

## PROTECTIVE SCREENS DURING COVID-19

### HACKNEY CARRIAGE & PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES

Crawley Borough Council does not currently have a policy for the installation of safety screens in private hire vehicles or hackney carriages.

None the less, the Council would expect to approve screens that meet the relevant EU standard to be installed and evidence provided to the Council of testing to the relevant EU standard and approval by MIRA or other comparable independent product engineering company.

However, the Council are aware new screen apparatus is being sold in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, there is a lack of information about safety testing or certification (both practically and in relation to transmission of the virus) to allow the Council to endorse their use, and there is currently no definitive Government guidance on the subject.

The Council recognise that the COVID-19 pandemic is unique, and we are taking a proportionate approach to the installation and enforcement in relation to safety screens.

In relation to Private Hire Vehicles, the following condition applies:

#### **Vehicle Change of Use**

*5. The proprietor must notify the Council of any intended change in use of the specified vehicle, or any change in the particulars supplied at the time of application for the licence and of any modifications made to the vehicle, including seating arrangements immediately and shall not use the vehicle for the purposes of carrying fare paying passengers until approved by the Council.*

Installation of a safety screen during the current COVID-19 pandemic is considered a modification to the vehicle and the decision to install a screen will be a matter for vehicle owners/ proprietor, drivers and operators to consider.

Both private vehicle proprietors/owners **and** hackney carriage proprietors are expected to notify the Council of their intention to install a safety screens and an inspection of the screen may be required.

**The Council will not accept liability in circumstances in which a screen causes injury or death to a passenger or driver.**

The Council requires that the following guidance is considered necessary if you are to continue operating or driving a private hire/hackney carriage vehicle and wish to install a protective screen/shield.

### **The screen/shield should:**

- Be fitted in such a way so as not to affect the structural integrity of the vehicle, or interfere with any manufacturer fitted safety equipment
- Not interfere with or compromise any operating or safety features in the vehicle (including airbags, handbrake, gearstick) or the Vehicle Type Approval.
- Not be made of materials that will increase the fire risk in the vehicle.
- Be transparent, so as not to interfere with the safe use of the vehicle, and to enable the driver and passengers to see each other; and remain clear of scratches, clouding or stickers which would impede the drivers or passengers' visibility.
- The screen must be made of a material which allows both the passenger and driver to see and hear one another clearly throughout the duration of the hire.
- The screen must be made of a material which does not cause suffocation or other injury.
- Shall only create a partition between the two front seats and the rear cabin area.
- Not obstruct the passenger leg room in any way, nor require the passenger to adjust the screen to accommodate legs and/or baggage.
- Be adequately and safely secured.
- Not interfere with the safe access and egress of the driver or passengers nor become easily detached during normal use.
- Be adequately disinfected between bookings and at the start and end of each working day

### **Owners/Drivers/Operators should:**

- Inform insurers about the intention to fit such a device, and ensure their insurance will not be invalidated as a result.
- Ensure that you are adequately insured if such a device is fitted.
- Produce evidence to the Councils Taxi Licensing Team that the relevant insurance for the device is in place.
- Fit/install screens at your own responsibility and in accordance with the manufacturers specifications and recommendations.
- Ensure the device/apparatus is removed prior to the attendance for a vehicle compliance test.
- Understand that this is a temporary measure and the Council reserve the right to require the device removal with immediate effect.
- Be aware depending on the type fitted (full front/back partition) the front passenger seat in the vehicle may be unusable in which case the maximum number of passengers the vehicle is licensed to carry will be affected, reducing the number of occupants permitted.

If a Licensing Officer has any concerns about the use of a partition screen in a licensed vehicle, they will speak to the owner and may require the removal of the device, they will explain their reasons in writing.

### **Advice on Sanitisation and Face Coverings**

Those who are working have a responsibility to take all possible precautions to keep themselves and their vehicles as safe and sanitised to help stop the spread of the virus. We advise you to frequently clean and disinfect surfaces using appropriate cleaning products that are touched regularly i.e. door handles, seat belts and buckles. You will also need to clean other obvious hard surfaces touched by a passenger,

including areas that may have been infected following a passenger coughing or sneezing.

Face coverings do not replace social distancing, but are advisable when in an enclosed space and where there is difficulty socially distancing. This is a matter for individuals to determine.

You are advised to keep yourself apprised of the recommendations of Central Government in relation to COVID-19.