

# OPEN LETTER TO LONDON'S TAXI DRIVERS

Dear Colleagues

The London Taxidriver's Fund for underprivileged children was established in 1928 by a group of well intentioned cab drivers with the primary aim of taking London's underprivileged children on days out to the seaside. Almost all of the children who went on those trips were financially bereft and were quite identifiable as children worthy of a day out at the cab driver's expense. As the years moved forward, the committee expanded its constitution and started introducing schemes such as buying equipment for homes

and hospitals and also helping out individual children, including cab drivers' children, with a variety of things to make their lives more worthwhile and tolerable. All this was done with the best of intentions and the committee's motives were never questioned about the type of children they were helping. In those far off days it was left to the committee members to best determine how the funds that were donated were spent and what type of children benefited from its actions. The drivers who went on the outings never 'looked for clues' about the children, but relied on the committee to make the right decisions.

Our fund now has a substantial data base of drivers who regularly come on our outings and we thank them for doing so, as without them we could not function properly. Like the drivers years ago they ask no questions about the children but rely on the committee's integrity. Never the less we now have a problem, it seems there are some drivers who decline to join our outings because they do not think that the children we are helping are in any way underprivileged and so miss out on what is traditionally a really important time in helping the children. Please allow me to remind you, long gone are the days when poor children walked about with their butts hanging out of their trousers and holes in their shoes, these days they are more likely to be wearing Gap track suits with Nike trainers, even though these clothes are very likely hand me down's and maybe the only decent clothes the child has, and there's the rub. What the driver who looks at these children does not see is the hidden, usually unspoken problem, the child who has been sexually abused for most of their life, the mental scars of a child frightened to death every night when his father comes home drunk, the mental anguish of someone who is physically abused with a belt or a stick just for saying the wrong thing, a terminal health problem that you don't know about, children surviving day to day in a woman's refuge praying their father does not find them, 'Gingerbread' and foster home children, etc.



Southend trip 2009

All of our children are 'special needs' in one way or another and deserve all the help we can give them.

None of our children have the privileges that we as cab drivers can give our own children, I could go on, but I think you get the point. Being underprivileged does not always mean it is visible, not every child can be in a wheelchair, or walk with callipers, some children are severely deaf, but you would never know it to look at them, some are refugees from war torn countries who will never get over their scars, lots of our children are from various ethnic

backgrounds who may feel lost in today's world. The list is endless and unfortunately it probably will never end, there will always be a need for our cab trade charities.

So I say to all those drivers, old and new, come on these outings, maybe starting with our trip to Southend on 13th July, make a difference to a child's life, don't question the type of child we ask you to take, these children are not chosen lightly, (yes, we are aware of the 'ordinary' child who goes to the same school and has to accompany the group but sometimes we have no choice). We are in constant touch with various organisations making sure we get things as tight as possible. One day it could be a child you know who you want us to help but may not 'look the part'

Thank you for taking the trouble to read this, I hope to see you on one of our outings.

Malcolm Shaffron.

[www.thelondontaxidrivenschilchildrenscharity.co.uk](http://www.thelondontaxidrivenschilchildrenscharity.co.uk)

REGISTERED UNDER THE CHARITIES ACT 1960 REG 249562

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