

Cab Safe (2)

Tool Kit to promoting the use of licensed taxis

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Chapter 1

Introduction – aims and objectives of the Initiative

Health Challenge Wales

1. The key themes of Health Challenge Wales have been selected because they are considered to be those issues that constitute a significant proportion of the ill health that could be avoided. They are however neither exclusive nor exhaustive, and the challenge extends to include other interventions that promote and improve health well being. This intervention seeks to reduce risks to the personal safety and well being of users of taxis and private hire vehicles by promoting the use of licensed vehicle and drivers. In so doing it seeks to reduce the risks of attacks on and robberies from the vehicle users and to underline that use of a licensed vehicle is the safest option. The intervention is therefore on all fours with the aspirations of Health Challenge Wales.
2. Passengers of taxis and private hire vehicles are vulnerable. They enter a vehicle and ask to be taken to a destination, and thereafter rely on the driver to get them to that place safely. There are however risks inherent in such a system. The passenger could be attacked or robbed by the vehicle driver and then left in an unfamiliar location. There are clear risks physical injuries, the transfer of sexually transmitted infections and unwanted conceptions as well as the damaging effect of such attacks on the well being and mental health of the passenger.
3. The taxi and private hire vehicle trade is subject to a strict licensing regime. Both the vehicles and the drivers have to be licensed by the local authority, the driver having to satisfy the local authority that he is a fit and proper person to hold a licence and the vehicle having to pass stringent safety tests. These tests are designed to ensure the safety of the passengers using the vehicles. An individual applying to hold a taxi or private hire vehicle drivers licence having a conviction for an offence involving the causing of actual bodily harm, any form of sexual assault or an offence involving a breach of trust, such as theft will not be granted a licence, on the ground that he or she is not a fit and proper person to engage with members of the public in such a role.
4. Whilst the licensing regime should control entry to the role of taxi or private hire vehicle driver it does not prevent access to the trade by those who choose to go outside the regime. In 2003 the Greater London Authority and police launched a crackdown on illegal mini cabs in central London, and they made 77 arrests in four days. Since June 2002, police in central London have made a total of 1500 arrests related to unlicensed minicabs, including

600 for touting since April 2004¹. Further, in an operation in 2005 over half the minicab drivers arrested had criminal records, including convictions for rape and assault. Figures from the Republic of Ireland show that serious attacks on passengers by taxi drivers have increased dramatically since the trade was deregulated 3 years ago. Other offences included overcharging and drug trafficking². Scotland Yard fears that the real number of attacks on passengers could be five times higher than the reported figure, due to under-reporting.

5. The likelihood of risk taking behaviour such as getting into an unlicensed minicab is aggravated by alcohol. Young women between the aged of 18-24 indicated to researchers that they were more likely to get into an unlicensed minicab when drunk, even though they were aware of the risk that they were taking³.
6. This initiative is designed to raise awareness in potential passengers of taxi cabs and private hire vehicles of the dangers of using unlicensed vehicles. It does so by sending the telephone numbers of 3 licensed taxi companies by text message to the mobile phone of a person requiring a taxi who texts a promoted number. The system works by locating the person who sent the text via their mobile phone signal and will automatically send them a text reply with the contact numbers of the nearest taxi firms to their location. The individual can then call any one of the numbers and use a licensed taxi rather than an unlicensed minicab for their journey. The initiative therefore provides the information to support the making of a 'safe' choice, and in doing so reduces the risk of attack or robbery, preventing injury and the risk of transmission of diseases and promoting health and well being. This initiative therefore supports the aims of Health Challenge Wales.

¹ Mayor of London's Office Figures.

² NTDU Republic of Ireland 2005. Quoted Irish Independent newspaper.

³ Engineer R, Phillips A, Thompson J and Nicholls J. Home Office Research Study 262. Drunk and disorderly: a qualitative study of binge drinking among 18- to 24-year-olds

Chapter 2

Cab Safe – Pre-considerations to running an Initiative

1. Initial considerations

Initial considerations for this project have to be addressed, including;

- What is the target group?
- Will the outcome have the desired outcome? i.e. reducing usage of unlicensed minicabs and the risks that can flow from the choice to do so,
- How can the target group be reached?
- Who are the key partners in the initiative?
- How will the initiative be evaluated?
- Will the initiative deliver value for money?

