

[New standards to improve safety for taxi and private hire vehicle passengers](#)

News story

New standards for taxi and private hire vehicles sector will protect passengers.



- government introduces robust new statutory standards for the taxi and private hire vehicle sector across England and Wales to protect passengers
- new recommendations include enhanced DBS criminal record checks for drivers every 6 months
- latest step taken by the government to reduce the risk of harm to passengers and help improve consistency across local authorities

Passengers travelling in taxis and private hire vehicles (PHVs), including app-based services, will be kept safer under tough new licensing standards introduced by the government, Transport Secretary Grant Shapps announced today (21 July 2020).

The new [Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards](#) which local authorities will be expected to implement are designed to improve consistency in the licensing system, reducing the risk of harm posed to children and vulnerable passengers in the process. It follows historic and serious cases of taxi and PHV drivers abusing their position of trust.

Criminal record checks for drivers every 6 months form a key part of the standards, as does safeguarding training to help drivers identify and respond to passengers that may be being abused or exploited. A recommendation for licensing authorities to consider whether the use of CCTV would be beneficial or proportionate in their areas is also included, which sets out that potential privacy issues must be taken into account.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

We know the majority of drivers provide an important and safe service for communities, but in light of appalling incidents in places like Rochdale, Oxford, Newcastle and Rotherham, more must be done to protect passengers from those who abuse their position of trust.

That's why we're looking to licensing authorities to enforce these rigorous new standards, ensuring drivers are fit to transport passengers in a safe environment and to stop those who aren't.

We expect all licensing authorities to implement the standards and won't hesitate to introduce legislation if they don't fulfil their responsibilities to keep the public safe.

Following extensive consultation across government as well as with industry and regulators, the strengthened measures will mean all drivers applying for a licence should now be required to disclose if they hold or have previously held a licence in another area. Local authorities will also now have to have robust reporting systems in place to make sure passengers feel comfortable reporting incidents and or suspicious behaviour. This follows the Casey Report which found there was inadequate investigation of some complaints in Rotherham.

Licensing authorities will be expected to fully implement these measures as soon as possible. The department will closely monitor progress, work with authorities not meeting their responsibilities and look to introduce legislation if licensing authorities fail to adopt the standards and update their operations.

Published 21 July 2020

[Pay rises for doctors, police and more in the public sector](#)

Reflecting the vital contributions public sector workers make to our country, these pay rises cover the Armed Forces, teachers, police Officers, the National Crime Agency, prison Officers, doctors and dentists, the Judiciary, senior civil servants and senior military personnel.

Nearly 900,000 workers will benefit across the country, with teachers and doctors seeing the largest rise at 3.1% and 2.8% respectively recognising their efforts on the frontline during the battle against COVID-19.

Police and prison officers will both have a 2.5% rise in pay. This comes as

6,435 new police officers were recruited to the force between November 2019 and March 2020, of which 3,005 joined specifically as part of the uplift programme to recruit 20,000 over the next 3 years. The Armed Forces will receive a 2% uplift as 16,340 new recruits join the UK Regular Armed Forces from April 2019 – March 2020 – an increase of 30.9% compared with the previous 12 month period.

This pay rise follows the settlement for more than one million NHS workers who continue to benefit from the three-year Agenda for Change pay deal, under which the starting pay for a newly qualified nurse has increased by over 12% since 2017/18.

This means nurses who are still moving up their pay structures will receive an average 4.4% rise this year. There are 12,220 more nurses and health visitors working for the NHS compared to last year.

Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak said:

These past months have underlined what we always knew – that our public sector workers make a vital contribution to our country and that we can rely on them when we need them.

It's right therefore that we follow the recommendations of the independent pay bodies with this set of real-terms pay rises.

Each award is recommended by independent pay review bodies, and this year government accepted the headline recommended rise for each workforce.

This year's pay awards reflect the enormous effort made by those in the public sector in responding to the unprecedented challenges for the country during the Covid-19 outbreak.

The pay awards for the armed forces, prison officers, senior civil servants and NHS staff work will be backdated to April this year, whereas the pay rise for police and teachers starts in September which run on a different pay year (September-August).

