had been developed to help drivers provide a safe and suitable service to vulnerable passengers of all ages; recognise what made a person

vulnerable; and understand how to respond, including how to report safeguarding concerns and where to get advice.

The refresher training would also include ways in which drivers could help to identify 'county lines' exploitation by being aware of warning signs which included children and young people travelling in taxis or private hire vehicles alone; travelling at unusual hours; travelling long distances; being unfamiliar with the local area or not having a local accent; and paying for journeys in cash or prepaid.

The key purpose of the training was to make drivers aware of what to do if they believed someone was at risk of harm. The principal consideration for the Service was for public safety, any drivers failing to attend safeguarding training would be referred to a Panel of the General Licensing Regulatory Board where Members would be asked to determine their licence.

In the ensuing discussion, the following matters were raised:

- The consensus of the Panel was that the safeguarding training was welcomed as a means of further ensuring the continued safety of passengers
- It was noted that all drivers were provided with emergency numbers (including out of hours) via which issues of concern could be raised. As a last resort, drivers could also ring 999 if there was a threat of imminent danger. Information about contact details was also available on the Council's website
- Details of the whistleblowing arrangements were outlined. Any issues raised were treated in confidence and investigated appropriately
- It was noted that any Child Sexual Exploitation issues would be fully investigated, and appropriate action taken. Particular reference was made to the potential for 'county lines' exploitation. Many drivers were already aware of such issues and of how to spot the signs but, nevertheless, this was also included within the training. The Senior Officer (Licensing) was confident that nothing occurred in Barnsley on the scale of the issues occurring in some other Local Authority areas, however, the service always remained vigilant. Safeguarding was 'high on the agenda' and appropriate action was always taken in response to issues raised
- The Service would investigate whether or not it was possible or feasible to assess the lessons learned and knowledge retained by drivers following attendance at the safeguarding training
- It was noted that regular meetings were held between the Licensing Service and the Home to School Transport Service so that any emerging issues could be dealt with. The Safeguarding training included information for drivers on how to behave and how to speak to children as well as the signs to look for when transporting children and particularly as this related to Home to School Transport contracts
- Arising out of the above, it was reported that drivers were being provided with contact numbers for the schools when they were transporting children so that if an issue was encountered in the vehicle on route, they could ring the school for support or advice.

RESOLVED that the report be received, and that the General Licensing Regulatory Board continue to support Officers in encouraging Private Hire and Hackney Carriage

Drivers to attend their mandatory safeguarding refresher training as soon as possible.

Chair