

SPEAK OUT

Against Child Exploitation



**STAFFORDSHIRE
POLICE**



**CHILD EXPLOITATION GUIDANCE
FOR DRIVERS IN THE TAXI AND
PRIVATE VEHICLE HIRE INDUSTRY**

Produced with thanks to Avon & Somerset Police

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Child Exploitation (CE), including Child Sexual Exploitation and Child Criminal Exploitation happens when anyone under the age of 18 is encouraged, forced or manipulated into criminal or sexual acts, often in exchange for something.

Everyone has a duty to act if they suspect a child is being exploited and being aware of it is the first step towards putting a stop to it.

Victims of 'county lines'

Children are being exploited by criminal gangs to carry drugs from urban areas to coastal and market towns and villages. Many of these children travel between cities and rural towns and other locations via trains, private hire vehicles and taxis. This is known as 'county lines'.

It's NEVER the child's fault

Exploitation of children is a crime that can affect any child, anytime, anywhere, regardless of their social or ethnic background. Child Exploitation (Sexual and Criminal) can be carried out by individuals, by street gangs or by groups. It can be motivated by money or by sexual gratification. But in all cases, there is an imbalance of power – children are controlled and abused by adults or by other children.

Exploited children are usually too scared and/or ashamed to ask for help themselves. This is why it is important that anyone using or working within transport can recognise the signs and indicators of exploitation. They may notice when things look a little out of the ordinary and will be able to pass their concerns on to the police with confidence, preventing children from coming to harm.



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The grooming process

Perpetrators gain control over children by grooming them, this can be in person, via mobile phones or online, offering excitement, drugs, alcohol, gifts and affection. Once a child does something – even something really small – that they know they might get ‘in trouble’ for, they become vulnerable. As the exploitation gets worse, threats and violence may be used to keep children compliant.

They are exploited not just by the original perpetrators but often by many other abusers.

How does this affect the taxi and private hire industry?

Taxi drivers are in a unique position to help

Evidence shows that taxis are often used to transport children (both girls and boys) between hotels, pubs and other places where they are exploited. So it's not just a good idea for taxi drivers to be able to spot the signs of exploitation, it's their responsibility. Exploited children are usually too terrified and ashamed to ask for help themselves. Taxi drivers are in a unique position to notice when all may not be right with passengers in their vehicle, pass their concerns on to the police – and potentially save a child from the nightmare of exploitation.

SAY SOMETHING IF YOU SEE SOMETHING



Indicators of Child Exploitation for taxis and private hire vehicles:

You should also look out for

Whether it is day or night time, look out for children and young people (girls and boys) who may:

