Taxi Licensing Newsletter

October 2026

1. Local Government reorganisation in Surrey

Although the Government has formally launched a review of its Local Government reorganisation programme, withdrawing several previously announced decisions and pausing others to ensure the process is legally robust and aligned with ministerial priorities, the plans in Surrey will still be going ahead.

From 1 April 2027, the existing Surrey County Council and the 11 district and borough councils will be replaced by two new unitary councils – East Surrey and West Surrey.

Runnymede, Guildford, Spelthorne, Surrey Heath, Waverley and Woking, along with Surrey County Council services will become West Surrey Council.

How licensing will be organised and function in terms of aligned policies and procedures over a greater geographical area, fares, fees and areas where HC's can ply for hire, are all being considered. Most changes will not happen immediately on 1 April, but will be phased in over time. As soon as we know more, we will let you know.

For more info please see: Future Surrey – Surrey LGR Hub

2. New right-to-work Operator duties from 1 October

New requirements for private hire drivers will come into force on 1 October 2026, placing a statutory duty on Operators to verify a driver's immigration status before allowing them to work.

Licensing Authorities will continue to carry out right-to-work checks as part of the badge-issuing process, but Operators will be required to complete their own verification before engaging a driver. This creates a shared compliance framework, ensuring that both licensing authorities and operators hold responsibility if illegal working is later detected.

Employers need to:

(a) update internal processes and onboarding procedures to include right-to-work compliance;
(b) ensuring staff understand acceptable documentation;
(c) keeping clear records demonstrating compliance.

3. County Lines Guidance

Part of the 'county lines' model is to send children and vulnerable adults out from metropolitan areas to deal class A drugs in rural and provincial areas. To facilitate the movement of those being exploited, they often use taxis and private hire vehicles to move around. Attached is National County Lines Co-ordination Centre (npcc.police.uk) guidance for licensed drivers in relation to your role in safeguarding children & vulnerable adults.

4. **London launches the UK's first self-driving licensed vehicles**

London has become the first city in the UK to launch commercial self-driving licensed vehicles, marking a major technical achievement and milestone in the future of transportation. The service, developed through a partnership between Uber and British autonomous driving company Wayve, allows passengers to be matched with autonomous vehicles when booking rides through the Uber app.

The launch began with just 15 licensed vehicles operating across the capital - while every vehicle currently carries a licensed safety driver who can take control if required, the cars are capable of navigating London's busy streets using advanced artificial intelligence technology.

Uber and Wayve plan to expand gradually over time, subject to demand and regulatory approval. Fully driverless services, without a safety driver on board, will require further government authorisation before they can operate commercially.

5. Fees for DBS Update Service are to reduce

From Monday 5 October 2026, fees for DBS checks and subscribing to the Update Service are to reduce;

- Update Service subscription: £15 per year (reduced from £16)
- Basic DBS check: £20 (reduced from £21.50)
- Enhanced DBS check: £41.00 (reduced from £49.50)

Reductions will be passed onto drivers for DBS checks in the 2027-2028 fees for West Surrey Council.

DBS reviews its product and service fees on an annual basis and the fee is based on its cost to deliver.

6. Government reaffirms plans for Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle (PHV) Bill

The Government has reaffirmed its intention to introduce a draft Taxi and PHV Bill, providing further confirmation of the intention to reform the taxi and PHV regulatory framework.

Although the detailed provisions of the Bill have yet to be published, improved accessibility for disabled passengers, strengthening existing protections and removing barriers to travel are identified as one of the key objectives of the proposed legislation.

The Bill is expected to also include requirements for:

- A national database of licence holders;
- Stronger cross-border enforcement powers;
- Ensuring drivers are licensed where they actually work.

7. **Government accepts Southport Inquiry recommendations on taxi and private hire licensing**

The Government has accepted recommendations from the first phase of the Southport Inquiry intended to strengthen taxi and private hire vehicle (PHV) licensing arrangements following the attack in Southport in July 2024.

The inquiry examined the circumstances surrounding the attack, including the actions of the taxi driver who transported Axel Rudakubana to the Hart Space dance studio shortly before the attack.

Evidence heard by the inquiry showed that, after dropping off his passenger, the driver heard loud bangs and screams and saw children fleeing from the building. Believing gunshots had been fired, he drove away from the scene rather than contacting the emergency services immediately. He subsequently picked up another fare, returned home and did not call 999 until approximately 50 minutes later. During the inquiry, the driver said he had panicked, feared for his own safety and deeply regretted not helping the victims or contacting the police sooner.

Following a review by Sefton Council, the driver has since had his taxi driver's licence revoked after the authority concluded that he no longer met the standards required under its taxi licensing policy.

In response to the inquiry's findings, the Government has accepted recommendations designed to reinforce the safeguarding and public protection responsibilities of licensed taxi and private hire drivers.

The recommendations include:

- strengthening guidance and training for licensed drivers on responding to emergency situations and safeguarding incidents;
- ensuring drivers understand the importance of promptly contacting the emergency services where there is an immediate risk to life or serious harm;
- working with licensing authorities and the taxi and private hire sector to improve consistency in standards and awareness of drivers' responsibilities during emergencies.

8. NEWS: Private hire driver in Elmbridge loses licence appeal

A private hire driver has lost his appeal after Elmbridge Borough Council revoked his licence following a joint investigation with Surrey Police.

The driver provided false information to Surrey Police after his vehicle was recorded by a speed camera on the M25 in 2024. He later submitted further false evidence to support this account. Following a joint investigation between Surrey Police and Elmbridge Borough Council, he continued to maintain this version of events.

As a result, the Council determined he was not a fit and proper person to hold a private hire driver's licence and revoked it, in line with its policy requiring drivers to be honest and trustworthy.

The decision was appealed, but at a Magistrates' Court hearing at Staines in June 2026, the District Judge upheld Elmbridge Borough Council's decision.