

Neighbourhoods Directorate
Licensing
City Hall
Plater Way
Sunderland
SR1 3AA

Date: 11 January 2022

Our ref:

Your ref:

This matter is being dealt with by:

Steve Wearing, Principal Licensing Officer, 07711 827989,
steve.wearing@sunderland.gov.uk

PLEASE GIVE THIS LETTER YOUR URGENT ATTENTION :

Dear Educational Establishment, Private Hire Vehicle Operator, or Licensed Driver,

RECOMMENDATIONS ISSUED BY THE COUNCIL'S LICENSING AND REGULATORY COMMITTEE

I have been asked to write to you by Councillor Fletcher, the Chair of Sunderland City Council's Licensing and Regulatory Committee, ("the Committee").

The Committee deals with licensing issues concerning hackney carriages and private hire vehicles, (ie. taxis), that operate within the City of Sunderland. The Committee has responsibility for ensuring that the public travel in safe, well maintained vehicles that are driven by competent Licensed Drivers. It also ensures that a fair and reasonable service is provided to the trade. The Committee's overriding consideration is the safety of the public, with particular emphasis upon children and vulnerable adults.

A copy of this letter has been sent to all educational establishments within the City, plus all Private Hire Vehicle Operators, (referred to as "Operators"), and Drivers licensed by the Council in relation to private hire and hackney carriage matters. By receiving a copy of this letter, you are being included in a city-wide sharing of information exercise that is being undertaken by the Council's Licensing Section.

The Committee recently heard a report relating to an incident involving the transportation of a vulnerable passenger from an educational establishment, under an Education Permit, in which the safety of the passenger was compromised.

The Committee, following hearing the specifics of the incident report, unanimously decided to set out a number of recommendations which are intended to help to prevent such similar incidents recurring and requested that they were shared with all educational establishments, taxi drivers and operators.

It is hoped the recommendations set out below reinforce the importance of safeguarding as part of the transportation of pupils and students as part of Education Permits, issued by Together for Children Sunderland Limited. Some of the recommendations have direct application to educational establishments, while others apply to the taxi trade, although there is a degree of overlap it is requested that due consideration is made and appropriate action taken to adopt the recommendations.

Recommendations Made by the Committee :

1. Educational establishments within the City of Sunderland be contacted to determine if they operate an emergency out of hours telephone system. It is recommended that those educational establishments that do not have an emergency out of hours telephone number in place do implement such arrangements. Once implemented, it is recommended that the emergency number to be publicised, such as on your respective website;
2. Existing Licensed Drivers and Operators licensed by the Council be contacted and reminded about the existing Coronavirus (COVID-19) Taxis and PHVs Guidance that apply, plus any other statutory requirements. It is important that Licensed Drivers follow issued COVID-19 guidance and statutory requirements, as appropriate. Following the guidance will help minimise the spread of Covid-19 and will help keep Licensed Drivers and their passengers safe. The guidance which has been issued at today's date can be found at : [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): taxis and PHVs - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-taxis-and-phvs);
3. Existing Licensed Drivers and Operators licensed by the Council be contacted and reminded that at regular intervals during the course of a Driver's shift that Drivers should check to ensure that no personal belongings, or other items have been left in their vehicle;
4. Existing Licensed Drivers and Operators licensed by the Council be contacted and reminded that when a Licensed Driver is undertaking driving duties under an Education Permit issued by Together for Children Sunderland Limited the Operator and / or Licensed Driver, as appropriate, should ensure that an adequate procedure is adopted and applied so that the Licensed Driver, :-
 - (i) Collects the correct children / students that are scheduled to be transported in their vehicle and that they are recorded as having boarded their vehicle;
 - (ii) That the children / students are transported to their correct address and that they alight the vehicle at their correct address, with this being recorded; and
 - (iii) Subject to the requirements of data protection laws, any children / students who have individual specific needs, then this should be identified in an appropriate Safety Plan which is made known to the Licensed Operator and the Licensed Driver who is to transport the child, or student in question;

- Existing Licensed Drivers and Operators licensed by the Council be contacted and requested to notify Mr. Paul Tomlin, (SEND Transport Lead at Together for Children Sunderland Limited), via e-mail address paul.tomlin@togetherforchildren.org.uk in the event that when undertaking driving duties under an Education Permit issued by Together for Children Sunderland Limited, a Licensed Driver transports a child / student to the incorrect address.

This notification is also required to confirm what immediate steps were taken by the Licensed Driver and Operator to correct the transportation error in order to safeguard the welfare of the child / student.

It is also requested that Ms. Jill Colbert, (Chief Executive of Together for Children Sunderland Limited and Director of Children's Services), be also copied into the e-mail: jill.colbert@togetherforchildren.org.uk;

- Educational establishments within the City of Sunderland be contacted and requested to undertake a review of their procedures for the transfer of children / students to Licensed Drivers when collections are being made under Education Permits. It is recommended that the review should also include children / students being dropped off at educational establishments.

In relation to recommendations 4, 5 and 6, Mr. Tomlin can be contacted regarding any queries you may have about the procedures that should be adopted by educational establishments, Operators and Licensed Drivers. Mr. Tomlin can be contacted on the above e-mail address or telephone number : 07717347322.

These recommendations have been issued to emphasise the importance of safeguarding measures as part of the transportation of pupils and students. It also promotes the aims of the Department for Transport's recently published Statutory Taxi & Private Hire Vehicle Standards.

Whilst the vast majority of those receiving a copy of this letter will already have suitable, robust procedures in place, undertaking a review of your existing arrangements or adopting suitable new procedures where appropriate is encouraged.

Should you have any queries concerning the content of this letter, then please do not hesitate to contact me on 07711 827989, or via e-mail : steve.wearing@sunderland.gov.uk

Yours faithfully,



Steve Wearing
Principal Licensing Officer