

Taxi Trade Updates

Licensing Unit - 25.03.2020

Due to the current climate in relation to Covid-19 and social distancing, self-isolation etc. please be aware of the following changes to our services:

- New private hire and hackney carriage vehicle and driver licences will not be issued. New vehicle licence applications will only be considered under exceptional circumstances and at the discretion of the Principal Officers/Assistant Director, for example processing a new vehicle licence, for an existing licenced driver.
- All business will be conducted via phone and email. There will be no face to face provision (Call 01204 336584 option 1, or preferably email licensing.unit@bolton.gov.uk).
- All existing private hire and hackney carriage vehicle and driver licences due to expire before 30th June 2020:
 - Will have the option to extend their existing licence until the 30th September 2020
 - Extensions will be approved upon completion and return of a Council online self-certification statement form (attached)
 - The form is now available on-line on the Council webpages or by emailing the licensing unit address above
 - Upon completion and approval, drivers and vehicle owners will receive a PDF confirmation via email that their licence has been extended without prejudice
 - Drivers will need to print the confirmation and keep it with them when working or be able to show a copy on their mobile phone.
- However, should a driver decide not to extend their driver licence, there will be a temporary extension of the 6 week grace period until 30th September 2020. This will allow any existing driver to reapply for a licence.
- Replacements/duplicates the individual licence holder is required to email the licensing team with their request.
- A new farecard form has been sent to all private hire operators. The operator will complete the form and request the farecard by emailing the form back to the licensing team. The new farecard will then be emailed to the operator for them to print.
- There will be no committee meetings until further notice. Any licence holder due to attend committee will be contacted to make alternative future arrangement.
- Any complaints against drivers, vehicle owners or operators will be dealt with by an Enforcement Officer by email or phone.
- The hackney carriage vehicle meter checks are cancelled until further notice.

MOT and Mid-Year Tests - 01.04.2020

We've received the notification from DVSA about new rules for MOT testing on 'light vehicles'. DVSA have confirmed that a private hire and hackney carriage vehicles are 'light vehicle' for the purposes of the new rules:

- MOT expired before the 30th March 2020 - then the vehicle needs to be submitted for test at one of the Councils authorised garages. The vehicle must pass both the MOT and vehicle licence test. A licence cannot be extended on a vehicle where the MOT expired before the 30th March 2020.

- MOT due to expire on or after 30th March 2020 – DVSA have confirmed the MOT will be extended for 6 months and by the end of this period you will need to have a new MOT, for example:
 - a vehicle whose MOT expires on 3rd April 2020 will have it extended to 3rd October 2020
 - the vehicle will however have to pass its MOT by 3rd October 2020
 - in these circumstances the vehicle licence can be extended

As outlined above if the MOT expired before 30th March 2020, then the vehicle will need to be submitted for test and pass both the MOT and vehicle licence test to continue to be used on the road as a licensed private hire/hackney carriage vehicle. Not all of the approved garages are currently open – please contact them directly to find out their opening arrangements.

If a vehicle is due its mid-year test you should apply the same rule as for the MOT. Any deposits already paid for a mid-year vehicle test will be deducted from the next vehicle test fee.

Please note that if you do extend your MOT, you are required to submit your vehicle for MOT at one of the approved garages within a month of the restrictions being lifted. This is to ensure both your safety and that of the travelling public. This will also assist in managing the backlog of vehicles which will require testing in 6 months time.

If the vehicle is being used, you must be certain that it meets the requirements of Part II of Road Traffic Act 1988 (Construction and Use Regulations) if it doesn't you may be committing an offence and putting your licence at risk.

Covid-19 Precautions - 07.04.20

In this response is guidance in relation to transmission of the coronavirus *'it is also crucial that all parts of the transport sector ensure that their services do not contribute to the transmission of coronavirus, so I hope you can help us in reiterating the key Government advice to all your members about the need for robust cleaning regimes for vehicles, and of course for immediate self-isolation for drivers who suspect that they may have contracted this awful disease'*. We ask you to share this message across the whole network of drivers and vehicles.

