



## Coronavirus – Update 5

### Updated advice for taxi and private hire licensees

This Notice provides updated advice and guidance for taxi and private hire vehicle (PHV) licensees following recent Government announcements and the publication of updated guidance by the Department for Transport.

This Notice also provides detailed guidance relating to taxi and private hire services, from the London Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell (STAC).

#### Government announcements and guidance

On 10 May, the Prime Minister announced the Government's roadmap to gradually ease coronavirus restrictions. A full transcript of the Prime Minister's speech can be found [here](#). The [Government's Covid-19 Recovery Strategy](#) was subsequently published on 11 May.

On 12 May, the Government published [guidance for those operating transport services](#) (this is relevant to all taxi and PHV licensees), including specific [guidance for taxi and private hire services](#).

#### Face coverings

Transport for London (TfL) [announced](#) the following advice to Londoners using public transport or taxi and private hire services:

- Please travel outside of peak times

- Use a face covering – this is particularly important where 2m social distancing is hard to maintain
- Carry a hand sanitiser
- Wash your hands before and after you travel

The latest Government advice suggests that wearing a face covering does not protect you, but it may protect others if you are infected but have not yet developed symptoms. This is most relevant for short periods indoors in crowded areas.

A face covering is not the same as the surgical masks or respirators used by healthcare and other workers as part of personal protective equipment. These should continue to be reserved for those who need them to protect against risks in their workplace, such as health and care workers, and those in industrial settings, like those exposed to dust hazards.

We are therefore advising that all taxi and private hire drivers working through this period consider wearing a face covering while in their licensed vehicle. To help taxi and private hire drivers have access to appropriate face coverings we are requesting all taxi and app booking companies, and all PHV operators, wherever possible to support drivers in sourcing supplies for drivers.

### **Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell (STAC)**

In late April, TfL approached STAC to ask it to examine issues around use of taxi and private hire services during the coronavirus pandemic. On 10 May we received a detailed briefing note from STAC, the advice from which is provided below.

## **STAC briefing: Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (PHVs)**

### **Purpose of the briefing note**

The purpose of this briefing note is to provide an update on current guidance from Public Health England (PHE) on prevention and control measures to be considered in the regulation of taxis and private hire vehicles (PHVs) by Transport for London (TfL) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

These considerations are particularly important in the context of a London that will be emerging from lockdown in the coming weeks.

### **Background / Role of the STAC**

The London Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell (STAC) provides a single point of trusted and credible scientific and technical advice to the London Strategic Coordination Group (SCG) in line with the SCG's objectives and the London Resilience Partnership's Strategic Coordination Protocol. It supports strategic and operational decisions being made by the SCG at pace, and sometimes in the absence of nationally available guidance, given the nature of this pandemic. It builds on national work undertaken by the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE), and other credible intelligence about the situation in London.

London has the UK's largest taxi and PHV fleet, and with many of London households not having a car, they are an important part of the transport offering.

TfL is responsible for the regulation of London's taxis and PHVs and has been asked to determine COVID-19 prevention and control measures for these fleets.

TfL has made a formal request via the SCG for an updated assessment from the STAC on COVID-19 prevention and control measures to be considered in regulation of taxis and PHVs including:

- Stay at home guidance and social distancing between drivers and passengers
- Hand hygiene for drivers and passengers
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and screens for the protection of drivers and passengers
- Cleaning of vehicles
- Ensuring drivers do not work if symptomatic

### **Stay at home guidance and social distancing between drivers and passengers in taxis and PHVs**

Individuals who have symptoms of possible COVID-19, or who live in a household with someone with possible COVID-19 should be self-isolating and should not travel by taxi or PHV. Taxi and PHV drivers should ask if customers have symptoms of possible COVID-19 (fever or new cough) and should not accept symptomatic customers.

For passengers who normally share a vehicle with people who are not members of their own household, journeys should be shared with the same individuals and with the minimum number of people at any one time. Passengers should consider alternatives such as walking, cycling and alternative public transport where a distance of 2m from others can be maintained.

Drivers and passengers should occupy the vehicle allowing for 2m social distancing (or maximum possible distance). Where it is not possible to remain 2m apart, drivers and passengers should face away from each other, rather than face-to-face if possible. Where face-to-face contact cannot be avoided, this should be kept to 15 minutes or less wherever possible.

Good ventilation (i.e. keeping the windows open) may help to reduce the risk of transmission. Air conditioning or ventilation on vehicles must be set to extract and not recirculate the air within the vehicle (where possible).

## **Hand and respiratory hygiene for drivers and passengers in taxis and PHVs**

PHE has published guidance for employers regarding hand hygiene, and this should be followed by those working in taxis and PHVs.

Drivers and passengers should wash hands more regularly than normal using soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Hand washing is particularly important after using the toilet, after handling money, before eating or handling food, before touching your face, and after blowing your nose, sneezing or coughing. Hands should be washed as soon as drivers or passengers get home. When hand washing facilities are not available, hand sanitiser can be used as a substitute. The use of hand sanitiser is only suitable when hands are not visibly dirty or soiled.

