



Job Theft (Private Work)

An ever increasing problem for Licensed Operators is drivers who steal work under the guise that it is private work. This is not the case and it must be regarded as job theft. Licensed Operators now report that many drivers are illegally stealing customers and jobs from Operators.

The mobile phone has enabled unscrupulous drivers to spirit customers into a 'private booking' by presenting a private card often with a mobile phone number on it. Not only is this illegal, it renders the driver technically uninsured, furthermore public safety is compromised as all the requirements that operators now rightly have to go through are by-passed.

If a dangerous driver has got through the system and they illegally take a booking from a passenger, there will be no legal booking record at a licensed operating centre or operator management and controls, so passenger safety is clearly being compromised.

Job theft undermines the industry and **The LPHCA** wants the regulator and safety groups to be aware of this sharp practice and bring it to an end.

This is not just a minicab problem; in fact this practice is even more widespread in executive and chauffeur companies than it is in the minicab sector, where principally airport work is usually the favourite stolen 'private' job.

The mobile phone has opened a can of worms and we now want the support of the regulator in this area. We want the licensing authority to help operators by clamping down on drivers who are pretending to be operators but actually running their trade from a mobile phone.

We also need the regulator to warn drivers that taking work directly from customers is illegal, uninsured, dangerous practice and unacceptable.

Roy Ellis at a previous LPHCA meeting said that a driver taking Private Hire bookings on a mobile phone was not acceptable and 'the man operating on the mobile' would become a thing of the past. We are now looking for Roy and The PCO to stamp out job theft and the consequential loss of control is causes for operators.

Drivers doing private work and disappearing from their regular operating centre without notice to do stolen work completely undermines the provision of a reliable pre-booked service for passengers.

Comments were sought from the floor and the problem was clearly understood and widespread. One Operator pointed out that some "small operators" had given their operating centre number as a mobile phone number and that many

small operators running from home were allegedly running so illegally.

A view shared by the association is that any Private Hire Business that is genuinely sighted in an office would hardly use a mobile number as its main point of contact. As a former operator I have also found drivers had licensed as operators from their homes but they were clearly running the so called Private Hire Business by mobile, fax and email with many bookings taken while 'the operator' was in fact driving.



In conjunction with their spurious operating centre they would card up my customers to call their mobiles. Worse still some stole bookings and even corporate clients from my business, often using my drivers illegally to undertake some of the work.

The Association also received a complaint from a very dissatisfied foreign client who had experienced difficulties with an internet site which claimed to be fully licensed by The PCO. Although they were not members I decided to call up their premium landline number which was diverted to a driver's mobile.

This was not an operator just a driver pretending to be an operator and The PCO were notified and action was taken against the company concerned.

It was raised from the floor that many Small Operators working from home addresses were allegedly just drivers operating illegally and the Association supports that viewpoint. It was however pointed out by a member of The Driver Guide Association that some such home based businesses are run perfectly legally from home addresses and this too is accepted as correct by the Association.

A mandate was then sought to formally request that The PCO look at Small Operators to make sure they are all working legally. In addition the Association want The PCO to take very seriously Job Theft, its serious impact on safety and its unlawfulness.

A mandate for the PCO to take action was proposed, seconded and carried unanimously without a single vote against. ●