



Public Safety and Protection Committee

Over the past few months, the Public Safety and Protection Committee has had to make some difficult decisions. It is never easy to take a decision that might severely impact on someone's ability to make a living. We know our decisions might affect not only the individual taxi driver concerned but their families as well.

At the same time, we must bear in mind that taxi drivers occupy a position of huge responsibility. Some of the most vulnerable people in our city rely on the honesty and integrity of our drivers, which is why each and every taxi driver must be fit and proper to take on those responsibilities.

Drivers might end up coming to the Public Safety and Protection Committee for any number of reasons, but many do so because something has happened to make the council believe they might not be 'fit and proper' to hold a taxi licence. It could be failing to disclose a conviction or caution, overcharging customers, or refusing a job to take one that pays better. Some drivers express remorse, apologise, and promise never to do it again. Some don't, but most do, and the driver concerned sincerely regrets the action that has gotten them into trouble.



It's hard not to feel for someone who genuinely wishes they could go back in time and make the right decision. However, as much as we might be tempted to give someone the benefit of the doubt, we have to ask ourselves "How would I feel putting a vulnerable loved-one in this person's taxi?"

While the committee's decisions might sometimes seem harsh, we need to ensure that all drivers are fit and proper. That way, the public can be confident that their trust in our drivers is well-placed, and Bristol continues to have a taxi service to be proud of.

Cllr Guy Poultney
Public Safety and Protection Committee

What would you like to see?

The Licensing Team aim to improve communication between the council and the trade. Remember, this is your newsletter! If you have something you think would be useful, or would like to see included in future issues, or you have a good news story or information you want to share, please get in touch at licensing@bristol.gov.uk with the subject 'Newsletter'.

PC Quinton update – Taxi Cop

I would like to wish all drivers a happy new year, and hope that 2022 is better for you than the last two years which have been awful for drivers and operators.

Despite having to limit my patrol activity to reduce the risk to myself and you from COVID-19, 2021 has still been a busy year for your Taxi Cop. During the year I have issued 58 tickets (including 13 for no insurance and 17 for failing to wear a seatbelt) and investigated 78 crimes.

I have also helped colleagues investigate their crimes too, and those 104 crimes include a murder and several serious sexual offences. The WhatsApp groups have also been busy – you've sent me 354 requests for help and advice, and I've put in nine intelligence reports about drugs supply based on information you've given me. I've also sent out 134 significant updates (not including the many messages about traffic and roads closed etc) including video updates.

Sadly, I've had to tell the Licensing teams about eight drivers who were under investigation for rape, assault, drink driving and drugs supply which has led to most having their licences immediately revoked. I've also given evidence to Licensing Committees about a further seven drivers of concern.



With over 3,379 vehicles and 4,001 driver licences across Bristol and South Gloucestershire you keep me very busy, and I'm delighted that Bristol City Council have approved the funding for my post for another year. Outside of London, I am still the only Taxi Cop in England and Wales. I'm as passionate about supporting the trade, dealing with bad drivers, and supporting those who need it as the day I started, and I consider this to be the best job I've ever had – and a lot of that is down to your help and support which I'm most grateful for.

Have a safe shift.

**PC Quinton, Taxi Compliance Officer
The Bridewell police station**

COVID-19 Restrictions

On 27 January the COVID-19 restrictions changed, there is no longer a legal requirement to wear a face covering in taxis or private hire vehicles. The government suggests that you continue to wear a face covering in enclosed spaces where you may come into contact with people you do not normally meet.

You may choose to continue wearing a face covering and you may ask customers to wear one, but you cannot refuse a fare because a passenger is not wearing a face covering.

We would advise all drivers and operators to ensure they are aware of the restrictions that affect them, for example face coverings are still a legal requirement in Wales, so if you travel through Wales, you must ensure that you, and your passengers are wearing a face covering unless exempt.



Tax Conditionality

HMRC have introduced new tax requirements for Hackney and Private Hire Drivers and Private Hire Operators from 4 April 2022.

If you are applying for a licence which expires on or after 4 April, which you have previously held with Bristol City Council or another licensing authority and that licence was valid within the last year you will need to complete a tax check.

You will need to complete this check when you apply for the renewal of your licence, and you will be able to prove your tax registration on the HMRC website, where you will be able to request a check code. You'll then need to provide that code to us, with authorisation to use it.

If you are applying for a licence, you have not previously held, or not held in the past year we will not require you to provide a tax check code.

If you are a driver, or operator you will need to sign up to HMRC online services in preparation for this. Self Employed individuals will need a business tax account, and any other individual will need a personal tax account. Businesses will need a business tax account.

If you apply for a licence where a tax check is required, we won't be able to issue a licence until a valid tax check code has been provided, we will send out more detailed information in a separate email in the next few weeks. You can find more information in the meantime on the [Government website](#).



Licensing applications

As you may be aware the licensing team are currently experiencing a backlog in issuing licences, this is due to a number of reasons.

The number of drivers applying for short term licences has increased over the last two years, a large number of applications are being submitted without the required supporting documents, such as DBS certificates and medicals, we have not been able to issue these licences until we have all of the required information.

To ensure that there is not a delay to your licence being issued, we would urge you to apply early, and ensure you have all the required documents.

If you are due a DBS you will need to submit an application through our online system, and contact us to book an ID verification appointment, we would advise you to do this as soon as you receive your three month reminder letter. You should still make sure you submit a renewal form before your expiry date, even if you don't have all the documents, otherwise you might be subject to extra charges and steps.

