



Introducing our new Chair of Licensing

It's an honour to take on the role as Chair of Bristol City Council's Public Safety and Protection Committee. Like so many people who live in Bristol, I rely on taxis. The taxi trade takes us to new places and gets us home safely, taking care of some of our most vulnerable citizens. During the Covid-19 crisis I've seen first-hand how drivers stepped up to keep the city moving, even as your health and livelihoods were in serious danger, and the city owes you all a debt of gratitude.

Now, more than ever, we need to tackle the problems of air pollution and carbon emissions that threaten our city's health and its future. Once again we see the taxi trade on the front line – upgrading vehicles to new emission standards and providing an alternative to the private car. Taking a journey by taxi is faster, cleaner, greener and cheaper (in the long run) than using a private car. It reduces carbon emissions, air pollution and congestion.

Lower standards in our neighbouring authorities remain a serious threat to that agenda. We need to stand together and show that we do not accept a race to the bottom on standards, and we will not tolerate illegal conduct by drivers from outside the city. I know this is a priority for you, and it's a priority for me.



Taxis are a public service, and as a city we have to show that we value that service. I want to ensure that drivers can earn a good living, and provide a vital public service while keeping the public safe and our standards high. I know we can only achieve that by working together.

Cllr Guy Poultney

Right to Licence and DBS Checks

As of 1st September 2021, we have resumed face to face Right to Licence and DBS Checks.

If you are due one of these checks you will now need to pre-book an appointment to provide your ID; there are appointments available on Tuesdays 10am–12 midday, Wednesdays 2–4pm and Thursday's 2–4pm.

Please ensure you come to the appointment on time with the required documents, you will need to wear a face covering.

Please note that the officer will only be able to complete your right to work check and will not be able to assist with any queries. More information can be found on our [website](#).

PC Quinton update – Focussing on suicide prevention

Although the trade is starting to get back on its feet following a horrendous 18 months, we shouldn't forget that drivers and customers are still struggling to cope. Sadly, sometimes people feel that suicide is their only option. Talking to someone you think may be suicidal is not easy but it may be the only and last chance that person has and you may save a life. This is particularly true for your customers.

SEE – Recognise when someone may be at risk of suicide. That includes being aware of how your customer appears, especially if they ask to be taken to the Clifton Suspension Bridge or Sea Walls.

SAY – Don't be afraid to ask someone if they are thinking about suicide, or ask how they are.

SIGNPOST – Help them to be safe and direct them to sources of support.

What can I do?

It will depend on the circumstances and what the passenger says and does.

Immediate risk to life: If there is an immediate risk to their life you should stop your journey if safe to do so and call 999. Be clear on your exact location and if an ambulance is also required.

Risk to life at the end of the journey: If you are en-route to a destination and need to contact the police you can call 999, or contact your Operator to call the police for you. If your destination is Clifton Suspension Bridge, go straight to the toll house and alert staff. They are very experienced at helping people with suicidal thoughts.

Acting strange / just worried for them: Call 101 to let us know. If I am on duty, stop your vehicle and text me with the destination, time you expect to arrive and quick note about what the issue is. If I do not reply within a couple of minutes call 101.

I'm a Controller and a driver has called in to say he is worried about a customer feeling suicidal

The Controller taking the call should arrange for an immediate call to 999 with details of the vehicle used, destination, estimated time of arrival and the details of the customer making the booking.

I'm an Operator, and have a regular customer I am worried about

Send me the details of the customer and why you're worried. I may be able to find a support worker for the customer who can advise you on the best thing to do when the person books a vehicle with you.

You could direct customers to The Samaritans on **116123** or jo@samaritans.org, or you can call the Mental Health Crisis Team on **0300 555 0334**.

Just as importantly, you may also be having suicidal thoughts. You can get immediate support 24/7 from the Support and Connect Helpline on **0800 012 6549**. Of course, you can always contact me direct on **07469 400 832** – I will do my best to listen and support you.

Your actions could save a life. Your inaction could cost one. Have a safe shift

PC Quinton, "Taxi Cop"



Changes to taxi policy and key dates

On 27 July 2021 the Public Safety and Protection Committee agreed changes to our existing policies. All licensing policies are now in a single policy document. The policy can be found on our [website](#).

