

REPORT TITLE **Training for Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Drivers - Safeguarding and CSE**

Submitted by: **Democratic Services Manager**

Portfolio: **Safer Communities**

Ward(s) affected: **All**

Purpose of the Report

To request permission to consult with all licenced hackney carriage and private hire drivers regarding the introduction of compulsory awareness training in relation to Safeguarding and Child Sexual Exploitation.

Recommendations

- a) **That a consultation letter be sent to all drivers regarding the introduction of compulsory awareness training for safeguarding and CSE.**
- b) **That there be a 4 week consultation period ending on 25th October 2015**
- c) **That a report be brought back to this Committee on 3rd November regarding the outcome of the consultation.**

Reasons

Failings in the way that some aspects of taxi licensing are administered have been highlighted following a review of taxi licensing in Rotherham. Officers of this Council have met to consider all of the findings of the Rotherham Report and are seeking to ensure that all necessary steps are being taken to safeguard and protect both our drivers and their customers by providing all drivers with a good understanding of how to keep themselves and the public safe, including children, young people and adults at risk of abuse or neglect.

a) **Background**

In October 2013 Rotherham Metropolitan Council commissioned an independent inquiry into child sexual exploitation. The final report found evidence of sexual exploitation of at least 1,400 children between 1997 and 2014 and that there had been a collective failure by the council and the police to stop the abuse.

One element of the report dealt with the licensing of taxis, specifically how this business can involve the placing of a vulnerable person in the company of a stranger.

Newcastle Borough Council already has many of the recommendations listed in the report in place including compulsory training for all drivers (NVQ, BTEC or DSA training) and a robust policy regarding convictions which states:

As the driver of Hackney Carriages and private hire vehicles often carry passengers who are alone, or may be vulnerable, applicants who have convictions for rape, indecent assault, any sexual offence involving children and any conviction for an offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 will normally be refused a licence.

The case in Rotherham at the time required a driver to have more than one conviction before a licence would be refused.

Our Policy also allows Members to take into consideration other information which may not have resulted in a criminal conviction:

When considering applications, the Council may take into account any information of a sexual nature which does not amount to a criminal offence that is brought to its attention where that information may indicate that an applicant may not be a fit and proper person to hold a licence.

b) **Issues**

Since the publication of the Rotherham findings your officers have met regularly to consider what this Council can do to make its policies regarding taxi licensing even more robust.

It is recommended that all new applicants for a private hire or hackney carriage drivers licence will be required to attend a safeguarding and CSE awareness training session prior to their licence being granted and that all existing drivers will be required to have completed the training by the end of December 2016 or upon renewal of their licence whichever is sooner.

It is proposed that these sessions will initially be run on a monthly basis to allow the application process not to be time burdened. The sessions will be delivered by the Council's Community Safety Officer in the Council Chamber. The frequency of the courses may vary over time depending on numbers of applicants but care will be taken to ensure that drivers are not hindered in their application process by the fact that a course is not available for them to attend.

The session will include:

- A good understanding of how to keep themselves and their customers safe
- An understanding of their responsibilities to the public and where to report concerns
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The training will be at no cost to new and existing licence holders the first time that they are booked to attend a training session. It is proposed that should the applicant fail to attend the training session without providing 24 hours notice then a fee of £35 will be incurred.

4. **Proposal**

- a) That all new applicants for a private hire or hackney carriage drivers licence be required to complete a safeguarding/cse course prior to their licence being granted;
- b) That all existing drivers be required to have completed the training by the end of December 2016 or upon renewal of their licence whichever is sooner.
- c) It is proposed that should the applicant fail to attend the training session without providing 24 hours notice then a fee of £35 will be incurred.

5. **Reasons for Preferred Solution**

- a) To ensure that Newcastle under Lyme has a robust Policy in relation to safeguarding and CSE especially in relation to the licensing of private hire and hackney carriage drivers.
- b) To provide all private hire and hackney carriage drivers in Newcastle under Lyme with a
 - A good understanding of how to keep themselves and children, young people and adults at risk of abuse or neglect safe
 - An understanding of their responsibilities to the public and where to report concerns

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6. **Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities**

- *creating a cleaner, safer and sustainable Borough*

7. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

As this will be a matter of Policy implementation it must be considered and agreed by the Public Protection Committee prior to implementation.

9. **Financial and Resource Implications**

The funding for the training will be met by using existing resources from the Business Improvement, Central Services and Partnerships budgets.

10. **Major Risks**

The risks associated with not having a robust safeguarding/cse policy have been highlighted in the findings of the Rotherham report which found evidence of sexual exploitation of at least 1,400 children between 1997 and 2014 and that there had been a collective failure by the council and the police to disrupt abuse, assist victims and prevent further incidents.

15. **Background Papers**

Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham (1997 to 2014)