A breakdown of the awards in full can be found below:

| Department | Agreed award |
|-----------------------|--------------|
| School Teachers | 3.1% |
| Doctors & Dentists | 2.8% |
| Police Officers | 2.5% |
| Armed Forces | 2% |
| National Crime Agency | 2.5% |
| Prison Officers | 2.5% |
| Judiciary | 2% |
| Senior Civil Servants | 2% |
| Senior Military | 2% |

Further information

- We are conscious that public sector pay awards must deliver value for money for the taxpayer. The Coronavirus is having a very significant impact on the economy, labour market and the fiscal position, and the government will need to continue to take this into account in agreeing future public sector pay awards.
- Where a pay rise for 2020/21 is announced after the start of the financial year, the award will be backdated. Pay years vary between workforces. The year for police and teachers starts in September, while the armed forces, prison officers, senior civil servants and NHS staff work on an April to March pay year and so their awards will be backdated accordingly.
- The Civil Service pay remit guidance provides a framework within which all departments will set pay for non-SCS. For 20/21, departments are able to make average pay awards within the range of 1.5% to 2.5%.

[New laws to extend homes upwards and revitalise town centres](#)

New laws laid in Parliament today (21 July 2020) will deliver much-needed new homes and revitalise town centres across England, Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick has announced.

The new rules, which will come into effect by September, will mean full planning applications will not be required to demolish and rebuild unused buildings as homes and commercial and retail properties can be quickly repurposed to help revive our high streets and town centres.

This will help our high streets and town centres to provide more space for new businesses and help them to adapt quickly to what consumers and businesses need.

Homeowners will also be able to add up to 2 additional storeys to their home to create new homes or more living space for growing families through a fast track approval process, with a requirement to carefully consider the impact on neighbours and the appearance of the extension.

This will reduce pressure to build on greenfield sites and deliver more homes that fit the character of their local area, without the red tape.

This month the government will set out plans to reform England's 7-decade old planning system to deliver more high-quality, well-designed homes, and beautiful and greener communities for people to live in. Cutting out

bureaucracy to get Britain building, while protecting high standards. Developers will still need to adhere to building regulations.

Housing Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

We are reforming the planning system and cutting out unnecessary bureaucracy to give small business owners the freedom they need to adapt and evolve, and to renew our town centres with new enterprises and more housing.

These changes will help transform boarded up, unused buildings safely into high quality homes at the heart of their communities. It will mean that families can add up to 2 storeys to their home, providing much needed additional space for children or elderly relatives as their household grows.

Pubs, libraries, village shops and other buildings essential to communities will not be covered by these flexibilities, recognising these form part of the fabric of areas.

Last week the [government announced changes](#) to ensure theatres, concert halls and live music performance venues are saved for future generations.

Councils will need to take the temporary impact of coronavirus into account when considering permission for change of use, redevelopment or demolition of these buildings, and this will not change due to the new laws introduced today.

Today's announcement builds on recent measures to support home building across England, including:

- supporting up to 180,000 new affordable homes through the new £12 billion affordable homes programme
- allocating funds from the £400 million Brownfield Land Fund to the West Midlands, Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire, Liverpool City Region, Sheffield City Region, and North of Tyne and Tees Valley to support around 24,000 homes
- boosting the Home Building Fund with an additional £450 million, helping smaller developers access finance for new housing developments. This is expected to support delivery of around 7,200 new homes

[Disabled People's Organisations \(DPOs\) forum launches this month](#)

News story

The Disability Unit has established a new Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) Forum to strengthen its engagement with disabled people.



In a world where coronavirus (COVID-19) continues to affect usual ways of working, the Disability Unit is holding the first virtual Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) Forum this month, chaired by the Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work, Justin Tomlinson MP. It is hoped future meetings will be held in person, when it is safe to do so.

Membership of the new forum will include national disabled people's organisations, regional organisations and chairs of our [Regional Stakeholder Networks](#). Forum members will be from DPOs, have lived experience of disability themselves, or represent others that do.

The Disability Unit will use the forum to enable a high level group of DPOs and influential disabled individuals to have regular conversations with the Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work and government officials.

As well as providing forum members with a regular opportunity to meet with the Minister, it will play an important role in bringing the voices and expertise of disabled people into the heart of government policy making.

Justin Tomlinson MP said:

I am looking forward to working with this new DPO Forum as we develop the National Strategy for Disabled People, the DWP Green Paper, and beyond.

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[Next stages in the NHS Test and Trace](#)

plan

NHS Test and Trace is a brand new service. Putting together a massive service of this kind at this pace has been a remarkable job. Almost unprecedented.

And I'd like to thank the remarkable leadership of Baroness Harding for spearheading this programme, and Tom Riordan who has driven our vital work with local authorities.

Everybody in this country who loves freedom should join with me in thanking all those who work in NHS Test and Trace, Public Health England and local public health operations, who are successfully delivering our plan of moving from a national lockdown, to local action. Our plan is working.

Now, Mr Speaker, I'd like to set out the next stages in this plan. We refuse to be complacent about the threat posed by this virus. And we will not hesitate to put on the brakes if we need to.

