

Cab Safe

Tool Kit to raise awareness of the risks inherent in using unlicensed minicabs

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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 2004ⁱ. 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 traffickingⁱⁱ. 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 takingⁱⁱⁱ.

6. This initiative is designed to raise awareness in potential passengers of taxi cans and private hire vehicles of the dangers of using unlicensed vehicles. It provides the information to support the making of a 'safe' choice, and in doing so reduce 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.

ⁱ Mayor of London's Office Figures.

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

ⁱⁱⁱ 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

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 drink spiking incidents to the target group (as well as to others outside this group)?
- 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. All potential users is too large a target group to be manageable, therefore it is suggested that a more restricted target group needs to be selected. For the purposes of the pilot project school groups were selected as there was a readily available resource, being a video that had been approved by the Education Authority as being suitable for use with teenagers, however other user groups, such as colleges, women's groups or older persons groups could be selected, depending on local priorities. It is essential that the group is manageable and can be contacted as a group, for the purposes of presentations and group discussions around the project.

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

For the initiative to succeed it is necessary that the target group are accessible at a location where the partners in the project can meet with them and promote the Cab Safe messages. The pilot project used school students as discussed at 2 above, and was therefore able to go to school premises and meet with the students as a group. Other groups that can be readily identified, such as elderly persons, young mothers etc

can be reached by attending at events such as Mother and Toddlers Clubs, Luncheon Clubs or WI or Merched y Wawr meetings to promote the initiative.

Other groups such as fluid groups of young men and women which may only form for particular social events or shoppers who use taxis to return from shopping will be harder to reach, since there is no continuum to the groups. It is therefore suggested that the project initially targets groups having a natural existence, such as those discussed before moving on to interface with the harder to reach groups.

Insofar as the harder to reach groups are concerned it is suggested that the campaign may need to be refined to a poster or leaflet campaign, with posters being displayed in premises, such as pubs and clubs or shopping centres and supermarkets, where they can be seen by members of the group. Leaflets can also be distributed from these premises, and could also be handed to passengers by drivers of licensed taxis and private hire vehicles.

5. Who are the key partners in the initiative?

Key partners in this initiative are the local authority environmental health department (licensing and health promotion/health and safety teams), Community Safety Officers and the Police Community Safety Officer at the inception of the initiative. Consideration should also be given to inviting a representative from the licensed taxi trade and from the local press to be partners in the initiative.

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.

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 £844^{iv}.

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 £ 1,500, which was used for the purchase of 10 videos, the organisation of the launch of the initiative and for the design and printing of the posters and leaflets.

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

^{iv} The economic and social costs of crime against individuals and households 2003/4. The Home Office
<http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk/statistics39.htm>

Cab Safe – Running an Initiative

The campaign

A campaign to raise awareness of the risks inherent in using unlicensed minicabs.

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
 - The nature of the messages to be put promoted
 - What sort of material are necessary and what form they should take
 - The commencement date and the period over which the initiative is to be run
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 and with whom an interface can be established. It is suggested that groups should be selected on the basis there meeting at a venue or location where the officers engaged in the project can meet with them and speak to them about the project. This may be in schools, students unions, at regular meetings in e.g. community centres or church halls. There must be a degree of acceptance that some individuals who may fall into a risk taking group , e.g. single women travelling late at night, fluid groups of young drinkers etc. may fall outside these groups, but this is inevitable.
3. Care needs to be taken when determining what messages should be delivered. Evidence shows that raising the profile of crime and criminal behaviour can cause levels of fear of crime which are unduly high, and do not reflect the risk of becoming a victim of crime. There is no doubt that taxis and private hire vehicles provide a valuable service to users, and the messages promoted should not be such as to cause people to be afraid to use licensed vehicles. The message should underline the risks that *may* be run by persons using unlicensed mini cabs, but should not be so graphic as to deter general use of taxis.
4. The material to be used is an important issue. In the pilot project a video tape was used, which was supported by text notes for the user. The tape features a scenario where an individual engages in high risk behaviour relating to use of an unlicensed vehicle, and group discussion is invited as to risks taken, ways of reducing the risk, and planning for safe behaviour. The Video tape used in the pilot project was made by Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC Licensing Department. With the prior agreement of Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC the tape may be purchased from: Tantrw2m, Video and Multimedia Experts, 45F Oxford Street, Aberdare, telephone number 01685 886546. The facilitation notes used with the video in the pilot project are attached as [Appendix 1](#). The other methods of promoting the selected messages could be through use of PowerPoint presentations, posters and leaflets and guided discussion. This will be matter for local decision based upon the nature of the target group and the availability of resources.

