

16th February 2021 – Trade Update – Covid-19

1. Test and Trace

Shropshire Council have received previous reports of drivers testing positive for coronavirus. In the interest of supporting the contact tracing team it is recommended that all private hire operators and hackney carriage proprietors obtain contact phone numbers from customers when accepting a booking. In the event of a driver testing positive for COVID-19, this will assist with contacting of passengers who will likely need to self-isolate.

Please see the Council's website for information available for businesses and the self-employed, including what to do if there is a suspected or positive case of coronavirus

<https://shropshire.gov.uk/coronavirus/information-for-businesses-and-the-self-employed/>

Information on the self-isolation period can be found on the GOV.UK website at

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-and-treatment/how-long-to-self-isolate/>. In addition, please see diagram below:



2. Lateral Flow Tests

All hackney carriage and private hire drivers who live in the county of Shropshire are considered frontline workers and, therefore, are able to take advantage of the rapid COVID-19 test. This test, known as a lateral flow test, is one of the tools being used to help detect and fight COVID-19. The speedy tests can rapidly turn around results within an hour without the need for processing the swabs in a lab. The test, which has already been rolled out to select groups including university students, social care staff and care home visitors, is for people who do not have symptoms. There is no cost to hackney carriage/private hire drivers if they have a test.

Further information, including a link to book a test if you are a resident within the administrative area of Shropshire Council, can be found at

<https://newsroom.shropshire.gov.uk/2021/01/coronavirus-rapid-testing-being-offered-to-shropshires-frontline-workers/>

Information on how to book a test if you are resident in Telford & Wrekin Council area can be found at <https://www.telford.gov.uk/info/20741/i-have-covid-19-symptoms/5177/getting-a-covid-19-test-in-telford-and-wrekin>

3. Vaccinations

The Licensing Team have received several enquiries about the coronavirus vaccination programme. The population groups (including occupational groups) for whom the NHS can provide vaccinations is determined through nationally defined criteria. These criteria were recommended to government by the Joint Committee on Vaccinations and Immunisations (JCVI) and are contained in a document referred to as 'the green book'

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/955548/Greenbook_chapter_14a_v6.pdf

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This document details the various population groups who are eligible for vaccination. This is largely determined by age and is focussed on reducing mortality across the whole population. The government's ambition is that all those aged more than 50 years, together with everyone age 16 years or more who have an underlying health condition, will be vaccinated by May.

With regard to occupational groups the only staff, outside of those in the NHS, who are eligible for vaccination are social care staff, but only those who provide care closely and regularly to those who are clinically vulnerable to COVID. On this basis there is a relatively small number of social care staff who meet the criteria. Within the eligible social care staff group there is a small number of drivers contracted by the Council to provide dedicated transport to and from the vaccination centres for those who are the highest priority for vaccination. The inclusion of these drivers is justified on the basis that they will need to be in regular and close contact with those clinically vulnerable to COVID on a daily basis for a number of months and as such they pose the risk of transmitting infection to multiple vulnerable people if they are infected.

Outside of frontline health and social care staff, there are a number of different occupational groups that are understandably concerned about their risk of contracting COVID and consequently the JCVI have given specific consideration to this issue. Guidance available through this link <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/priority-groups-for-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccination-advice-from-the-jcvi-30-december-2020/joint-committee-on-vaccination-and-immunisation-advice-on-priority-groups-for-covid-19-vaccination-30-december-2020> includes the following statement:

“The committee considered evidence on the risk of exposure and risk of mortality by occupation. Under the priority groups advised below, those over 50 years of age, and all those 16 years of age and over in a risk group, would be eligible for vaccination within the first phase of the programme. This prioritisation captures almost all preventable deaths from COVID-19, including those associated with occupational exposure to infection. As such, JCVI does not advise further prioritisation by occupation during the first phase of the programme.

Occupational prioritisation could form part of a second phase of the programme, which would include healthy individuals from 16 years of age up to 50 years of age, subject to consideration of the latest data on vaccine safety and effectiveness.”

It is considered that all those most vulnerable to COVID will have been vaccinated during the first phase of vaccinations (i.e. all those who are most vulnerable across all occupational groups will be vaccinated). The first phase of the programme should be completed by May and we await further guidance in terms of the priority groups to be included within the second phase. It is understandable that many individuals will remain concerned about their risk of contracting COVID but there should be some assurance in that all individuals with the highest risk of illness should be offered vaccination by May.

4. Coronavirus (COVID-19): taxis and PHVs:

The Department for Transport (DfT) has produced sector-specific guidance for the taxi and private hire vehicle (PHV) industry to help drivers and operators of taxis and private hire vehicles stay safe, prevent the spread of coronavirus, and ensure passengers are well informed. You can access the latest on GOV.UK by clicking [here](#).

5. Contacting the Licensing Team:

Shropshire Council offices remain closed to the public. Therefore, we strongly encourage you to submit any queries, applications, additional paperwork and photographs etc. to the Licensing Team by email to taxis@shropshire.gov.uk.