

# Blackpool Council

## Safeguarding Handbook for licensed Hackney Carriage and Private Hire drivers



**Lancashire  
Constabulary**

police and communities together

## **What is safeguarding?**

Safeguarding relates to the protection of an individual (child or adult) who is vulnerable. We can all be vulnerable at different times in our lives through illness, injury, age or simply by being in the wrong place at the wrong time. In your job as a licensed driver even you may find yourself in vulnerable situations from time to time as you work alone.

## **What makes an adult vulnerable?**

An adult could be at risk for various reasons such as:

- They may be unable to protect themselves if they have care and support needs
- They may be elderly, frail or have memory problems
- They may have a learning disability
- They may misuse substances or alcohol

In Blackpool a common vulnerability is a passenger who has had too much alcohol, has lost their bearings and can't remember where their hotel is. If a passenger can't afford to pay a fare this could potentially make them vulnerable – ring 101 (the non-emergency Police number) if you need Police help or advice in such circumstances. NEVER offer or accept a sexual favour in lieu of payment.

You have a duty of care to your passengers and so if a vulnerable (e.g. frail / intoxicated) person asks to be helped into a property you should oblige, however don't force your way in or make yourself vulnerable to any accusations of improper / inappropriate behaviour.

## **Who are children at risk?**

- Unaccompanied children (particularly young children under 10)
- Children who have a learning difficulty or disability
- Children whose parents have mental health issues, use substances or may be in a domestic violence relationship
- Children who travel with adults who do not appear to be their parents, relatives or carers to hotels, party houses etc.
- Young people who appear distressed or frightened.

If you carry lone children as part of a school contract we recommend having a CCTV system installed in your vehicle. Kits that record good quality images are commonly available for a reasonable price. If you have any concerns about carrying a child to school in your vehicle talk to your company who can speak to the department that deals with school contracts about your concerns.

## **What are the signs of abuse?**

If you have regular customers you may spot changes in their behaviour. Some signs of abuse could be:

- Changes in what a person normally wears (e.g. long sleeved clothing in summer could be an attempt to cover up cuts or bruising)
- Not as talkative as usual – quiet and withdrawn rather than chatty
- Extreme anger or sadness
- Tearful, lack of self-esteem, depression
- Noticeable marks or bruising which are unexplained
- Unexpected new friends (this is not always a bad sign, depending on how they are being treated)
- Changes in appearance – poor personal hygiene, clothes unwashed etc (an elderly person may have become vulnerable if they are no longer able to look after themselves)
- House in a mess (e.g. you may notice a difference if you normally help someone into their home with shopping bags)

People react to abuse in different ways – there is no "A+B=Abuse". Trust your instincts and if you have concerns ring your taxi office control room – each company should appoint a safeguarding lead who can report non-emergency concerns to social services. Alternatively, you can call one of the numbers at the back of this booklet.

## **Child safeguarding**

Any child can be hurt, put at risk of harm, or abused, regardless of their age, gender, upbringing, religion or ethnicity. Safeguarding means:

- Protecting children from maltreatment
- Preventing impairment of children's health or development
- Ensuring children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- Taking action to enable all children and young people to have the best outcomes.

Abuse can be physical, emotional (including domestic abuse) or sexual. Abuse can be perpetrated in a family, institutional or community setting, by those known or unknown to the child, or by a stranger i.e. via the internet.

## **Who is responsible?**

The action we take to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm is everyone's responsibility. Everyone who comes into contact with children and families has a role to play.

## **What is CSE?**

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is a form of sexual abuse and offenders can be prosecuted under the Sexual Offences Act 2003. CSE affects both boys and girls under the age of 18. The young victim is often given something (such as food, money, alcohol, affection, drugs or shelter) in return for sexual activity with the abuser or others, and exploitation can also take place online.

Violence, physical coercion and intimidation can exist but are not always present. Often, the child or young person has been manipulated and does not recognise the danger of the relationship so does not realise they are a victim.