5. The timing of the project is also a matter of some importance. There are periods of higher than usual taxi use, such as around the Christmas and New Year period, when taxis may be in short supply and demand is high. Other peak periods can be identified. There may also be locations where taxi use is high, town centres or areas around night clubs. The partners to this project may feel that the project should be targeted at a particular location, and commenced and run over a particular time when maximum impact can be achieved. It is suggested that the time period over which the intervention is run should be defined in order to allow for like with like comparisons of alleged incidents to be made when the project is evaluated.

Running the Initiative

6. The initiative is commenced by meeting with the target group and promoting the selected messages through whatever medium has been selected. As noted, care should be taken not to cause alarm whilst promoting the message. Local authorities may wish to consider a targeted enforcement programme which would run at the same time as the initiative, to both act as a deterrent to and to identify and prosecute the drivers and operators of unlicensed minicabs. The enforcement programme may be run in conjunction with the Police. It is suggested that there is merit in using the local media to highlight both the campaign and the enforcement programme, which will have the effect of raising awareness with users of taxis, but will also show the local taxi and private hire vehicle operators and drivers that the local authority is taking steps to prevent unlicensed minicabs operating in the area.

Reaching the Non-Target Group.

7. It is established that individuals outside the target group may engage in behaviour that puts them at risk through using unlicensed minicabs. These individuals may be women travelling alone late at night, young people whose judgement has been impaired through drink and visitors with no local knowledge of the area. Since this group is fluid in its make up it is hard to contact. It is therefore suggested that licensed taxi and private hire operators and drivers should be provided with leaflets outlining the risk of using unlicensed vehicles, for distribution to their customers. There is potential for such leaflets to be sponsored by licensed operators and drivers and to carry contact numbers for their firms, which can be retained for reference by the recipients of the leaflets. The leaflets can also be placed in local authority premises and in public houses and railway and bus stations, as well as other locations from which individuals or groups may seek taxis. The leaflets used in the pilot project is attached as [Appendix 2](#), the press release issued is attached as [Appendix 3](#). The cards produced are shown as [Appendix 4](#).

Evaluation and monitoring

8. At the end of the time period selected for the intervention its effectiveness must be evaluated. As discussed in Chapter 2 there are a number of evaluation methods that can be used. The use of reported crime figures can be considered, subject to the constraints discussed. The number of unlicensed minicabs identified and prosecuted could also be used as a measure of success – on the grounds that the fewer there are operating the less the risk to the travelling public. Licensed operators and drivers of taxis and private hire vehicles are usually able to give anecdotal evidence as to the number of unlicensed vehicles operating in an area, and whether this number is higher or lower than previously, although some care has to be used when relying on such evidence.
9. If the intervention has been short term consideration can be given to repeating it over periods and around locations where taxi use is high to maintain levels of awareness and to reassure the licensed trade that the authority and its partners have a continuing commitment to the issue.



FACILITATORS PACK

SAFE CAB CAMPAIGN

AIMED AT YOUNG PEOPLE AGE 15+

This pack contains: -

Video and Guidance Notes
Copies of Taxi Registration Badges etc.

GUIDANCE NOTES

Student 15years+ Time – 45 minutes

Aim:

To improve student's knowledge of personal safety

Objective:

At the end of the session the students will be able to: -

1. Explain the application procedure concerning licensed taxis/drivers
2. Describe the features of a licensed taxi
3. List the detail required to “book” a licensed taxi
4. Compare advantages/disadvantages of licensed/unlicensed taxis.

There are several other objectives that may be accessed relating to personal safety issues. These may be developed and may include threats and risk assessment formula.

Resources:

- Video tape player
- CabWhys! Video
- Registration Forms
- Taxi Badge
- Dry Board
- Paper and Pens

Method:

- Facilitation
- Discussion
- Didactic

Development:

Introduction –

- Self and Subject
- Health and Safety
- Equal opportunities

PLAY VIDEO

PAUSE 1

INTRODUCTION – Aims and Objectives of video
(If appropriate possible outcomes may be discussed)

RE – START VIDEO

PAUSE 2

Explore and discuss the scenario, topics may include: -

- Communication
- Dress
- Interfamily relationships
- Rules and responsibilities
- Transformation of Jenni from school girl to young lady
- Forward planning
- Risk assessment

PAUSE 3

Explain and discuss. Topics may include – Jenni’s actions so far

- “What has she don that may be dangerous”.
- “What might she have done”.
- “What could she do next”.
- Peer Pressure

RE – START VIDEO

Conclusion – Summary of the video

- Open questions to discuss points and issues raised
- Production of documents e.g. Badges, licenses
- Objectives tested by open question
- Information on SafeCab initiative re-enforced

There are other issues relating to Personal Social Education (P.S.E) that may arise during the session, e.g. peer pressure, drug and alcohol abuse, parent/child communication, codes of conduct, dress, responsibility or other relevant topics.

