

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Face Coverings

Please note that this document is up to date as of the date shown in the title; please also regularly check your relevant government sector guide and the recent and upcoming changes web page.

All businesses are required to put in controls to prevent the transmission of Covid-19 on their premises by following the government guidance. Failure to do so can result in fines for business owners, if you are unsure on how to implement these controls in your business or have any questions on the below guidance, please contact your local Environmental Health team at your local council for advice.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

PPE protects the user against health or safety risks at work. It can include items such as safety helmets, gloves, eye protection, high-visibility clothing, safety footwear and safety harnesses. It also includes respiratory protective equipment, such as face masks, face shields and visors.

Risk Assessment:

PPE should be regarded as a last resort. Other approaches must be considered first and include:

- Is the task necessary?
- Can we change the task so that it is carried out in a fundamentally safer way?
- Can the workstation be made safer, e.g. screens, guards, etc.
- Hand Hygiene – following guidance on hand washing procedures and the frequency.
- Hand sanitising stations – following guidance on suitable and effective hand sanitizers.
- Cohort working – keeping dedicated teams of people working together in certain areas.
- Maintaining 2 metre distancing or working back to back facing away from each other.
- Shift working – staggering working patterns.
- Prompt self-isolation if you experience any of the symptoms associated with Coronavirus and get yourself tested for Covid 19, ideally within 3 days of symptoms starting

If a risk assessment identifies PPE as the only safe way to work, then the employer must provide suitable and sufficient PPE for the tasks in which you are involved, including training on its use, storage, maintenance of the equipment, continued supply, and where necessary, its suitable disposal.

Where the wearing of PPE has already been required for the work activity to protect against non-COVID-19 risks, it should be continued.

Current government guidance outlines the requirements for PPE and face coverings when working in differing industry sectors:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

- By law, people providing a close contact service e.g. as hairdressers, barbers, beauticians, tattooists etc. have to wear a clear visor/goggles and *Type II Face Mask.
- By law, staff of venues that provide food and drink are required to wear a face covering, except when eating or drinking (or because they are exempt).
- By law, staff of retail settings are required to wear a face covering, unless they have an exemption.
- Face coverings are mandatory on public transport and will be mandatory in a number of indoor premises (unless they have an exemption)

*Type II face masks are medical face masks made up of a protective 3-ply construction that prevents large particles from reaching the client or working surfaces.

Note: All businesses are required to remind customers to wear a face covering in their premises where already mandated e.g. by displaying a poster/signage.

Face coverings/Visors/Face shields

Face coverings are a source control which may protect others if worn by people who are infected and have not developed symptoms. They are required to be worn as a public health protection measure under the [Health Protection \(Coronavirus, Wearing of Face Coverings in a Relevant Place\) \(England\) Regulations 2020](#) (as amended) for specific sectors and settings. The guidance on face coverings clarifies how to wear them and does not allow the option of wearing a visor or face shield instead (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own>).

Within the context of a COVID-19 control measure, the function of face shields/visors are to protect the wearer from droplets emitted by other people and these may be classed as personal protective equipment (PPE). In addition to good hand hygiene and surface cleaning, people providing close contact services are required to wear: a type II facemask, to prevent the spread of infection from themselves to their clients; and a visor or face shield, to protect themselves.

Face coverings have now been linked to offering some protection against Covid19 (they are not PPE). A face covering is not the same as the surgical masks or respirators used by healthcare and other workers as part of personal protective equipment. These should continue to be reserved for those who need them to protect against risks in their workplace, such as health and care workers, and those in industrial settings, like those exposed to dust hazards.

It is important to know that evidence suggests that wearing a face covering does not protect you. However, if you are infected but have not yet developed symptoms, it may provide some protection for others you come into close contact with. Face coverings (along with protective screens and visors) should not replace the most effective methods of preventing the transmission of COVID-19, which are still social distancing and regular handwashing. These steps must still be followed as much as possible, even when people are wearing protective equipment.

Using PPE and Face covering safely

It is very important to use both PPE and face coverings properly. Employers should support their workers in using PPE/face coverings safely, this means telling workers:

- To wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser before putting a face covering on, and after removing it
- When wearing PPE/face covering, to avoid touching their face or face covering, as this could contaminate them with the virus from their hands.
- That the face covering should be changed if it becomes damp or if it has been touched
- For all staff to continue to wash their hands regularly
- To change and wash their face covering daily
- If the material is washable, the face coverings should be washed in line with manufacturer's instructions. If it's not washable, the face covering should be disposed of carefully in your usual waste.
- Face shields and visors must be cleaned and sanitised between uses.
- To still practise social distancing wherever possible.

It is now compulsory for members of the public to wear face coverings in the following indoor settings (a list of examples for each is included in the brackets):

- public transport (aero planes, trains, trams and buses)
- taxis and private hire vehicles (PHVs)
- transport hubs (airports, rail and tram stations and terminals, maritime ports and terminals, bus and coach stations and terminals)
- shops and supermarkets (places which offer goods or services for retail sale or hire)
- shopping centers (malls and indoor markets)
- auction houses
- premises providing hospitality (bars, pubs, restaurants, cafes), except when seated at a table to eat or drink (see [exemptions](#))
- post offices, banks, building societies, high-street solicitors and accountants, credit unions, short-term loan providers, savings clubs and money service businesses
- estate and lettings agents
- theatres
- premises providing personal care and beauty treatments (hair salons, barbers, nail salons, massage centers, tattoo and piercing parlours)
- premises providing veterinary services
- visitor attractions and entertainment venues (museums, galleries, cinemas, theatres, concert halls, cultural and heritage sites, aquariums, indoor zoos and visitor farms, bingo halls, amusement arcades, adventure activity centres, indoor sports stadiums, funfairs, theme parks, casinos, skating rinks, bowling alleys, indoor play areas including soft-play areas)
- libraries and public reading rooms
- places of worship
- funeral service providers (funeral homes, crematoria and burial ground chapels)
- community centres, youth centres and social clubs
- exhibition halls and conference centres
- public areas in hotels and hostels
- storage and distribution facilities

Businesses can choose to refuse entry if an individual is not wearing one and is not exempt. Please see these links for further guidance and exemptions:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own#exemptions-to-wearing-a-face-covering-where-they-are-mandated>

For further guidance on using face coverings, visors and protective screens in your business, please see the relevant sector guidance for your business:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>