Drivers should keep a bottle of hand sanitiser gel in their vehicle. It is recommended this be a minimum 60 per cent alcohol. Alternatively keep a large bottle of water and a bar/bottle of soap.

Drivers are advised to avoid handling money and take alternative payment methods. If handling money cannot be avoided, drivers should wash their hands with soap and water after handling money.

Drivers and passengers should carry tissues and use tissues to catch coughs or sneezes. Used tissues should be disposed of in a bin as soon as possible. Hand sanitiser should be used after coughing or sneezing into a tissue.

## **Use of PPE for the protection of drivers and passengers in taxis and PHVs**

There are a number of issues that need to be considered regarding the wearing of PPE (medical face masks and gloves) to protect taxi and PHV drivers and passengers from coronavirus infection.

There is very little evidence of widespread benefit from the use of medical face masks outside of the clinical or care settings. To be effective, medical face masks

must be worn correctly, changed frequently, removed properly, disposed of safely and used in combination with good universal hygiene behaviour.

These conditions are unlikely to be adhered to outside of a healthcare setting and research shows that compliance with these recommended behaviours reduces over time when wearing face masks for prolonged periods, such as in the community. The use of medical face masks in inappropriate settings may offer false reassurance of protection. False reassurance may lead to a failure to adhere to good hygiene and social distancing practices, thus increasing the risk to the user

Therefore, PHE does not advise the use of medical face masks in public places and for those working in transport settings. This is in line with advice from the World Health Organization (WHO) which states that for any type of mask, appropriate use and disposal are essential to ensure that they are effective and to avoid any increase in transmission.

PHE guidance states that PPE should be reserved for those working directly with people experiencing COVID-19 symptoms. It is not recommended as required for those working with asymptomatic individuals. This is in line with WHO guidance, which states that the best way to protect yourself against COVID-19 is by social distancing and frequently cleaning your hands.

Regarding the wearing of gloves to protect transport workers from coronavirus infection:

- Gloves, if used inappropriately, could increase the risk of transmission of infection.
- Wearing of gloves may discourage adequate hand hygiene practices, including frequent hand washing with soap and water, and use of hand sanitiser where washing facilities are not available.
- Wearing gloves does not prevent transmission of infection to the wearer if they touch their face whilst wearing gloves.

- If gloves become contaminated, any objects that are touched with the gloves can also become contaminated.
- Gloves would need to be changed each time the employee has touched cash, and this would pose practical problems as well as increasing infection risk during the changeover to new gloves.

For the reasons above, the routine use of PPE (medical face masks and gloves) is not recommended for transport workers.

### **Use of face coverings by drivers and passengers in taxis and PHVs**

There is some evidence that the use of cloth face coverings by the public may help to reduce transmission of coronavirus infection where it is not possible for people to maintain a distance of 2m.

Use of cloth face coverings is for the protection of others, not the wearer. It may help people who have the virus and do not know it from transmitting it to others.

### **Use of partitions or screens in taxis and PHVs**

Partitions or safety screens provide a physical barrier between drivers and passengers in the vehicle. They are commonly installed as a safety feature to protect the driver from physical attacks or theft. There has been an increase in interest of the use of screens as a way of providing physical separation between drivers and passengers in order to reduce the transmission of COVID-19.

Black taxis are already fitted with partitions between drivers and passengers. The majority of PHVs in London do not have partitions/safety screens installed. There are a wide variety of different makes and model of PHVs in London.

There is no evidence available that demonstrates that partitions in taxis or PHVs reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 infection. Partitions in taxis or PHVs do not provide a fully sealed compartment which completely separates the driver from

the passenger. Therefore, whilst it is possible that partitions may reduce the risk of transmission of infection, the risk would not be eliminated entirely. It is not possible for the STAC or PHE to assess the likely effectiveness of screens in reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in taxis or PHVs.

If drivers wish to install a partition or safety screen, vehicles will need to comply to government and industry regulations and TfL's requirements as the licensing authority<sup>1</sup>.

If partitions or screens are used, they should be cleaned regularly (see Cleaning of vehicles), including between passenger journeys and changes of driver.

### **Cleaning of vehicles**

Cleaning vehicles with normal household disinfectant<sup>2</sup> will reduce the risk of passing coronavirus infection on to other people. After each passenger journey, drivers should clean hard surfaces such as door handles, window winders, seat belts, card payment devices, the rear of the front seats and other surfaces passengers may have touched. Drivers should then wash/sanitise their own hands.

A thorough clean of the vehicle with normal cleaning products should be completed at the end of each shift/working day.