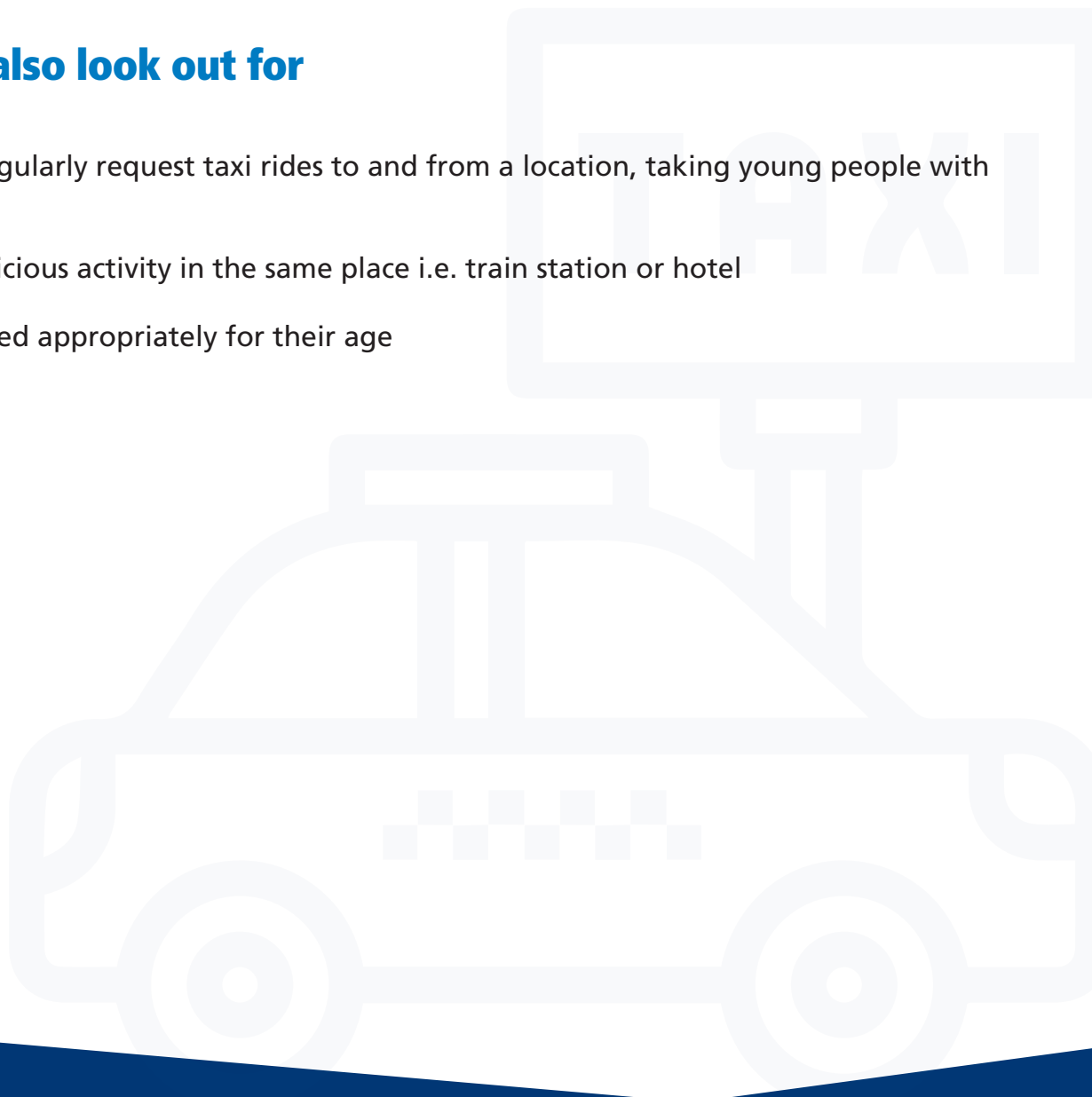
- Be from another area, so may not be familiar with an area (may look lost) and may have a distinct urban accent.
- Be travelling during school hours or unusual hours (i.e. late in the evening).
- Be with an older individual who appears controlling.
- Be a victim of physical assault or unexplained injuries.
- Be in excessive receipt of texts, phone or video calls.
- Look withdrawn, uncomfortable or distressed in the company of adults.
- Be in a vulnerable state due to drink or drugs, accompanied by older individuals.
- Be using trains whilst under the influence of substances, anxious state or travelling late at night unaccompanied.
- Using terminology or slang that is not understood by others.
- Be collected and taken to hotels, B&Bs, parties or gatherings.
- Have little/ no luggage going to hotels.
- Be with an adult who is expressing sexualised behaviour towards them.
- Be dropped off at any location that causes you concern.
- Have their fares paid by adults who are not in the taxi.



REMEMBER - Young People will often try to make themselves look older than they are. Always consider the age of the young person even if, at first glance, they may look over 18.

You should also look out for

- Adults who regularly request taxi rides to and from a location, taking young people with them
- Frequent suspicious activity in the same place i.e. train station or hotel
- Children dressed appropriately for their age



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Missing children

Young people who run away from home are at increased risk of exploitation. Missing children may:

- seem unusually emotional
- have difficulty paying the full fare
- be trying to get to a station or airport
- be reluctant to discuss their destination

Additional safeguarding

- If you refuse to take a young person tell police, hospital staff, family or security staff why you cannot take them so that they're given the necessary support
- Keep a record of any refusals; dates, addresses, phone numbers and descriptions of customers etc.
- Always get a specific address from passengers

Don't hesitate. Information, however small it may seem, can help police build a bigger picture of what's going on.

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What to do if you have concerns about a child:

If you think the young person is at imminent risk of harm, call 999 to report your concerns.

Offer support to the child:

- Ask if they are ok
- Check that they are not receiving unwanted attention
- Check whether they know who they are with and if they feel safe
- Being with them
- Offer to call a parent/carer

