

FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

PRESS RELEASE

29 January 2021

Support and training for taxi drivers to help reduce transmission of COVID-19

From today, taxi drivers in Fenland will be able to access new training and funding in a bid to help passengers and drivers stay safe during car journeys.

East Cambridgeshire District Council, together with neighbouring district and city local authorities and Cambridgeshire County Council, have come together to tackle the transmission of COVID-19 in taxis by creating a county-wide safety scheme.

The scheme will provide taxi drivers with video training, explaining the necessary safety precautions required such as cleaning procedures, cashless payment and the use of face coverings, as well as provide a subsidy for fitting a quality standard screen within their vehicle to separate driver and passengers.

To help residents identify drivers who have undertaken the training and provide a screen in their vehicle, drivers will also be provided with a sticker to put on display.

This will be a phased roll out throughout the local district and city councils in Cambridgeshire and more information of each local authority's launch of the safety scheme will be available on their websites.

Car sharing has been identified as a high risk for COVID-19 transmission as people from different households share a confined space for some time. Recent data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) has identified taxi drivers being in a higher risk occupation.

Councillor Andrew Lynn, Portfolio Holder for Licensing and Community Safety at Fenland District Council, said: "I'm delighted that Fenland District Council is part of this excellent scheme that helps both our taxi drivers and residents during these challenging times.

"Taxis are often used for essential journeys, including travelling to and from hospital, to attend Covid vaccine appointments and for key worker children to get to school, so we must do everything we can to help protect passengers while ensuring the safety of drivers too.

"The training and vehicle screens will provide greater peace of mind when travelling, and I would encourage people to look out for the stickers in vehicles or ask for accredited driver when booking a vehicle."

Cllr David Ambrose Smith, chairman of the operational services committee for East Cambridgeshire District Council, said: "In East Cambridgeshire there is a reliance on taxis as a mode of transport for residents to get to the shops. This reliance will increase now the vaccine is being rolled out and residents, especially the elderly and vulnerable, attend their GP surgery or a mass vaccination site to obtain their vaccination.

“Partition screens are now widely used in areas where social distancing is still possible such as shops and similar protection should therefore be provided in cars where maintaining a two-metre distance may not be possible.

“I am glad to see this new safety scheme and I hope that drivers, taxi firms and passengers really do get behind it.”

The video includes guidance such as asking passengers if they have any COVID-19 symptoms before entering the vehicle, different points to sanitise your hands, maintaining social distancing where possible and opening windows for ventilation.

Dr Liz Robin, Director of Public Health at Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council, said: “I am delighted to support this initiative to reduce the spread of COVID-19 by safeguarding taxi and volunteer drivers and their passengers. Many of those who use taxis and voluntary car schemes will be at risk people travelling to NHS services, including vaccination appointments, as well as children attending special schools. Screens in cars add an additional layer to reduce the risk of transmission and the grant makes this more affordable. Please do take part in this scheme, it will provide reassurance to passengers, it could save someone’s life and can help protect livelihoods too.”

The safety scheme is being launched in Fenland on Friday, 29 January, and more information can be found on the Fenland District Council website at: www.fenland.gov.uk/taxinews. Drivers looking to undertake the training will be transferred to the East Cambridgeshire District Council website as the lead authority of the scheme.

It is hoped that this will subsequently be rolled out to voluntary car schemes in the very near future.

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For more information contact Fenland District Council press office on 01354 622226

Notes to Editors

- The video was created with the help of taxi company, Panther Taxis.