

Safeguarding and the Taxi Trade

Introduction

Safeguarding is nationally in the headlines, Rotherham, Oxford, Derby, Newcastle, I could go on..... North West Leicestershire District Council has a duty to assist the taxi and private hire trade and the public in tackling this issue, whilst protecting those who are vulnerable and /or being exploited.

We need the help of taxi and private hire drivers and operators to identify those who commit these crimes and protect those who most need our help. The information in this advice document will help you recognize risk factors and do something about it, plus basic awareness of safeguarding issues can enhance the service a driver delivers to vulnerable passengers whilst protecting themselves.

After reading this document you will be able to:

- Understand the need to protect vulnerable adults, young people and children
- Identify possible victims of abuse and exploitation by understanding indicators of risk
- Identify sources of advice and pathways for reporting concerns
- Understand their roles and responsibilities in relation to personal safety and security

Taxi drivers and taxi booking staff are part of the eyes and ears of this District and can help keep your community safe. You are in a perfect position to spot signs and form an important part of a network to help stop exploitation. We are not asking you to be detectives however what is important is if you should come across a situation, which you think doesn't feel right, you will have your safeguarding knowledge and card and know who to report it too. If it feels wrong- its likely to be wrong – trust your gut instincts.

We need to be aware that some people suffer harm as a result of abuse by others.

When this is the case, we have a duty to take some action

'Breck's Last Game' is a film showing how a taxi was used in the murder of a 14 year boy. Breck lived in Surrey and was groomed by an 18-year-old man in Essex. He was persuaded, tragically, to get a taxi to his groomer's flat where he was murdered. <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=hZIYSCE-ZjY>

Safeguarding is everyones business

Summary of your responsibilities:

- Duty of care. Make sure vulnerable people are safe.
- Duty to pass on information if concerned about abuse / neglect
- To treat all passengers with dignity and respect
- Whistle-blowing (other drivers / other services / club staff)

Types of Abuse

Physical abuse – including assault, hitting, slapping, pushing, misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate physical sanctions.

Domestic violence – including psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional abuse; so called ‘honour’ based violence.

Sexual abuse – including rape, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, inappropriate looking or touching, sexual teasing or innuendo, sexual photography, subjection to pornography or witnessing sexual acts, indecent exposure and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the adult has not consented or was pressured into consenting.

Psychological abuse – including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, cyber bullying, isolation or unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal of services or supportive networks.

Financial or material abuse – including theft, fraud, internet scamming, coercion in relation to an adult’s financial affairs or arrangements, including in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

Modern slavery – encompasses slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude. Traffickers and slave masters use whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment.

Discriminatory abuse – including forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment; because of race, gender and gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion.

Organisational abuse – including neglect and poor care practice within an institution or specific care setting such as a hospital or care home, for example, or in relation to care provided in one’s own home. This may range from one off incidents to on-going ill-treatment. It can be through neglect or poor professional practice as a result of the structure, policies, processes and practices within an organisation.

Neglect and acts of omission – including ignoring medical, emotional or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, care and support or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition

and heating

Self-neglect – this covers a wide range of behaviour neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding.

Physical abuse

A form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Emotional abuse

The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Sexual abuse

Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Neglect

The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Recognising Indicators of Concern – Children (Under 18 years old)

- Relationships with older males or females.
- Concern that young person is sexually active
- Breaking away from family, friends or professionals
- Not attending school.
- Going missing from home.
- Experimenting with drugs and/or alcohol
- Children with physical injuries
- Secretive
- Involved in offending behaviour
- Unexplained mobile phones/credit
- Accepting lifts in different cars
- Sending/receiving inappropriate images
- Spending increasing time on social networking sites

How are young people targeted?

- Vulnerable
- Befriended by offender
- Grooming process
- Blackmail/threats
- Isolation from support

Examples

- Given alcohol/drugs/gifts/money
- Encouraged to be secretive about the friendship/relationship
- Encouraged into sexual activity

Who are the offenders?

