



Bath and North East Somerset Council  
Review of Taxi Policy and Conditions

CSE Issues

October 2018



## Executive Summary

This Theme Report considers the issue of applying CSE training to all licensed vehicle drivers in B&NES. It provides the present national and local status of CSE training for drivers and outlines potential options to be taken forward, including wording for addition to the revised policy document and conditions. Options are provided to allow an appropriate decision to be made in the light of consultation with the public and trade.



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## 1 General introduction and background

On 7 July 2017 OFSTED published its report of their “Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers” and “Review of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board”, inspection of which occurred between 24 April 2017 and 18 May 2017. Whilst most of this report does not relate to taxi licensing, as part of the review of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) it was identified that, with reference to child sexual exploitation (CSE), “the impact of some partners’ practice in raising local awareness has been slow in some significant areas...for example the engagement and training of ... some taxi drivers” (p28).

The recommendation from this is outlined in paragraph 88 – “Strengthen current arrangements for partners to raise awareness of CSE through licensing activity in B&NES”. Paragraph 96 adds “Only taxi drivers approved to transport children who are actively involved with the local authority are required to attend CSE training as part of the licensing process.” The result of this is that licensing was tasked to ensure all drivers should be subject to mandatory training, and that this should be a requirement of their licence renewal. No further suggestion of content or method was provided.

The remainder of this Theme Paper considers the current national background and status of CSE training across English licensing authorities, considers the present and potential required content, and options of the way forward to achieve this requirement.

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## 2 National CSE training background

The current status of the need and reasons for CSE training for taxi drivers has been summarised by a set of power point slides on the Local Government Association web-site (as at 26 April 2018). The presentation confirmed that the need arose from the well-publicised issues in Rochdale and Rotherham which meant CSE training for licensed vehicle drivers had ceased to be an issue not historically a requirement. More discussion of the content of this presentation follow.

To set the current context, the DfT regularly undertake a national survey of various licensing practices and public the results every two years. The last such survey was undertaken for the end of March 2017 and published later in 2017. Results from this survey identify 292 licensing authorities in England at the time of that survey. Of those, 122 (42%), including B&NES had no overall requirement of either hackney carriage or private hire drivers that they undergo CSE training. One authority required this of hackney carriage drivers only, with the remaining 169 (58%) requiring both hackney carriage and private hire drivers to undergo such training. No further detail of the content of this training or the level to which drivers had taken up the requirement is provided.

For the local area around B&NES the following authorities were recorded as having a requirement on all drivers to receive CSE training:

- South Gloucestershire
- Cheltenham
- Cotswold
- Forest of Dean
- West Oxfordshire (works with Cotswold and Forest of Dean)
- Stroud
- Tewkesbury
- Wiltshire
- Sedgemoor

Initial discussions were held with 17 local area licensing authorities which identified two further authorities who were actively planning to introduce a requirement for all drivers to have CSE training, and one other that was considering the issue. Five authorities remain without any requirement, but did not confirm this with us whilst this report was being written, and three of these are within a County who are considering rolling out a County-wide requirement which local licensing authorities would then have to choose to react to the option.

Further, at a national level we identified four potential providers for CSE training. One national charity, Barnardo's currently provides training for 16 present authorities and continues to expand its client base. Another private company, Personnel Checks, provides a training option, whilst another licensing authority and another private company were identified but no further detail was obtained in the time available.

However, in many cases we found authorities had drawn on local safeguarding provision, either from within the authority itself, or from their higher tier County authority, also including police representation. Many had found novel sources of funding for their area to allow rapid provision of the opportunity to drivers to have training. Further discussion of this occurs below in the options available.

Ten contacts provided us useful tips and insight into how they had moved from a position of having no drivers trained to having all current drivers trained. There were different levels of experience in terms of training for new drivers and for refreshing current training when all had been trained.

### 3 Present content and scope of driver CSE training

At the time of writing this Theme Report we understand that there remains no national standard or provision for licensed vehicle driver CSE training, and significant debate about what is appropriate for such drivers.

The LGA published presentation by a North-Eastern licensing officer summarises current thought and led into the present provision by Barnardo's. The presentation confirms that, to reduce risks to the public and council, the training needed to be affordable, sustainable, credible and appropriate for drivers. After considering a range of options, the wider area licensing group in the North East decided a web-based nationally provided course that took 45-60 minutes to complete with a pass certificate emailed was their best way forward. This package remains available commercially from Barnardo's (Nightwatch – CSE training for taxi drivers).