As you will be aware from March 2022 all drivers will need to be signed up to the Update Service, we wrote to all drivers last year informing them of the requirement to sign up to the Update Service, unfortunately not all drivers have signed up to the Update Service yet, some have signed up and later cancelled and some have signed up and not informed us of the details. It's now a requirement of the policy that stay signed up for the duration of your licence, and this could result in us taking action on your licence including suspension.

We can understand the frustration of not having been issued your licence, however, in order to help us assess your application quickly and make sure you are still able to hold a licence we need all the supporting documents.

Business support grants for taxi drivers



The Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) scheme supports small businesses, including the self-employed, who have been financially impacted by the rise of the COVID-19 Omicron variant and Plan B measures.

- To apply, taxi drivers must have a driver licence issued by Bristol City Council, that was valid on 4 January 2022.
- Even if you have previously received a grant under the ARG scheme, all drivers must apply again. There will be no automatic top up payments.

- If you have both a private hire and hackney carriage driving licence you can only make one application and receive one grant.
- Applications opened on 20 January 2022, and close at midday, **12pm on 14 February 2022**. If you have submitted an application since 20 January 2022, there is no need to reapply.

Visit the council website for information on the **[Additional Restrictions Grant](#)** and to apply.

All enquiries should be made by email to **ARG4@bristol.gov.uk**. Please only contact if essential or if there has been a change to your circumstances.

Fleet Services update

From August 2021 all drivers have been required to show their current private hire or hackney carriage badges when presenting a licensed vehicle for vehicle inspection check.

This is because only a licensed driver can drive a licensed vehicle. Unfortunately some drivers are still attending their appointment without their badge. If you don't bring your badge to the appointment the compliance test will be cancelled, and you will lose the fee for that booking.

If you are bringing a new vehicle which has not previously been licensed, you do not need to bring your badge, this is because the vehicle is not a licensed taxi or private hire vehicle and therefore can be driven by anyone.

We have had a number of vehicles which have been brought in with rubbish, and personal items left inside. Vehicles must be presented in a clean and tidy condition; in the same condition you would present the vehicle when working.

It's important all year round to ensure your tyres are safe, and legal but especially during the colder months. Lots of vehicles have been brought in with bald tyres, with the cords exposed, or close to the legal limits. This is dangerous for you and other road users and if you were to be pulled over with bald or defective tyres this could result in 3 penalty points per tyre, which means four defective tyres could result in a totting up offence and the loss of your licence.



School transport update

The start of another year and January has already brought lots of changes to school travel with self-isolations for school staff, children, escorts, and drivers.

On a few occasions the school transport team have been unable to cover a route because they haven't had a driver available. Families have been very understanding of the current situation and have been able to make arrangements or the school has helped them.

The team have had an issue recently where information was shared which shouldn't have been. This is being investigated and the team would like to remind drivers that the information they have on the route schedules is confidential.

The taxi operator will be provided with the route schedule and this must only be shared with the driver who will be covering the route. This information must not be shared with anyone else, including other drivers.



School Streets



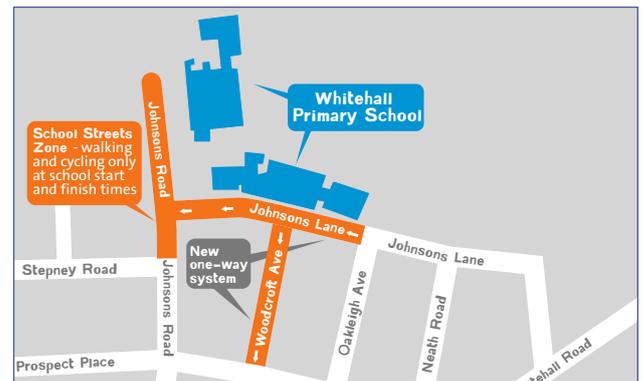
Bristol City Council are currently implementing "school streets", this is when a street or streets immediately outside the school entrance are closed to non-essential vehicles at school opening or closing times.

Only people walking wheeling, cycling, and scooting are permitted access to the School Street zone while the restriction is in place, with automatic exemptions given to emergency vehicles and Blue Badge holders. In some cases, permits will be given to residents and businesses living or working within the zone – this varies from scheme to scheme and is decided on an individual basis.

There are currently three schools which will be added to the scheme in 2022, with a further school to be announced in the coming months. These schools are:

- Whitehall Primary, Easton
- Chester Park Junior School, Hillfields
- Minerva Primary Academy, Hillfields

You can find out more information about School Streets or make a comment about the proposed designs on the [Travelwest website](#).



Whitehall Primary, Easton



Chester Park Junior School, Hillfields



Minerva Primary Academy, Hillfields

Private Hire Vehicles and Hackney Carriages – Basic Disclosure and certificate of good character

All vehicle proprietors who do not hold a private hire or Hackney Carriage driver licence (or private hire operator licence) are now required to obtain a Basic Disclosure on a yearly basis. A certificate of good character is also required on initial application for applicants who have lived outside of the UK.

All applications must be accompanied with a Basic Disclosure or certificate of good character as appropriate.

More information can be found in our [policy](#) on pages 15 and 53.



Clean Air Zone

Bristol is introducing a Clean Air Zone in Summer 2022, vehicles that do not meet the zone's emission standards will be charged £9 per day to enter the zone.

Information regarding the Clean Air Zone is available on our [website](#).

You can find out whether your vehicle will be compliant at [Gov.uk](#). We will implement the same scheme as Birmingham so if the checker shows a daily charge for Birmingham, you'll have to pay to drive your vehicle into Bristol's Clean Air Zone.

There are a number of grants available for vehicles which will not be compliant with the Clean Air Zone, you can find out further information about the grants which are available on our [website](#). The Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicle grants and loans are only available to vehicles licensed by Bristol City Council.



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