Everyone has a role to play in limiting the spread of coronavirus. Licence holders, including taxi and private hire car drivers, are reminded to follow government advice when it comes to hand washing, including advice on isolation if you have symptoms.

The following information is advice for 'taxi' drivers from GMRCE:

Guidance for taxi drivers during the coronavirus outbreak

Ask about symptoms before a passenger is picked up.

In line with current guidance people with a new persistent cough or high temperature should stay at home. If potential passengers have symptoms, direct them to NHS 111 and advise them not to make the journey.

Where possible, ask passengers to sit in the back of your vehicle.

Keep your vehicle clean:

- Regularly clean surfaces, such as card payment devices, steering wheels, handbrake, door handles, and seat-belt buckles with normal cleaning products after picking up each customer;*
- Wash hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20-seconds or use a sanitiser gel. If hand sanitiser is not available, a wash station can be set up in your car with basin, soap, water, kitchen towels and plastic bags for waste.*

Payments:

Where possible, cashless payments should be set up to avoid cash/change exchange – BACS, telephone or internet card payment, or similar is suggested. These could be taken over the phone or internet when taking the booking. We recognise that this may be more difficult for hackney carriages and if cash is exchanged – hand washing (above) in-between customers is even more important.

Further guidance/links:

Public Health England guidance on Coronavirus, including links to the package of support available to businesses: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19>

Government support and how to access it: <https://www.businesssupport.gov.uk/>

How your business might be helped with the response to coronavirus: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-support-from-business>

The Business Growth Hub has developed a range of free resources and advice to support businesses, including webinars below - www.businessgrowthhub.com/coronavirus

We know the trade are facing a very challenging and difficult time and the licensing team will do everything possible to support you.

Press Update 4th May 2020

Bolton taxi and private hire drivers urged to seek financial help in pandemic

Taxi and private hire drivers are being encouraged to apply for financial help as the COVID-19 lockdown continues.

Bolton Council is issuing a reminder that self-employed drivers may be eligible for the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS).

Cllr Adele Warren, Executive Cabinet Member for Environmental Services, said: “Undoubtedly times are tough for the self-employed and this includes the private hire and hackney carriage trade.

“We’ve had quite a few calls from worried drivers and we wanted to remind people that there is help out there.

“Please make the most of the support available.”

If you are self-employed and affected by COVID-19, find out whether you are eligible for SEISS by visiting: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-a-grant-through-the-coronavirus-covid-19-self-employment-income-support-scheme>

Taxi and private hire drivers are also being urged to avoid turning to illegal money lenders to make up for any loss of income during the pandemic.

The warning comes from the England Illegal Money Lending Team (IMLT) – a national Trading Standards team set up to prosecute loan sharks and support their victims.

Loan sharks are unregulated, often give cash loans without any paperwork and charge extortionate interest rates.

They may offer what appears to be a quick-fix small loan but in the long term, any money borrowed will come at a very high price and may lead to violence, threats and intimidation.

A loan shark is someone who lends money without the correct permission from the Financial Conduct Authority.

Loan sharks often use threats and violence against those who fall behind with their payments, forcing many victims into crime.

One case involved a loan shark who preyed on taxi and private hire drivers and lent money at excessive interest rates. Drivers were typically paying back at least £100 per week.

To ensure these loans were repaid, the unscrupulous money lender took different forms of collateral, including spare car keys and an electricity payment card from one customer.

In most cases, victims are introduced to the lender either through a friend, family member or because they are known in the community. Victims believe the loan shark is offering them a service, but their behaviour can quickly change if repayments are not met.

The England Illegal Money Lending Team (IMLT) have already prosecuted loan sharks for illegal money lending, blackmail, threatening behaviour, violence, kidnap, drugs offences and rape.

Cllr Adele Warren added: “Loan sharks are a blight on our communities, causing misery to lots of families.

“Private hire and taxi drivers are a particular group being targeted during this pandemic.

“If you think you’ve borrowed from a loan shark please get in touch with the Illegal Money Lending Team in confidence so they can help you.”

The Team has had nearly 400 successful prosecutions resulting in 480 years-worth of custodial sentences, and more than 29,000 victims have been helped.

