

Hackney carriage and private hire newsletter December 2021

Welcome to the West Suffolk Council December 2021 hackney carriage and private hire newsletter containing updates on COVID-19, plate and badge collections, recent workshop (Medicals, DBS, application forms, spiking, Suffolk Passenger Transport), partnerships survey, new driver courses and festive period licensing team working times.

Please continue to check our webpage for regular updates:

<https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/taxi>

COVID-19 guidance

Please keep checking the Government website for important updates on coronavirus, including recent information on travel. [GOV.UK – Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): taxis and PHVs](#)

You should not continue to work if you have coronavirus symptoms, or if you have been told to self-isolate. If you have coronavirus symptoms you should get a test as soon as possible. You should stay at home until you get the result. If the result is positive, you should not work until your isolation period is over.

It is a legal requirement to self-isolate if you test positive or are told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace. You could be fined if you do not self-isolate. Driving when COVID-19 positive is a serious breach of public health sanctions. Any driver found to be driving a licenced vehicle within the period of 10 days of testing positive for COVID could have their licence revoked.

We would strongly suggest, if you have not already, that you [sign-up to the GOV.UK update service](#) to receive emails when information changes about COVID-19.

Updated guidance for transport operators, passengers and taxi and PHV specific guidance has been issued and is available using the links below:

- [GOV.UK - Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): safer transport guidance for operators and people who work in or from vehicles](#)
- [GOV.UK - Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): safer travel guidance for passengers](#)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): taxis and PHVs](#)

The contingency face covering distribution programme is extended until 31 December 2021. As such, transport bodies and operators can order face coverings they may require for contingency purposes for passengers and transport workers until 31 December at zero cost.

Please note that guidance is subject to change as per any government updates.

Plate and badge collection

All plate and badge collections continue to be made via an agreed appointment with

the licensing team who will contact you by phone in the first instance. Once arranged a confirmation email will be sent. These collections will only be made from West Suffolk House where a member of the team will be available to assist you. We must remind you that if you fail to attend your appointment or arrange a suitable time then you risk your licence being suspended. Please ensure you book your appointment in advance of your expiry dates.

Private Hire and Hackney Carriage workshop Bury St Edmunds - 7 December 2021

Thank you to all of those who attended the workshop and for the feedback provided. For those who could not attend here is a summary of the topics covered:

Medicals

New medical forms were introduced last December. This is a standard Group 2 medical form with a covering and end page specific to West Suffolk Council. Medicals must be carried out by a Registered General Practitioner (GP). You can check if someone is a Registered GP on the General Medical Council (GMC) website [General Medical Council \(GMC\)](#). The GP must have access to your full medical records and complete the West Suffolk Council covering page in full. Please make sure they have completed this correctly before you leave your appointment.

A Group 2 medical will be valid up to the applicant's 45th birthday. Thereafter, a further Group 2 medical will be required every five years at ages 50, 55 and 60 until the age of 65. The medical will then be required every year thereafter. The council will not accept Medics on Wheels Group 2 Medicals at any time.

If you are not sure when your medical is due, please email us to check.

Due to current issues with getting medical appointments, you may wish to book this in advance. Medicals are valid for four months from the date of examination.

Disclosure and Barring Service

We are aware of current delays with Enhanced DBS applications. Some applications are being returned very quickly, others are taking weeks and months to come back.

It is a condition of your driver's licence to sign up to the DBS Update Service. This means, providing you maintain the subscription, keep your original DBS certificate and there is no change to your criminal record, we can check your record online.

We cannot and will not grant a licence without a valid DBS certificate so please make sure your applications are made in good time. For details on how to apply for your DBS please consult our policy or email us.

(Policy - 2.18 In order to sign up to the online service the applicant, on receipt of their completed Enhanced DBS Certificate, must register for the service within 19 days of the DBS certificate issue date. Upon licence renewal the applicant will need to provide the council with their original certificate for the update service to be checked)

Application forms

All of our application forms are available on our website at [West Suffolk Council - Taxi licences](#). Please see guidance below in relation to transfer and change of vehicle applications.

The transfer form is when a plated vehicle is being purchased by someone else. The form needs to be submitted by the new proprietor, but also needs the signatures of all the proprietors which were connected to that vehicle prior to sale. If we don't have all the signature's we are not authorised to complete the transfer.

Change of Vehicle - this also includes change of registration number. This is different to a transfer - it is a change of vehicle on an existing plate with all the same proprietors. The new vehicle will have to meet the requirements of our policy.

Driver Licence applications – a reminder when applying, on the endorsement section it states – 'Certificate of good conduct issued by relevant non-UK country – **where the applicant has had a period of residence of more than three months outside of the UK since the age of 18**'. If this is not submitted and or not verified, then the application cannot proceed further. Please ensure it is included with all applications to avoid rejection or delays in processing your licence.