We recommend you watch a short film presented by Dr Helen Beckett from the University of Bedfordshire which outlines 10 key facts about CSE via YouTube: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=b-LcS0fwTxg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b-LcS0fwTxg)

## **Why are drivers involved?**

We believe that you can play a positive role in preventing CSE and human trafficking. Drivers can specifically form a crucial part of the fight against these issues and can be the eyes and ears of the community, providing potentially important information to authorities.

This matter cannot be dealt with solely by policing. There are significantly more taxi drivers than Police Officers in Lancashire. You may overhear or see something in your car you are not happy with, or hear conversations at work between other drivers. Always listen to your gut instinct and report any concerns.

By working in partnership with the Police and other agencies you can help to make a difference. It is not just hackney carriage and private hire drivers who are being targeted - similar training and information has also been provided to workers in the hospitality sector and to organisations such as Blackpool Transport.

## **Who are the offenders?**

- Offenders can be from any ethnic background, race or gender.
- Individuals who control adult sex workers
- Drug dealers with links to violent crime

- People who exploit for their own sexual gratification
- People who pass young people to others for sex
- Other young people
- Online grooming is a huge issue nationally.

Anyone can be an offender – there have even been cases of people in positions of authority who have been perpetrators (e.g. school teachers grooming pupils).

### **What makes a passenger vulnerable?**

- A child can be vulnerable just by virtue of their age
- Under the influence of alcohol or drugs (people lose their inhibitions, forget where they're staying or going)
- Separated from friends and alone
- Communication issues (deaf / blind / language barrier)
- In a state of distress
- Mentally confused due to an illness such as dementia
- Having a learning disability
- Age-inappropriate sexual behaviour
- No means of payment (never offer / accept a sexual favour in lieu of payment)
- Stranger to the area (someone could offer to help take them to their destination and take advantage / mislead them)

### **Your responsibilities**

- You have a duty of care whilst you are carrying passengers.
- You have a moral / social responsibility to report a concern about a vulnerable person.
- Reporting a concern could change (or even save) a life.
- As a public service you are the eyes and ears of the community.

If you have a concern about young people in your vehicle because they may be injured or distressed, concerns about the location you drop off or pick up at (be aware of addresses you take young people to – you may get the same job regularly!), concerns about adults paying the fares, or concerns about a conversation you hear then you should pass on any information you have.

It is not your responsibility to assess your passengers but you should consider reporting any concerns to professionals. If you have a concern – share it!

## **What to look out for**

- School age children being taken by an adult on a journey in school time.
- Young people being taken to A&E by someone who is not a parent.
- Picking up young people from other cars or car parks.
- Young people with injuries or blood stained clothing.
- A young person looking uncomfortable or intimidated by the older person accompanying them.
- A young person accompanying an older person to a hotel.
- Regular adult customers repeatedly being accompanied by significantly younger people.
- Young people under the influence of drink or drugs in the company of adults.
- Young people out late at night in company of non-family members.
- Dropping off a young person at a house where there is clearly a party going on.
- Overly sexualised language or behaviour from or to a young person in the vehicle.
- A young person with a large amount of cash.
- A young person who tries to hide their face from you and is reluctant to make eye contact.
- An overly made up young person who is maybe dressed inappropriately.
- An offer of sexual favour in exchange for the fare from a young person.

Of course there may be instances where one or more of these situations occur with a genuine explanation behind them. However instead of dismissing them completely it may be worth checking out their behaviour and conversation during the journey. Instinct is often correct and if you act and prevent just one case of abuse, that is a real result.

## **Information to share**

- Names of passengers if known
- Locations and addresses of the places you are concerned about, such as where you picked up and dropped off at
- Description of the people in your vehicle if you can see them clearly

- If there are cars you think are suspicious or you pick a young person up who gets out of a car share, try to note the registration number and car description (colour / model etc)
- Share what is concerning you about the activity

### **Don't make assumptions**

- CSE can happen to boys and well as girls.
- Abusers can be from any ethnic background.
- If an adult is under the influence of drink or drugs this could make them equally vulnerable and open to abuse.
- Perpetrators can be female as well as male.
- Offenders can be from any age group.
- Social class is no barrier to abuse.
- Although the night-time economy can be a hotspot, there is also potential during the day and in school holidays.