“Drivers have been threatened, intimidated, some have even considered suicide because of the impact that these loan sharks have had in charging exorbitant rates and then demanding the money back. I urge anyone affected by illegal money lending to get in touch for confidential support,” said Tony Quigley, head of the IMLT.

Call the Illegal Money Lending Team’s 24 hour helpline confidentially on 0300 555 2222, email reportaloanshark@stoploansharks.gov.uk or complete an online report form at www.stoploansharks.co.uk.

DfT update – 21.05.20

Please see attached communication from the DfT for the taxi and private hire industry following the publication of transport guidance for operators and passengers in England.



20200513 Taxi PHV
Q&A and Letter.pdf

Licensing Unit Update – 22.05.20

Due to the outbreak of the Coronavirus and to support the trade we agreed interim steps to extend licences upon request. This was shared with you at the end of March. Since then we’ve been developing online application forms to enable licence holders to renew their licence.

From the **3rd June 2020** both Private Hire and Hackney Carriage **vehicle licence** holders will be able to submit an online application to renew their vehicle licence.

The form doesn't go live until the 3rd June, but additional information and guidance is already available on our website here: <https://www.bolton.gov.uk/taxi-private-hire>.

Requirements:

- A vehicle will need to pass a recent MOT and a Private Hire/Hackney Carriage vehicle examination.
- The vehicle examination must be completed by one of the Council's approved testing stations before an online renewal application can be submitted.
- Testing stations contact details are available on our website here: <https://www.bolton.gov.uk/downloads/file/2640/hackney-carriage-and-private-hire-test-testing-stations>
- Vehicle licence holders are required to attach a copy of their current vehicle insurance to the online form.
- The application will be rejected if the insurance is not attached.
- Once the online form has been submitted vehicle licence holders will need to call 01204 336584 (option 1) to make the renewal payment.
- Licence holders are required to quote the online form reference number which starts with a 'VL' when making the telephone payment.
- The reference number is provided at the end of the online process and is also included on the acknowledgement email sent to the email address provided on the online form.
- Online applications will not be processed and are not valid until the payment has been received.
- Payment **MUST** be made within 3 working days of the application being submitted (we're working on an online payment system and hope to launch this later this year).

Once the vehicle licence has been granted the licence holder will receive an email with a PDF licence and fare card. These will need to be printed. A copy of the licence will be shared with the nominated private hire operator.

The vehicle livery (plates and internal stickers) will be sent in the post. The current livery will need to remain on the vehicle until the new livery have been received. You must be able to provide a copy of your valid current licence to a Police Officer or Authorised Officer of the Council.

We're progressing with the online application form for driver renewals and hope to launch this in the next few weeks. In the meantime the current licence extension process will remain in place.

A reminder of the online arrangements outlined in our previous communications:

- Replacements/duplicates - the individual licence holder is required to email the licensing team with their request.
- Fare cards for change of operator – the new farecard form which was sent to the private hire operator, needs to be completed by the operator and emailed back to the licensing team. The new farecard will then be emailed to the operator for them to print.

- Any complaints against drivers, vehicle owners or operators will be dealt with by an Enforcement Officer by email or phone.
- All business is still being conducted by phone and email if you have any questions or queries please email licensing.unit@bolton.gov.uk.

Please could you circulate this communication to all members/licence holders operating via you licence. We would like to take this opportunity again to thank you for your patience during this difficult time and hope you are all staying safe and well.

Guidance on the use of non-standard plastic screens in hackney carriage and private hire vehicles - 01.06.20

We have received queries relating to the fitting of screens to licensed vehicles as a precautionary measure in relation to the coronavirus.

We will look longer term at a solution for approval across the ten authorities, however this is not an option that we can advise proprietors to pursue at this moment in time, and we would not recommend it.

Current scientific advice is that the virus can survive for a period of time on plastic surfaces, and there is therefore a possibility that fitting of such a screen provides an additional area that could harbour the virus. This would then present an additional burden on drivers to clean this area between fares.

Further, the fitting of such a screen would not remove the need to interact directly with passengers to take payment, where pre-payment or contactless systems are not available. There is a concern that the presence of such a screen would give the customer a false sense of security as regards transmission of the virus.

