



Coronavirus – Update 6

This Notice provides updated advice for taxi and private hire (TPH) licensees following the Government announcement, on Thursday 4 June, regarding the mandating of face coverings for passengers using public transport services. In light of this Government announcement, we are also issuing updated guidance to taxi and private hire drivers, private hire operators and taxi app companies.

Licensees should also familiarise themselves with updated Government guidance for those [operating transport services](#) and [specific guidance for taxi and private hire services](#).

The Notice also provides an update on the resumption of vehicle licensing inspections, personal and vehicle hygiene advice and social distancing.

This Notice supplements information provided in previous [TPH Notices](#) issued in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

Face coverings

The latest scientific advice suggests that, although face coverings are unlikely to prevent an individual from getting the coronavirus, they can help prevent someone who is infected from infecting others and therefore help control the virus. Face coverings are particularly important where two metre social distancing is hard to maintain, for example when travelling on public transport. While the Government advice doesn't explicitly cover the use of taxi and private hire services, this guidance is intended to mirror the arrangements put in place on public transport.

Face coverings for drivers:

From Monday 15 June, all taxi and private hire (TPH) drivers **should** wear a face covering at all times when in a taxi or private hire vehicle.

A face covering is not the same as the surgical masks or respirators used by healthcare and other workers as part of personal protective equipment. These should continue to be reserved for those who need them to protect against risks in their workplace, such as health and care workers, and those in industrial settings, like those exposed to dust hazards.

Face coverings can be a simple cloth covering that covers the face and mouth. They can be made using many items found in the home or in many shops open across London.

Information on how to wear and make a face covering can be accessed via these links:

www.london.gov.uk/coronavirus/face-covering-guidance

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering>

Alternatively, disposable or reusable face coverings can be obtained from a number of online or local retail outlets. Face coverings should not be used if they are no longer in good condition or become too damp.

When wearing a face covering drivers should follow the Government guidance on the use of face coverings:

- A cloth face covering should cover your mouth and nose while allowing you to breathe comfortably. It can be as simple as a scarf or bandana that ties behind the head
- Wash your hands or use hand sanitiser before putting it on and after taking it off and after use. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth at all times and

store used face coverings in a plastic bag until you have an opportunity to wash them, if they are reusable

- Do not touch the front of the face covering, or the part of the face covering that has been in contact with your mouth and nose. Once removed, make sure you clean any surfaces the face covering has touched
- You should wash a face covering regularly. It can go in with other laundry, using your normal detergent
- When wearing a face covering, take care to tuck away any loose ends

We recommend that drivers carry a pen and paper to help communication with some passengers (e.g. someone who lip reads, someone who has a hearing impairment). Separate pen and paper should be available for the driver and passengers.

Face coverings for passengers:

Passengers are being advised by Transport for London that they should wear face coverings when travelling by taxi or private hire vehicle for the duration of the journey.

However, face coverings should not be used by children under the age of three or those who may find it difficult to manage them correctly. For example, primary age children unassisted, people with breathing difficulties and people whose disabilities makes it difficult for them to wear a face covering.

If a passenger is not wearing a face covering, then taxi and private hire drivers can refuse to carry them, taking into account any mitigating circumstances such as the age of the child. The driver should explain to the passenger that they are required to wear a face covering while travelling in a taxi or PHV.

Passengers that are making journeys that are booked through a private hire operator or engaged via a taxi app should be informed, in advance, of the face covering requirement. In instances where a taxi is hailed on the street or at a rank, a

passenger may not be aware that they should use a face covering. In either instance, we would expect drivers to explain to the passenger that they need a face covering to be permitted to travel in the vehicle and to direct them to a nearby retail outlet or transport hub where face coverings can be obtained. For their own safety we recommend drivers avoid getting into a lengthy discussion with passengers.

Private hire vehicle (PHV) operators and taxi booking companies

All PHV operators and taxi booking companies should read and follow the [Government's guidance for operators](#).

To help TPH drivers have access to appropriate face coverings we are advising all taxi app booking companies, and all PHV operators, wherever possible, to source supplies and provide these to drivers.

We also expect all private hire operators and taxi app companies and radio circuits to provide clear messages to passengers, at the time of making the booking / as a condition of booking and as part of a booking confirmation, on the requirement for passengers to wear a facial covering and also whether the vehicle in question will enable social distancing of more than two metres between driver and passenger. It should also be made clear to a passenger in the booking confirmation that the driver can refuse the journey if the passenger does not have a face covering.

At the point of booking, the PHV operator / taxi app company should:

- Seek confirmation from the passenger that anyone planning to travel in the vehicle isn't suffering from any coronavirus symptoms
- Provide information to the passenger about whether Government social distancing guidelines of two metres can / cannot be met in their choice of vehicle

- Advise the passenger to enter the vehicle via the near-side rear passenger door (diagonally opposite the driver) and to sit in the near-side rear passenger seat for the duration of the journey
- Advise the passenger about the requirement to wear a face covering for the duration of the journey (including entry and exit of the vehicle)
- Advise passengers who choose to use TPH services to travel alone, or with other members of their household.
- Notify the driver if more than one passenger is on the booking (e.g. additional people from the same household) enabling the driver to decide whether or not they wish to undertake the journey
- Ask the passenger to pay by credit or debit card if possible and avoid paying by cash
- Advise passengers that drivers will keep the vehicle well ventilated for everyone's safety by opening car windows or by using the car's vents to circulate air from outside.

Taxi and private hire drivers are also advised to follow all of the above guidance where applicable.

Personal and vehicle hygiene

The most up to date personal and vehicle hygiene advice is as follows:

- Wear a face covering **at all times** when in your licensed vehicle
- Wash your hands regularly or, if you are unable to, use hand sanitizer
- Regularly clean frequently touched surfaces in vehicles, e.g. door handles, window controls and seat belts, with sanitising wipes or spray
- Wash hands or use sanitising gel after handling cash
- Taxi drivers should also regularly clean card payment devices and partitions should be cleaned regularly, including between passenger journeys and changes of driver
- Licensees who share a taxi or private hire vehicle should regularly clean the steering wheel and instruments

- Ask passengers to handle their own personal bags and belongings during pick-up and drop-off.
- Drivers should keep a bottle of hand sanitiser gel in their vehicle. It is recommended this be a minimum 60 per cent alcohol. Alternatively keep a large bottle of water and a bar/bottle of soap.
- Drivers should avoid using the recirculated air option for the car's ventilation when carrying passengers and instead use the car's vents to bring in fresh air from outside or lower the vehicle's windows.
- Drivers should maintain a two metre distance from people wherever possible, including at taxi ranks and other areas where drivers and/or passengers may congregate. TfL is adding social distancing signage at busy ranks where there is a risk of overcrowding.
- Where a two metre distance cannot be maintained, avoid physical contact with other people and try to face away from them as much as possible.
- Keep the time you spend near other people as short as possible, ideally under 15 minutes, and be aware of the surfaces you or others touch

The routine use of gloves is not recommended for TPH drivers and other transport workers. The reasons for this are:

- Gloves, if used inappropriately, could increase the risk of transmission of infection
- Wearing of gloves may discourage adequate hand hygiene practices, including frequent hand washing with soap and water, and use of hand sanitiser where washing facilities are not available
- Wearing gloves does not prevent transmission of infection to the wearer if they touch their face whilst wearing gloves
- If gloves become contaminated, any objects that are touched with the gloves can also become contaminated

- Gloves would need to be changed each time a person has touched cash, and this would pose practical problems as well as increasing infection risk during the changeover to new gloves

In addition to the above advice, TfL is installing a number of hand sanitiser stations at key transport locations, including at tube and bus stations, for use by passengers or transport services.

Social distancing

It is important that any passenger carrying journeys, as far as practicable, are undertaken within social distancing guidelines to ensure passengers and drivers aren't put at risk.