Re-licensing applications must be submitted at least 14 days prior to expiry. If for any reason you are unable to submit all the necessary documents in time you must contact the licensing team and make us aware that you are experiencing problems. Failing to do this could mean that your licence will expire, and you will then have to apply as a new applicant.

Important note - we must always see a handwritten signature and not a typed one.

Spiking

Spiking is a crime and is frightening and traumatic for victims, who feel personally targeted, invaded and often suffer loss of physical or muscular control, as well as memory loss. Some drugs may also cause a victim to act in an erratic or violent manner or lose consciousness. Spiking can occur in various ways such as drugs being covertly being placed into drinks. Recent methods revealed involving victims being injected by needle. As well as being victims of rape and sexual assault we are now finding victims of robbery and theft, with personal identify being taken and bank accounts cleared. Be mindful that both females and males are victims of these crimes. There have no offences reported to Suffolk Constabulary to date but there has been an increase in other parts of the UK. When we receive any updates from the police, we will advise you all accordingly.

Spotting the signs -If someone is displaying the below symptoms and you're concerned about them, check they are safe, reassure them, and phone 999 to request the ambulance service. If they believe they have been spiked, contact the police, again by phoning 999.

There are a range of things to look out for, which include:

- confusion
- disorientation
- hallucinations
- loss of ability to communicate properly
- nausea or vomiting
- paranoia
- poor coordination
- unconsciousness

Suffolk Passenger Transport

Suffolk County Council (SCC) Passenger Transport works as an integrated transport unit to contract transport services to meet the local authorities' responsibilities under the Transport and Education Acts as well as procuring transport for other directorates such as Adult and Community Services (ACS).

Passenger transport procures contracts for:

- registered local bus services
- home to school transport and specialised student transport (also known as SEND transport – special educational needs and/or disability) on behalf of the Children and Young People's Directorate
- specialised adult transport on behalf of Adult and Community Services (ACS)
- demand led rural transport.

Vehicles sizes range from double deck buses to small saloon cars and will be determined by the needs identified.

To become a transport supplier, please visit the Suffolk Passenger Transport webpage to find out more information and what steps you will need to take to register: [Suffolk on Board - Working with Suffolkonboard](#)

School contracts - If you are a private hire driver or a combined hackney carriage or private hire driver with a private hire vehicle, you cannot bid for a school contract with Suffolk County Council. You can carry out a school contract journey if your private hire operator, who has the contract, has given you the job. Only private hire operators or hackney carriage drivers or combined hackney carriage, private hire drivers with a hackney carriage vehicle can legally enter into a school contract. **Suffolk County Council has tightened up the bidding process. Please feel free to contact them if you have any queries.**

Recently commissioned online safeguarding training for drivers and passenger assistants who work on home to school transport. This helps to safeguard pupils but will prevent drivers putting themselves into a potentially vulnerable situation and open to allegation. For more information visit: [Suffolkonboard - Safeguarding children and adults for drivers and passenger assistants](#)

Partnerships

Suffolk Licensing Officers Group (SLOG), Suffolk Community Safety Partnerships (CSP's), Suffolk Police and Suffolk County Council (SCC) have been working together to develop a survey for taxi, private hire operators and drivers.

The aim of the survey is:

- to identify and respond to trends
- to raise awareness of exploitation and a driver's role in helping to tackle this in line with new [Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards](#)
- to consider current reporting mechanisms and establish if there is evidence showing a need to develop a taxi reporting app
- Raise awareness of hate crime and understand more about how to respond to any specific issues regarding this.

We hope that as many drivers and operators as possible complete the survey to enable us to work together to support safeguarding across our communities. Please go to the link and take a few minutes to complete the short [Suffolk County Council Smart Survyer- Taxi/PHV SmartSurvey](#)

New driver courses

West Suffolk College are currently running courses for new drivers every other month. The next course is scheduled for 22 and 23 February 2022. There are lots of spaces available for this next course.

For more details please contact West Suffolk College on 01284 716246 or email training@wsc.ac.uk

West Suffolk Christmas opening hours

[West Suffolk Council - Contact us](#)

Licensing team contact details

Website: www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/taxi

Email: licensing@westsuffolk.gov.uk

Phone: 01284 758050 - Customer Services – Licensing

We are currently experiencing a high volume of calls and applications within licensing. To allow urgent matters to be prioritised, please consult [West Suffolk Council – Taxi licences](#) for any general enquiries.

Please continue to submit all applications and supporting documentation by email to licensing@westsuffolk.gov.uk. In the first instance you will receive an automatic email acknowledging receipt of your application. Within a further three working days you will receive acknowledgment of your application being validated. Please only call or email if you do not receive an acknowledgement within this time frame

We would like to wish you all a safe and peaceful festive period and a prosperous new year.