



# Government ignores taxi drivers

**The Coronavirus pandemic has devastated the taxi trade throughout the country, and two lockdowns, followed by Tier 3 restrictions, continue to make it almost impossible for drivers to make a decent living. A recent article stated that the number of taxis licensed in London has fallen from 18,900 on June 7 to 15,000 in November.**

Initially, the Government failed miserably to bring in clear safety guidance for taxi drivers, (as they did for other modes of public transport), and left it to Local Authorities to make their own decisions about rules without the same level of scientific advice. Following lobbying and the publication of more and more data on the impact of the virus on the trade, they have finally produced standardised safety guidance that is outlined in detail later in this newsletter. See page 2

## Coronavirus (Covid-19) taxis and phvs

At the same time, they brought in national licensing standards, which, whilst we might welcome the protection they provide to passengers and public safety, show again how they have failed to listen to the trade, as they don't address the issues that impact on drivers like hate crime and cross border working. **Statutory taxi and private hire vehicle standards**

The toll on the trade nationally is immeasurable, partly due to the higher number of deaths among men and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people, taxi drivers and chauffeurs have the highest occupational death rate (65.3 deaths per 100,000).

This is significantly higher than driver in other forms of transport like buses, and higher than healthcare and social care workers, and yet this has hardly been reported in the news locally or nationally. Following our lobbying this issue was raised by Kerry McCarthy MP in the House of Commons with a request that drivers be considered as a priority occupational group for the vaccine.

On top of the major risks to health, drivers are now facing immeasurable financial hardship. Whilst the Government have provided some schemes that drivers and operators may access, these do not in any way help to replace pre-pandemic income levels, and many drivers have fallen through the net due to strict eligibility criteria.

We must take every opportunity to publicise the advantages of using taxis as a safer and more accessible form of public transport while restrictions are in place, which can be tailored to meet a wide range of needs during this pandemic, so we

can try to boost the trade in any way we can.



**Cllr. Ruth Pickersgill**  
**Chair Public Safety**  
**Committee**

## Look out for scams!

There have been reports in our area of scammers targeting taxis. The ruse is as follows:

*A "Mr Hill, Area Manager, Boots" calls a taxi company to request some computer software be picked up Luton and two staff members from Premier Inn, Hemel Hempsted. En route the driver receives a call to say there is a problem with payment and can driver make payment for the computer software. On arrival at Luton, the driver swaps money for a package and then goes to Hemel Hempsted*

*to collect staff members who are not there. Driver returns to base, and no payment is made for the software or journey and no answer to mobile used to make booking"*

If you have experienced any incidents of this, or a similar, nature you should report them to Action Fraud online at [www.actionfraud.police.uk](http://www.actionfraud.police.uk) It's important any incidents are reported to try to catch the scammers and prevent it happening to others.



# PC Quinton update

**As we come towards the holiday season, the police traditionally conduct extra checks to detect drink and drug impaired driving. As part of that, I will also be breath/saliva testing drivers and it's worth bearing in mind the following points:**

- To require a sample, we do not always need suspicion you have been drinking/taking drugs. We can do it when there is an accident or where you have committed a traffic offence (such as not wearing your seatbelt)
- If you are stopped and required to provide a sample please don't be offended, and don't refuse based on religious/cultural grounds as you can be arrested or summonsed to Court for failing to provide a sample of breath or saliva. Stating you don't drink alcohol is not an excuse not to give a breath sample. The Council would also need to consider if you are still a fit and proper person to hold a licence if you refuse.
- Drugs tests take around 8 – 10 minutes to complete, but breath tests take between 1 – 2 minutes so they won't hold you up very much.

Earlier this year, Merseyside Police arrested dozens of taxi drivers on suspicion of drug/drink driving, and in our area I know of three drivers who have also been arrested in the last few months. Public safety is my first priority, and testing drivers is a part of keeping us all safe. Your cooperation will be much appreciated.



**PC Quinton, Taxi Compliance Officer,  
Bridewell Police Station**

## Covid-19 Update – Financial support and the importance of social distancing

**As local and national restrictions continue to change, and cases of Covid-19 remain higher than the national average in Bristol and the surrounding areas, it is important to remember the guidelines around social distancing and why they are important. There is guidance on the council's website for drivers about keeping yourselves and your vehicles as safe as possible, and how you should socially distance from your passengers which can be found here: [Covid-19 safety guidelines for taxi and private hire drivers](#)**

The Government have published guidance specifically for those in the taxi trade, including information on financial support available to those who are self-employed, as well as

operators and intermediaries.

