

Hackney carriage and private hire vehicles COVID-19 update 5 February 2021

Please read through this carefully as it contains important information.

Licensing appointments

The Licensing team no longer meets with customers. All communication will need to be done via email. Public access to West Suffolk Council buildings is closed.

Applications

All applications must be emailed to licensing@westsuffolk.gov.uk

All supporting documentation can be scanned or photographed and emailed to Licensing.

Licence renewals for drivers and vehicles

Due to the rise in COVID-19 cases, with immediate effect we will be suspending the issue of taxi plates.

Until further notice taxi and private hire vehicle plates and badges will be delivered electronically to those applicants on completion of the application process.

Drivers and operators who have received a 'temporary electronic vehicle plate' along with their 'paper licence' must ensure that the 'plate' is placed in the rear window of the required vehicle, visible to a person standing at the rear of the vehicle. The driver must also carry within the vehicle the explanatory letter from West Suffolk Council authorising the use of the temporary plate. You will need to leave your expired plate on the vehicle and keep the new documentation with you at all times.

New vehicle applications

Applications must be submitted following the same process as renewals via email.

Operator applications

All applications must be submitted following the same process as renewals via email.

New drivers

New driver applications are now being processed. If you have already submitted a complete application a member of the licensing team will contact you.

Other applications

Please continue to notify us of accidents, change of address, convictions and so on, on appropriate forms by email, and we will process these as soon as we can. Please note that, due to the circumstances, it may take eight weeks for some applications to be processed. Applications will be processed in order of date received and once validated as correct.

You must ensure that all application forms are fully completed and that all the relevant documentation is attached, otherwise we cannot process the applications. The council's approved garages can be found on our Taxi licensing [webpage](#).

Email addresses

To enable us to keep you updated, please provide us with your email address if we do not already have this, as we are not currently able to deliver anything by post.

Precautionary measures

The licensing authority is continuing to monitor the developing issue of COVID-19. It is important to exercise precautionary measures, as we should with all general coughs and colds. The current advice is to:

- always carry tissues and use them to catch coughs and sneezes
- dispose of used tissues in the bin as soon as possible
- wash hands with soap and water or, when not possible, use sanitiser gel to kill germs.

We would encourage you to take sensible and routine precautionary measures such as cleaning vehicle surfaces, especially door handles, seatbelt clasps, and any payment devices between passengers, with sanitising wipes or spray and, if you share a vehicle with other drivers, you should also consider cleaning the steering wheel and instruments before the start of your shift.

If you are worried about COVID-19, have a cough, temperature or shortness of breath and have been in physical contact with someone from an affected area, the NHS advises you to:

- stay indoors and avoid contact with other people as you would with the flu
- call NHS 111
- not just turn up to Accident and Emergency or your doctor's surgery.

Contact tracing

Wherever possible, we would ask hackney carriage drivers to keep a record of the passengers they have taken from place to place in line with the 'maintaining records' guidance given by the NHS test and trace service, details of which can be found on the [GOV.UK website](#). This includes full contact details of the person making the booking for a journey, such as forename and surname, home address or specific address of the destination, telephone number. We appreciate that not everyone wants to give this information, however, if most people do it could help a great deal.

One of the features of the NHS mobile app is the ability to scan a QR code poster which confirms the user has visited that venue. All drivers are advised to generate a poster to be displayed within your vehicle so the passenger can scan the QR code confirming they have used your services. The use of the QR code prevents the need for you to record the passenger's details as it will be linked with the details generated through the NHS mobile app and the QR code. To create a QR code poster for this purpose you can visit the [GOV.UK website](#) and follow the instructions given. You should ensure that the display of the poster in your vehicle does not obscure the visibility of the windows.

It is also advised for your own benefit to download the NHS mobile app for the test and trace service. This will prevent potential downtime to your business as it will inform you if you have been in contact with a passenger that has tested positive that has also installed the NHS mobile app. The [NHS mobile app](#) will then alert you and give you advice.

Payment details

We will not process anything without payment. Cash payments are no longer accepted. Payments can be made by debit or credit card. Once a complete application has been received the Licensing team will contact you to take payment.

Licensing team contact details

Email: licensing@westsuffolk.gov.uk

Phone: 01284 758050