2. Target Group

Any individual using an unlicensed mini cab is potentially at risk. The target group in this case is all of those individuals likely to use taxis who also use mobile phones and are familiar with and comfortable with the concept of sending and receiving information by text message.

3. Achieving the desired outcome

The factors leading use of unlicensed minicabs include:

- Lack of awareness the licensed taxi and private hire vehicle regime
- Assumption of 'safety in numbers' when risk is known
- Drinking to excess and making poor judgements
- Failing to plan for safety
- Lack of local knowledge about taxi ranks, telephone numbers of private hire firms etc.
- All of the above in combination.

This list is neither exclusive nor exhaustive.

As many as possible of the factors needed to be addressed to ensure that the desired aim of the intervention is met.

4. Reaching the Target Group

Anyone who may use a taxi is a potential user of an unlicensed minicab. The target group may also use unlicensed minicabs as individuals or in groups moving from one location to another. It is therefore suggested that the initiative should be promoted by saturation coverage of areas where people likely to use taxis are likely to be, either for education, employment or socialising, such as pubs, clubs, higher education facilities, shopping centres etc. The posters can also be displayed in all local authority premises, including schools, libraries, leisure centres and council offices.

As it is often the case that individuals or groups who are out drinking will chose to use taxis to move from one venue to another or to go home at the end of the night the pilot project also advertised the telephone number to be texted on beer mats which were distributed to local pubs and clubs. This meant that the number was available to members of the target group at the time they were most likely to be looking for taxis and when their judgement was most likely to be impaired through drinking alcohol. It also meant that they could telephone for a taxi from the safety of the inside of a premises, rather than standing on the street where they may be tempted to use an unlicensed vehicle whilst waiting for the arrival of a licensed and therefore safer vehicle.

5. Who are the key partners in the initiative?

Key partners in the pilot project of this initiative were the local authority environmental health department (licensing teams), the Community Safety Partnership and the licensed taxi trade. The local police, through the Community Safety Officer could also be included in the partnership.

6. How will the initiative be evaluated?

This initiative is intended to raise awareness in the target group of the risks of using unlicensed taxis and private hire vehicles. In order to evaluate it, it is necessary to have data relating to levels of knowledge within the target group prior to the initiative and post initiative so that a comparison can be made of results to determine whether risk awareness has risen.

It may be possible to compare the number of incidents reported to the Police before the awareness campaign and after it, but there are dangers in using this evaluation measure. Not every police force will have sufficiently sophisticated breakdowns of reported incidents to be able to provide figures for the number of robberies, assaults, sexual or otherwise or incidents of overcharging to passengers to allow for a pre-and post initiative comparison to be made. Further, there is concern from the Police that there is considerable underreporting of such crimes, such that the figures that they do hold may not be a true reflection of the picture. This being the case great care must be taken in using such figures for evaluation of the initiative.

It should also be noted that awareness raising campaigns often have the effect of causing reported incidents to rise. This does not necessarily reflect a rise in number of incidents, but rather a rise in the level of awareness as to the fact that such incidents should be reported. A rise in the level of reported incidents could be used as an indication that awareness has risen in consequence of the campaign, but it should be remembered that the reported crime figures post initiative may be a true reflection of the crime that exists in this area, rather than a rise in unlawful behaviour, in order to allay fears in the public of rising crime levels.

The scheme can however be evaluated by looking at the number of texted requests to the telephone number. This will show how many people have requested taxi numbers and also from which area there is greatest interest. This information will be helpful in showing where the need for taxis is greatest and at what times, since it is in such areas that unlicensed minicabs are most likely to ply for hire. This information can then direct targeted local enforcement action against unlicensed vehicles.

7. Will the initiative deliver value for money?

The costs to the police of investigating crimes that flow from attacks on passengers using unlicensed minicabs are considerable, Home Office figures for 2003/4 showing that the average cost of investigating a sexual offence is £31,438, of investigating a serious wounding incident is £21,422 and the cost of investigating an allegation of theft from a person is £844¹.

The personal cost to the victims of the attacks is also considerable. As noted there are serious impacts on the mental health of victims of crime, their personal life and their ability to live a full life can be compromised. There may also be personal expenditure on therapy to help them overcome the incident, and additional may be medical costs if the incident has involved assault the transmission of a sexually transmitted disease.

