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Dear drivers and operators

COVID-19 COMPLIANCE

With infections from Coronavirus on the increase the Government expects local authorities to work very closely with it's stakeholders to ensure that all is being done to reduce the risk of infections and therefore the licensing team want to refresh the messages that we have been sending out in this regard:

Customers you're allowed to take on journeys

- Customers must wear a face covering whilst in your taxi, unless they have an exemption. You can refuse to take a passenger if they refuse to wear a face covering

Social distancing advice for taxi drivers

- Where possible, customers should sit in the back of your vehicle
- Before the journey, ask the customer if they have any luggage or bags and if they're able to put them in the boot themselves. If they are able to do so, you should pop the boot open from inside your vehicle, if you can, and the customer should put their items in and close the boot.
- If you need to help a customer with luggage or shopping, you should keep your distance, where possible. You can do this by asking your customer to leave their bags at the back of the vehicle and then step away so you can load them.
- Avoid skin to skin contact at all times.
- If you take breaks at your operator's base, you should keep your distance from other drivers, where possible.

Hygiene and safety advice

- Avoid cash payments and take card payments, where possible.
- You should have disposable tissues with you to catch coughs and sneezes.
- You should wash your hands or use hand sanitser before and after you get into your vehicle and before you touch a customer's luggage.
- Always keep the windows open when there is a passenger in the vehicle to help with ventilation.
- Switch off the air conditioning or set it to avoid recycling air within the vehicle to a setting that brings fresh air in and enables air changes to take place.

Wearing a face covering and gloves as a taxi driver

The government recommends that if you are in an enclosed environment and can't maintain social distance you should wear a face covering.

It's important for passengers to be able to identify you as a legitimate driver. Therefore, please be prepared to remove your face covering so passengers can see your identity matches up with your displayed licence badge. This must be done following the current social distancing rules.

Cleaning your vehicle and disposing of waste

- After each customer, you should clean your vehicle thoroughly using wipes or disinfectant spray. Make sure you clean the surfaces your customers are likely to touch, such as door handles and seat belt clips.
- You should clean the areas of the vehicle you touch regularly a few times throughout the day and always at the start and end of each shift. This includes door handles, steering wheel, handbrake and switches.
- If you share your vehicle with another driver, you should clean the inside thoroughly before the next driver gets in.
- Store any personal waste, such as tissues and cleaning wipes in disposable rubbish bags. Each driver should ensure they use a new disposable rubbish bag each shift

Operator staff advice and guidance

The government has published transport guidance on the safe provision of transport services during the COVID-19 pandemic. It's important you review and implement government guidance if you're operating a taxi or private hire vehicle business, or are a self-employed driver.

- Regularly clean all contact points with disinfectant. This includes telephones, surfaces, door handles and taps.
- If your operator base is open for customers to walk in and make bookings, you should ensure staff and customers can socially distance, where possible. To do this, you could consider limiting the number of people allowed in at the same time or provide markers on the floor to allow people to stand, queue and socially distance.

Government guidance is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-transport-guidance-for-operators/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-transport-guidance-for-operators>

DBS APPLICATIONS

As some of you may be aware we have been able to process DBS application in the normal way for quite some time. However, the DBS service is taking longer to process some applications. Current advice on the DBS website states that it may take 8 weeks for an application to be processed. Whilst we endeavour to send reminders for these checks in good time, we would remind you that it is your licence and your responsibility to ensure that you submit all required paperwork to us in a timely manner, particularly if you need to renew your badge.

To obtain an application form from the DBS telephone 03000 200 190 and quote the Council's registration number 21149 000 002. Complete the form when received and either post it to Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent ME10 3HT or drop the application through the letterbox of the office where it will be collected and dealt with by a licensing officer. You can scan your supporting documents to us and pay in the normal way.

CHRISTMAS OPENING

This year Swale Council will not be working between Christmas and the New Year. Please take note and ensure that we have all required paperwork for renewals by no later than Tuesday 22 December

Kind regards, Licensing Team

