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Mystery disabled passengers go undercover in Exeter taxis

Undercover taxi passengers with disabilities have given Exeter's cabbies a bumper tip for their helpful service.

Seven 'mystery passengers' undertook 25 trips with a variety of taxi companies around Exeter towards the end of last year.

The survey was aimed at checking how aware the taxi drivers were of the varying needs of people with different disabilities, after they took part in a special training course run by leading disabilities charity Living Options Devon.

Diana Crump, Chief Executive from Living Options Devon, said: "Generally our mystery passengers received a good service most of the time and would be happy to use taxis in the future. They found most drivers were polite, respectful, helpful and friendly, and most of them responded to assistance requests without getting impatient if the passengers needed extra time to get in and out of the vehicle."

Eighty taxi drivers, who are all licensed by Exeter City Council, have taken the half day course at Living Options Devon to date. A further 280 are booked onto further courses in 2008.

The survey has also highlighted a number of recommendations on how they can improve the service they provide under the 'reasonable adjustment' criteria of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).

These include providing SMS text messaging facilities to enable Deaf Sign Language Users or people who have speech impairments to book their own taxis, asking a passenger if they need assistance and what assistance they would like rather than make assumptions, informing visually impaired

passengers how much is on the meter at the start of a journey as well as at the end, and considering hidden disabilities.

Living Options Devon provides half and full day courses to a wide variety of organisations on disabled issues. The charity supports disabled people to help themselves. In 2006, the charity helped over 120 people with disabilities change their lives for the better by providing training in assertiveness, confidence building and other skills. During the same year, Living Options also helped 50 different organisations to comply with the Disabilities Discrimination Act – many of whom made improvements that cost nothing.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

For further information and interviews with Living Options please contact Janet Kipling at Kor Communications on 01392 466733.

- Living Options Devon is an organisation which exists to ensure people with physical and/or sensory disabilities and Deaf people with sign language can make an active and equal contribution in society www.livingoptions.org

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