The suggested initiative is inexpensive to run. The pilot project cost £ 3,200, which was used to set up text response service with an commercial company, the collation of the database of licensed taxi firms, and a 12 month licence to operate they system. The organisation of the launch of the initiative and for the design and printing of the posters and beer mats for the pilot project cost approximately £2000.

Once operational the scheme becomes self funding. The cost to a member of the target group of sending a text request for taxi numbers is 50 pence. The handling cost to the local authority is 40 pence. There is therefore a 10 pence 'profit 'on each call, which could be used to finance a portion of the cost of the licence for the following year if it is found to be an effective service. Once the license has been secured it can be expanded to include other services.

In the light of the foregoing it is suggested that this initiative does deliver value for money in financial and in well being terms.

Chapter 3

Cab Safe (2) – Running an Initiative

The campaign

A campaign to raise awareness of the risks inherent in using unlicensed minicabs and to promote the use of safer, licensed taxis.

Preliminary steps

1. There is a considerable amount of preparation work to this initiative, which should be undertaken well before it goes live. An initial planning process will necessary to determine
 - The target group
 - The premises at which an interface with the target group can be created
 - What sort of materials are necessary to promote the initiative and what form they should take
 - The likely interest from the licensed taxi trade
 - The commencement date
 - The pre-commencement publicity for the scheme
2. Selection of the target group is important. The group must be made up of individuals who would have occasion to use taxis and private hire vehicles, who will have access to mobile phones and will be comfortable with the concept of sending and receiving information in the form of text messages and with whom an interface can be established. Given this profile it is likely that the group will be young people who will come together to socialise in areas where there are a number of entertainment choices, such as pubs, nightclubs, restaurants etc.
3. The choice of premises at which an interface with the target group can be made will, in the main, be self selecting. The premises which will be used by the group when socialising will be included as may others, such as leisure and sports clubs, higher education establishments, and premises such as Halls of Residence, or Nurses Homes. Local authority premises such as schools, libraries, leisure centres and payments centres or One Stop Shops can also be included.
4. The choice of material is important. Poster campaigns are useful in that they can reach a large number of people, which will include, but not be limited to the target group. Poster should be displayed at such premises, which will advertise the telephone number to be texted by those wishing to be provided with licensed taxi numbers. The poster used in the pilot project is shown as [Appendix 1](#).

The pilot project also used beer mats to promote the initiative, which were provided to premises all licensed premises and premises likely to be used by the target groups. The style and message on the beer mat follows, for consistency and for recognition purposes the same style as the posters used in the campaign. A copy of the beer mat used in Carmarthenshire in the pilot project is shown as [Appendix 2](#).

5. It is vital that there is sufficient support from the licensed taxi and Private Hire Vehicle trade for this scheme to proceed. The licensing department of the local authority will have details of all licensed taxi and private hire operators in the administrative area, and a letter can be sent to all of them inviting them to participate in the scheme, by putting forward their telephone numbers to be included in the data base of numbers to be provided when text requests are received. A copy of the letter used in the pilot scheme is shown as [Appendix 3](#).
6. Assuming sufficient support from the licensed taxi and private hire vehicle trade is forthcoming the commencement date for the scheme should be selected. This will then drive the production of the promotional materials, which should be produced and displayed to coincide with the commencement of the scheme. It is also essential that the database of telephone numbers of participating vehicle operators is produced prior to the commencement date, initially by sending in excel format of details by email to the company to put onto the software, which is then returned to the local authority to take over full control and amend records as necessary. Should a licensed operator be suspended the database can be amended immediately to reflect the change.
7. The local authority have to decide what number should be used. The number may not be one that is in use, but must be 5 digits. The text message to be used, in the case of the pilot the word 'cab', has to be negotiated with the company. Again the word is a matter for the partners, but may not be a word

Promotion of the scheme

8. Prior to the commencement of the scheme it should be publicised by the partners taking it forward. This will ensure that the public and particularly the target group are aware of the scheme and the way in which it will work, and it will also encourage taxi and Private Hire Vehicle operators who may not have joined up to consider participation. Publicity can be through the display of the poster discussed at paragraph 4 above, as well as through a press release to the local black and white and electronic media. In the pilot project detail of the scheme and the terms and condition that attached to it were placed in the local authority web site. [Appendix 4](#) is the terms and conditions of usage of the scheme.

