
SUMMARY REPORT OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE 'EARN AS YOU LEARN' SCHEME

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To review the effectiveness of the 'Earn As You Learn' Scheme which was implemented in January 2022. The aim of the scheme was to increase the number of licensed drivers within the District whilst maintaining the high standards required to obtain a licence.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 In November 2021 members of the Rochford District Council Licensing Team identified that the District had seen a reduction in licensed drivers over the 2 years during the Covid pandemic. This was identified not only locally, but also nationally.
- 2.2 As business and the public returned to normal it was identified that the trade was not going to meet the demands based on the number of drivers available within the District.
- 2.3 In November 2021 the Licensing Team met with the 4 main taxi operators within the District. At the meeting the trade proposed a previously requested 5-point plan. The points raise were:-
- To remove the DVLA seven penalty point restriction
 - No representation from the trade was allowed an input at meetings of the Licensing & Appeals Committee
 - To pause the introduction of the Taxi Licensing Policy until a review is completed by the Department of Transport on its National Standards
 - Change the requirements in relation to MOT's.
 - Pilot training scheme for encouraging new drivers
- 2.4 Four of the points were considered and discussed prior to the introduction of the Rochford District Council Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy 2021-26. The Committee decided to review the policy again in 2016.
- 2.5 The introduction of the 'Earn as you Learn' scheme was to address the pilot training scheme to encourage new drivers.

Licensing and Appeals Committee held on 18 January 2022

- 2.6 On 18 January 2022 the Licensing Team presented a report to the Members of the Licensing and Appeals Committee to propose the introduction of an 'Earn as you Learn' scheme.

2.7 The key aspects of the report highlighted:-

- There is a national shortage of drivers since the pandemic
- The existing drivers had changed their work patterns; this had impacted on the availability on a Friday and Saturday night
- The trade felt that the current requirements in place to obtain a Hackney Carriage Driver's badge took too long and could be up to 6 months

2.8 The 'Earn as You Learn' scheme sought to address these concerns by introducing the following requirements.

The 'Earn as You Learn' drivers:-

- Will be issued with a badge once they had completed all the appropriate aspects except the Knowledge Test
- Will be issued with a Private Hire Driver's badge for 9 months
- Must pass the Knowledge Test within 9 months; failure to pass the test would result in the driver's badge lapsing
- Would not be allowed to re-apply within 12 months from the conclusion of the expiry of the badge.

The Operators:-

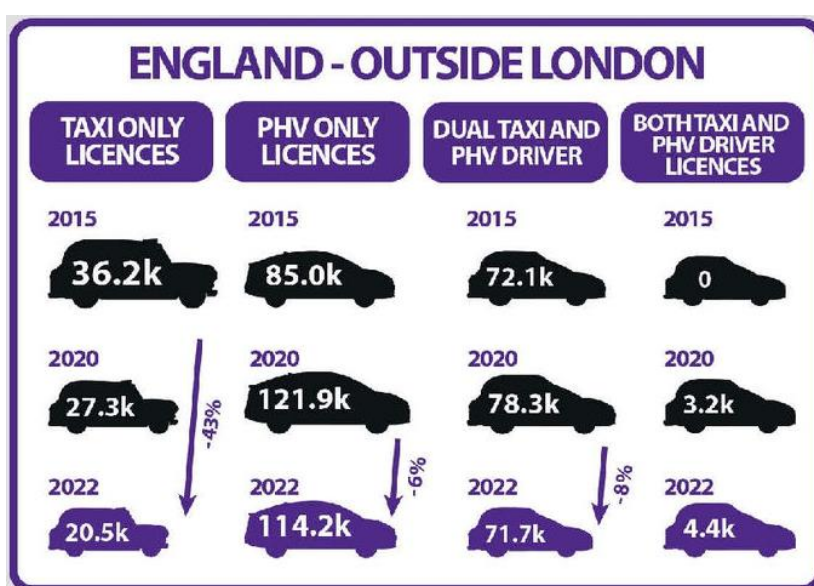
- Would work a mentor system and the drivers could only work for 1 of the 4 main operators.
- Must ensure they are assigned to work solely within the Rochford District and not sub-contracted to operate outside the district.
- The 'Earn as you Learn' badge will place a requirement on the operators to work with the licence holders to encourage them to obtain their full badge. Any concerns relating to the driver must be reported to the Licensing Team immediately.
- Will ensure that 'Earn as You Learn' drivers will only drive Private Hire vehicles and can only work on pre-arranged bookings.
- Will help the driver by means of financial support and assistance from their Knowledge Test schools.

