

TITLE	Disability Awareness Training
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Licensing and Appeals Committee on 25 June 2019
WARD	Non-specific
LEAD OFFICER	Sean Murphy, Public Protection Manager

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

There is an existing requirement for licence holders to undertake a session of disability awareness training. It is proposed to introduce a regular refresher training session to ensure that licence holders are appraised of any changes in legislation and advice, as well as to ensure licence holders are reminded of their role in providing accessible transport to disabled people.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee:

- i) Reviews and considers the responses to the consultation that has been carried out, and;**
- ii) Mandates that disability awareness training be carried out by all new driver and operator licence applicants before a licence is granted and thereafter on a three yearly basis, and that all existing driver and operator licence holders attend the same training within the 12 months following the first training session, and thereafter on a three yearly basis.**

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The report presents the results of a consultation and proposes the introduction of regular refresher training for licence holders, in addition to initial training at the time the licence is first issued.

Background

There is an existing requirement that new applicants for licences must attend a suitable training session so they are aware of their legal duties as well as best practice for providing assistance to disabled passengers.

It is felt that regular refresher sessions of this training should be mandatory for licence holders. It is important that the trade are aware of changes in applicable legislation, for example, in 2017 sections of the Equality Act 2010 came into force making it an offence for the driver of a designated vehicle to refuse to carry a passenger because they use a wheelchair, and best practice advice is also subject to change. Regular refresher training will ensure that licence holders are appraised of such changes so they are best able to provide an efficient service to the residents of Wokingham Borough, as well as visitors.

Consultation

A consultation was carried out between 11 April 2019 and 31 May 2019. Details of the consultation were sent by email to all licence holders for whom we have an email address, totalling 213 email addresses, and was available via the Council's online consultation portal for anyone to review and respond.

During the consultation period, a total of 12 responses were submitted, 11 the trade from and 1 from a resident. The full details of all responses received, with personal information redacted, is attached at **Annex A** of this report. **Annex B** details the wording of the consultation.

On reviewing the information within the consultation responses has reinforced the need for information provision to the trade, as there appears to be a general misunderstanding as to the nature of disability itself, as well as a lack of knowledge as to the legal obligations of the licensed trade.

Analysis of Issues

Disability awareness training as a requirement for licence holders is recommended in the Government's Inclusive Transport Strategy: Achieving Equal Access for Disabled People (July 2018), the Local Government Association's Taxi and PHV licensing Councillors' handbook (August 2017), and the recent Task and Finishing Group report (September 2018).

Such training is a requirement for new applicants. It is proposed any existing licence holder who was licensed prior to the training being mandatory, or who attended the training more than three years ago, will be given a set period to attend a session. This is suggested to be 12 months. Following completion of the training, a refresher session will be mandatory after a period of three years.

The cost for this training shall be borne by the licence holder and will be at cost.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	No impact	N/A	N/A
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	No impact	N/A	N/A
Following Financial	No impact	N/A	N/A

Year (Year 3)			
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Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

It is intended that the training will be funded through a charge included within the licensing fees.

Cross-Council Implications

N/A

List of Background Papers

- Inclusive Transport Strategy: Achieving Equal Access for Disabled People (July 2018)
- The Local Government Association's Taxi and PHV licensing Councillors' handbook (August 2017)
- Task and Finishing Group report - Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing Steps towards a safer and more robust system (September 2018).

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