It is of course a decision that individual proprietors may themselves make, but please be advised that:

Any adaptations to a vehicle would need to be agreed with the insurance company, and we would advise that written confirmation is obtained that the vehicle remains insured.

Any addition of a 'screen' would not form part of the vehicle inspection, and therefore will not be tested as part of that inspection

The Authority would not accept liability in circumstances in which a screen has caused injury to a passenger or driver, as we do not recommend the addition of a screen in licensed vehicles.

We would remind proprietors who are continuing to operate that they have a responsibility during the pandemic to minimise the potential for the spread of the virus between customers and drivers, by keeping their vehicles clean, e.g. by sanitising high contact areas such as belts and handles between fares. Social distancing rules should still apply where possible.

If you did still decide to fit a screen, the advice from the Community Infection Prevention and Control Service on barriers / plastics screens is as follows:

The barriers would only be to prevent droplet contamination from cough/sneezes – and staff with any symptoms would, of course, be off work and isolating for the 7 days. They would also be able to request a self-test kit through the .GOV portal as classed as an essential worker, or be able to access the local drive thru testing through manager application at the Bolton Wanderers site.

The only guidance is that which has been released around use of protective barriers in vehicles is as per the .GOV link:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5eb96cd6d3bf7f5d3a907e58/working-safely-during-covid-19-vehicles-110520.pdf>

This does state that plastic screens can be used if staff working in vehicles cannot be 2 metres apart.

Additional cleaning/decontamination would be required if these were installed, along with all other surfaces of the cab, and this would need to be stressed if the decision is taken to fund the screens. The companies (who are currently lining up to provide the screens at a substantial cost I would imagine!) would be required to provide appropriate decontamination advice. As per MHRA guidance (see link below), some disinfectants are not suitable for plastic surfaces, including bleach/chlorine based products:

<https://www.gov.uk/drug-device-alerts/medical-device-alert-detergent-and-disinfectant-wipes-used-on-reusable-medical-devices-with-plastic-surfaces-risk-of-degrading-plastic-surfaces>

08/06/20 – Information for Taxi Drivers

What help are the council offering

- Working with our trade representatives and operators to get the message out and circulate the information about the government's Self Employment scheme as widely as possible.
- We can also provide help via our Money Advice/Money Skills/Furniture 4 U/Furniture Options teams
- Our Time2Talk team can assist with financial conflicts which may be causing conflict in the home.

- We are still issuing licences and have extended the grace period for those who are not currently working to enable them to renew when they start work again,

What are the concerns for drivers welfare etc

- Loan sharks preying on vulnerable drivers
- We understand a lack of money can cause added stress, impact on family life, mental health issues, general health issues
- Around 10% of drivers are over 60, some with ongoing medical issues which make them vulnerable.

Time2Talk – Family Mediation Service – for families & households in conflict with each other

Who can help	What they deal with	Contact details
Time2Talk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Managing conflict within households with issues such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Abusive threatening behavior ▪ Conflicting personalities ▪ Putting in place age appropriate boundaries ▪ Sibling rivalry ▪ Teenagers ▪ Neighbour issues ○ Improving self-esteem and building confidence ○ Managing anger ○ Communication Skills ○ Assertiveness 	01204 335945 or 01204 335976 or email Time2Talk@bolton.gov.uk

Why the council are urging drivers to seek financial help

- According to our main operators up to 80% of drivers are off the road due to the current circumstances (around 1500 drivers).
- For many drivers they are the sole breadwinner for the family.
- We want them to seek help in the right way so they don't end up with huge debts, contacting loan sharks or other loans which due to high interest rates they cannot repay.
- Want to support them as much as possible to ensure once restrictions are lifted and the industry starts to pick up they are well enough to work and also have the funds to ensure their vehicle is roadworthy for the travelling public.