2.9 Members agreed the scheme would run for 12 months and a service review should be conducted at the end of the trial period to determine whether to continue with the scheme.

3 BASELINE INFORMATION PRIOR TO THE ‘EARN AS YOU LEARN’ SCHEME IMPLIMENTATION

Number of Drivers

- 3.1 Using information provided by the Department of Transport across England (outside of London) in 2015 there were 72,100 Dual Taxi and Private Hire drivers. In 2020, this saw an increase to 78,300 drivers; however, in 2022 only 71,700 drivers were licensed. This equates to an 8% reduction across England.
- 3.2 More details of the other types of licence holders have been outlined in the illustration below:-



- 3.3 In relation to Rochford, in 2015 the Licensing Team recorded **258 Dual Taxi and PHV drivers** and **94 PHV Only Licences**.
- 3.4 In 2022, the Licensing team oversaw **207 Dual Taxi and PHV drivers** and **136 PHV Only licences**. This equated to a reduction of 19.8% in the number of Dual Taxi and PH drivers. However, the team saw an increase in PHV drivers due to the school contract providers licensed within the District.

Number of Licensed Vehicles - PHV AND HC (Taxi) Vehicles

- 3.5 Using the same dataset produced by the Department of Transport in 2015 England (excluding London) recorded 55,900 Hackney Carriage (Taxi) vehicles and 95,500 Private Hire vehicles.
- 3.6 In 2020 the number of Hackney Carriage (Taxis) vehicles had reduced to 48,900 and Private Hire vehicles increased to 134,800.
- 3.7 In 2022 the number of Hackney Carriage (Taxis) vehicles again reduced to 43,400 (22% reduction since 2015) and the number of Private Hire vehicles

also reduced to 122,200 – this represents a decrease of Private Hire vehicles by 9%.

3.8 In relation to Rochford, in 2015 the Licensing Team issued licences for **226 Hackney Carriage (Taxi) vehicles** and **57 Private Hire Vehicles**.

3.9 In 2022 the team managed **130 Hackney Carriage (Taxi) vehicles** and **49 Private Hire vehicles**. This equates to a reduction of Hackney Carriage (Taxi) Vehicles by 42.5% and 14.0% reduction in Private Hire vehicles since 2015.

4 **STATISTICS SINCE THE INTRODUCTION OF THE ‘EARN AS YOU LEARN’ SCHEME**

4.1 The information provided below outlines the number of applicants, ‘Earn as you Learn’ drivers and those issued with Hackney Carriage drivers that were part of the scheme between 18 January 2022 and 18 January 2023.

Drivers’ Information

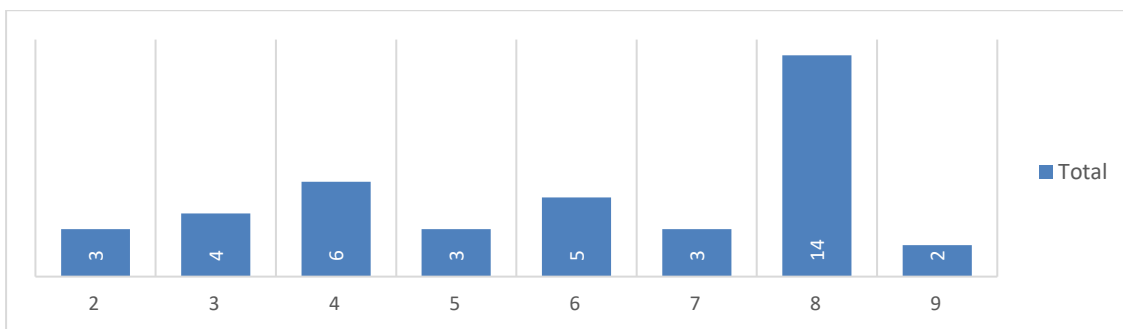
4.2 The chart below outlines the number of pending applicants, EAYL Drivers, those that have completed the process and those that have failed to complete the process:

Type of Applicant	Number
New EAYL Applicants pending EAYL Licence	10
Drivers working under an EAYL Badge (9 months)	40
Drivers completed the process and have Hackney Carriage (Taxi) drivers’ badges	8
Total	58
Number of Drivers failed to pass within 9 months	3

4.3 Based upon information provided, the Licensing Team has issued a ‘Earn as you Learn’ badge to a new applicant in an average of 45 days from the applicant’s submission date and the issue date of the driver’s badge.

