

Report to:	Licensing and Regulatory Committee	Date of Meeting:	Monday 5 September 2022
Subject:	Review of Training Requirements for Licensed Drivers		
Report of:	Head of Highways and Public Protection	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services		
Is this a Key Decision:	N	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt / Confidential Report:	N		

Summary:

To consider removal of the requirement for all new licensed drivers to have completed the VRQ (Introduction to the Role of the Professional Taxi and Private Hire Driver) and replace it with a new redesigned training course.

Recommendation(s):

- (1) Remove the requirement for new drivers to complete the VRQ training programme
- (2) Authorise the creation of a new redesigned training course requirement
- (3) Once established, make the new training course a mandatory requirement for all drivers.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

The current Accredited Training provider was unsuccessful in obtaining continuing funding from Liverpool City Region (LCR) therefore the VRQ will no longer be provided to new applicants free of charge. This has led to the closure of the training provider's local facility.

The Government has indicated in its published statutory standards that it expects local authorities to provide safeguarding awareness training that focuses on exploitation and county lines issues.

The reason for the recommendations is to redesign and modernise the training provided to bring it up to date and more in line with the new national standards and bolster safeguarding awareness along with training relating to Sefton's policies and procedures.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: (including any Risk Implications)

None

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

The cost of the training will be met by new applicants on a cost recovery basis.

(B) Capital Costs

There are no direct capital implications associated with the recommendations in this report.

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):

The cost of the service is wholly recovered from the ring-fenced Taxi Licensing Trade Account (Revenue Budget BD12).

Legal Implications:

The Town Police Clauses Act 1847 and The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 provide that a district council may set out criteria when undertaking their taxi and private hire licensing functions and may attach to the grant of a licence such conditions as they may consider reasonably necessary.

Equality Implications:

The Statutory Taxis and Private Hire Vehicle Standards have been set directly to address the safeguarding of the public and the potential impact of failings in this area. The adoption of recommendations made in this document will therefore have a positive impact on equality and diversity specifically for vulnerable individuals and children.

Climate Emergency Implications:

The recommendations within this report will

Have a positive impact	N
Have a neutral impact	Y
Have a negative impact	N
The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Y

It is anticipated that a change in the training provided to new applicants will have a neutral impact.

--

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: Increased safeguarding awareness to help protect the most vulnerable.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities:
Commission, broker and provide core services: Updating taxi licensing service provision.
Place – leadership and influencer:
Drivers of change and reform:
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity:
Greater income for social investment:
Cleaner Greener

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD.6917/22.....) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD5117/22.....) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

Immediately following the Committee meeting.

Contact Officer:	Mark Toohey
Telephone Number:	Tel: Ext 2274
Email Address:	mark.toohey@sefton.gov.uk

Appendices:

There are no appendices to this report

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 Following a report to the Licensing & Regulatory Committee in 2009, all new and existing drivers were required to obtain the VRQ or NVQ in 'Introduction to the Role of the Professional Taxi and Private Hire Driver'. At that time, there were at least 10 training providers delivering the VRQ.
- 1.2 Members may recall a report to the committee on 6 January 2020 in relation to issues around fake training certificates and the establishment of an accredited training provider programme.
- 1.3 Since 2009, one training provider received accreditation (Antrec).
- 1.4 In July 2022, the funding from LCR for this training came to an end and Antrec's local facility has now closed.

2. New Training Proposals

- 2.1 Some elements of the VRQ had become outdated and new elements were unable to be added.
- 2.2 The Council now has the opportunity to develop a new training programme that addresses the need for more safeguarding awareness as well as educating drivers on current policies and procedures.
- 2.3 The following is an excerpt from the 2020 Government national standards policy;

“Licensing authorities should consider the role that those in the taxi and private hire vehicle industry can play in spotting and reporting the abuse, exploitation or neglect of children and vulnerable adults. As with any group of people, it is overwhelmingly the case that those within the industry can be an asset in the detection and prevention of abuse or neglect of children and vulnerable adults. However, this is only the case if they are aware of and alert to the signs of potential abuse and know where to turn to if they suspect that a child or vulnerable adult is at risk of harm or is in immediate danger.

All licensing authorities should provide safeguarding advice and guidance to the trade and should require taxi and private hire vehicle drivers to undertake safeguarding training. This is often produced in conjunction with the police and other agencies. These programmes have been developed to help drivers and operators:

- provide a safe and suitable service to vulnerable passengers of all ages;*
- recognise what makes a person vulnerable; and*
- understand how to respond, including how to report safeguarding concerns and where to get advice.”*

- 2.4 The training would also cover an overview of existing policies and procedures relating to licensed drivers.
- 2.5 If approved, it is proposed to start a course of consultation with interested groups with a view to a procurement exercise to create and deliver the training. Once established, the Council would also look at making it a requirement for all existing drivers to attend the revised training at some point.
- 2.6 The exact content of the training is yet to be developed but there are well established training courses already available that cover these subject areas which will be explored.
- 2.7 It is envisaged that any driver that has been licensed without the VRQ qualification would be priority for the training with all existing drivers eventually completing the course at some point in time.
- 2.8 Further reports will be provided concerning the content and delivery of the training with suggested dates for completion of the training for all drivers.
- 2.9 The training will likely be a one or two day course with the costs being met by the applicants and drivers.

3 Conclusion

- 3.1 Members are requested to consider the recommendations with further reports to be presented to the committee.