

Good morning,

Thank you for sending this consultation to us.

Comments have been regarding the cost increase for the new training and concern for the impact that might have on driver recruitment for the local transport operators but it is felt that the training will drive an improvement in standards.

Regarding positive trace DBS and convictions it is felt that the suggested new training is a really positive step forward in that the training is proposed to include CSE and safeguarding. The suitability guidance provides some clear standards related to how to assess offences, a useful addition might be for a risk assessment also to support this. (if not already in place)

The only additional comment relates to offences/concerns arising when a driver is operating as a Taxi already. This relates to the importance of transport operators having clear policies in place related to codes of conduct to ensure that it is the responsibility of drivers to inform their employer and licensing authority if they are the subject of any investigation by the police or where concerns in their private life arise that may impact on their suitability to work. (We get a number of cases where employees have failed to inform their employer of current investigations which leads to concerns about their honesty and integrity).

Essex County Council supports efforts to reduce vehicle emissions in the county, working through road junction improvements and bids for funding.
<https://www.essexhighways.org/highway-schemes-and-developments/bids-and-funding/Low-Emissions-Buses-Scheme-LEBS.aspx>

Overall it is felt that this Taxi policy review is suggesting a very positive way forward.

We hope that these comments will prove useful.

Yours sincerely

Integrated Passenger Transport Unit
Essex County Council

RESPONSE:

Thank you for your response to the consultation, we appreciate you taking the time to share your views as an authority that awards contracts to operators, drivers and vehicles licensed by this authority. You have, in the same way UDC has, considered the perceived impacts on recruitment against the benefits of improved standards. This is a difficult balance to strike but ultimately it is the safety of the passengers, particularly the most vulnerable, that is of paramount importance.

We are glad that you can see the benefit in the proposed training of drivers and the impact it will have on increasing standards. We see the inclusion of CSE training and safeguarding as

an absolute requirement for any driver but in particular for those undertaking school contracts and appreciate your support. This has been reflected in the draft Statutory Guidance which the Department for Transport are currently consulting. If you wish to view the Guidance and respond to the consultation it can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/taxi-and-private-hire-vehicle-licensing-protecting-users>

UDC shares your concern about people clearly understanding their responsibilities with regards to reporting matters to their employer or this authority. This is a issue that will be addressed in the training for both new drivers and those already in the trade. The expectations of these individuals as professional drivers will be explained in detail and also covered by revised application forms. Combining that with the new suitability policy makes the system more robust whilst we wait for the Government to introduce legislation regarding national minimum standards.

Thank you for the support regarding the Vehicle Emissions criteria and it is helpful to see that we are not the only authority seeking to tackle this issue.

Once again thank you for your comments and support which will be put before the Licensing & Environmental Health Committee when they consider all the reposnses.