4.4 This has been significantly reduced compared to the previous application processes.

4.5 The chart below highlights the expiry month of the EAYL licences. The majority of the drivers’ licences expire in August 2023.



Vehicle Information

4.6 With the increase in drivers, we have also seen an increase in licensed Private Hire vehicles. Since the introduction of the scheme we have issued a further 12 vehicle licences.

5 SUMMARY OF CURRENT POSITION IN ROCHFORD

5.1 As of 6 January 2023, when this report was created, we currently have 189 Dual Taxi and PHV drivers, 40 ‘Earn as you Learn’ drivers and 114 PHV Only Licences. The chart below compares Rochford between 2015, 2022 and now:-

Year	Dual HC & PH drivers	EAYL (Potential HC Drivers)	PHV Only drivers	Total
01 / 2015	258	0	94	352
01 / 2022	207	0	136	343
18/01/2023	189	40	114	343

6 FEEDBACK SINCE THE INTRODUCTION OF THE SCHEME

‘Earn as You Learn’ Drivers’ Responses

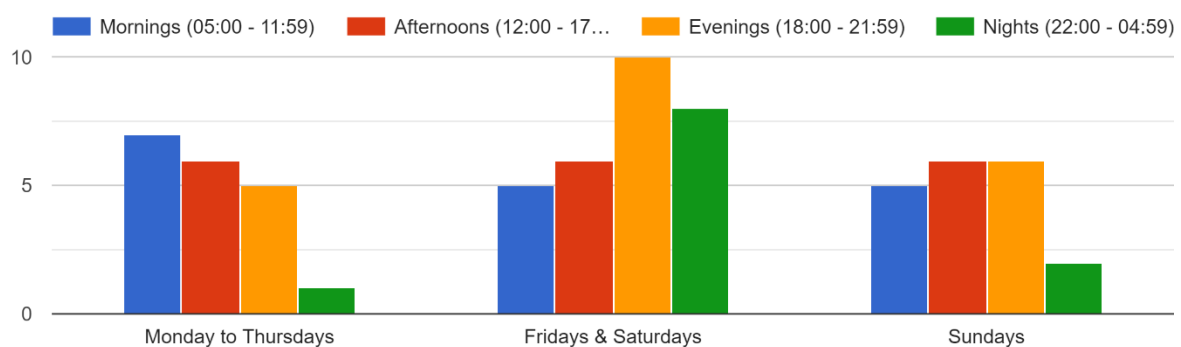
6.1 A feedback survey was sent to all the applicants and drivers involved in the ‘Earn as you Learn’ scheme. The key findings of the survey shows:-

- 71.4% of those that responded were working as EAYL drivers at the time of completing the survey
- 57.1% of the responses worked for Andrews and 42.9% worked for Bestax
- 35.7% of the responders have held the EAYL badge for 3-6 months
- 46.2% attended a knowledge school once a week or more. 30.8% stated they have never been to a knowledge school

6.2 85.7% felt the Council should continue with the ‘Earn as you Learn’ scheme. In relation to working patterns.

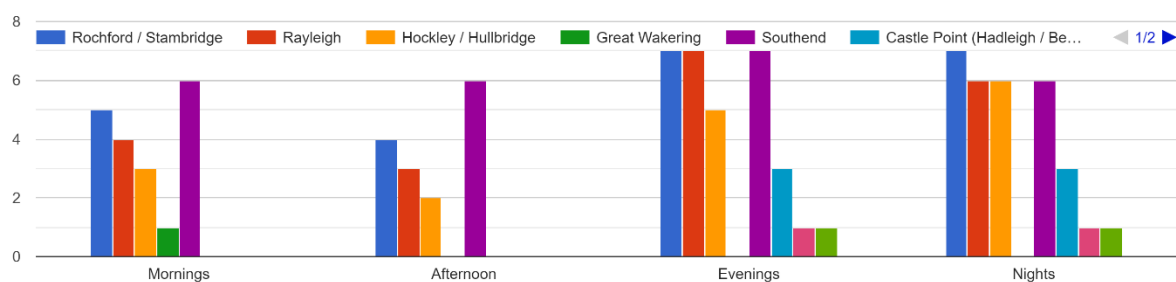
- Most drivers worked on a Saturday (92.3%) followed by 84.6% on a Friday. Least popular day of working was a Wednesday at 53.8%
- When asked what times of the day they tend to work, the majority stated Friday and Saturdays between 1800 hours and 2200 hours

What times you tend to work?