### **Good safeguarding practice**

- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Share information - do not keep it to yourself.
- Refer any concerns to an appropriate person / agency (contact details are at the back of this booklet).
- If in doubt - ask for advice.
- Never accept sexual favours instead of payment.
- Don't assume the young person is ok - ask them.
- Never follow a passenger into the house unless previously agreed / authorised.
- Never restrain a passenger in your vehicle
- Do not allow yourself to be placed in a situation that could be misinterpreted.
- If you lock your doors, explain why (e.g. if the doors autolock upon driving away).
- Do not act in an over friendly manner to a passenger, especially if they are of the opposite sex, or younger.
- Keep yourself safe – don't intervene. In an emergency dial 999.

### **Human trafficking**

Human trafficking is a serious crime. Trafficking involves the illegal trade in human beings if they are brought to (or moved around) a country by others who threaten, frighten or hurt them, or force them to do work or other things they don't want to do, including sexual

exploitation. This can include being carried by a licensed vehicle to a premise where abuse subsequently takes place.

Children and young people who are victims of sexual exploitation can be vulnerable to trafficking across towns and cities. The recognition of trafficking within the UK applies irrespective of distance travelled and can be applied to movements within the same area of Blackpool, e.g. North Shore to South Shore: there is no minimum distance.

If you transport a child knowing or believing that child will be sexually exploited during or after the journey, you will commit an offence of human trafficking. The key here is "knowing or believing" – if you don't know you won't commit an offence. Safeguard yourself as well as victims by sharing any concerns you have – don't risk being caught up, accused or investigated in anything.

### **What would you do if you have concerns about a child or young person you have come into contact with?**

#### **Example scenario 1**

You are working a night shift and a young person who looks to be drunk gets into your licensed vehicle with a visibly older person. The older person asks for them to be taken to a hotel. En route the conversation and actions of the older person make you uncomfortable, as they are talking about sexual activity. You suspect that the young person is under the age of 18.

#### **What should you do?**

As there is an immediate danger to the young person, you should contact the police and tell them of your concerns as soon as possible by contacting 999.

#### **Example scenario 2**

Drivers frequently discuss problem venues and fares. Drivers have talked about one bar in particular in relation to the young age of some of the people requesting transport at the end of the night and the fact they seem very drunk when they come out. You are called to the club at 4.30am, where three drunken youths who appear to be under 18 request that you take them to an address.

#### **What should you do?**

As there is no immediate danger to the youths, you should take them to the address and inform the police about your concerns on the non-emergency Police number (101).

## **Terrorism**

UK threat levels vary: when the risk is 'severe', an attack in the UK is highly likely and could occur without warning. Vigilance is required whatever the threat level may be.

Preventing terrorism is important – policing cannot be the only answer. Therefore, we need to take an early intervention and preventative approach towards safeguarding people and those who are vulnerable to being drawn into extremism. This does not mean spying on your neighbours or customers, or that we stigmatise or label particular communities or groups.

Preventing terrorism is challenging because it operates in a pre-criminal space before any criminal activity has taken place. It is about supporting and protecting people who might be susceptible to radicalisation, ensuring that they are diverted away before any crime is committed.

The nature of your job means you are in contact with people all day long and in some cases for long periods of time. You will know instinctively when someone is acting suspiciously or if something is out of the norm.

- Be alert
- Be vigilant
- Report suspicious behaviour

## **Suspicious packages**

If you find an unattended item either in your vehicle or elsewhere and you think it is suspicious, trust your instinct – don't ignore it.

Remember the HOT principles:

H – is it **H**idden from view, not clearly seen?

O – is it **O**bviously suspicious because of its appearance?

