



**TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE
NEWSLETTER**

FEBRUARY 2022

Staffing Updates

As many of you may know, unfortunately our Service Lead Officer on licensing, Howard Bee retired at the end of November last year, after a long and complicated battle with his health. This did cause some resourcing issues in 2021, however we are pleased to have recently recruited two contractors now working on licensing.

We would firstly like to introduce Noel Bourke an ex Police Sergeant, with significant enforcement experience. Noel is predominantly covering alcohol licensed premises and taxi and private hire matters from a regulatory perspective. Secondly, we welcome Lee Staples, ex Principal EHO from Exeter City Council who has been engaged on areas of hackney carriage and private hire policy. We are very pleased to have these highly experienced officers as part of our team.

We need your email addresses, and any updated email addresses

We send these newsletters via email and post, however we will be commencing sending newsletters by email only. Not only is this environmentally more sound, but it also ensures that our service runs more cost effectively which will ultimately ensure our fees remain competitive.

If you have not provided your email address to us or need to update your details **please email licensing@northdevon.gov.uk with the subject heading 'newsletter'**.

We do not wish to mandate the provision of emails but if uptake is poor we will have to consider requiring these. We do need to be able to correspond with all drivers electronically for a number of purposes. Furthermore, we need to refer to information on other websites thus it is more practical, otherwise drivers will need to type in the long web-links to get the correct information.

Taxi Tariff: Initial Consultation

We have received notification in respect of a suggestion to increase the Council's taxi tariff. It is acknowledged that fuel price increases have taken effect, and as such work is currently being undertaken to draft a report to the Council's Licensing and Community Safety Committee. This report will likely be furnished to the committee in their March or April meeting. In producing this report, it would be useful to gauge the wider feeling of the trade on the tariff, before options are presented. The collective proposal we have been in receipt of so far is for:

Day rate to rise to:	£3.00 flag, and £0.30 for 1/10 mile.
Night rate to rise to:	£5.00 flag and £0.45 per 1/10 mile.
Multi-seaters day rate to rise to:	£4.00 flag and £0.45 per 1/10 mile.
Multi-seaters night rate to rise to:	£6.00 flag and £0.50 per 1/10 mile.

Should there be support for this proposal or for an alternative proposal we would be grateful if you could **please email licensing@northdevon.gov.uk and outline the details to ensure that the committee is adequately advised of the views of the taxi trade as extensively as possible.** All emails should be received prior to the **22 February 2022.**

Bank Holiday Rates

This coming calendar year celebrates the Queen's platinum Jubilee on the 2 and 3 June 2022. This will mean that all calendar controlled meters will need to be updated with the new dates in order for meters to charge bank holiday rates on those given dates. If making any changes to the tariff we will attempt to get these through prior to the above, in order that any amends can be made at the same time. Please note however, that this cannot be guaranteed, and it will remain a driver's responsibility to add any bank holiday rates to their meters.

If for any reason a vehicle does not receive a calendar update and its calendar 'runs out', meters should continue to run as normal, automatically switching rates depending on time of day, with the exception that they will not charge bank holiday rates e.g. on the 2 and 3 June.

The software update required for the new dates can easily be carried out by your meter agent. The update will only take a few minutes and will not require any of our supported meters to be replaced or removed to receive the update.

DFT Standards related Changes

In July 2020 the Department for transport published the long awaited Statutory Taxi & Private Hire Vehicle Standards (the DFT Standards). The DFT Standards outlined some significant changes to the regulation of the taxi trade, and aim to improve public safety by providing a national template for taxi regulation that all local authorities are required to have regard to.

North Devon Council formally considered the changes outlined in the DFT Standards at the meeting of 13 October 2020, and ran a public consultation from November 2020 until January 2021. Following on from a review of the consultation responses, a new draft Taxi policy incorporating the DFT Standards changes was recommended for approval by the Licensing and Community Safety Committee on 18 January 2022 and adopted by Strategy and Resources Committee on the 7 February 2022. For those that wish to see the tracked changes to the policy, please see [Browse meetings - Strategy and Resources Committee Council Services \(northdevon.gov.uk\)](https://democracy.northdevon.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=296&MIId=2495&Ver=4)

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A summary of the significant policy changes including implementation dates is outlined below:

Policy Change	Implementation
<p><u>Mandatory subscription to the DBS update Service</u> Many drivers will already be familiar with the DBS Update Service as it provides a way of maintaining an up-to date DBS record without having to pay for a new certificate each time. Subscription to the service currently costs £13 per year. All existing drivers will need to subscribe to the update service as part of their driver licence renewal, whilst for new applicants they will be required to subscribe from 1 April 2022. See below for further information on the DBS update service.</p>	<p>From 1 April 2022.</p>
<p><u>Notification of offences/ arrest/ charge</u> Licence holders are now required to notify the North Devon Licensing within 48 hours of an arrest and release, charge or conviction of any sexual offence, any offence involving dishonesty or violence and any motoring offence. Previously Licence holders were required to notify within 7 days.</p>	<p>From 1 March 2022.</p>
<p><u>How to make a complaint notice</u> All vehicle proprietors will be issued with a 'how to complain' sticker which must be displayed clearly within the vehicle. The sticker contains details of how to contact North Devon Licensing in the event of a complaint.</p>	<p>As soon as sticker stocks arrive and stickers are issued, prior to 1 April 2022.</p>
<p><u>Guidelines Relating to the Relevance of Convictions</u> This section of the taxi policy has been amended in-line with the model relevance of conviction policy developed by the Institute of Licensing. For certain serious convictions such as sexual offences, or murder, the policy now states that North Devon Council will not grant a licence to an applicant with those convictions, whereas other convictions require between 10 and five years to have elapsed in order for the grant of a licence to be considered. Where subsequent complaints or information from the Police are received regarding an existing licence holder, then their suitability will be judged against the new relevance of conviction policy.</p>	<p>From 1 March 2022.</p>
<p><u>Mandatory safeguarding training</u> From 1 March 2022 all existing licenced drivers will have 12 months to undertake child sexual exploitation and safeguarding training. North Devon Licensing will shortly be publishing a series of dates for online seminar training sessions via Zoom. Sessions will be around 1.5-2 hours long, with the cost expected to be around £10 (further details to follow shortly). All new drivers will also have to complete this training within 1 year of obtaining a licence.</p>	<p>From 1 March 2022.</p>

<u>Basic DBS disclosure for vehicle proprietors</u> If a vehicle proprietor doesn't have a hackney carriage/private hire driver licence then they will need to undertake a basic DBS annually.	From 1 March 2022.
<u>Basic DBS disclosure for PH Operators</u> If the operator doesn't have a driver licence then they will need to undertake a basic DBS annually.	From 1 March 2022.
<u>Register of booking and dispatch staff</u> PH Operators will be required to maintain a register of booking and dispatch staff to be held for at least 12 months and available for inspection by Licensing Staff within 7 days of request.	From 1 January 2023.
<u>Basic DBS Disclosure for booking and dispatch staff</u> PH Operators will be required to obtain a basic DBS for all booking and dispatch staff and to make these available for inspection by Licensing Staff within 7 days of request.	From 1 January 2023.
<u>Additional PH Operator record keeping requirements</u> PH Operators will be required to record the following <i>additional</i> information for each booking: a. the name of the driver attending the booking; b. the name of any individual that responded to the booking request; c. The name of any individual that dispatched the vehicle	From 1 January 2023.
<u>PH Operators policy on employing ex-offenders</u> All PH Operators will be required to have a written policy on employing ex-offenders, and make this policy available for inspection by Licensing Staff within 14 days of request. The Council has produced a draft policy which operators will be able to use as the starting point for their own policy, and this will be downloadable from our website.	From 1 January 2023.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

DBS Update Service

From 1 April all existing drivers at renewal, and all new driver applicants will be required to subscribe to the DBS update service.

The DBS update service is an online subscription service that lets you keep your DBS certificates up to date and allows employers/ the Licensing Team to check a certificate online, with your consent. It means that after signing up you won't in future have to make a separate application for an Enhanced Disclosure as part of your application to renew your licence. Maintaining your yearly subscription to the service costs £13 a year, which is cheaper than applying for a new disclosure every three years. The DBS Update Service will

save you time, as further applications and ID checks will only be requested when an update has been made to your disclosure.