Bolton's Money Skills Service – for those struggling financially

Who can help	What they deal with	Contact details
Bolton's Money Skills Service - Money Advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debt • Homelessness prevention advice and assistance for mortgage and rent arrears • Council Tax and fuel arrears • Negotiating affordable and realistic payment arrangements for both priority and non-priority debts • Advice and assistance with court forms including Debt Relief Orders (DRO), Individual Voluntary Arrangements (IVA), Bankruptcy • Reassurance about bills and debts • Referral over to Welfare Rights to check that the customer is receiving all they are entitled to. • Unfortunately we are unable to advise re business debts. • If a person is not a sole trader and has business debts they could contact Business Debtline. 	<p>01204 331965 or email moneyadvice@bolton.gov.uk</p> <p>0800 197 6026 9am - 8pm Monday to Friday. https://www.businessdebtline.org/</p>
Bolton's Money Skills Service - Money Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice on budgeting • Making ends meet • Reducing expenses • Saving on gas and electric costs • Energy efficiency advice to reduce fuel costs • Getting a better deal for fuel, broadband, etc either by changing tariff or switching supplier (average savings are around £200 per year) • Warm Home Discounts – who may be entitled and when • Advice on eligibility and benefits of the Priority Services Register for vulnerable customers and help to join. This a free service provided by utility suppliers (eg, British Gas, Eon, United Utilities) and network operators (Electricity North West) to customers in need. https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/consumers/household-gas-and-electricity-guide/extra-help-energy-services/priority-services-register-people-need 	<p>01204 331983 or email moneyskills@bolton.gov.uk</p>

Furniture4U / Furniture Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise and support you with Local Welfare Provision (LWP) applications, not just for furniture but also for food and fuel. And - where outside suppliers permit: - • Advice and guidance about different furniture options available across Bolton • Sale of goods directly to the public, via loans via the credit union Hoot, where applicable • Advice re pre-loved items • Help with trust fund applications to help source items, should all else fail. 	<p>01204 331973 email furniture4u@bolton.gov.uk</p>
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Housing Sustainability Principal Officer - Carole Jackson 33 1967

Team Leaders Money Skills/Money Advice.Furniture4U - Clare Maskrey 33 1910

Time2Talk – Catherine Skelton 33 5945

Licensing Unit Update – 16.06.20

Due to the outbreak of the Coronavirus and to support the trade we agreed interim steps to extend licences upon request. This was shared with you at the end of March. Since then we've been developing online application forms to enable licence holders to renew their licence.

Following the successful launch of the online vehicle renewal application form, from the 18th June 2020 both Private Hire and Hackney Carriage **driver licence** holders will be able to submit an online application to renew their licence.

The form doesn't go live until the 18th June, but additional information and guidance is already available on our website here:

<https://www.bolton.gov.uk/taxi-private-hire>.

Requirements:

- The licence holder needs to ensure they've completed (if required) a:
 - Certificate of Medical Fitness
 - New DBS
 - Declaration of Conviction & other matters

- Declaration and Statement of Medical Fitness
- The licence holder is required to email these documents once the online application form has been submitted.
- You will need the following documents to complete this form. Please have them ready before continuing:
 - You DVLA check code which is available from <https://www.gov.uk/view-driving-licence>
 - Proof of right to work in the UK (non UK/EU nationals only). We can accept any of the following documents: Visa (in current passport only), biometric card or letter from Home Office,
 - A recent passport sized photo.
- The application will be rejected if the required documentation is not submitted.
- Once the online form has been submitted the licence holder will need to call 01204 336584 (option 1) to make the renewal payment.
- The licence holder is required to quote the online form reference number which starts with a 'DL' when making the telephone payment.
- The reference number is provided at the end of the online process and is also included on the acknowledgement email sent to the email address provided on the online form.
- Online applications will not be processed and are not valid until the payment has been received.
- Payment **MUST** be made within 3 working days of the application being submitted (we're working on an online payment system and hope to launch this later this year).

Once the renewal for the driver licence has been granted the licence holder will receive an email with a PDF licence. This will need to be printed. A copy of the licence will be shared with the nominated private hire operator.

The badge and internal sticker will be sent in the post. You must be able to provide a copy of your valid current licence to a Police Officer or Authorised Officer of the Council.