- Individuals who control adult sex workers
- Drug dealers with links to violent crime
- Groups of males who exploit for their own sexual gratification

- Males who pass young people on to others for sex
- Female offenders
- Other young people

Recognising Indicators of Concern (Adults)

- Being bullied
- Having decisions made for them all the time
- Preferences being ignored
- Being subject to verbal abuse / put downs
- Physical injuries (bruises / cuts etc)
- Being poorly dressed / unclean
- Someone else controlling money
- Struggling to look after themselves

Definition of Domestic Abuse (DA)

Defined by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 as occurring when:

The behaviour of a person (A) towards another (B) is domestic abuse if they are each aged over 16 and are personally connected to each other and the behaviour is abusive.

'Abusive' is defined as physical or sexual abuse, violent or threatening, controlling or coercive, psychological, emotional or other abuse.

The abuse can consist of a single incident or a course of conduct.

'Personally connected' is also defined and it is a lengthy list that you probably don't need to put on the PowerPoint but it would help your trainer to be conversant with. I cover this when doing the DA Matters training for Safe Lives.

Controlling behaviour is: a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive behaviour is: an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

Family members are defined as mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister and grandparents, whether directly related, in-laws or step-family.

What is Sexual Assault?

Sexual assault is where one person intentionally touches another person sexually without their consent. The touching can be done with any part of the body or with an object, or through clothing. (CPS website 2022).

Sexual Offences Act 2003 Sec 3

A person (A) commits an offence if

- (a) he intentionally touches another person (B)
- (b) the touching is sexual
- (c) B does not consent to the touching and
- (d) A does not reasonably believe that B consents

What is Sexual Exploitation?

Sexual exploitation is another type of abuse which can happen to people of any age and gender, but there is particular concern at the moment about the number of young people who are victims of this. You will be aware of the high-profile cases in Rotherham a few years ago.

We are asking you to watch out for these signs and take action if you become concerned.

- Young people receive something in return for engaging in sexual activities
- Offenders have power over victims due to their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources
- Violence, coercion and intimidation are common
- Boys and young men can be victims as well as girls / young women

What's being done to try and stop this?

There has been a multi-agency training programme for the last four years which hundreds of professionals have attended, i.e. Police, Licensing Officers. Locally all 9 Leicestershire Licensing Authorities were asked by the Chief Executives to provide taxi driver safeguarding training. Safeguarding has recently come to everyone's attention due to the events in Rotherham, Rochdale, Derby and recently Newcastle. Training is also being carried out in schools.

- Professionals and Partners are being trained to spot signs of exploitation
- Young people are being warned of risks
- Concerns referred to the Police or Social Care are fully investigated
- Information is passed to the police to help disrupt activities and prosecute offenders

How could all this affect you as a taxi driver or operator?

What might you see and hear in your work that would be a cause for concern?

- Young people – intoxicated, not at school, upset , angry – school runs
- Locations /venue – same driver gets the same job all the time for a young person ...why?
- Adults paying regularly for a child's journey ...who are they , why?
- Grown up conversation for a child, secretive – gone from talkative to quiet.

What can you do to help?

- Be aware of indicators of risk
- Be aware of young people / adults you think may be at risk
- Be aware of addresses you are taking young people / adults to
- Pass on any information/concerns you have

What to do if you are concerned about a vulnerable passenger?

If it is an emergency, i.e. if risk is imminent / assault happened – you should call the Police on **999**.

Non emergency – call the Police on **101**.

Crimestoppers: 0800555111 (free and confidential).

If concerned about a **child** contact: Children First Response Children's Duty – 0116 305 0005

If concerned about an **adult** contact: Adults Social Care Customer Services – 0116 305 0004

Use the following online information sharing form

[Community partnership intelligence | Leicestershire Police \(leics.police.uk\)](#)

Make and keep a **record** of your concerns, what you did and why.

For further advice contact the Licensing team at North West Leicestershire District Council on licensing@nwleicestershire.gov.uk

Protecting yourself and others –

Good safeguarding practice

- Check at the point of booking if there are any vulnerability issues.
- Ask the person booking if an escort for the vulnerable passenger is required and if they are providing one
- Let your operator know (or keep a record) of the time you picked up the vulnerable passenger, the time and place you dropped them off and whether there was any incident or anything significant on the journey.
- If you refuse to take a passenger explain why to them, consider your actions and tell your operator or the police.

