

GUIDANCE FOR TAXI/PHC DRIVERS/ESCORT CONTRACTED DURING CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

Version 1 (May 2020)

Ability to Help

Before you offer your services, you must consider whether it is appropriate to do so.

- Are any of your drivers or anyone in their household in a high-risk group? See full list here: <https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-social-distancing>
- Do any of your drivers have a
 - o new, continuous cough (that's lasted for an hour OR had 3 or more episodes of coughing in 24 hours OR are coughing more than usual)
 - and/or
 - o a fever/high temperature (37.8C or greater)?

If 'yes' to any of the above, do not use the driver. You will also have to discuss if drivers are willing. There is a lot of fear about the current outbreak and you must not pressurise your staff into carrying out journeys they do not want to make.

PVG

Existing PVG Scheme rules apply so, if drivers are transporting adults on behalf of the Council, they must have PVG Scheme Membership for working with Protected Adults. Likewise, if they are carrying children, they must have PVG Scheme Membership for working with Children. Delivery of goods only e.g. shopping, medicines or other items, does not require PVG Membership.

Vehicle Hygiene/Cleaning

To help reduce possible spread of the virus amongst passengers and your staff, please clean key areas as often as possible. Clean surfaces regularly with sanitising wipes or disinfectant spray to get rid of germs.

Focus especially on areas of the vehicle which receive the most regular contact:

- door handles (exterior and interior)
- handrails/grab handles
- headrests/armrests
- seat backs
- seatbelts (tongue/buckle/webbing)
- driver controls (e.g. steering wheel, gearstick, handbrake, indicators, push buttons etc) if drivers share vehicles in your fleet
- ticket machines/card payment devices (be careful using liquids on electronic devices)
- shared mobile phones or radio handsets (be careful using liquids on electronic devices)

We would recommend cleaning before the first passenger boards and after all passengers have alighted at the destination, on each journey.

When cleaning your vehicle, there are a few things to bear in mind:

- Using too much water/liquid can make interior fabrics damp, which will increase the likelihood that germs will collect and thrive. This can be overcome by being careful with the amount of water/disinfectant being used and maintaining good ventilation during cleaning and journeys
- Be careful, if using disinfectant spray, not to breathe-in any of the spray. Keep the vehicle ventilated
- Make sure wet floors and surfaces are dried before passengers board

In addition, if drivers have to manoeuvre wheelchairs, clean the wheelchair handles and brake levers prior to pushing the wheelchair. Likewise, if installing car seats or booster seats, clean the hard surface areas (e.g. outer shell, buckles) before installing in the vehicle and clean them after use.

Driver/Escort Personal Hygiene

Drivers can reduce the risk of getting and spreading the virus by:

- maintaining good hand hygiene (washing hands with soap and water or alcohol hand sanitiser)
- avoiding direct hand contact with eyes, nose and mouth
- using tissues to catch coughs and sneezes (or at least to cough/sneeze into the crook of their elbow) and dispose of tissues in a bin immediately
- considering the use of a facial covering of the mouth and nose, made of cloth or other textile (not surgical/medical masks) e.g. a scarf. It may be prudent to notify passengers in advance that a driver is wearing one to avoid any surprise at pick-up time

Drivers should wash their hands with soap and water as often as is practical and be equipped with hand sanitiser, disposable tissues and a bag or container, which used or potentially contaminated material can be dropped into for secure disposal later.

If drivers are also using disposable gloves,

- hands should be cleaned before putting them on
- they should change them if heavily soiled or torn
- try not to touch surfaces if gloves are contaminated (e.g. after a sneeze), otherwise follow cleaning procedures
- they should not touch their face with contaminated gloves
- they should never reuse gloves once removed
- they should not remove one glove and then pull the other glove off by the fingertips. See how to take off disposable gloves without touching the outer surface here:

<https://www.globus.co.uk/how-to-safely-remove-disposable-gloves>

If drivers are using a facial covering, when applying or removing it, it is important that they wash their hands first and avoid touching their face. After each use, the face covering must be washed at 60°C or disposed of safely.

At the end of their shift, drivers should minimise possible contamination in their own home by doing the following, which is based on advice given to NHS staff returning home after their own shifts:

- wipe down vehicle steering wheel, controls and handles
- Enter your home, touching as little as possible. Do not embrace anyone in the house just yet
- Drop your shoes, clothes, keys, bag, glasses, pens and anything else you have brought inside from your vehicle, into a plastic crate or box. Wipe them down with a damp soapy cloth. Be careful with any gadgets like mobile phones
- Go to the sink or shower, touching as little as possible on the way. Get someone else to open doors for you, if possible. Wash or shower, especially hands, arms and face with soap and hot water

Carriage of Passengers

Unless several passengers have been verified as belonging to the same household, only one passenger should be carried on each journey. The exception to this is where a passenger requires an escort and the escort has been agreed by East Lothian Council. Minimise contamination by doing the following:

- If passengers haven't come out to the vehicle at boarding time, the driver should wait the standard 5 minutes and then contact their base for further instruction. Drivers should not approach house doors, knock or ring doorbells. Stay with the vehicle
- Escorts may approach the door and knock ensuring they have protective gloves on and step back 2 meters from the door.
- at boarding/alighting time, drivers should open the vehicle door, stand back 2m and close the door after the passenger is aboard
- in vehicles with one row of back seats, the passenger should be seated in the rear nearside seat, diagonally behind the driver
- in vehicles with two or more rows of back seats, the passenger should be seated in the rearmost row
- if a passenger is unable to fasten their seatbelt on their own, encourage a parent/carer from the same household to do it or if an escort present they fit it. If not possible, and as a last resort, approach the passenger from the side where the seatbelt buckle is located (i.e. don't lean across the passenger) and fasten the seatbelt for them, minimising contact as best possible. Do not, under any circumstances, drive off without all passengers seat belted
- ensure good ventilation during the journey

Escorts

Escorting duties, by their nature, may require close contact with those requiring the escort. If there is no physical, behavioural or medical need to sit beside the passenger being escorted then escorts should sit on the opposite side of the same row of seats and, if there are two or more rows of back seats, the escort should sit in the nearside seat, diagonally behind the driver with the passenger in the offside seat in the back row, diagonally behind the escort.

In some cases, it may be necessary to sit beside and have physical contact with the passenger being escorted. Escorts should, therefore, follow any additional advice given by Education or Social Work staff over and above the basic advice in the *Driver/Escort Personal Hygiene* section, above.

Deliveries/Carriage of Goods

It may be that, instead of carrying passengers, drivers are redeployed to deliver meals, food, medicines, foodbank boxes or other essential items to help vulnerable people in the community. Special instructions will be issued by those arranging transport. However, some basic considerations are:

- recipients should be asked to name the best drop-off point e.g. behind the gate or on the doorstep
- the driver should not touch the door or ring the bell with a bare hand – use a disposable tissue/glove as a barrier. The driver should then step back from the doorway and remain at least 2m away
- any conversation with the recipient should be kept brief and at least 2m separation maintained at all times
- drivers must not enter the property unless they have been given specific instruction to do so
- drivers should not accept any cash or other items from the recipient
- delivery crates/bags should not be taken back by the driver for re-use

Useful Links

- *COVID-19 Information and Guidance for Non-Healthcare Settings* here: <https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/web-resources-container/covid-19-guidance-for-non-healthcare-settings/> Click the link under the Documents heading for the latest version.
- NHS Inform website: <https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19>
- Scottish Government website: <https://www.gov.scot/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance/>

