

**Hackney Carriage & Private Hire – Knowledge & Safeguarding Tests**

<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	LICENSING COMMITTEE
<b>Lead Head of Service</b>	John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Community Services
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Sharon Bamborough, Head of the Licensing Partnership
<b>Classification</b>	Public
<b>Wards affected</b>	All

**Executive Summary**

There has been a two requests made by operators regarding the knowledge test and safeguarding training/test for new private hire drivers.

The first part of the report contains the proposal by operators to be supplied with the questions and answers for the safeguarding training/test in order for them to sit mock tests / study the answers in advance. This will require a decision by members.

In the second part of the report, Members may recall that in April 2021 they agreed to a temporary amendment of the knowledge test so as to remove the routes part of the test for six months and this was further extended by Members in November 2021 (to end of May 2022) to give an opportunity to assess whether that made a difference in the pass rate for new drivers. The results of those tests are in and are set out in the appendices. Members should note that period is coming to an end and may wish to decide to extend the period, make it permanent or confirm that it will be re-instated from 1 June 2022.

**Purpose of Report**

Decision

**This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:**

That:

1. The request to supply the questions and answers to the safeguarding training and test (supplied by INCLU [trading name Equo]) be refused; and
2. Consideration be given to further extending or permanently removing the routes/streets part of the knowledge test for private hire drivers.

**Timetable**

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Licensing Committee	17-03-2022

# Hackney Carriage and Private Hire - Knowledge & safeguarding tests

## 1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
<b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>No implications have been identified</i></li> </ul>	Sharon Bamborough – Head of the Licensing Partnership
<b>Cross Cutting Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>No implications have been identified</i></li> </ul>	Sharon Bamborough – Head of the Licensing Partnership
<b>Risk Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>No implications have been identified</i></li> </ul>	Sharon Bamborough – Head of the Licensing Partnership
<b>Financial</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>No implications have been identified</i></li> </ul>	John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Community Services
<b>Staffing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>No implications have been identified</i></li> </ul>	Sharon Bamborough – Head of the Licensing Partnership
<b>Legal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>No implications have been identified</i></li> </ul>	Robin Harris, Mid Kent Legal Services
<b>Privacy and Data Protection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>No implications have been identified</i></li> </ul>	Sharon Bamborough – Head of the Licensing Partnership
<b>Equalities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>No implications have been identified</i></li> </ul>	Sharon Bamborough – Head of the Licensing Partnership

<b>Public Health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>No implications have been identified</i></li> </ul>	Sharon Bamborough – Head of the Licensing Partnership
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>No implications have been identified</i></li> </ul>	Sharon Bamborough – Head of the Licensing Partnership
<b>Procurement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>No implications have been identified</i></li> </ul>	Sharon Bamborough – Head of the Licensing Partnership
<b>Biodiversity and Climate Change</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>No implications have been identified</i></li> </ul>	Sharon Bamborough – Head of the Licensing Partnership

## 2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 The safeguarding training was introduced in April 2021 as a result of the authority adopting the National Statutory Standards for drivers. The training and test covers three modules of:

- Disability awareness
- Child Sexual exploitation
- County lines

There is a bank of 66 questions and during the training and testing, 36 questions will be asked.

2.2 The revision materials which are already supplied to applicants for the safeguarding training are attached at **Appendix 1**

2.3 A request from the trade has been received asking for the questions and answers for the safeguarding training (**Appendix 2**)

2.4 A history of the introduction of the knowledge test and analysis of pass rates was considered by the committee at their meeting of 15th April 2021. An extract from that report is attached as **Appendix 3** for easy reference. At that meeting a decision by members was made as follows:

- The pass rate for the highway code section of the knowledge test, for private hire applicants only, be increased to 90% with the number of questions in that section be increased to 10; and

- The Routes and Street element of the rest for private hire applicants only be removed for a period of 6 months.

### **Section One**

- 2.5 The operators have put forward a proposal that they be supplied with the questions and answers for the disability part of the safeguarding training and test. Please see **Appendix 2**.
- 2.6 The reason for the request is to allow the operators to have access to the questions and answers to help train applicants before they sit the training and test (which operators hope would increase the pass rate for new drivers so as to alleviate driver shortages in the trade)
- 2.7 The revision materials which are *already* supplied to applicants for the safeguarding training are attached at **Appendix 1**
- 2.8 The licensed operators have been invited to the meeting should Members wish to hear from the representatives of the group.

