NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL WASTE, FLEET AND PUBLIC PROTECTION

Coronavirus (COVID-19) advice for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensees

Following the advice of NHS England and Public Health England, North Lincolnshire Council is providing the following guidance to hackney carriage (HCV) and private hire vehicle (PHV) drivers in the North Lincolnshire area to help prevent potential transmission of Coronavirus should it become more prevalent in the country.

Drivers are encouraged to:

• Always carry tissues and use them to catch coughs and sneezes
• Dispose of used tissues in the bin as soon as possible
• Wash hands with soap and water, or use sanitiser gel, to kill germs
• Clean surfaces regularly with sanitising wipes or spray to get rid of germs

We advise all licensees, including HCV and PHV drivers, to follow these simple and sensible steps at all times and particularly in the wake of the outbreak of Coronavirus.

We would also encourage licensees to take sensible and routine precautionary measures such as cleaning surfaces regularly with sanitising wipes or spray to get rid of germs. As ever, drivers should consider regularly cleaning card payment devices. Licensees who share a hackney carriage or private hire vehicle should consider regularly cleaning the steering wheel and instruments.

Public Health England is the lead agency and is providing regularly updated information for the public on the outbreak of Coronavirus (COVID-19) in China, including the current situation in the UK and information about the virus and its symptoms.

If you are worried about the Coronavirus (COVID-19), have a cough, temperature or shortness of breath and have been in physical contact with someone from an affected area then the NHS advises you to:

• Stay indoors and avoid contact with other people as you would with the flu
• Call NHS 111

We would expect all private hire operators (PHO) to fully cooperate with any enquiries they may receive from Public Health England or any other relevant agencies. Whilst the above advice is current at the time of writing, please regularly check the Public Health England website and Government / NHS websites for updated information.

The Department for Transport has also issued updated guidance following the Governments relaxation of restrictions.

The DfT’s updated HCV and PHV guidance follows the Government’s publication of transport guidance for operators and passengers in England.
The DfT said: “The guide for operators will help organisations, agencies and others (such as self-employed transport providers) understand how to provide safer workplaces and services for themselves, their workers and passengers across all modes of private and public transport. Each transport provider will need to translate the principles and examples in this guidance into specific actions.”

To support this, the DfT’s Buses and Taxis Division has written to hackney carriage and private hire vehicle providers and licensing authorities with Q&A for the HCV/PHV sector, containing links to the guidance and answers to common questions.

Deputy Director, Local Transport COVID-19 Response, Department for Transport

TAXIS AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE Q&A

1. What guidance has been published for the taxi and private hire vehicle sector?

The Government has published transport guidance on the safe provision of transport services during the COVID-19 pandemic. There are separate guidance documents for transport providers and for passengers. Both guidance documents cover all modes. The guidance sets out government recommendations on who should be traveling and under what circumstances, and how social distancing rules should be interpreted. It also includes information about cleaning practices.

- Guidance for passengers
- Guidance for operators
- Guidance on clinically extremely vulnerable
- Guidance for households with a possible coronavirus infection

2. Should taxi and private hire vehicle drivers or passengers wear PPE such as a mask?

There are some circumstances when wearing a face covering may be marginally beneficial as a precautionary measure. The evidence suggests that wearing a face covering does not protect you, but it may protect others if you are infected but have not yet developed symptoms. This is most relevant for short periods indoors in crowded areas.

We are advising passengers if they can, wear a face covering in an enclosed space where social distancing isn't possible, and where you will come into contact with people you do not normally meet - such as when travelling in a taxi or private hire vehicle.

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.

Wearing a face covering is optional and is not required by the law. If you choose to wear one, it is important to use face coverings properly and wash your hands before putting them on and taking them off. Use the guidance on face coverings to
understand how to wear and make a face coverings. Other measures such as changing habits, social distancing, screens, cleaning and hygiene are also suggested in the guidance.

3. Should protective barriers be installed between drivers and passengers?

4. The installation of protective barriers is a decision for licensing authorities, PHV operators and firm/individual operating the vehicle to make based on their own assessment of risk.

They may also wish to consider:

- Eliminating the use of face-to-face passenger seating
- Use of ventilation
- Reducing occupancy to individual passengers in the back left-hand seat for vehicles that do not enable 2 metre separation; considering reducing occupancy in a larger vehicle

5. Can a taxi or PHV driver refuse to admit a passenger who is not wearing a face covering?

Taxi and PHV drivers are advised to make an assessment of risk as outlined in the transport operator guidance published on 12 May. The acceptance of a booking request by a PHV operator is a decision made based on the operator’s own assessment of risk. Any requirements for face coverings should be made clear to the passenger before the operator accepts the booking. Taxi drivers can use this assessment to determine whether or not it is reasonable to admit a passenger who is not wearing a face covering, considering other mitigations they put in place from their risk assessment. This does not however absolve them of their duties under the Equality Act 2010.

6. What support is the Government providing to the taxi and PHV sector?

The Self-employment Income Support Scheme will allow HCV and PHV drivers to claim a taxable grant worth 80% of your trading profits up to a maximum of £2,500 per month for the next 3 months. This may be extended if needed.

The Chancellor has set out a package of temporary, timely and targeted measures to support public services, people and businesses through this period of disruption caused by COVID-19.

7. Why are HCV and PHV drivers not considered critical workers?

Hackney carriage and private hire drivers should not generally be considered critical workers. Those undertaking Home to School transport or the transport of ‘extremely vulnerable’ people may be considered critical workers on a case-by-case basis. Critical workers should make suitable arrangements for their children to stay at home where it is safe for them to do so; the need for children to attend school should be discussed with the school.

8. Can HCVs and PHVs transport workers to and from hospitals?
Yes.

9. Can HCVs and PHVs transport passengers of ill health in and out of hospital?

Yes, but individuals should not use HCVs or PHVs if:
- They have symptoms of COVID-19 – a new, continuous cough or a high temperature
- Any of your household are self-isolating due to experiencing symptoms of COVID-19.

10. Can HCV and PHV drivers support passengers with accessibility issues while maintaining social distancing?

HCV and PHV drivers are still under the same obligation to provide reasonable assistance and make reasonable adjustments for disabled passengers. The guidance includes advice on measures that workers and passengers can take when it is not possible to maintain the recommended social distance.

For further advice please visit https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/ or contact Licensing at licensing@northlincs.gov.uk

In addition there may be grants available to businesses during this difficult time and you can read the information related to businesses on the Invest in North Lincolnshire website.