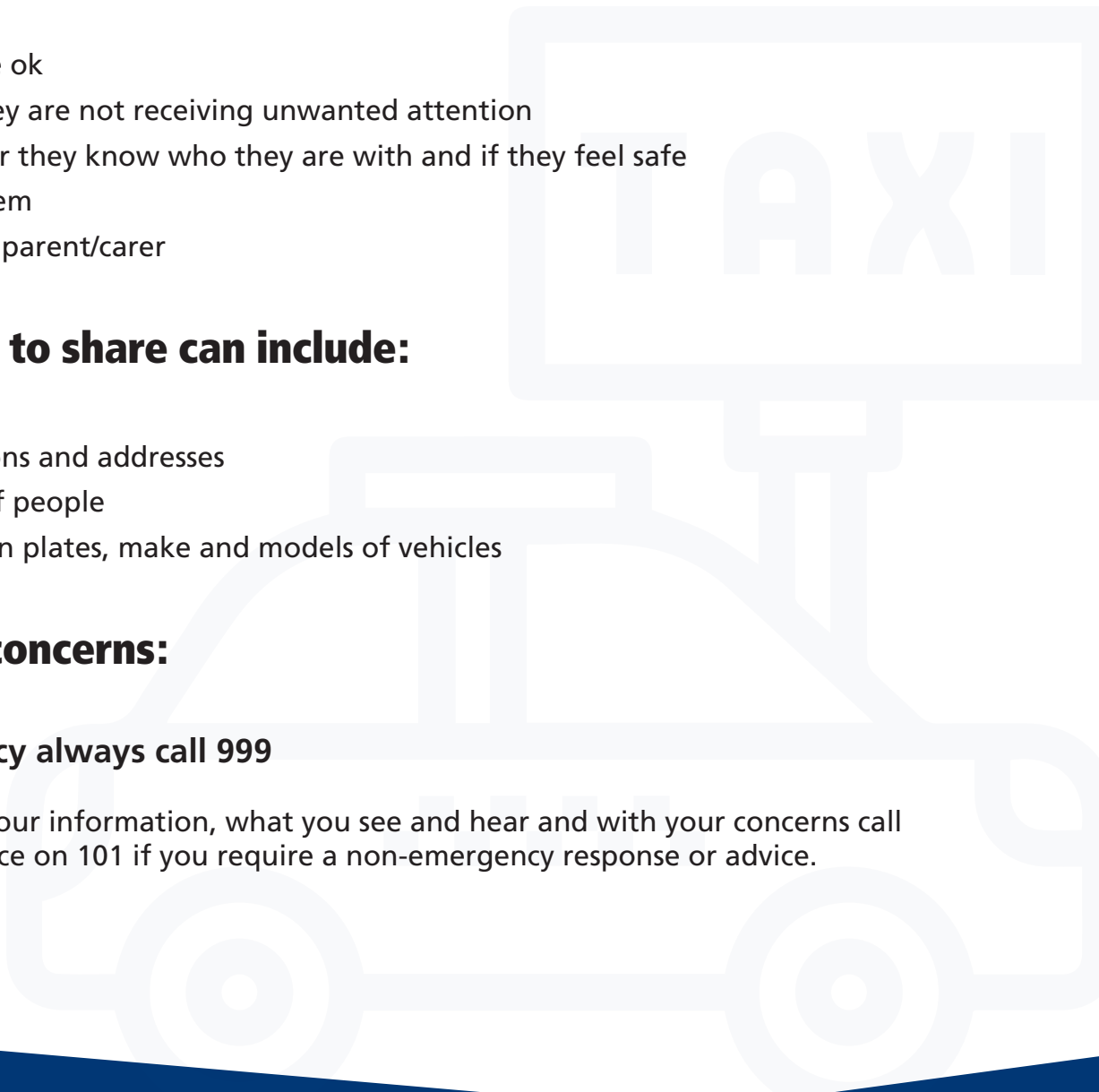
Information to share can include:

- Names, locations and addresses
- Descriptions of people
- Car registration plates, make and models of vehicles

Report the concerns:

In an emergency always call 999

Make a note of your information, what you see and hear and with your concerns call Staffordshire Police on 101 if you require a non-emergency response or advice.



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Intelligence and information which may be useful to the police can be reported anonymously via Crimestoppers - **0800 555 111** or visit **crimestoppers-uk.org**

Also you can report concerns in person – at a police station.

For non-emergency matters contact us on **101** or through **our social media channels** (Facebook or Twitter)

Provide a written record of your concerns and descriptions of individuals to the police.

Code of conduct

Safeguarding code of conduct when working with vulnerable passengers

This guidance aims to promote good safeguarding practice for drivers and staff working with vulnerable passengers in the taxi or private hire trade. It is recommended that the following safeguarding principles should be embedded into staff/driver training and practice:

All drivers should register in and out of shifts. A shift register should be maintained and at the point of registration the driver should confirm his/her/their identity and the registration number of the vehicle in use.

Drivers should carry photo ID at all times.

The booking process should include a check for vulnerability issues so that provision can be arranged.



Code of conduct

When making a journey with vulnerable passengers, photo identification should be produced to the carer responsible for the vulnerable person. If necessary, the driver/staff should obtain a record of the carer's contact details if there is no chaperone.

Never double up passengers unless formal consent and authorisation has been obtained.

If a vulnerable passenger is refused service a responsible person should be informed so that alternative arrangements can be made.

Always ask if a vulnerable passenger needs help, do not assume.

A log should be maintained by drivers when a service has been provided to a vulnerable passenger including the details of any incidents occurring/actions taken or refusals of service.