### **Section Two:**

#### THE KNOWLEDGE TEST FOR PRIVATE HIRE DRIVERS - ROUTES

- 2.9 The temporary removal of the routes part of the knowledge test for private hire drivers comes to an end on 31 May 2022.
- 2.10 The most up to date information is set out in **Appendix 4** showing the pass rates.
- 2.11 From May – Oct 21 (5 months) we have had 16 candidates pass, double the number for the years 2018, 2019 & 2020 combined. Removing Routes and Streets has definitely improved the pass rate for candidates.
- 2.12 The current results show an upward trend in the number of passes being achieved by potential drivers which will increase the pool of available drivers in Maidstone borough.
- 2.13 Since the start of the trial no complaints have been received about drivers not knowing their journeys.
- 2.14 Officers feel that this warrants either a further extension of the trial or dispense with that part of the test for private hire drivers altogether.

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### **3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

- 3.1 *In respect of the proposal to be provided with the questions and answers for the safeguarding training and test for new drivers, to make a decision to:*

Either:

Refuse to provide the questions and answers to the safeguarding training and test

Or

Agree to provide the information.

3.2 *In respect of the knowledge test and whether to revert back to the routes forming part of the test for private hire drivers, to make a decision to:*

Either:

Instruct officers that the routes part of the test for all potential private hire drivers be re-instated from 1st June 2022

Or

Agree to a further extension of the removal of the routes part of the test for a further six months (or other period they deem necessary)

Or

Agree to permanently remove that element of the knowledge test for private hire drivers

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#### **4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

4.1 Members are requested to refuse the proposal to supply the questions and answers to the safeguarding training test, for the following reasons:

- (i) as this would be undermine the National Statutory Standards which require safeguarding training to be undertaken by drivers and would go against previous Member decisions to elevate the training standards and requirements, in that officers feel strongly that to supply this information will water down the value of the training and test because it will mean that the applicants only study and learn those specific questions and answers.
  - (ii) Maidstone are not the only authority which uses Equo as their training package for safeguarding and they have confirmed that no other authority has agreed to supply questions and answers to the trade up front in order to make it easier for them to pass the test. As we are the customer they would agree to supply Q & A if we requested it but it is not something they are advocating.
  - (iii) It has not been evidenced that there is a public safety issue requiring such a change to be made
  - (iv) It is important that the Partnership acts as one in their approach to the delivery of this training and testing, and the other partners do not agree to the sharing of the questions and answers
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## **5. RISK**

- 5.1 Failure to supply the questions and answers to operators will potentially mean it takes longer to get through the safeguarding training and test which could result in a shortfall of Maidstone licensed drivers.
- 5.2 A return of the routes/streets part of the knowledge tests for private hire drivers could result in decrease in applicants passing the knowledge test leading to a shortfall of Maidstone licensed drivers.
- 5.3 For both proposals this could see an increase in out of town drivers being in Maidstone illegally cashing in on the employment gap and ultimately causing enforcement issues for the Licensing Department.

## **6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK**

- 6.1 N/A
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## **7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION**

- 7.1 Should Members approve the proposal by the trade to be supplied with the questions and answers of the safeguarding training this would need to be reported to the other partner licensing committees with a view about what action to take and the results reported back to a future meeting of the licensing committee. This is because once the questions and answers were released they could easily be shared and this may go against the wishes of the other partners.
  - 7.2 Whatever the decision regarding the knowledge test routes element, this will be communicated to the trade and potential new drivers
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## **8. REPORT APPENDICES**

- Appendix 1: revision materials for safeguarding training
  - Appendix 2: request from operators to be supplied questions and answers of safeguarding training
  - Appendix 3: Extract from committee report of 15.04.2021 outlining the knowledge test and the decision made proposal from trade re temporary badge for drivers without knowledge test
  - Appendix 4: Tables of analysis on knowledge tests going back to July 2019
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## **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None