The key changes to the policy are as follows:

- There is no longer a requirement for vehicles to be equipped with a fire extinguisher
- Any alteration to the seating configuration or capacity of a vehicle is not permitted
- All hackney carriages must have an electronic payment facility to accept debit/credit card and contactless payment
- Vehicle proprietors are now required to provide a basic disclosure check, vehicle proprietors who have been out of the country for a period of more than three months in the last five years will also need to supply a certificate of good character
- When presenting a vehicle for inspection to fleet services, the driver must also present their drivers badge for inspection
- No smoking signs will now be required to be a minimum of 70x70mm
- If a driver applies to renew their licence after it has expired they will be required to complete the council's Gold Standard Training Course before the date of their next renewal
- All driver's will be required to complete a mandatory safeguarding course, more information will follow on this
- There have also been a number of changes to the operators policy, further information on this has been emailed directly to the operators

Some of the key dates:

1 October 2021:

- All Hackney Carriages are now required to have an electronic payment facility and to display signage stating that contactless card payments are accepted.
- All vehicle proprietors who do not hold a private hire or Hackney carriage driver licence (or private hire operator licence) will now be required to obtain a Basic Disclosure on a yearly basis. A certificate of good character is also required on initial application for applicants who have lived outside of the UK.
- No smoking signs must be a minimum size of 70x70mm to ensure they are clearly visible.

31 March 2022:

- All drivers must have signed up to the DBS Update Service. All drivers will be contacted individually and asked to complete a new Enhanced DBS and sign up to the Update Service either by their next renewal date or by March 2022, whichever is earlier. When contacted drivers must act immediately to ensure the application is completed on time.
- Drivers who have already signed up will not need to complete a further DBS. Drivers who signed up prior the introduction of the online DBS application process will need to contact the Licensing Team so we can update our records.



Assisting disabled passengers

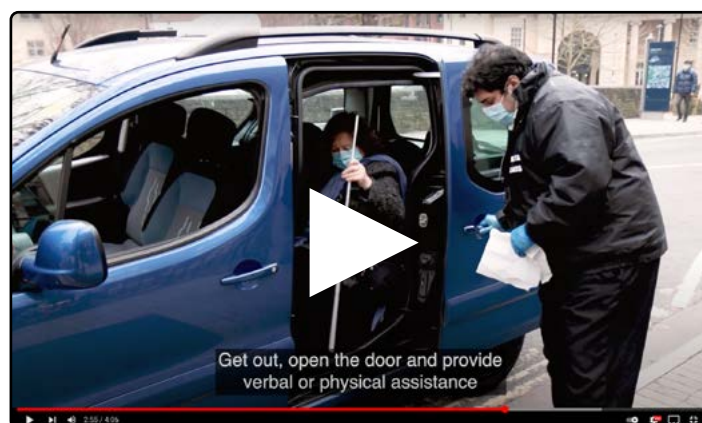
We recognise that taxi drivers are often key people in the lives of their customers, this is especially true of customers with disabilities, access to taxis gives them freedom when other public transport is less accessible. We hear a lot of positive feedback from disabled people, often from those who have a regular driver or operator they use who is polite and helpful and meets their needs well.

Unfortunately, we also do get a number of concerns raised and recently the PSP Committee has had to take action against a driver who refused to take a passenger with a guide dog. The driver had requested that the dog sit in the boot of the vehicle, which is in contravention of the Equality Act 2010 which states that the guide dog should remain with the passenger at all times. The dog then became distressed and ran off. The driver then drove off leaving the passenger alone without his dog. The committee revoked the driver's licence in this case.

The council is taking a strong approach to dealing with complaints regarding accessibility, and these complaints will be investigated by the Neighbourhood Enforcement Team. These investigations could lead to revocation and/or prosecution; drivers can receive fines of up to £1000.

A new national database of revocations and suspensions means all councils can check to see if an applicant has been suspended or revoked elsewhere.

It is illegal to discriminate due to a disability. It is also poor business practice, many disabled and older people in Bristol report being unable to get an accessible cab when they need to. It makes sense to recognise that this group are often totally reliant on taxis, and if treated well and communicated with, could bring a lot of new business. For more information on assisting visually impaired passengers visit our [website](#), there is also a [video guide](#) available.



