



Taxi and Private Hire Advice

Returning to work safely (coronavirus)

This Advice is a guide to how Dacorum Borough Council will be approaching some of the key aspects of consideration for the Taxi and Private Hire Trade returning to work as the restrictions relating to Covid-19 are gradually lifted

Licensees should also familiarise themselves with updated Government guidance for those [operating transport services](#) and specific [guidance for taxi and private hire services](#).

Key issues for consideration:

- Use of face masks/coverings
- Social distancing
- Partitions in licensed vehicles
- Cleaning vehicles

Face Masks/Coverings

The latest scientific advice suggests that, although face coverings are unlikely to prevent an individual from getting the coronavirus, they can help prevent someone who is infected from infecting others and therefore help control the virus. Face coverings are particularly important where two metre social distancing is hard to maintain, for example when travelling on public transport. While the Government advice doesn't explicitly cover the use of taxi and private hire services, this guidance is intended to mirror the arrangements put in place on public transport.

Face coverings for drivers:

The Council advises that all taxi and private hire (TPH) drivers should wear a face covering at all times when in a taxi or private hire vehicle.

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.

Face coverings can be a simple cloth covering that covers the face and mouth. They can be made using many items found in the home or in many shops.

Information on how to wear and make a face covering can be accessed via these links:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering>

Alternatively, disposable or reusable face coverings can be obtained from a number of online or local retail outlets. Face coverings should not be used if they are no longer in good condition or become too damp.

When wearing a face covering drivers should follow the Government guidance on the use of face coverings:

- A cloth face covering should cover your mouth and nose while allowing you to breathe comfortably. It can be as simple as a scarf or bandana that ties behind the head
- Wash your hands or use hand sanitiser before putting it on and after taking it off and after use. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth at all times and store used face coverings in a plastic bag until you have an opportunity to wash them, if they are reusable
 - Do not touch the front of the face covering, or the part of the face covering that has been in contact with your mouth and nose. Once removed, make sure you clean any surfaces the face covering has touched
- You should wash a face covering regularly. It can go in with other laundry, using your normal detergent
- When wearing a face covering, take care to tuck away any loose ends

We recommend that drivers carry a pen and paper to help communication with some passengers (e.g. someone who lip reads, someone who has a hearing impairment). Separate pen and paper should be available for the driver and passengers.

Face coverings for passengers:

Passengers are being advised that they should wear face coverings when travelling by taxi or private hire vehicle for the duration of the journey.

However, face coverings should not be used by children under the age of three or those who may find it difficult to manage them correctly. For example, primary age children unassisted, or those with respiratory conditions. Disabled people and those with breathing difficulties are also exempt from wearing a face covering.

If a passenger is not wearing a face covering, then taxi and private hire drivers can refuse to carry them, taking into account any mitigating circumstances such as the age of the child. The driver should explain to the passenger that they are required to wear a face covering while travelling in a taxi or PHV.

Passengers that are making journeys that are booked through a private hire operator or engaged via a taxi app should be informed, in advance, of the face covering requirement. In instances where a taxi is hailed on the street or at a rank, a passenger may not be aware that they should use a face covering. In either instance, we would expect drivers to explain to the passenger that they need a face covering to be permitted to travel in the vehicle and to direct them to a nearby retail outlet or transport hub where face coverings can be obtained. For their own safety we recommend drivers avoid getting into a lengthy discussion with passengers.

