

Coronavirus (Covid 19): Information to taxi and private hire licensees

We understand that the taxi and private hire trade in Wales may have a number of concerns and queries regarding the possible implications of the coronavirus (Covid 19) outbreak.

HM Government has published up-to-date information on the [Coronavirus \(Covid 19\)](#) and [guidance for the transport sector](#)

In addition, the following information has been collated that you may find of use.

1. Should I continue to work?

The advice from the Department for Transport (DfT) on 25 March 2020 states:

“Taxis and private hire vehicles can continue to work. But the advice is absolutely clear - people should stay at home if possible. That is the way to save lives and protect our NHS. The public should avoid travel unless absolutely essential. The only reasons to leave our houses are set out in the [government guidance](#).

Clearly if absolutely necessary to travel by taxi or private hire vehicle, best efforts should be used to follow the guidance as far as is practically possible, including washing your hands as soon as you get home.

Critical Worker Status

Taxi and private hire drivers should not generally be considered Critical Workers. Those undertaking home to school transport or the transport of [extremely vulnerable](#) people may be considered Critical Workers on a case-by-case basis.

Critical Workers should also whenever possible make suitable arrangements for their children to stay at home, and requests for children to attend school should be discussed with the school.”

2. Financial Support

If you are unable to work due to the current emergency situation, you may be eligible for financial support.

a. Self Employed Income Support

On 26 March 2020 HM Government announced a financial support package for the self-employed. Those eligible will receive a grant worth 80 % of their average trading profit (up to a maximum of £2500), for the next three months.

For further information and how to apply please visit: [Covid 19 Self-Employed Income Support](#)

b. Business Support

HM Government has also announced a number of financial support packages available to employees and businesses. This includes measures such as the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, deferring VAT and Income Tax payments and a number of grant initiatives.

For further information and how to apply please visit: [Covid 19 Support for Businesses](#)

c. Statutory sick pay (SSP)

If you cannot work as you have coronavirus or are self-isolating on government advice, you may be eligible for statutory sick pay. You will be able to claim SSP from the first day that you are self-isolating and cannot work. For further information please see [Statutory Sick Pay](#)

d. Universal credit

For those not eligible for the business or self-employment income support schemes or SSP, you may be eligible for Universal Credit. Further information can be found at: [Universal Credit](#)

3. Your health

You should keep up to date on information about stopping the spread of Covid 19 and self-isolation (including what to do if you or someone you have had contact with have symptoms) via the [Public Health Wales](#) and [Welsh Government](#) website.

The current advice is to:

- wash your hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds
- use hand sanitizer gel if soap and water are not available
- wash your hands as soon as you get back home
- cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze
- put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, mouth if your hands are not clean

The following groups of people are strongly advised to stay at home and not to have face to face contact for at least 12 weeks, these include people who:

- Are 70 or over
- Have a underlying health condition
- Are pregnant
- Have a weakened immune system

Please see the [Welsh Government website](#) for further information on how to protect extremely vulnerable people (shielding).

4. Keeping yourself and passengers safe when you are working:

You should follow the Government's advice concerning critical workers, but if your work is considered critical you should take the following precautions in order to protect yourself and your passengers:

- If you have symptoms or have been in contact with someone with symptoms you should observe the self-isolation rules outlined on the [NHS website](#)
- Ask passengers to sit in the rear of the vehicle
- Keep a bottle of hand sanitizer gel in your vehicle. It is recommended this be a minimum 60% alcohol. Alternatively keep a large bottle of water and a bar/bottle of soap. Hand washing/sanitising should take place for at least 20 seconds.
- Where possible try to avoid handling cash and accept alternative payment methods such as debit/credit card.
- 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 surface the passenger(s) may have touched or coughed/sneezed on. You should then wash/sanitise their own hands.
- Drivers/licensees that share a vehicle should regularly clean the steering wheel, gear stick, radio equipment, handbrake, indicators, switches, handles, seat belts and any other hard surfaces with normal cleaning products.
- A thorough clean of the vehicle with normal cleaning products should be completed at the end of each shift/working day.
- Ensure the vehicle remains safe and road-worthy. Basic vehicle maintenance checks should be completed each day at the start of every shift, and as a minimum should include a visual check on all lights, oil & water levels, tyres, mirrors, seat belts and access ramps (where applicable). Many garages that undertake repairs remain open.
- Carry tissues in your vehicles and use tissues to catch coughs and sneezes. Used tissues should be disposed of in a bin as soon as possible

5. Can I refuse to carry passengers through fear of infection?

The Institute of Licensing has provided some guidance on the legitimacy of fare refusals in relation to the Covid 19 outbreak . <https://www.instituteoflicensing.org/news/covid-19-licensing-issues-can-hackney-carriage-and-private-hire-drivers-refuse-to-carry-certain-passengers-through-fear-of-infection/>

6. Changes to licence application processes/licence expiries

We have implemented changes to licensing requirements and procedures. Advice has been provided to Private Hire Operators to share with drivers and to Hackney Carriage Proprietors. Information can be found at <http://www.torfaen.gov.uk/en/Business/Licensing/Licence-PrivateHireAndHackneyCarriages/Private-Hire-and-Hackney-Carriages.aspx>

7. Can I install a safety screen in my vehicle to protect myself from Covid 19?

Safety screens provide a physical barrier between you and your 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 in the use of screens as a way of providing physical separation between drivers and passengers in order to prevent the transmission of the novel coronavirus. The Welsh Local Authorities are collectively developing guidelines for the use of safety screens in licensed vehicles. These guidelines will be available in due course.