

Media Release

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Super-Trained Taxi Drivers Ready for First Fares

Photocall: 11.30am, Thursday, 27th September 2007, Chelmsford.

Around 50 taxi drivers in Essex will become among the most professional 'cabbies' in the country; receiving a qualification and membership of a scheme helping them become "ambassadors" for Essex.

At an awards ceremony the drivers from Chelmsford will be getting their NVQs in Road Passenger Transport and will become fully fledged members of the Quality Taxi Partnership.

The NVQs have been introduced as part of a scheme to help taxi drivers become ambassadors for the area they serve, with training on customer care, awareness of medical conditions and disabilities. They are also trained in health and safety, safer driving skills and legal matters. They will in essence, be supremely qualified for the work they undertake giving their customers an even better service and a lasting impression of professionalism.

The drivers also become members of the Chelmsford Quality Taxi Partnership which is dedicated to improving the taxi industry helping to provide much needed passenger shelters, better signage together with safer and more reliable vehicles. It forms part of a wider Essex strategy, strengthening the role of public transport and reducing congestion.

For the passenger, the trained drivers will lead to better customer service, with more responsiveness to queries and at no extra cost in fares (the cost of the training is being met by the Learning and Skills Council). While for the taxi drivers, this scheme should mean better career prospects, being the first nationally recognised training course of its type.

Councillor John Spencer, Deputy Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation, said: "Taxi drivers work very hard in Essex at giving their customers the service they want, but this qualification will help them to achieve that something extra special. The driver will essentially become an ambassador for the area they serve, the passenger will be more satisfied with the service and our aim at Essex of providing better public transport will be a stage further to being met."

Speaking as the relevant licensing authority for Chelmsford drivers, Cabinet Member for the Environment, Councillor Janette Potter, said: "I am delighted that our drivers have had the opportunity to participate in this qualification and improve the service that they provide.



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We are encouraging all other eligible drivers in Chelmsford to sign up for this course. The Council takes its responsibility as a licensing authority extremely seriously and works hard to ensure that the public are satisfied with the service they receive.”

Members of the media are invited to attend the award ceremony on Thursday 27th September at the Essex Records Office in Chelmsford (details below).

For media information or for further comment contact: Scott Wilson (Communications Officer, Highways and Transportation) 01245 434383, scott.wilson@essexcc.gov.uk

Notes to editors:

1. A Photocall and opportunity for interviews will be held on Thursday 27th September at 11.30am at the Essex Records Office, Wharf Road, Chelmsford. CM2 6YT. Refreshments will be provided.
2. Cabinet Members from Essex County Council and Chelmsford Borough Council will be attending as well as representatives from the Learning and Skills council and Essex Police.
3. The first QTP scheme was established in Basildon in 2004/5
4. The Chelmsford QTP is a partnership between ECC, Chelmsford Borough Council, Chelmsford Taxi Association, Essex Police, and Private Hire Operators.
5. The NVQ scheme involves at least 14 hours of classroom training and assessment as well as post course driver assessment. Grants of £1800 are provided by the Learning Skills Council.