It may not be possible to deal with all matters arising and it may be necessary to make suitable referrals relating to these issues.

GUIDANCE NOTES

CHECKLIST

- Communication
- Interfamily Relationship
- Dress
- Rules and Responsibilities
- Forward Planning
- Risk Assessment
- Information – Numbers
- Identification – Vehicles/Drivers
- Document
- Identity of Group Members
- Time of Return
- Route of Planning
- Sufficient Funds

- Isolation of Group Members

WHO TO INFORM REGARDING AN UNLICENSED TAXI

Police **01633 838111** Licensing Department **01633 644221**

Enforcement Officer **0770857115**



STOP
Monmouthshire CAB SAFE

**Do you use a taxi?
Is it licensed?
Do you know the risks?**

Always use a licensed taxi

Only get into a taxi if they display these signs:



If you use a vehicle that's not licensed then you could be in danger. A licensed vehicle and driver are scrutinised by the Council to ensure you're safety.

If you're not sure or need more information contact:
Licensing Section, Monmouthshire County Council, County Hall, Cwmbran, NP44 2XH
Tel: 01633 644 221 Fax 01633 644 878

BE SAFE - BE CAB SAFE



Designed by Piethzra - www.piethzra.com

Appendix 3

Draft Press Release

December 4, 2002

TRAVEL IN A LICENSED TAXI AND BE SAFE THIS CHRISTMAS

A hard-hitting campaign is urging people to stay safe this Christmas by making sure they use licensed taxis.

Monmouthshire County Council's Cab Safe campaign will highlight the risks associated with using unlicensed taxis and private hire cars in readiness for the busiest social time of the year.

The Council hopes the campaign, which is supported by Gwent Police and the Monmouthshire Taxi Association, will make people think twice about jumping into unlicensed taxis and private hire vehicles.

Licensed taxi drivers will be instantly recognisable by a plate on the front and rear of the vehicle; the plate will display the vehicle's registration number, the number of passengers it is licensed to carry and the Monmouthshire logo.

The campaign is supported by a video, aimed particularly at young people, to be taken through the education programme. The video shows how a young girl on a night out is faced with the choice of getting home quickly in an unlicensed taxi that pulls up alongside her in the street or ordering a licensed taxi and waiting a while for it to arrive. She makes the right choice and gets home later but safe.

The police will use the video in schools to provide a catalyst for discussion. It will also be shown to students, pensioners and women's institutes.

Flyers will be handed out to members of the public outlining the dangers of using unlicensed taxis and displaying pictures of the plates used on licensed vehicles. Posters will also be displayed in pubs, supermarkets, libraries etc.

The Chairman of the Council, Councillor John Major, will attend the launch event together with the Chair of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee, Councillor Maureen Roach.

Councillor Major said: "Everyone needs to be on the alert for unlicensed taxis and private hire vehicles, especially in the run-up to Christmas.

"These unlicensed drivers have not been police checked like bona fide taxi drivers, and their vehicles are not inspected. They will not have insurance to carry paying passengers and their vehicles may not be roadworthy."

"Worse, there have been incidents elsewhere in the UK where men have posed as taxi drivers and gone on to assault, rape or even murder their passengers. We want people to be fully aware of these risks."

The Cab Safe campaign tells people:

- Use a reputable cab firm
- Check driver's badge
- Check the vehicle licence ID
- If alone, sit behind the driver
- Have your money and keys ready for the end of the journey

The Cab Safe campaign will be launched at 11am on Monday 9th December at the Priory Centre, Abergavenny.

Photo opportunities

Licensed taxi drivers will be available with their vehicles at 11.30am at the Priory Centre.

Tracy Burton
Communication Officer
01633 644014
tracyburton@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Cab Safe Card

Monmouthshire Cab Safe

- Use a reputable cab firm
- Check drivers badge
- Check the vehicle licence I D
- If alone, sit behind the driver
- Have your money & keys ready for the end of the journey

HACKNEY CARRIAGE 3001
JG21 DEM
4 PASSENGERS

PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE 765
D562 DEM
4 PASSENGERS

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
10 JURY