Where it is not possible to achieve two metre social distancing, then efforts should be made to put as much distance between the passenger and the driver as possible e.g. seating the passenger in the near-side rear seat (diagonally opposite the driver) for the duration of the journey. Passengers should also consider alternatives such as walking, cycling and alternative public transport where a distance of two metres from others can't be maintained.

Update on partitions in private hire vehicles

We have received a large number of applications from private hire operators, individual private hire drivers and some suppliers of partitions and our dialogue with these applicants continues.

Our role is to ensure the installation of any such screen, and the materials used, comply with government and industry regulations and TfL's requirements as the licensing authority.

We have engaged with the London Scientific Technical Advisory Cell (STAC) that stated (see [TPH Notice 07/20](#) for further information):

There is no evidence available that demonstrates that partitions in taxis or PHVs reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 infection. Partitions in taxis or PHVs do not provide a fully sealed compartment which completely separates the driver from the passenger. Therefore, whilst it is possible that partitions may reduce the risk of transmission of infection, the risk would not be eliminated entirely. It is not possible for the STAC or PHE to assess the likely effectiveness of screens in reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in taxis or PHVs.

We've also had extensive discussions with [Millbrook](#) and [HORIBA MIRA](#), two industry leading automotive testing facilities. As part of our discussions it has been raised that the introduction of these protective screens into a vehicle could negatively affect the deployment of curtain and other air bag systems which are installed in the vast majority of private hire vehicles.

Millbrook and HORIBA MIRA are able to offer a bespoke assessment process that will consider the appropriateness of the screen and installation process for specific models of vehicles in accordance with automotive standards. The air bag issue is one element that will be considered as part of the assessment.

We have written to applicants to provide them with details of how they can book a vehicle assessment. The results of the assessment will be shared with the applicant and with TfL – enabling us to make an informed decision on whether to approve the screen.

The inspection and assessment criteria for partition screens can be found on our [website](#).

Vehicle licensing

Arrangements have been made to reopen our vehicle inspection service with appropriate social distancing measures in place in accordance with Government guidelines. To ensure the safety of our staff and customers, there will be some changes to the way the inspection will be carried out, but all the standard checks will

be undertaken. Vehicle inspections recommenced on Wednesday 3 June.

The most efficient way to make a booking is via the 24/7 [online booking portal](#). Phone lines are also available but capacity will be limited. Any enquiries should continue to be made via email on TPHenquiries@nslservices.co.uk.

The reintroduction of the inspection sites will be a phased approach with Staples Corner, Canning Town and Coulsdon the first to reopen.

Vehicle licence renewal inspections will continue to be prioritised, however, there will be limited capacity for vehicles that are new to licensing.

Taxi or PHV vehicle licences which expired, or are due to expire, between 23 March 2020 and 30 June 2020 (inclusive) **do not** need to have their vehicle inspected until the new expiry date (if they wish to renew). The expiry date of Private Hire vehicles can be confirmed via the [TfL licence checker](#).

If a Taxi or PHV vehicle licence is due to expire on or after 1 July 2020 a vehicle **will** need to attend a vehicle inspection centre. Vehicles that are presented for licensing will be required to meet all licensing requirements. This includes the production of a valid MOT certificate which took place no more than 14 days prior to the inspection.

Resumption of Topographical and Knowledge of London assessments

We are working towards a phased recommencement of Knowledge of London and Topographical assessments at 210-212 Baker Street.

Every effort will be made to reduce the risk relating to coronavirus to staff and candidates and arrangements for candidates attending an assessment have been changed to reflect Public Health England guidance.

We will be contacting all candidates who had an assessment cancelled due to coronavirus, to re-book their assessment and provide them with details of the new arrangements that are in place when attending Baker Street.

Candidates need not take any action and we request that you do not contact us as we currently have limited access to our phone lines.

We will continue to provide important updates and inform licensees of any regulatory and licensing changes via our weekly email to licensees and in future TPH Notices.

Please do stay safe and well.

Graham Robinson

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'GR', written in a cursive style.

**General Manager
Taxi and Private Hire
Transport for London**

5 June 2020

For previous Notices and additional licensing information, please visit tfl.gov.uk/tph