

TRAINING FOR THE TAXI TRADE

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on amendments to the Drivers Awareness Test (DAT) which must be passed by all applicants prior to the Licensing Authority issuing them with a drivers licence.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 A Licensing Authority must not grant a taxi or private hire vehicle driver's licence unless it is satisfied that the applicant is a fit and proper person to hold such a licence. The test involves assessing the applicant's character, health, local knowledge of the area and understanding of their responsibilities as a licensed driver.
- 2.2 The Driver Awareness Test which has been renamed as the Driver Knowledge Test has been reviewed and updated for a number of reasons; mainly to include a safeguarding element to the test and to modernise the geographical knowledge section. Amending some of the questions has also improved consistency with other Hampshire Authorities which has removed the perceived view that this Council's test was easier to pass.
- 2.3 A compulsory safeguarding module has been added following the Jay Report into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham which indicated that licensed vehicles played a prominent role in the issues investigated. There is no legal requirement or standardised format or content for this training and therefore this Council has decided to design and implement a safeguarding training pack.
- 2.4 The amendments to the test will ensure a robust licensing scheme that protects safety by driving up standards, is a real benefit to our communities and maintains public confidence in the trade.

3. THE NEW KNOWLEDGE TEST

- 3.1 The Driver Knowledge Test consists of three sections which cover the following areas:
- Law and regulation 10 questions
 - General driving, highway code, basic English and numeracy skills & geographical knowledge 40 questions
 - Safeguarding (scenario based) 10 questions
- 3.2 The safeguarding training is an e-learning package designed by the Council's Partnership Interventions Manager (Brian Byrne) and includes knowledge and assessment modules. Each candidate is taught by a series of scenarios and their understanding is then assessed to ensure they could take appropriate action should the need arise.
- 3.3 The Driver Knowledge Test is completed by applicants at Appletree Court. The time allocated to complete the test is 1 hour 20 minutes. The pass mark is 80% for all three sections, with failure to pass any one section resulting in a failed test.

Applicants have 3 attempts to complete and pass every section in the test in one sitting. If they are unsuccessful on the third attempt, they cannot re-take the test for a period of 12 months. Although some questions are repeated, many are different throughout all three tests in order to reduce the likelihood of information sharing between applicants.

- 3.4 All applicants are required to pay for the test before booking and failure to attend, late arrival or failure to cancel the booking within 2 clear working days of the test will result in the fee being forfeited.

4. REVIEW OF THE TEST

- 4.1 The new Driver Knowledge Test was trialled in March and April by officers within the service particularly to ensure that the IT system would support the e-learning module. Feedback was provided and a few minor amendments were implemented.
- 4.2 The Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Statement of Principles, Part K, refers to passing the Driver Awareness Test as a pre-qualifying condition for a drivers licence. The Knowledge Test has been reviewed and amended to address the national safeguarding issues, in advance of the full policy review. This will take place over the following 6 months and will involve consultation with all stakeholders.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The feedback from partners who have reviewed the safeguarding training has been very positive. All have recognised the need for training to ensure drivers and applicants understand issues around safeguarding and vulnerable adults, as well as acting as the eyes and ears of the community to assist in the prevention of similar issues.
- 5.2 The safeguarding module was presented to the Hampshire Safeguarding Children's Board in June by the Council's Chief Executive and was recognised as an excellent training package to raise standards and give greater customer confidence. It is anticipated that other Hampshire Authorities will adopt this package which will improve consistency in the application process across the region.

6. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY, FINANCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no equality and diversity, financial or environmental implications for the committee to consider resulting from this report.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 That the Committee endorse the new knowledge test with the safeguarding training module and recognise the positive outcome of implementing it with all new applicants.

7.2 That the Committee support the future roll-out of the safeguarding training for all existing drivers and operators.

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Background Papers

None