T – is it **T**ypical of what you might expect to see?

### **What do you do?**

Do not use your radio. Stop in a safe place, switch off your engine and remain calm. Move at least 15m away from the vehicle and contact the emergency services on 999 and explain why you are suspicious of the item. Think about the last person you saw around the package, did they act suspicious and try to remember as much detail as possible for the operator.

## **General driver safety tips**

Here are some tips on how to keep yourself safe:

- Keep in contact with your operator / radio base. Use your radio or PDA to alert someone if you are in trouble.
- Operators and radio bases should have in place a set of emergency procedures for use in different circumstances. Know what the trouble call signals are. If you do not have this facility, flash your taxi-sign light to attract attention.
- Be alert and aware at all times, especially when you're parked on the street or at a rank.
- Don't wear expensive watches or jewellery, and make sure any neck chains break easily.
- Keep a minimum amount of money on you, and don't show passengers your cash when giving change.
- Never tell customers you had a good shift and have made a lot of trips or money. If they ask, be polite, but evasive.
- Read passengers' body language – assess them, then act accordingly. Do not underestimate people.
- Make eye contact with passengers when entering your vehicle. Greeting them is not only good customer service but it also sends a subtle message that you have seen and can identify them.
- Always keep your windows up just open enough so that you can speak to people and get air.
- Always keep your doors locked. This is extremely important if you are parked at a rank or on the street to ensure your safety. Be extra vigilant late at night and in the early hours when there are fewer people around.
- Be aware of passengers who give you vague instructions. Insist on customers giving you a fixed destination before you drive away. If they say "just start driving we will tell you the way", this should be a danger signal to you. Do not move and politely advise them that you need an exact address.
- Should the passenger suddenly direct you to take a different route or tell you to "turn here, turn there" this is also a danger sign and you should immediately alert your dispatcher to the change of address.
- Know your location at all times. Always know where you are in case you get into trouble. Nobody can help you if they do not know where you are.

- Be careful of a passenger seated behind you, however you may feel more comfortable asking a single female passenger or child to sit in the rear seats rather than in the front passenger seat.
- Consider buying a convex rear-view mirror that replaces or fits over the regular one. This will allow you 100% back-seat visibility. It also sends a message to the customer that you can see them.
- Install a CCTV camera in your vehicle.
- Keep an eye on suspicious passengers.
- Do not be aggressive or argumentative. This type of behaviour can lead to problems and escalate a minor disagreement into a violent confrontation. Stay calm and controlled.
- Maintain self-control at all times, even with the most difficult of passengers. Never threaten any person with violence if they won't pay or can't pay.
- Do not resist a robbery: co-operate. Offer no resistance – comply with the offender. Resisting could escalate the situation drastically. Keep calm and observe everything you can. When you are able, call your dispatcher or 999.
- If things go wrong, try to remember:
  - What happened?
  - What did the person look like?
  - What were they wearing?
  - What did they say to you? Try to write this down whilst your memory is fresh.

### Prompts for notes & descriptions for incidents to refer to

Location	Person description	Incident
Time	Gender	What happened
Date	Approximate age	Were they carrying anything?
Location	Height	What did they say?
Address of concern	Build	
	Hair colour	
	Ethnicity	
	Clothing	
	Accent	

## Tips

- Keep this handbook in your glove compartment for easy access to contact numbers at all times
- Keep a notebook in the car or use the notes application on your phone
- Enter the Crimestoppers number in your phone as a contact

## Contact numbers

Immediate danger to yourself or others – call **999**

Not immediate danger but the situation or person(s) involved causes concern - **101** (Police non-emergency number)

Crimestoppers - **0800 555 111** (anonymous)

Blackpool Adult Social Care: **01253 477592**

Blackpool Children's Social Care Duty and Assessment Team: **01253 477299**

Anti-terrorist hotline - **0800 789 321**

Blackpool Council Licensing Department **01253 478570**  
or email [licensing@blackpool.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@blackpool.gov.uk)