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Drivers/staff should remain professional at all times and should not:

- Touch a vulnerable person inappropriately.
- Make offensive or inappropriate comments (such as the use of swearing and sexualised or discriminatory language).
- Behave in a way that may make a vulnerable passenger feel intimidated or threatened.
- Attempt to misuse personal details obtained via the business about a child (for example communicating with a child at their postal address, by social network, internet, mobile phone or by using any other information disclosed as part of placing a booking, or obtained by any other aspect of the business).

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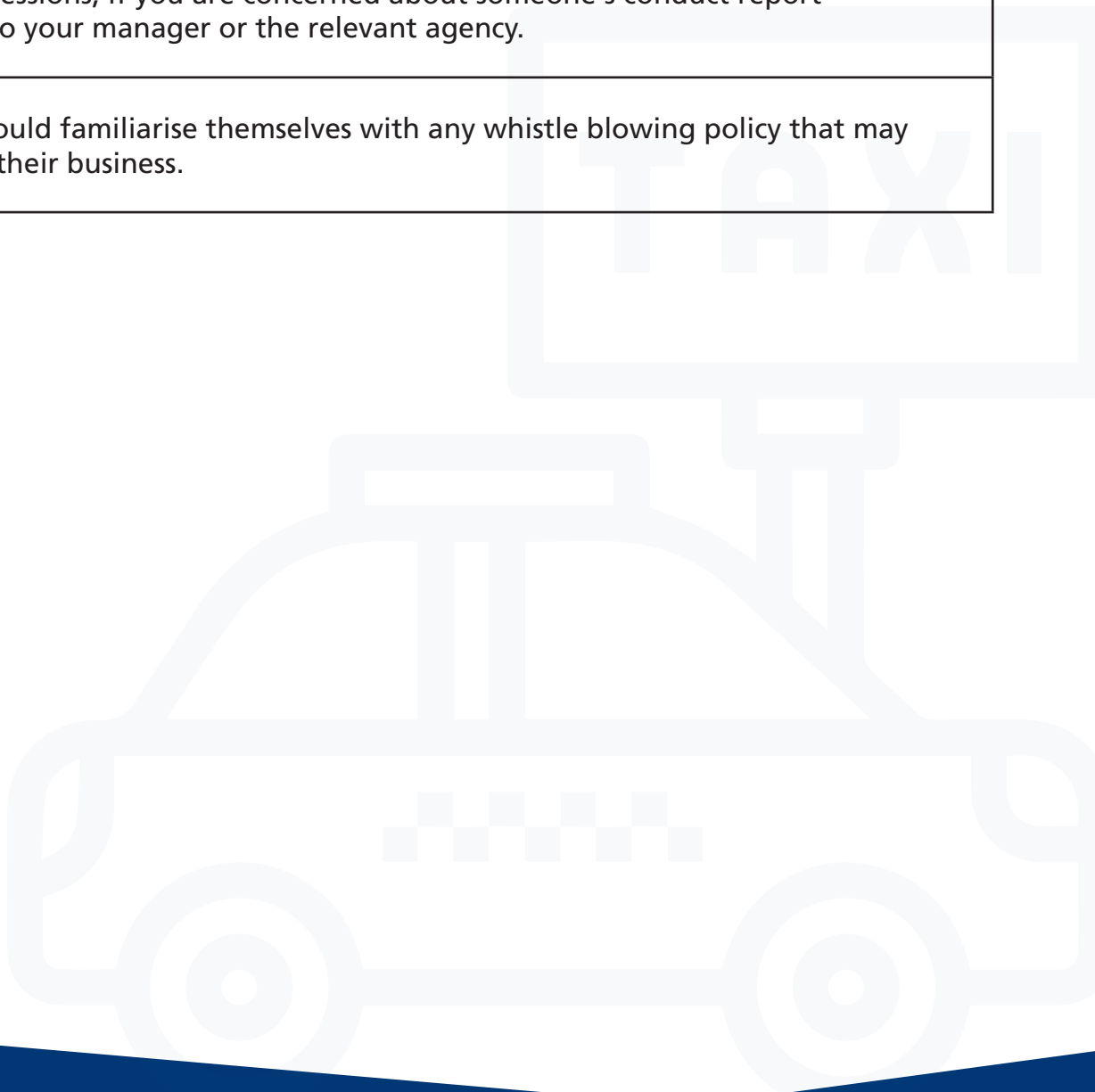
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If a driver or member of staff is concerned about the safety, welfare or behaviour of a vulnerable person, he/she/they should report this to the police or other relevant service and to the business manager.

As with all professions, if you are concerned about someone's conduct report your concerns to your manager or the relevant agency.

Drivers/staff should familiarise themselves with any whistle blowing policy that may be in place for their business.



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Working together to improve the safety and well-being of people, places and communities across Staffordshire.

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