For B&NES, the training provided for drivers of education clients was found sufficient and fit for purpose from the OFSTED review point of view. This training also has value in being locally developed and highly relevant to the local situation, which is counted as very important for CSE training. However, given the wider range of situations experienced by drivers in their normal work beyond education contracts, which are very specific in their remit, rolling out this very specific training is not felt to be comprehensive enough for a general mandatory requirement training session.

On the other hand, most of those talking about the provision they have made for mandatory CSE training for all drivers, have spoken clearly that any training provided needs to be carefully tailored to the local situation, and in fact the national providers we have spoken to also agree with this.

Training can be provided to groups face to face, or by drivers undertaking on-line using a secure accredited system. In some cases, on-line training is undertaken in a group setting. A key issue is ensuring the licensing authority can prove the person gaining the certificate has actually personally undertook the training, with most on-line options having some safeguards built in. Another main concern is that people are able to ask sufficient questions to ensure they are completely clear in their understanding – in some cases this can be done in a group setting although it is agreed that people also need to be able to ask questions on a more individual, private basis if they prefer.

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## 4 Future scope and content of CSE training for B&NES

The March 2017 DfT information about licensed vehicle statistics shows there are 644 licensed drivers in the B&NES area. At that time, they drove a total of 522 vehicles, suggesting some sharing of vehicles and / or drivers not regularly active. These vehicles worked for 82 different private hire operating companies, although there is no requirement for the 161 hackney carriages to have any operator licence at all. There is no information available concerning how many customer-facing non-driving operator staff there are.

At the present time several drivers operate on school and social service contracts. These drivers are provided with an outline CSE training within the overall training course they have to undertake to be able to hold such contracts. However, even though records exist of those taking this training, as stated earlier, the level of training is not felt to be appropriate given the wider operating circumstances for taxi drivers overall. This means some new course is needed for any roll-out involving all drivers.

It is also clear from evidence both nationally and locally that CSE training for all drivers is, though not legally required at present, becoming very strongly accepted as national best practice. There are well-publicised issues relating to child (and other vulnerable person) sexual (and other) exploitation and human trafficking that have occurred throughout the country. There are abhorrent crimes well known about, and the licensed hackney carriage and private hire trades have a role to play in tackling these issues by acting as the eyes and ears of the community to help identify, help and protect those who are vulnerable or actually being exploited.

There needs to be a locally-tuned, taxi-driver specific training provision set up and then maintained for B&NES. However, there are a number of options available.

Having considered the various options, proposals for B&NES are:

- 1 - Sessions undertaken face to face for up to 40 with a course developed by and delivered by the person who provided the education training
- 2 – Use of a nationally accredited, locally tailored on-line course
- 3 – working with nearby authorities to draw on courses they have, or are, setting up

There are merits and disadvantages of each option. All have cost implications. There are also time implications and a decision is needed over how long the full driver cohort should take to become fully trained.

It is also important to determine how to ensure all drivers are trained promptly, and how to cope with those who either do not consider they need the training, or those who simply find it hard to get round to completing. In most authorities the initial training is free for a limited period to encourage take-up. Some have had to be very strong in their requirement that training be completed. In some cases, when a schedule of training is known, local operators can be drawn in to ensure they work with their drivers to make sure they all have opportunity to undertake the training, by revising shifts, etc to permit attendance.

Once training is completed, there are various ways to inform the public this is completed for B&NES drivers. All drivers should have a certificate, some authorities have provided a drivers' licence style card which provides accreditation on one side and key contact numbers on the other. One authority has a banner footer on all licensing emails that promotes the training and CSE awareness.

Irrespective of which initial training option is used, there is need to provide an option which then covers new drivers. Some authorities undertake the initial training face to face, but then the new driver training using an on-line or individual based system to avoid long waits for available courses. It seems that many authorities use on-line (but possibly at-desk) style new driver training. Where this fits in with a driver application varies. Many require this training to be undertaken once initial checks prove a person is fit and proper to be a driver, others give up to a year after starting driving for the training to be undertaken.

Finally, there is need to determine if private hire operator staff, particularly those with a public facing focus, need to have similar training. Very few authorities seem to cover this.

There is a clear head of steam in local authorities around B&NES in regard to CSE training. There would be strong value in discussion with nearby authorities to ensure that there is an element of consistency across the local area, and the initial discussion have already provided many very useful lessons and suggestions.

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