Whilst the laws requiring facemasks on public transport do not apply to Taxis and Private Hire vehicles, it is recommended that the same rules are followed, including exemptions. Exemptions are as follows:

- If the person cannot put on, wear or remove a face covering—
 - (i) because of any physical or mental illness or impairment, or disability
 - (ii) without severe distress;
- If the person is travelling with, or providing assistance to, another person who relies on lip reading to communicate
- If the person removes their face covering to avoid harm or injury, or the risk of harm or injury, to themselves or others;
- If the person is travelling to avoid injury, or to escape a risk of harm, and does not have a face covering with them;

- If it is reasonably necessary for the person to eat or drink, and they remove their face covering to eat or drink;
- If the person has to remove their face covering to take medication;
- If a relevant person requests that the person wearing their face covering removes it. (In the case of Dacorum companies it is likely that a police constable would be the only 'relevant person')

Private hire vehicle (PHV) operators and taxi booking

Private hire vehicle (PHV) operators and taxi booking companies

All PHV operators and taxi booking companies should read and follow the Government's guidance for operators.

We also expect all private hire operators and taxi app companies and radio circuits to provide clear messages to passengers, at the time of making the booking / as a condition of booking and as part of a booking confirmation, on the requirement for passengers to wear a facial covering and also whether the vehicle in question will enable social distancing of more than two metres between driver and passenger. It should also be made clear to a passenger in the booking confirmation that the driver can refuse the journey if the passenger does not have a face covering.

At the point of booking, the PHV operator / taxi app company should:

- Seek confirmation from the passenger that anyone planning to travel in the vehicle isn't suffering from any coronavirus symptoms
- Provide information to the passenger about whether Government social distancing guidelines of two metres can / cannot be met in their choice of vehicle
- Advise the passenger to enter the vehicle via the near-side rear passenger door (diagonally opposite the driver) and to sit in the nearside rear passenger seat for the duration of the journey
- Advise the passenger about the requirement to wear a face covering for the duration of the journey (including entry and exit of the vehicle)
- Advise passengers who choose to use TPH services to travel alone, or with other members of their household.
- Notify the driver if more than one passenger is on the booking (e.g. additional people from the same household) enabling the driver to decide whether or not they wish to undertake the journey
- Ask the passenger to pay by credit or debit card if possible and avoid paying by cash
- Advise passengers that drivers will keep the vehicle well ventilated for everyone's safety by opening car windows or by using the car's vents to circulate air from outside.

Taxi and private hire drivers are also advised to follow all of the above guidance where applicable.

Social distancing

It is important that any passenger carrying journeys, as far as practicable, are undertaken within social distancing guidelines to ensure passengers and drivers aren't put at risk.

Where it is not possible to achieve two metre social distancing, then efforts should be made to put as much distance between the passenger and the driver as possible e.g. seating the passenger in the near-side rear seat (diagonally opposite the driver) for the duration of the journey. Passengers should also consider alternatives such as walking, cycling and alternative public transport where a distance of two metres from others can't be maintained.

Partitions in licensed vehicles

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

Vehicle owners must ensure that they comply with the conditions of their licence which are provided when the licence is issued and are available at: <http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/environment-street-care/licensing/taxis-private-hire-vehicles/taxi-and-private-hire-vehicle-licences/applying-for-a-vehicle-licence>

A key condition is that licensees must -

Ensure that no material alteration or change in specification, design, condition or appearance of the vehicle are made without the approval of the Council at any time whilst the licence is in force

Taking into account the above, the following information is provided to assist licensees further when considering such modifications to their vehicle.

The London Scientific Technical Advisory Cell (STAC) has stated

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

Leading automotive testing companies have advised that the introduction of these protective screens into a vehicle could negatively affect the deployment of curtain and other air bag systems which are installed in the vast majority of private hire vehicles.

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.

Cleaning of vehicles

Cleaning vehicles with normal household disinfectant 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.

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.

It is important to be careful when cleaning, more information regarding cleaning is provided by Public health England at - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>

Further information

If you have any further questions which are not answered within this guide, please check our website, at www.dacorum.gov.uk/taxilicensing, or contact the Licensing team:

- By email – licensing@dacorum.gov.uk
- By phone – 01442 228225 / 228487
- By post – Licensing, Dacorum Borough Council, The Forum, Marlowes, Hemel Hempstead, HP1 1DN

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