Clean Air Zone

Bristol is introducing a Clean Air Zone (CAZ) in the summer of 2022. Vehicles that do not meet the zone's emission standards will be charged £9 per day to enter the zone.

In the autumn we will share more information about our loans and grants scheme to help taxi drivers licenced in Bristol upgrade to cleaner vehicles and adapt to the changes to tackle pollution in the city.

Go to the [Clean Air Zone](#) page on the Bristol City Council website to check whether your vehicle will be charged and find out more about the zone.



Hate Crime Awareness Week

National Hate Crime Awareness Week will be Saturday 9 October to Saturday 16 October 2021. The first national week took place in October 2012; it evolved out of the London Vigils against Hate Crime, that were held between October 2009 to October 2012

Alex Raikes MBE DL, Strategic Director of SARI (Stand Against Racism & Inequality) said;

“NationalHCAW (National Hate Crime Awareness Week) is organised between the second and third Saturday in October each year. People and agencies organise events, activities, awareness campaigns all over the UK during this week every year. SARI have been working with our hate crime services specialist partners, Avon & Somerset Constabulary, Local Authorities, Housing Associations and many other partner agencies to sort a whole variety of different events and activities – often delivered in partnership during the week across the Avon and Somerset area.

Our aim is to raise awareness, encourage more people to do more to stop hate crime and reach out so people don't suffer in silence but report hate crime.”

How can you get involved?

“Contact Alex Raikes at SARI by [email](#) or PC Patrick Quinton, to find out what is going on. You can also help share information about what Hackney and taxi drivers can do to tackle hate crime by using the attached resources. You are eyes and ears of the community and can be great Hate Crime Champions for us all. You can visit the Hate Crime Awareness Week [website](#) to find out more and to check out their resources and the social media campaigns they are running. You can check out our social media [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) – we will be posting information leading up to and during the week which you can also share or get involved with.

“Thank you to all our amazing drivers out there – you are critical for keeping Bristol connected and safe.”

School transport update

The school transport team are at the start of a new school year and trying to get around 800 children back to school. They are advising escorts to continue wearing PPE whilst they see how things settle down with children back in school. They have also asked that children continue to wear masks if they are able to do so, but this is not mandatory.

They have contacted our transport contractors and asked that they continue to keep the vehicles well ventilated, and continue with the higher standards of cleaning of vehicles – the usual cleaning regime as well as the cleaning key areas after the morning and afternoon school run. A few crumbs on a seat or a smeary window can give people the impression that the whole vehicle isn't clean.

Drivers should continue to follow the guidance set out on our [website](#) where possible, but of course this will vary depending on the job you are doing.



Using multiple apps and operators

An increasing number of drivers are using multiple operator booking apps at the same time. This can be a commercially beneficial decision for drivers, and there is no reason this can't be done.

However, we are aware that there have been a number of instances where drivers have accepted a booking on one app, and then cancelled that booking to take an easier or higher value booking on another app, effectively leaving the first customer high and dry. Once a driver has accepted a booking they have an obligation to provide a service to that customer unless there are exceptional circumstances, cancelling a booking could leave a vulnerable customer stranded, and is bad customer service.

If we receive reports of this happening in respect of individual drivers we may consider taking action on their licence which could include referral to the Public Safety and Protection Committee.



Fleet Services update

Whilst the restrictions may have come to an end, we understand the importance of keeping everyone safe, and preventing the spread of the virus as we can see levels are still rising, with schools now returning anticipate the levels will rise over the coming months.

Therefore, you should still wear face coverings when visiting our sites for compliance test where possible; we are also trying to keep the number of people to a minimum so please come alone if possible.

All vehicles that are brought to fleet services should be clean inside and outside, dirty tissues, empty wrappers and drinks containers should not be left in door pockets or by seats.

In line with the recent changes to the taxi and private hire policy we would like to remind you that all drivers are required to bring their badges to appointments with fleet services. If you don't bring your badge to the appointment the compliance test will be cancelled, and you will lose the fee for that booking.

What would you like to see?

The Licensing Team aim to improve communication between the council and the trade.

Remember, this is your newsletter! If you have something you think would be useful, or would like

to see included in future issues, or you have a good news story or information you want to share, please get in touch at licensing@bristol.gov.uk with the subject 'Newsletter'.