6.3 In relation to working locations, the chart below outlines where the drivers felt the majority of their work was located.

Where would you say the majority of your work is located?



The chart demonstrates the drivers feel that the majority of their work is within the Rochford, Rayleigh and Southend area.

Case study of an Applicant that has Completed the Process

6.4 This is a case study relating to one of the drivers that has successfully completed the process.

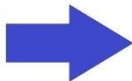
- 6.5 Glenn Hammond applied to become an 'Earn as you Learn; driver in March 2022. Prior to applying for a badge, Glenn worked as a caretaker in a local school.

Glenn worked with Bestax's dedicated Knowledge School and was issued his 'Earn as you Learn' badge on 10 May 2022.

On 28 July 2022 Glenn took his Knowledge Test and successfully passed. Glenn was issued with his full Dual Hackney Carriage and Private Hire driver's licence on 28 July 2022.



Glenn Hammond started with Cab Call Taxi Training School on 22nd February 2022



He collected his badge and started as Trainee Private Hire Driver on 10th May 2022. 2 Months and 18 Days after starting on the course



Glenn Passed his knowledge test on 28th July 2022. He collected his Hackney Carriage Drivers Badge and began driving his Taxi on the same day.

The total course length for Glenn was 5 months and 6 days. Due to the scheme Glenn was able to work and earn for his family and serve the travelling public for an extra 2 months and 18 days.

- 6.6 In Glenn's own words, he said:-

"I decided to be become licensed driver for a number of reasons: to earn a better wage for the family, to have a long, successful career. Having a good talk with Mark and Andre, they made it clear that if you work hard you will get the rewards.

If the course wasn't on the 'Earn as you Learn scheme' I wouldn't have started as it's been organised extremely well and affordable.

Being a taxi driver is completely different to working the usual 9-5; you can become more flexible for the family and still make the time up at any point that day and/or week. It's also worked very well financially. Personally, the scheme should continue as it's an excellent trade to get into if you're willing to put the hours in. It's also affordable to anyone willing to put the time and effort in. For example, I was working a full-time job, learning and driving and still passed first time due to the help from the trainer, Andre, which is very professional and his knowledge from being a driver himself is impeccable. To top off a great trainer being able to drive in a professional manner whilst learning, there is no better way to learn than being hands on".



Feedback from the Operators

6.7 As part of the review process the Licensing Team asked the two main operators, Andrews Taxis and Bestax, for the details of the bookings completed by the 'Earn as you Learn' drivers.

6.8 The details of the operators are outlined below:-

Figures between July 2022 and December 2022.

Operator	Andrews	Bestax
Number of EAYL Drivers	21	19
Number of Bookings in Rochford Area	25,571	69,714
Number of Bookings completed by EAYL Drivers in the Rochford Area	7,466	18,787
Percentage	29%	27%

6.9 The breakdown of the bookings is highlighted in the chart below. These relate to the postcode area of the pickup locations between July 2022 and December 2022.

Area	Andrews		Bestax	
	Number of Bookings	Percentage	Number of Bookings	Percentage
Outside SS postcode	10	0%	641	3%
SS0	234	3%	354	2%
SS1	189	3%	362	2%
SS11	2	0%	241	1%
SS2	754	10%	477	3%
SS3	126	2%	537	3%
SS4	4 596	62%	196	1%
SS5	1 213	16%	2 249	12%
SS6	138	2%	11 888	63%
SS7	8	0%	303	2%
SS9	196	3%	1 539	8%
Grand Total	7 466	100%	18 787	100%

6.10 The Licensing Team also asked for the percentage of attendance at the knowledge schools operated by both operators; the chart below outlines the attendance at the schools

Operator	Andrews	Bestax
0% – 9% attendance at the schools	7 drivers	0 drivers
10% - 29% attendance at the schools	10 drivers	0 drivers
30% - 59% attendance at the schools	0 drivers	0 drivers
60% - 100% attendance at the schools	4 drivers	19 drivers
Average EAYL Drivers attendance at the knowledge school	24%	90%

6.11 A testimonial representing Andrews Taxis states:-

“From the circuit’s perspective this has been a major success as without this support our customers would be stranded on the streets late at night as post pandemic we have lost driver numbers and ultimately coverage.

