

Safeguarding Training for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Drivers and Private Hire Operators

Ward(s) Affected:	All
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Purpose

To consider a requirement for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Drivers to receive compulsory Safeguarding Adults and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Training

1 Background

- 1.1 In recent years there has been greater awareness about the issue of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). High profile media coverage of specific cases in the North of England highlighted failures within social services and other public sector bodies. These failures often allowed the abuse of vulnerable children to continue without detection or action.
- 1.2 In the wake of such incidents and as a result of the attention that grooming and other forms of exploitation have received, the Government have put additional focus on combating CSE. On 10th September 2014, the Government appointed Louise Casey to carry out a Report of Inspection of Rotherham Borough Council specifically in relation to its functions on governance, children and young people, and taxi and private hire licensing. The Government responded to these reports in March 2015 with publication of the document Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation.
- 1.3 One area of concern identified within Louise Casey's Report of Inspection was whether Rotherham Borough Council had made sufficient efforts to ensure that only 'fit and proper' persons were permitted to hold a hackney carriage or private hire licence. Professor Jay described the prominent role of taxi drivers in facilitating or engaging in CSE as a 'common thread' across England, while inspectors have raised concerns that the licensing and enforcement side of taxi and private hire regulation are often unable or uninterested in getting to grips with the issue and using their powers to good effect.
- 1.4 Those with a responsibility for confronting and tackling CSE therefore need to be aware of the potential role that taxis can play in facilitating abuse, ensure that only those who are fit and proper hold a licence, and that there are robust procedures in place for dealing with complaints. Public safety must be the first and most important priorities when determining policy, setting standards and determining enforcement of issues related to taxi and private hire licensing.
- 1.5 It is also important that those with responsibility for overseeing the taxi and private hire licensing functions of local authorities are aware of the challenges that those operating within the trade may face when asked to transport children or vulnerable adults. Taxi drivers fall under the scope of Section 59(A) of the Sexual Offences Act 2003, which makes it an offence to intentionally arrange or facilitate the travel of a person within the UK for the purposes of sexual exploitation; or believes that another person is likely to abuse the passenger during or after the journey. This means that if a driver transports a child knowing or believing that the child will be sexually exploited, that driver will commit the offence of human trafficking and could face a maximum sentence of 14 years imprisonment.
- 1.6 There is a responsibility, on local authorities, private hire operators, and individual drivers to ensure that licensed drivers are aware of the warning signs that could indicate when a passenger is at risk of trafficking or CSE, and that training is available or has been undertaken to assist those in the taxi trade to deal with such scenarios and report them to the relevant authorities.
- 1.7 Part of the Surrey Multi-Agency Strategic Child Exploitation action plan, has been to agree consistent procedures with district and borough councils for vetting and licensing of premises and taxis and agree standards for revoking licenses.
- 1.8 Partnership working between all Surrey District, Borough, and County Councils agreed a consistent approach across the county to provide specific safeguarding CSE training. This was initially delivered by Surrey Police in the form of a presentation. An interactive online system was then developed with the Barnardos organisation which included a wider range of safeguarding subjects, including vulnerable adults

2 Training

- 2.1 On 21 July 2015 all licensed Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Drivers/Operators were invited to attend a safeguarding course delivered by Surrey Police. Of the approximate 230 licensees, just 8 attended the one day training course.
- 2.2 The process was repeated but with more forceful wording on 28 February 2017 and 77 drivers attended the training session, 9 drivers have made arrangements to receive training with other Boroughs on alternative dates and a further 36 drivers have received training provided by their operators as a result of a compulsory requirement for Surrey County Council School Contracts, making a total of 122 or 53% of licensed drivers.
- 2.3 In June 2018, the Barnardos online training package was rolled out across the County. All previously untrained drivers were offered online safeguarding training upon the supply of a valid e-mail address. 54 Surrey Heath licensed drivers have passed the course and provided with a safeguarding certificate

3 Current Position

- 3.1 Existing drivers have had the opportunity to receive free CSE training for nearly 4 years, with free on-line training being available for the last 12 months.
- 3.2 Officers propose mandatory CSE training for all licensed Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Drivers and Operators in order to promote public safety and ensure that such persons remain 'fit and proper' to fulfil their role.
- 3.3 It is also recommended that all new applicants undertake appropriate CSE training as part of the application process, and that this is a mandatory requirement for all new and existing drivers to be fulfilled by 31 October 2019.

4 Resource Implications

- 4.1 The only additional resource implication arising from the training process is postage and stationary costs. The total costs are met within the existing budget. It is proposed that future training will be self-funded.

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 That the Licensing Committee resolve that:
 - i. all persons who make an application to renew or be granted a Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Drivers licence must first receive compulsory safeguarding training, as defined by the Executive Head of Community, regarding Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) with immediate effect and for licence conditions to be amended accordingly.
 - ii. any existing Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Drivers who have not received safeguarding training, as defined by the Executive Head of Community, regarding Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) by 31 October 2019 shall have their licence suspended or revoked.

Background Papers: None

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