Our goal is this should be done through a targeted local action as possible. Like we did in Leicester, where we can now start to ease the restrictions there.

On Friday, we published our [framework for containing and controlling future outbreaks in England](#). And from Saturday, local authorities have had new powers in their areas, so they can act with more vigour in response to outbreaks.

They can now close specific premises, shut public outdoor spaces, and cancel events. And later this week, we will publish indicative draft regulations, which clearly set out the suite of legislative powers that ministers may need to use to intervene at a local level.

As I pledged in the House on Thursday, we are publishing more data, and sharing more data with local bodies. I bow to no one in my enthusiasm for the good use of data in decision-making. Properly used, data is one of the best epidemiological weapons that we have.

From last month, local directors of public health have had postcode-level data about outbreaks in their area. And from today, as I committed to the House last week, we are going further and we are putting enhanced levels of data in the hands of local directors of public health too.

Now of course, high-quality testing is the main source of our data. And having set targets radically to expand testing over the past few months, which have had exactly the desired effect, as each one has been met, so we are now setting the target for the nation, of half a million antigen tests a day by the end of October, ahead of winter.

I am sure that as a nation, we will meet this challenge too. Mr Deputy Speaker, the need for extra testing is not the only challenge that winter will bring. We know that the NHS will face the usual, annual winter

pressures. And on top of that, we do not yet know how the virus will interact with the cold weather.

So we will make sure that the NHS has the support it needs. We have massively increased the number of ventilators available to patients across the UK – up from 9,000 before the pandemic to nearly 30,000 now.

We now have an agreed supply of 30 billion pieces of PPE. And we will be rolling out the biggest ever flu vaccination programme in our country's history. To support this, I have agreed with the Chancellor of the Exchequer the funding necessary to protect the NHS this winter too. We have already announced £30 billion for health and social care. And we will now provide a further £3 billion, on top of the £1.5 billion capital funding announced a fortnight ago.

This applies to the NHS in England. And Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will also receive extra funding. This means the NHS can keep using the extra hospital capacity in the independent sector. And that we can maintain the Nightingale hospitals, which have provided so much reassurance throughout this pandemic, until at least the end of March.

We have protected the NHS through this crisis. And this support will help us to protect the NHS in the months ahead.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we all know that the best solution to this crisis would be a vaccine. Here, I'm delighted to say that Britain continues to lead the world.

Two of the leading vaccine developments are taking place in this country, at Oxford and Imperial, both supported by government funding and the British life science industry. Today, Oxford published a very encouraging report in the Lancet showing that its phase 1 and 2 trials are proceeding well.

I can report to the House that the trial shows that the Oxford vaccine produces a strong immunity response in patients, in terms of both antibody production and T-cell responses. And that no safety concerns have been identified. This is promising news and it takes us one step closer to finding a vaccine that could potentially save lives all across the world.

The UK is not just developing world-leading vaccines, we are putting more money into the global work for a vaccine than any other country. And, with like-minded partners, we are working to ensure that whoever's vaccine is approved first, the whole world can have access.

We reject narrow nationalism. We support a global effort, because this virus respects no borders. And we are all on the same side. This morning I held a global conference call with other health leaders, including from Germany, Australia, Canada, Switzerland the United States and others, to discuss the need for global licensing access for any successful vaccine.

Here at home, as well as our investment in research, we are also working hard to build a portfolio of the most promising new vaccines, no matter where they are from. We have already secured 100 million doses of the Oxford vaccine, if

it succeeds.

And today I can tell the House that the government has secured early access to 90 million further vaccine doses. 30 million from an agreement between BioNTech and Pfizer. And 60 million from Valneva.

We are getting the deals in place so that as soon as we know if a vaccine is safe and effective, we can make it available for British citizens as soon as is humanly possible. Mr Deputy Speaker, another long-term solution to eliminating this virus's negative effects is through developing effective treatments.

It was British scientists, backed by UK government funding, who led the first robust clinical trial to find a treatment proven to reduce the risk of dying from COVID – dexamethasone. And we now have preliminary results from a clinical trial of another treatment, known as SNG001, created by Southampton-based biotech firm Synairgen.

Initial findings based on a small cohort suggest it may reduce the chance of developing severe disease substantially and could cut hospitalisation time by a third. The data still needs to be peer-reviewed and we are supporting a further large scale trial, but these preliminary results are a positive sign.

In this fight against the virus, our world-renowned universities, researchers and scientists are indispensable so we can develop the vaccines and treatments that will tackle this virus for the long term.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we have a plan, and our plan is working.

The measures I've set out today will help protect the NHS, support our treatments and vaccines, and take our country forward together. I commend this statement to the House.