It is our strong belief and evidenced from the number of complaints to us and the hackney carriage office that these drivers (which are controlled via the system Autocab despatch system) have been adequately supported to carry out the role as a licensed driver.

Lastly thank you for all your support; it is truly refreshing and a pleasure working with you. We believe you have a balanced view in the interest of all parties: the public, the drivers and the circuit owners. I strongly recommend that this scheme remains in place.”



Feedback from the Public

6.12 In November 2022 a post on social media was created within the Hockley and Hawkwell People Group. The main discussion under the post relates to issues with booking taxis during the day and at night.

6.13 The post asked for views of the public in relation to their experiences with booking taxis across the district. The key comments raised in the thread are listed below:-

- Have been informed that Rochford licences are more restrictive in relation to neighbouring boroughs like Southend who are allowed to pick up fares out of area. Due to the small size of Rochford it is not worth being a taxi driver here any more. During Covid drivers were forced to sell their cars because they couldn't pay for licences and insurances, etc. Come to the end of Covid the former drivers now have not got the money to buy a new

or decent car and license it. Also combined with the car shortage and not many decent cars being available the drivers have secured other employment.

- Bring back Uber! Would definitely make it more appealing to go out of an evening knowing you can get a taxi home!
- I would be interested to hear if there is any truth in the rumour that the local taxi firms have bought up licences and will only issue them to new drivers with the rental of a taxi firm owned vehicle. That's definitely not self-employed. The drivers are then being charged too much to make even minimum wage.
- There's no limit to private hire plates being issued; never has been. The issue is lack of drivers which has been well reported on since Covid and Brexit happened, drivers left to do other things and no supply of labour from Europe willing to do low paid jobs any more. Truck drivers also short and many shop and factory work etc in the same position. Combined with most Councils are making it harder and harder and more and more expensive to get a driver's licence to basically earn minimum wage and often get abuse whilst doing so. Why would anyone start driving a cab for a living under those circumstances?
- Interesting that the police say to plan ahead and pre book. Great but has he tried that? I've tried several companies for my 22 and 20 year old to pre book taxis for them on a night out so they can get home and each company tells me on Friday and Saturday nights they don't take bookings. They just have to ring when they want to come home and hope for the best!

Responses to the Points Raised Above

- 6.14 In response to the points raised by the public, these have been responded to in order:-
- 6.15 In relation to being more restrictive than Southend to obtain a licence this is not the case; the two councils have slightly different conditions, but both councils must follow the minimum standards set by the Department of Transport. Rochford District Council has been the only authority in Essex to change their processes to encourage new drivers into the trade. Basildon is in the process of adopting the Rochford scheme.
- 6.16 In relation to Uber, the company was contacted to see whether it would be interested in expanding its operation into the district. They responded saying

“Whilst we currently have no plans to apply new operator licences, we definitely will keep the district in mind at such a time as any expansion plans develop. In the shorter term, there may be potential for us to offer services through a local operator, using our 'Local Cab' product

(<https://www.uber.com/en-gb/blog/local-cab/>). I will discuss this with the team at Autocab to see if there is a way to make this happen.”

- 6.17 The rumours of the taxi companies purchasing all the Hackney Carriage Plates, this is not true; new drivers can obtain a Hackney Carriage (Taxi) plate; however, this needs to be a Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (rear or side loading wheelchair accessible vehicle). There are no restrictions on the numbers of plates issued by Rochford District Council. Drivers can still obtain Private Hire plates for saloon vehicles that are not Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles.
- 6.18 In relation to pre-booking vehicles on Friday and Saturday nights, the Licensing Team has spoken to the operators and the two main operators do not allow pre-booking on these days due to the high demand and do not want to secure a booking and fail to deliver due to the high demand. Anyone wishing to obtain a licensed vehicle on a Friday and Saturday night needs to contact the companies when they require collection; the operator will advise them of estimated waiting times for a vehicle.
- 6.19 Finally, in relation to the general comment relating to the lack of drivers, as highlighted in section 4 of this report, the District currently has 9 less drivers available compared to 2015 and is nearly back to pre-pandemic numbers.