A reminder of the online arrangements outlined in our previous communications:

- Replacements/duplicates - the individual licence holder is required to email the licensing team with their request.
- Fare cards for change of operator – the new farecard form which was sent to the private hire operator, needs to be completed by the operator and emailed back to the licensing team. The new farecard will then be emailed to the operator for them to print.
- Any complaints against drivers, vehicle owners or operators will be dealt with by an Enforcement Officer by email or phone.
- All business is still being conducted by phone and email if you have any questions or queries please email licensing.unit@bolton.gov.uk.

Please could you circulate this communication to all members/licence holders operating via you licence. We would like to take this opportunity again to thank you for your patience during this difficult time and hope you are all staying safe and well.

Update 19.06.20

MOT & MID-YEAR TEST IMPORTANT UPDATE:

In an earlier notification we confirmed the arrangements by DVSA for MOT testing. MOT's were extended for light vehicles expiring from the 30th March for 6 months.

The Councils approved garages are now open and adhering to the DVSA and social distancing guidelines. You're now required to have your licensed vehicle tested.

Vehicle Owners - if your vehicle missed a mid-year test, MOT test, or if the test is due you **MUST** contact one of the approved garages and book your vehicle in for test. This is to ensure both your safety and that of the travelling public.

Private Hire Operators – please ensure all vehicles being used by you under your licence have passed the MOT within the last 6 months.

You can now renew the vehicle licence online here: <https://www.bolton.gov.uk/xfp/form/183>

Email sent to Trade Reps and Private Hire Operators - 09.07.20

Good Morning,

Transport for Greater Manchester are undertaking a census, this is in relation to the Clean Air Zone and Common Minimum Standards, and funding for the private hire and hackney carriage industry.

Please can you share the information and link below with all drivers operating under you operator licence and/or drivers and vehicle owners you represent.

Dear Licensed Driver/Owner/Operator,

As you know, the 10 Greater Manchester local authorities are working together to produce a Clean Air Plan to reduce air pollution and the government have confirmed that Greater Manchester must introduce a category C Clean Air Zone across the region.

This would mean that the registered keeper – the person or business listed as the owner with the DVLA – of any non-compliant licensed hackney carriages or private hire vehicles would pay a daily charge when travelling into, within, or through Greater Manchester.

Since lockdown started, we have seen air pollution falling, however it is likely that these air pollution levels will rise as restrictions are lifted, so the government have confirmed there is still the need to take action.

During lockdown GM confirmed that due to the impact of COVID-19 the implementation of a GM Clean Air Zone will be delayed to the Spring of 2022. We also reported that we have secured an initial £10.7m to help the owners of Greater Manchester licensed private hire vehicles to upgrade to compliant vehicles and are working closely with Government to secure funding for the hackney carriage vehicles.

A statutory consultation on the Clean Air Zone and proposed financial support to businesses will take place later this year alongside a consultation on the proposed minimum licensing standards. There will be further engagement sessions with the taxi and private hire trade in the run up to these consultations.

*We want to make sure that this funding can support as many owners and operators as possible. With this in mind, we would like to know a little about you and your licensed vehicle(s) to further build our case to Government. **You can help us by completing the 10 minute survey here: <https://surveys.tfgm.com/snapwebhost/s.asp?k=158109218862> by midnight on Friday 17 July.***

This data request does not form part of the consultation on Greater Manchester's Clean Air proposals.

This information is also available on the Councils website here: <https://www.bolton.gov.uk/taxi-private-hire>

Thank you for your assistance and hope you are all keeping safe and well.

Trade Communication – 15.07.20

Bolton Council guidance on face coverings in hackney carriage and private hire vehicles:

Passengers:

Please be aware some firms have made face coverings compulsory and are also limiting passenger numbers. Check before you travel and if you are asked to wear a face mask you should do so.

A taxi driver or private hire operator may be entitled to refuse to accept a customer if they are not wearing a face covering.

Guidance on travelling in a private hire or hackney carriage vehicle can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers#taxi-and-private-hire-vehicles>

Drivers and Operators:

Please make it clear to passengers before they book if face masks are required and if you are limiting passenger numbers in vehicles.

Hackney carriage and private hire drivers should be prepared to remove their face covering so passengers can identify them as the driver displayed on the licence and badge.

Government guidance on face coverings can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-safe-outside-your-home/staying-safe-outside-your-home>
