

REPORT TO:	Licensing Committee
DATE:	8 March 2017
LEAD OFFICER:	Head of Planning and Public Protection Services
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SUBJECT:	Child Sexual Exploitation Awareness training

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To provide Members with an update on driver attendance at Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Awareness events and to seek direction on actions for non-attendance as well as comment on future proposals for similar training for new applicants.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 The primary role of the licensing authority and Committee members is the protection, safety and wellbeing of the public.
- 2.2 A number of high profile safeguarding issues around the country have been publicised and in particular relating to CSE a number of which have had links with local authority licensed vehicles.
- 2.3 Members resolved to introduce a programme of CSE Awareness training events for all licensed drivers and operators during 2016.
- 2.4 Following a number of events officers are now reporting back to the Licensing committee of the progress made and seeking further direction from Members.

3. POWER TO MAKE THE DECISION

3.1 The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976.

4. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

4.1 Members will recall that at their Licensing Committee of 9th of March 2016 they resolved to make CSE Awareness training mandatory for all licensed drivers in Denbighshire.

- 4.2 Members will further recall that this was introduced following incidents linked to the late night economy, including taxi drivers, in other areas of the country.
- 4.3 Licensing officers, with the assistance and input from Social Services, North Wales Police and the charity Barnardo's, introduced a programme of Awareness events starting in the summer of 2016. In total there were 17 sessions over five different dates across the county, primarily in Rhyl but also in Ruthin and Denbigh.
- 4.4 At each location the events, lasting about 1 hour in duration, were held at various times across the day to allow for as many options possible across the working day.
- 4.5 The intention of the event was to raise awareness to drivers and demonstrate the signs and symptom to look out for in relation to CSE and what to do if they suspect CSE abuse.
- 4.6 All attendees were given a certificate of attendance along with branded window stickers and car air fresheners to help continue spread the awareness to the wider community.
- 4.7 A final mop up event was arranged for late January 2017 and every driver who had not attended up to that date were contacted by letter and either by phone or in person.
- 4.8 All licensed drivers were notified in writing prior to the events and those not attending as the process progressed were sent written reminders. Drivers not attending up to the last event would have received five letters.
- 4.9 To date, a total 340 drivers have attended the awareness training. Feedback has been positive.
- 4.10 There remains a total of eleven drivers who have not received CSE Awareness training through this method. The reasons for this are outlined in Appendix A but in summary:
- Five drivers are new to the taxi industry and are either not licensed or were not licensed before the final event;
 - Three of these five drivers were out of the country on holiday on the date of the last event and had not applied prior to previous dates;
 - One driver did not attend and the other went to the wrong venue.
 - Six drivers are currently licensed drivers:
 - One of these drivers has daytime employment (not taxi related) and is unable to get time off in the daytime.
 - One other existing driver was out of the country for the final event
 - The remaining four existing drivers did not attend

- 4.11 Overall, 97% of Denbighshire's licensed drivers took part in the awareness training.
- 4.12 In respect of new drivers there is currently no agreed process to highlight CSE to prospective licensed drivers. Two possible solutions are identified below for Members' consideration.

5.0 CONSIDERATION

- 5.1 The primary role of the licensing authority and Committee members is the protection, safety and wellbeing of the public.
- 5.2 The Local Government (Miscellaneous) Provisions Act 1976 Section 51 deals with the issue of driver suitability as follows:
- “.....Council shall not grant a licence to drive a (Private Hire/Hackney Carriage Vehicle) unless they are satisfied that the person is a fit and proper person to hold a driver's licence.
- 5.3 Whilst there is no absolute definition when it comes to what constitutes a “fit and proper person”, the licensing authority should consider all aspects of what makes a driver safe and suitable to be a licensed driver which could include good character.
- 5.4 Given that 97% of Denbighshire licensed drivers have attended one of the seventeen awareness training events due consideration should be given to those existing drivers that have yet to undergo training. A decision needs to be made on what action is taken against each driver that has not had this awareness training.
- 5.5 To enable new applicants to demonstrate their awareness of CSE in the community Licensing officers have drafted a guidance document and the text of this document is attached at Appendix B.
- 5.6 Licensing officers are also in discussion with Barnardo's about the feasibility of introducing an online CSE Awareness course. This method of training is operating in other areas of the country and is instigated and funded entirely by the applicant. Completion of the course produces a certificate which can be included in the application.

6.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 In respect of existing drivers that have not attended the training (Appendix A) Members may resolve to :
- Instruct officers to revoke or suspend the drivers licence
 - Instruct officers to submit any applications for renewal by these drivers to a future Licensing committee for consideration.
 - Convene a Special Committee to hear representations from these drivers.

- Instruct these drivers to arrange appropriate awareness training themselves within a certain period of time, potentially through a method endorsed by the council

6.2 In respect of new drivers who haven't yet had opportunity to attend awareness training Members may resolve to :

- Instruct officers to arrange a further awareness training event (this could potentially be delivered in-house)
- Instruct officers to arrange a "knowledge test" type assessment after providing the guidance note to the applicants/new drivers
- Instruct drivers to arrange appropriate awareness training themselves within a certain period of time, potentially through a method endorsed by the council

6.3 In respect of new applicants Members may resolve to :

- Instruct officers to implement a "knowledge test" type assessment after providing the guidance note to the applicants/new drivers which can be included in the pre-licence Knowledge Test.
- Instruct applicants to arrange appropriate awareness training themselves, potentially through a method endorsed by the council, prior to submitting an application.