7 OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Since the introduction of the scheme, the District has seen a significant increase in drivers; without this scheme the officers can only imagine the challenges the public would have faced trying to access licensed vehicles within the District.
- 7.2 Two of the four operators have taken full advantage of the scheme with both operators using their knowledge schools to introduce new drivers into the trade. Several new applicants were previously licensed with other authorities including Transport for London.
- 7.3 The officers are concerned that a high percentage of the drivers will not pass the Knowledge Test within the 9-month period based on their responses in the driver survey; however, it is evident from the case study that if the driver is willing to put in the work and work closely with the operators, they can achieve their full Hackney Carriage badge within the allocated time.
- 7.4 The Licensing Team is keen to support the continuation of the scheme, however recommend adjustment to the scheme to limiting the number of ‘Earn as you Learn’ applicants per operator.
- 7.5 The officers recommend that each of the 4 main operators are allocated 10 ‘Earn as you Learn’ spaces under an Operator Development Scheme; once a driver has passed their Knowledge Test or completed the 9 month period, the slot is made available to the operator to hire another applicant.

- 7.6 This will allow the continuation of the scheme but limit the number of applicants to 40 at any one time across the District giving the existing drivers and new drivers sufficient work to operate and earn money within the District.

Comments from the Taxi Trade Association

- 7.7 No comments were made by the Chair of the Voice of Reason (Taxi Trade) Association.

8 RISK IMPLICATIONS

Reputation

- 8.1 There is a low reputational risk associated with this scheme; the Licensing team has been working closely with the operators to address any concerns over a specific driver.

Strategic

- 8.2 The additional 'Earn as you Learn' drivers have helped reduce any safeguarding concerns, specifically relating to Friday and Saturday nights. It has been identified from the recent social media post in November 2022 that the problems still exist with some pickups up to 2 hours from the moment the vehicle is booked.
- 8.3 Despite the number of drivers increasing in the last 12 months, if a number of the 'Earn as You Learn' drivers fail to complete the process within the 9-month window, this may impact on the travelling public and specifically those with limited mobility. The lack of drivers indicates those that are reliant on this method of transport could be disadvantaged with the lack of drivers and vehicles.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 If the District sees a further reduction in the number of licensed drivers and vehicles available for hire, some individuals may see an opportunity to provide an unlicensed service which could place the public at risk or harm.

10 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 We have considered if the decision to continue with the scheme will impact negatively on the climate/impact on carbon and/or GHG emissions. We do not believe the continuation of this scheme will have any implications.

11 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 12 There are no resource implications arising from the “Earn As You Learn” proposal. The ongoing administration of the policy will be carried out within existing resources in partnership with the trade.

13 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**Town Police Clauses Act and Local Government Miscellaneous Provisions Act**

- 13.1 The Town Police Clauses Act (Hackney Carriage Licence) does not allow local authorities to apply conditions to a licence. However, Section 51 (2) of Local Government Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1976 relating to drivers of Private Hire Vehicles states: A district council may attach to the grant of a licence under this section such conditions as they may consider reasonably necessary.

14 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:
- To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
 - To advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
 - To foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
 - The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender, race, sexual orientation, religion, gender reassignment, marriage/civil partnerships, pregnancy/maternity.
- 14.2 The Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) indicates that the proposals in this report will have an impact on any people with a particular characteristic by increasing public services. Those that are elderly, with a disability or mobility issues that rely on the Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Trade will be impacted if the level of service is reduced.

15 RECOMMENDATION

- 15.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**
- (1) That Rochford District Council Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Driver, Vehicle and Operator Licence policy and conditions be amended to allow the ‘Earn as you Learn’ scheme to operate.

- (2) That Rochford District Council Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Driver, Vehicle and Operator Licence policy and conditions be amended to allow the 'Earn as you Learn' scheme to operate with changes to the procedures.
- (3) That Rochford District Council Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Driver, Vehicle and Operator Licence conditions be amended back and stop the 'Earn as you Learn' scheme.



Tracey Lilley

Director of Communities & Health

Background Papers:-

None.

For further information please contact Steven Greener, Principal Licensing Officer on:-

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If you would like this report in large print, Braille or another language please contact 01702 318111.