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<sup>1</sup> Any fittings and equipment must comply with the Road Vehicle (Construction and Use) Regulations. Any screen must be tested to the relevant EU standard for an original equipment type approval test covering interior fittings. The screen must be approved by MIRA or other comparable independent product engineering, testing, consultancy and certification organisation. Screens must be professionally and securely fitted in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Certification from the vehicle's manufacturer should be sought to confirm that the screen does not compromise the integrity of the vehicle structure. Screens should be constructed of PETg or polycarbonate. The screen should not impede the driver's vision, movement, or communication with passengers. The screen should not impede driver or passenger access or egress to the vehicle. Insurers should be notified of any modifications made to the vehicle. Prior to installing a safety screen, drivers should contact the licensing authority (TfL) to check that they will permit the installation and ensure that the screen and installation will meet their requirements.

<sup>2</sup> The concentrations must be either a combined detergent disinfectant solution at a dilution of 1,000 parts per million available chlorine or a household detergent followed by disinfection (1000 ppm av.cl.). Follow manufacturer's instructions for dilution, application and contact times for all detergents and disinfectants. If an alternative disinfectant is used, this should be checked and ensure that it is effective against enveloped viruses.

## **Ensuring drivers do not work if symptomatic or if a member of their household has symptoms of COVID-19**

PHE has released guidance for the general population that anyone who has symptoms of COVID-19 should be self-isolating and they should not be working. Anyone who lives with someone who has symptoms must self-isolate for 14 days. This guidance applies to everyone including drivers of taxis and PHVs.

The government advises anyone who falls into the clinically vulnerable group to take particular care to minimise contact with others outside their household. See the government guidance on '[Staying alert and safe social distancing](#)' for information on which people are clinically vulnerable.

The government advises that it is good practice for employers to “ensure employees who are in a vulnerable group are strongly advised to follow social distancing guidance”.<sup>3</sup>

The government has strongly advised people who have been identified as clinically extremely vulnerable to stay at home at all times and avoid any face-to-face contact.<sup>4</sup>

## **10. Conclusions & Recommendations**

Drivers, like the general population, should not be working if they are symptomatic or if someone they live with is symptomatic. Drivers in the clinically vulnerable group and extremely clinically vulnerable group should follow government advice, as above.

Drivers and passengers should remain at 2m distance. If maintaining 2m distance is not possible, drivers and passengers should face away from each other and face-to-

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/guidance-for-employers-and-businesses-on-coronavirus-covid-19>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>

face contact should be minimised. Windows should be kept open if possible and air conditioning/ventilation should be set to extract and not recirculate the air within the vehicle.

Drivers and passengers should wash hands more regularly than normal for at least 20 seconds. When hand washing is not possible, hand sanitiser should be used.

Drivers are advised to avoid handling money and to take alternative payment methods. If handling money cannot be avoided, drivers should wash their hands with soap and water after handling money.

PHE does not advise the use of medical face masks or gloves for transport settings, including by drivers and passengers of taxis and PHVs.

There is no evidence available that demonstrates that partitions in taxis or PHVs reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 infection. Partitions in taxis or PHVs do not provide a fully sealed compartment which completely separates the driver from the passenger. Therefore, whilst it is possible that partitions may reduce the risk of transmission of infection, the risk would not be eliminated entirely. It is not possible for the STAC or PHE to assess the likely effectiveness of screens in reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in taxis or PHVs.

Taxis and PHVs should follow guidance on cleaning vehicles as above.

**I can confirm that this briefing note was reviewed and approved by STAC**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin A. Fenton', written in a cursive style.

**STAC Chair, Professor Kevin Fenton  
Regional Director for London, Public Health England**

**Licensee Health and Wellbeing**

During these challenging times, it is more important than ever to prioritise your mental and physical wellbeing. It is important to be self-aware and spot any early warning signs of feeling mentally unwell and to seek help and support at the earliest opportunity.

Below are examples of support services available to all licensees. Please also visit our dedicated [Taxi and Private Hire Health and Wellbeing](#) webpage for further information.

- [SANE](#)
- [Rethink Mental Illness](#)
- [Mind](#)
- [Citizen's Advice Bureau](#)
- [CALM](#)
- [Age UK](#)
- [Stress Management Society \(SMS\)](#)
- [UK Active](#)

### **NSL vehicle inspection customer service**

To ensure the safety and welfare of its staff and to ensure all available staff are used most effectively, NSL has taken a decision to close its phone lines and will operate an email-based customer service until further notice. Customers can contact NSL by emailing: [TPHenquiries@nslservices.co.uk](mailto:TPHenquiries@nslservices.co.uk)

### **Next steps**

All licensees are asked to follow the latest information from Government alongside the detailed advice from STAC. Any additional advice and guidance will be published in the form of a future TPH Notice.

Please do stay safe and well.

Graham Robinson

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'GR', with a large, sweeping underline.

**General Manager  
Taxi and Private Hire  
Transport for London**

**12 May 2020**

*For previous Notices and additional licensing information, please visit [tfl.gov.uk/tph](https://tfl.gov.uk/tph)*