The financial support available includes:

- the **Test and Trace Support Payment scheme** which is a payment of £500 and may be available to people who are told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace
- the **Self-Employment Income Support Scheme**
- the **Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme**
- a **Coronavirus Bounce Back Loan**

Operators and intermediaries may also be eligible for financial support through the **Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme** or a **Coronavirus Bounce Back loan**

The full guidance can be found on the Government's website here: **[Coronavirus \(Covid-19\) taxis and phvs](#)**

Support and career coaching is also available from Future Bright, which is a coaching scheme managed by the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) and the scheme has been expanded to help people affected by Coronavirus. You can find out more here: **[Support during Coronavirus outbreak](#)**

You should still be ensuring that you and your passengers wear a mask unless you or they are exempt from doing so. Please remember to follow all the social distancing guidelines, in particular:



- **Guidance on face coverings**

Passengers and drivers must wear face coverings in vehicles.

- **Exemptions for face coverings**

Some people are exempt from wearing a face covering. This includes children under 11, and people who cannot put a face covering on because of a mental or physical illness or impairment, or disability. Some people who are exempt may identify themselves by wearing a lanyard or badge which says 'Exempt'.

The full list of people who may not have to wear face coverings can be found on the gov.uk website here: [Face coverings when to wear one](#)

- **Disability awareness** Some disabled people don't have physical signs of impairment, and so you may not be aware they are disabled at all. Hidden disability can affect people in lots of different ways sometimes making daily life more

- demanding, especially if others don't understand their challenges. People with a hidden disability may not need to wear a face covering, and may also choose to wear a sunflower lanyard, badge or pin, or wristband to identify this. More information about hidden disabilities can be found on the Hidden Disabilities website here: [What is a hidden disability](#)

- **Self-isolating requirements**

If you or someone you live with have symptoms of Covid-19, however mild, you must self-isolate

- for at least 10 days from when your symptoms started. You should arrange for a test, and if you receive a positive result you must self-isolate and could be fined if you don't.

You must also self-isolate if returning from abroad from some countries. If the country is not listed on the travel corridor list, then you must isolate when you return and you may be fined if you do not.

Further information on self-isolating can be found on the gov.uk website here: [Covid-19 stay at home guidance](#)

The list of countries on the travel corridor can be found on the gov.uk website here: [Coronavirus \(Covid-19\) travel corridors](#)

**Stickers reminding customers to wear face coverings are available from PC Quinton or the BBNTA representatives.**





# Taxi renewals and documents

**We often receive applications that are not complete or missing documents. This can delay the processing of the application whilst we wait for the documents to be submitted.**

- In order to help us process your application as quickly as possible please take the following steps:
- Renew online where you can. Please upload all of the documents when submitting your application.
- If you can't renew online email your renewal form and all supporting documents to [licensing@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@bristol.gov.uk) Make sure you put your name and plate or badge number in the subject line of the email so we can easily identify it.
- Try to send all the documents in one email where possible. If you send multiple emails this takes more time to process.
- Complete your pre-checks (DBS, DVLA and medical) well in advance and as soon as you receive the reminder letter. We send these reminders out around 3 months in advance, and if you haven't received the letter in this time frame you should contact us to check what you need to do. If you haven't completed your pre-checks by the time of your renewal we might not be able to issue a new licence.
- Pay the fee – if you sent your application by email and haven't heard from us within 24 hours of submitting it, contact us to make payment on 01 17 357 4900.

As a reminder you need to submit the following documents with each application.

## **Vehicle renewal:**

- Renewal application form
- Vehicle inspection check from fleet services (Not the MOT Certificate)
- Current insurance

- V5C – where we don't have a copy on file we will ask you for this, so if you send a copy with your renewal this should save time.
- Meter certificate if you have had your meter recalibrated or a new one installed since the last renewal.