You can register online as soon as you have your application form reference number (produced when you follow the DBS link we send you and add your details to the application online). Or you can wait and register with your certificate number when you receive your DBS certificate. ***If so, you must do so within 30 days of the certificate being issued.***

When you join, you'll get an online account that lets you:

- Take your certificate from one job to the next
- Give employers/ the Licensing Team permission to check your certificate online and see who has checked it
- Add or remove a certificate

Important information about DBS update service

- If you have signed up for the DBS update service you are advised to retain your original DBS certificate.
- If your certificate is lost or misplaced then you will be required to apply for a new DBS
- If you change address you will need to inform the DBS update service but you will not be required to apply for a new DBS certificate.
- If you change your name or have any new convictions, cautions or warnings then you will be required to undertake a new DBS certificate.
- If you have signed up for the service and you lose your credit/debit card or it expires, you will need to contact the DBS update service to provide your new card details. ***If the DBS update service is unable to debit your account when required and your subscription is stopped, then your disclosure will no longer be valid.***

Mandatory Workshop/Training: Safeguarding training for taxi drivers

As part of North Devon Council's ongoing commitment to supporting and improving the taxi trade in North Devon, we are running a series of short workshops (approximately two hours), on safeguarding for taxi drivers. The workshops will introduce the topic of safeguarding, the background to why it is such a prominent subject at the moment, and what the taxi trade can do to assist with this.

At the Strategy and Resources Committee on the 7 February the imposition of mandatory safeguarding training for all dual Hackney carriage/private hire licence holders and private hire licence holders was approved. We are therefore arranging a series of workshops at different times of the day to try and help you to find a convenient time to attend. Dates of workshops will be advised by newsletter and will appear on our website.

As stated above this training will be a *mandatory* requirement of your licence and it will be expected that all North Devon licenced drivers attend one of these sessions by 1 March 2023. Therefore, we strongly recommend that you contact us to book your attendance at one of these sessions when the opportunity arises.

Sessions are proposed to be held via video conferencing software and once you have booked a space on a workshop you will be emailed a link to be able to join the meeting (you should be able to do this via your smartphone, tablet or computer).

We would very much welcome your support with this important initiative.

Tax Conditionality Check

From 4 April 2022, it will be a new requirement that licensing authorities carry out checks to make sure applicants are aware of their tax responsibilities or have completed a tax check.

New applicants will need to confirm on their application form that they are aware of their tax responsibilities.

Applicants renewing their licence will need to complete a tax check and obtain a tax check code via the HMRC website. The code will need to be provided on their application form. The licensing authority must not renew a licence until a valid tax check code has been provided.

Please refer to the Tax Check Factsheet and additional information attached, so you understand what is required as this will apply to all renewals and new applicants.

A reminder of the Home Office campaign to help taxi and private hire vehicle staff identify and safeguard victims of "County Lines"

To help safeguard these vulnerable children and protect them from gangs, the Home Office, Institute of Licensing and CrimeStoppers are working to increase awareness among taxi and private hire vehicle drivers, and licensing staff, of the signs to spot a potential victim.

The signs to spot are:

- A child, normally 14-15 years old, but can be as young as 12 travelling a long train or taxi journey. They may be from another area, so may not be familiar with an area (may look lost) and may have an unfamiliar accent for the local area.
- They may be travelling during school hours or unusual hours (e.g. late in the evening).
- An obvious relationship with controlling, older individuals.
- Suspicion of self-harm, physical assault or unexplained injuries.
- Excessive receipt of texts or phone calls.

The Home Office has produced posters (example shown below and available on GOV. UK just type in 'County lines posters for taxi and private vehicle hire staff' into the search

bar) to help taxi and private hire vehicle drivers and booking staff recognise the signs to spot potential victims.

Taxi drivers who spot a vulnerable young person should report their concerns to CrimeStoppers on 0800 555 111.



Children travelling in taxis or private hire vehicles may be being exploited by gangs involved in drug crime.

Know the signs to spot.

County lines gangs use children to courier drugs and money across the country. Many of these children travel by taxis or private hire vehicles.

Have you seen:

 <p>A child, sometimes as young as 12, travelling alone</p>	 <p>Are they travelling during school hours or unusual hours (early in the morning, late at night)?</p>	 <p>They might seem unfamiliar with the local area, or not have a local accent</p>
 <p>Are they travelling a long distance?</p>	 <p>Are they paying for these journeys in cash?</p>	

If you see something that doesn't feel right, or looks suspicious, concerning a child or young person you should report it to Crime Stoppers on 0800 555 111.

 Home Office

Working in partnership with
CrimeStoppers.