The scheme was also promoted at a number of events where the target group were likely to be present. These included in the pilot project Llanelli Beer Festival and the Big Day Out, and the local sports clubs, since the launch coincided with the start of the rugby season. Organisers may also wish to consider a formal launch of the scheme, to which local press can be invited. This will raise the profile of the scheme and will also allow elected members to associate themselves with it.

Running the Scheme

9. Once the scheme has been established the partnership running it is not required to take any action. Those wishing to avail themselves of licensed taxis text the word 'Cab' or similar to the number being used, and received back from the company operating the scheme a number of telephone numbers for licensed vehicle operators in the areas from which the text is received. In the pilot project a choice of

3 numbers was provided. Where more than 3 licensed vehicle operators operated in that area the computer randomly generated the numbers to be provided to ensure that each operator was treated fairly. The scheme will then run without the need for intervention by the partnership operating it.

Where as licensing authority the local authority becomes aware that licensed vehicle operators have had their license suspended, or where new operators wish to join the scheme they should notify the local authority operating the scheme to have the numbers either deleted from or added to the operational list.

Evaluation of the Scheme.

10. Evaluation of this scheme is simple, since its use can be measured in terms of the number of texted requests for the numbers of licensed taxis and private hire vehicles received by the operating company. Provided each request is actioned by the recipient of the telephone numbers actually contacting one of them and using a licensed vehicle each request can be viewed as the prevention of a potential use of an unlicensed mini cab. Whilst for a number of reasons this may not be the case, e.g. a person who books a licensed vehicle in consequence of reducing a texted number may use an unlicensed vehicle rather than wait for his booked vehicle, it can be assumed that the likelihood of use of unlicensed minicabs will fall, and further that unlicensed minicabs may reduce since the need for them to provide taxi services will fall.

It is suggested that there is considerable merit in the partners to the scheme promoting the details of its usage, since there will be increased confidence in the scheme from the target group if they are convinced that it works, and similarly there will be increased participation from vehicle operators if they feel that they will actually derive some business benefit from participation.

Appendix 1

See attached document - Copy of the [poster used in the Pilot Project](#)

Appendix 2

See attached document - Copy of the [Beermat used in the Pilot Project](#)

Appendix 3

JHP/IMMW

24th July 2006.

Mr Justin Power

(0845) 658 0445

Dear Sir/Madam,

**RE: Carmarthenshire Community Safety Partnership
CAB SAFE INITIATIVE**

The Carmarthenshire Community Safety Partnership aims to make Carmarthenshire an even safer and more secure place to live, work and visit.

The Partnership is chaired by the Chief Executive of the Council and is made up of senior members from Dyfed-Powys Police and Police Authority, Mid & West Wales Fire Service, Dyfed-Powys Probation Service and Youth Offending Teams, and the Carmarthenshire Local Health Board.

The Partnership is hoping to pilot a CAB Safe initiative which will be the next step following recent Council campaigns warning Carmarthenshire residents about the dangers of using illegal taxi's. These campaigns followed reports of serious attacks by unlicensed drivers in other parts of the country. Some of these incidents occurred as a result of members of the public being unable to get a licensed taxi or not knowing the telephone numbers for taxi's in that area, and therefore starting to walk home late at night or go in search of a taxi.

The **CAB SAFE** initiative is a service that will give members of the public access to a text service that will allow them to receive local licensed taxi and private hire information to their mobile phone in the area they are texting from.

This service is an innovative text service, that allows people to receive local licensed cab numbers direct to their mobile phones by texting a keyword to a shortcode (5 digit number) e.g. text **CAB** to **83222**.

The system works by locating the person who sent the text via their mobile phone signal and will automatically send them a text reply with the contact numbers of the nearest Taxi firms for their location (on a randomised basis).

The Carmarthenshire Community Safety Partnership is funding this service and there will be **no cost** to the Licensed Hackney Carriage/Private Hire Trade in Carmarthenshire.