## **Driver renewal:**

- Renewal application form
- DBS Certificate where it is due
- Medical certificate where it is due – if your GP is not completing medicals because of Covid-19 you may be able to fill in a health declaration instead. This can be found on our website here: [DBS and DVLA medical checks](#)
- DVLA mandate where it is due
- DVLA Check code and authorisation form – we need this every year to check your DVLA status. You can get a check code online at [Driving licence](#). Don't use the code yourself; you need to provide it to us to do the check. You must complete it on an authorisation form, making sure to write the letters and numbers clearly, as it is case-sensitive. The authorisation form is available on the council's webpage here: [DBS and DVLA medical checks](#)
- RTL checks – if you have not already completed a right to licence check you'll need to do this before your next renewal. You can find out more on our website [Licence check for taxi drivers](#).

Please make sure you submit your application and accompanying documents well in advance of the expiry date to allow us to process it in good time. You can submit renewals up to 6 weeks in advance of your expiry date.

## Online DBS applications, DBS Update Service and Updates to policy

You can now apply for your DBS online. We'll send you an email with a link to the online form, along with your login details. You'll be asked if you want to sign up to the [DBS Update Service \(GOV. UK\)](#) when you receive your certificate. You should strongly consider doing this as it allows us to check your DBS status at any time, and you won't need to complete a full DBS check every three years if you maintain your update service subscription. This will

also avoid delays in DBS checks when you apply to renew your licence.

Because of the introduction of the National Standards by the Department for Transport it is likely the DBS update service will become a requirement of the policy in the near future. To allow you to sign up now if you want to we, are creating accounts for everyone when they are due to renew their licence. We will have more



information on the changes to the policies and how they are affected by the National Standard early next year.

If you have received a purple form in the post, just let us know by email and we can set up an online account for you which you fill in and submit to us online. The rest of the process is the same:

- You need to email copies or photos of your ID documents to [licensing@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@bristol.gov.uk) Check the GOV.UK website for acceptable forms of ID.
- We'll check your ID when we receive it, and send you an appointment for a video call. You need to have your ID with you for the video call, so we can verify it against the ones you've sent by email.

- Once your ID has been verified, we'll end the video chat and call you by phone to take payment for the DBS application for £51.

- We'll verify the DBS online form and send it off.

More information about DBS checks can be found on our website here: [DBS and DVLA medical checks](#)

The National Standard can be found on the Government's website here: [Statutory taxi and private hire vehicle standards](#)

## Gold Standard Updated

**The Gold Standard course, required for all new drivers, and available to existing drivers, has been updated to allow online learning in combination with classroom learning and assessment. This means you are able to complete the course more flexibly in your own time, and attend the training centre for assessments.**

The assessment includes:

- English and Maths entry level and level 1
- Highfield level 1 Award in Customer Service
- Pearson Level 1 Safe Road Skills
- Highfield Level 2 Introduction to the role of the professional taxi and private hire driver

This is a requirement for all new drivers and gives an opportunity for any existing drivers to upskill and gain nationally recognised qualifications which complement their role in the

taxi industry. More information can be found on the N-Gaged website here: [www.n-gaged.co.uk](http://www.n-gaged.co.uk)



## Ranks Update

The times for the St Augustine's Parade rank have been extended. You can now use the rank between 4pm and 8am every day.

## Fleet Services Update

**Fleet services would like to remind everyone of the requirements for booking tests and the measures they are taking to keep you and the testers safe. Please make sure that when you book a test, you take the following steps to make sure your vehicle is ready for inspection:**

- All booked test slots must be paid for the day before by card payment only.
- Vehicles must arrive 10 minutes before test starts.
- Vehicles must be clean inside and outside.
- All rubbish is to be removed from the vehicle.
- Windows should be lowered to air the vehicle before exiting.

The vehicle will be sanitised by the testers before and after your test to reduce the risk of spreading Covid, please advise the tester beforehand if you wish for this not to be done.

Some vehicles have been brought in filled with personal items or rubbish, you must make sure this is cleared out before bringing the vehicle for inspection; your vehicle should be brought to Fleet Services as if it is ready to take your next fare.

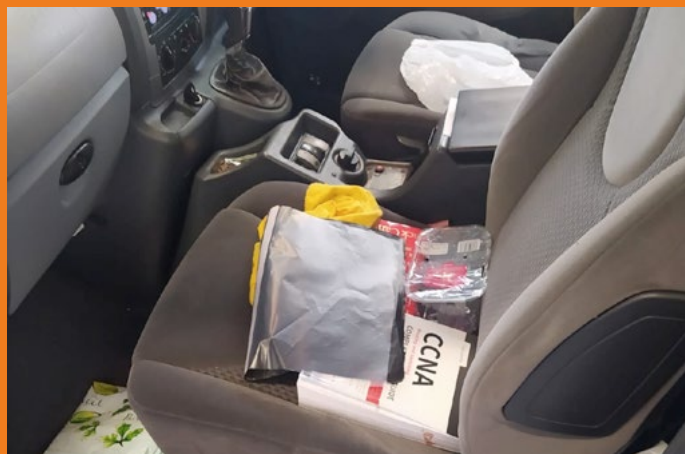
When presenting the vehicle for test, please come alone. Do not bring pets, children or another person with you. You may need to remain outside for the duration of the test and that there may not be shelter available so please make sure you bring suitable clothing/umbrella.



Where 2m social distancing cannot be maintained, then you'll need to wear a face covering unless you are exempt.

If you aren't able to exit the vehicle for your test please call Fleet Services on 0117 9036319 before your test takes place so that we can make suitable alternative arrangements.

If you don't follow the guidelines, they may not be able to carry out your test. More information can be found on our website here: [Vehicle inspection and testing](#)

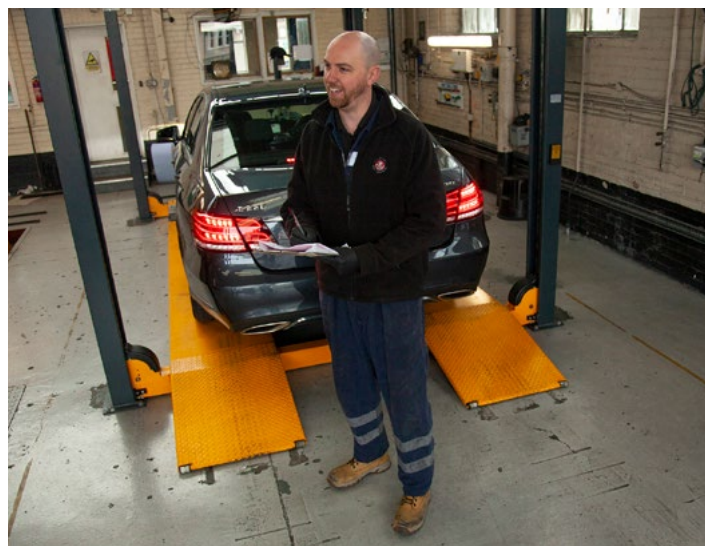


## Vehicle inspections and failures at Fleet Services

**We have continued to receive a number of queries about vehicles which have failed the Vehicle Inspection check (VIC) at Fleet Services, as part of the renewal process. The Fleet Services team test vehicles to the Council's Inspection Standard. If a vehicle doesn't meet this standard then Fleet Services must fail the vehicle, and will not issue a pass sheet.**

Common failures are where a vehicle has tints, or doesn't have contrasting coloured grab handles. If your vehicle receives a failure for this type of issue please contact the Licensing Team directly by email including a copy of the Vehicle Inspection Check sheet you are given, as the Fleet Services team won't be able to issue a pass sheet. The Licensing Team will record these reasons and will decide whether they are acceptable to issue a licence. Additional documents may be required and we will let you know if this is the case.

Other failures, such as no no-smoking stickers, scratches to bodywork, or mechanical issues, must be rectified as normal.



## Christmas and New Year opening times

Fleet Services, the Customer Service Centre phone lines, and the Citizen Service Point (CSP) at 100 Temple Street are all open over the festive period with the exception of Christmas Day (25th December), 28th December (in lieu of Boxing Day), and New Years Day (1st January 2021).

Please note that the Licensing Service are not operating out of the CSP and documents should continue to be submitted online or by email to [licensing@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@bristol.gov.uk). The CSP is open for essential services only.

Fleet services will be operating at the following times over the festive period:

Thursday 24 December	7:15am to 15:15pm
Friday 25 December	Closed
Monday 28 December	Closed
Tuesday 29 December	8:00am to 16:00pm
Wednesday 30 December	8:00am to 16:00pm
Thursday 31 December	8:00am to 16:00pm
Friday 1 January 2021	Closed

They are open normal hours outside of these times.

## 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](mailto:licensing@bristol.gov.uk) with the subject 'Newsletter'.