- Record incidents
- Be professional – try not to be over-friendly or talk about personal or intimate issues, don't exchange personal contact information such as passenger's telephone numbers or Facebook address. Avoid swearing or aggressive behaviour. Do not touch passengers
- Never accept an offer of a sexual favour instead of payment
- Wear in a conspicuous position your drivers badge issued to you by the Council
- If driving a London Style Cab, explain to passengers if using a centralised locking system on starting the engine
- DON'T ASSUME that your passenger wants help – ALWAYS ASK
- Never follow a passenger into the house - **A driver recently followed a passenger into their house without asking , carrying her bags, was told to get payment out of the ladies purse. The driver did as asked and was later accused of taking more money Don't put yourself at risk ...REMEMBER YOUR VULNERABILITY AND YOUR LICENCE.**
- ASK before making a journey shorter by going off the main roads e.g. using another route
- NEVER set off with a passenger without a specific destination address
- NEVER double up on a booking – even if passengers are travelling in a similar direction, as they may pose a threat to each other
- If the passenger appears nervous offer to ring your operator to tell them you have picked up your passenger and approximate time of arrival; this reassures the person that they are safe and someone is monitoring the trip
- As with all professions if you are concerned about another driver's conduct report your concerns to your operator or the licensing section
- Operators should have a member of staff who can advise their colleagues about how to manage vulnerable passengers and any incidents arising
- ALWAYS KEEP A RECORD either in your vehicle or at your private hire base, of ANY incidents or situations you were not happy with – the record should include a description of what happened and what you did to keep yourself and your passenger safe.

Safeguarding is every bodies business ... including YOURS!

Unfortunately there are people out there who abuse their position of trust and commit horrendous crimes , this is happening and is happening locally. An article in Private Hire Taxi monthly contains a Nottingham driver who has been jailed for 11 years for an attack on a vulnerable passenger in his vehicle because he raped her.

On the other side of the coin, in Decembers 2017 PHTM a hero taxi driver saved a 13 year old girl from a horrific ordeal. A man from Gloucestershire met the girl online and persuaded her to take a taxi to meet him at the railway station. The cabbie was concerned about the girl who was in her school uniform and alerted the Police on arrival at the station. The man was late arriving at the station but was picked up on CCTV and arrested by the Police. On searching his belongings he was

found to have a ruck sack of two knives, a roll of duct tape and sedatives. The man later admitted at court that he had fantasised about killing children. This is a perfect example of a how a drivers gut instinct and actions preventing a terrible crime.

Thank you for reading this important safeguarding advice note

Below are 4 scenarios that you could be faced with. Reading the scenarios, questions and suggested answers.

Scenario 1

You work in the Town Centre and often pick up passengers from pubs and clubs. You notice that there are often high numbers of young people who appear to be drunk and underage coming out of a particular night club at weekends.

On this occasion when you arrive to pick up your passenger, you see a young girl leaving the premises. The girl seems to be about 14 or 15 years old and is very intoxicated. She is with three significantly older men and the group is walking towards your vehicle.

Is the young girl vulnerable in this situation?

What could happen if you refuse to accept the passengers?

What would you do – what options have you got?

Accept the passengers, engage in conversation, if concerns emerge note details including description of passengers, time date, address of pick up and destination, alert the Police, report the pub/club to the Police/licensing authority for suspected underage drinking.

Scenario 2

You are aware that one of your colleagues regularly picks up a 14 year old girl from a children's home and takes her to a local hotel.

Who is at risk?

(Young person/driver – reputation, complaint, criminal offence).

What would you do?

(report the incident to the Children's Home, the Police, to your operating office, keep your own record)

Be professional ,the reputation of your company and the District are at risk.

Scenario 3

An elderly lady approaches your taxi at the local railway station.

She has a lot of luggage with her and a walking stick. She appears to be in pain when she walks.

What would you do?

Customer care/service. Would you ask if she needs assistance? Do not assume. Ask is the Key!

Reputation of District and Taxi companies

Scenario 4

You collect a man and a woman from a local restaurant. When they get into your vehicle, the man is shouting at the woman who is crying.

During the journey to their home address the man slaps the woman across the face.

What would you do?

Make notes of what you have witnessed

Record the address where you took them to.

Report the incident to your operator/police

Don't put yourself at risk by confronting the man, you are vulnerable