It is hoped that this service will be launched by the end of August 2006. If you wish for your Taxi or Private Hire business to be included for this service, then please complete the attached information sheet and return it in the pre-paid envelope provided by the **4th August 2006**

If you require any further information regarding this matter, then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

Mr Justin Power
Senior Licensing Officer

Appendix 4

Terms and Conditions

CABSAFE

MOBILE PHONE PRIVACY STATEMENT FOR CARMARTHENSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

In order to enable Carmarthenshire County Council to provide you with this service which requires us to locate you and provide relevant information or a service (phone numbers and names of licensed Cab firms) based upon that location, we will contact your mobile phone network operator who will provide us with your approximate location based on the grid reference of the cell antenna which is or was last used in connecting your phone to your network. The only information we will receive about you is the location from which you are sending the text message and your mobile phone number and we will only use this information as set out in these terms and conditions, and our privacy policy at <http://www.carmarthenshire.gov.uk/eng/index.asp?locID=7130&docID=-1>

By sending a Short Message Service (SMS) to Carmarthenshire County Council , you give your consent to the use of your information as described above.

Carmarthenshire County Council's relationship with its customers is one of trust. We respect the confidentiality and privacy of any information that you supply to us. It is therefore the policy of Carmarthenshire County Council not to disclose to any third party without your consent, any personal, financial or operational data that you may supply to us. Please read the privacy policies for Carmarthenshire County Council , which can be found at <http://www.carmarthenshire.gov.uk/eng/index.asp?locID=7130&docID=-1>

Personal information you supply will not be made available for external distribution outside Carmarthenshire County Council except that which is essential in the provision of the offered service. Carmarthenshire County Council may disclose personal data to the DVLA, police and other law enforcement agencies at their request, for the purposes of crime prevention and detection and where otherwise required to do so by law.

Carmarthenshire County Council have notifications under the Data Protection Act 1998, and comply with their obligations under it. You have the right to ask for a copy of the information held by us about you in our records in return for the payment of a small fee. You also have the right to require us to correct any inaccuracies in your information. If you would like a copy of the information we hold about you please contact us using the contact details in the final section of these terms and conditions.

SECURITY

Carmarthenshire County Council are committed to ensuring that your information is secure. In order to prevent unauthorised access or disclosure Carmarthenshire County Council have put in place suitable physical, electronic and managerial procedures to safeguard and secure the information collected on line.

DISCLAIMER

Carmarthenshire County Council do not guarantee that provision of mobile phone information or services will be uninterrupted, timely, secure, or error free. Please note that the status of licensed Cab firms can change from time to time. This means that some previously licensed firms may cease to be licensed, and contact details may change. Carmarthenshire County Council cannot therefore guarantee that the information provided relating to licensed Cab firms will be accurate on or after the date it is provided. When using information provided by Carmarthenshire County Council after the date the information is provided, you are advised to check the licence status and contact details of Cab firms.

LIMITATION OF LIABILITY

Due to the nature of mobile phone services and in light of the disclaimer above, Carmarthenshire County Council are only liable to you for losses which you suffer as a result of a breach of these terms and conditions by Carmarthenshire County Council . Carmarthenshire County Council are not responsible to you for any losses which you may incur which were not a foreseeable consequence of Carmarthenshire County Council breaching these terms and conditions, for example if you and we could not have contemplated those losses. Carmarthenshire County Council's liability to you shall not in any circumstances include any business losses that you may incur, including but not limited to lost data, lost profits or business interruption.

Carmarthenshire County Council do not exclude or limit any liability for:

- death or personal injury due to their negligence;

- fraud; or
- any matter which it could be illegal for us to attempt to exclude our liability.

COST

The cost of this service will be 50p per SMS plus the standard rate charged by your network operator. The service works on Vodafone, Orange, O2 and T-Mobile.

The service does not currently work on 3 and Virgin. Customers from these service providers will not be Charged 50p for their request. They will receive a free information message regarding their request.

CONTACT

Carmarthenshire County Council

Telephone:

0845 658 0445

Email: SCHLicensing@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

Post:

Carmarthenshire County Council

Licensing Section

Social Care and Housing

3 Spilman Street

Carmarthen

Carmarthenshire

SA31 1LE

Partneriaeth Diogelwch Cymunedol **Sir Gâr**
Carmarthenshire Community Safety **Partnership**



ⁱ The economic and social costs of crime against individuals and households 2003/4. The Home Office
<http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk>