

Face-covering guidance- what you need to know and do (all services)

General advisory note

In all countries face-coverings should be worn in enclosed spaces, where physical distancing is more difficult and where there is a risk of close contact with multiple people who are not members of your household.

What do we mean by face-covering?

In the context of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, a face-covering is something which safely covers the nose and mouth. You can buy reusable or single-use face coverings. You may also use a scarf, bandana, religious garment or hand-made cloth covering but these must securely fit around the side of the face. **Face coverings are not classified as PPE (personal protective equipment) which is used in a limited number of health and social care settings to protect wearers against hazards and risks, such as surgical masks or respirators used in medical and industrial settings.** Face coverings are instead largely intended to protect others, not the wearer, against the spread of infection because they cover the nose and mouth, which are the main confirmed sources of transmission of virus that causes coronavirus infection (COVID-19).

Mandatory

There are some places where you must wear a face-covering by law. Different rules exist in different parts of the UK about which you can find out more on the relevant regional websites:

- [Scotland](#)
- [Wales](#)

In England, you must wear a face-covering in the following indoor settings (a list of examples for each is included in the brackets):

- public transport (aeroplanes, trains, trams, ferry and buses)
- 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 centres (malls and indoor markets)

- auction houses
- premises providing professional, legal or financial services (post offices, banks, building societies, high-street solicitors and accountants, credit unions, short-term loan providers, savings clubs and money service businesses)
- premises providing personal care and beauty treatments (hair salons, barbers, nail salons, massage centres, 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, funfairs, theme parks)
- 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
- public areas in hotels and hostels
- storage and distribution facilities

Education

Schools that teach children in years 7 and above and which are not under specific local restriction measures have the discretion to require face coverings for pupils, staff and visitors in areas outside the classroom where social distancing cannot easily be maintained, such as corridors and communal areas and it has been deemed appropriate in those circumstances. Primary school children not need to wear a face-covering. In particular, schools that teach years 7 and above may decide to recommend the wearing of face-coverings for pupils, staff or visitors in communal areas outside the classroom where the layout of the schools makes it difficult to maintain social distancing when staff and pupils are moving around the premises, for example, corridors.

In primary schools where social distancing is not possible in areas outside of classrooms between members of staff or visitors, for example in staffrooms, headteachers have the discretion to decide whether to ask staff or visitors to wear, or agree to them wearing face-coverings in these circumstances. For more information click [here](#).

Scotland - People must by law wear a face-covering in shops and on public transport and public transport premises such as railway and bus stations and airports. This applies to open-air railway platforms, but not to bus stops. Other new settings include banks and beauty salons, museums, places of worship and aquariums, same as in England. Certain indoor public places have been listed in the *Scotland* related hyperlink above.

Education

Secondary school pupils have to wear face-coverings between lessons from 31 August. The Scottish Government says all pupils over the age of 12 should wear face coverings in corridors and communal areas. However, they do not have to wear them in classrooms. On school buses, everyone over the age of five has to wear face-coverings.

Wales - Three layered face-coverings are mandatory on public transport from the 27th July and in shops from the 14th September. More specific information about face-covering can be found in the *Wales* related hyperlink above.

Education

It is up to schools and councils to decide if face-coverings are used. But the government is recommending those aged 11 and over wear them when social distancing cannot be maintained, including in schools and school transport.

Public transport exemptions;

Some passengers are exempt from the [rules](#) including:

- Children under 11
- People with disabilities
- Those with breathing difficulties
- Anyone travelling with someone who relies on lip reading

If it is "reasonably necessary" for you to eat or drink, you can remove the face-covering to do so.

People can be refused travel if they don't follow the rules, and can be fined as a last resort.

[Click here for an easy read poster for Exemptions on Public Transport](#)

Fines

England

From 24 September this is £200 (reduced to £100 if paid within 14 days) for the first offence.

Repeat offenders receiving fines on public transport or in an indoor setting will have their fines doubled at each offence.

After the first offence, there is no discount. For example, receiving a second fine will amount to £400 and a third fine will be £800, up to a maximum value of £6,400.

Scotland

If necessary, the police have enforcement powers including issuing fines of £60 (halving to £30 if paid within 28 days) if members of the public do not comply with this law.

Wales

When asked, the public will be given an opportunity to wear a face covering or explain why they have a reasonable excuse not to wear a face covering. If they are not complying with the law they may be asked to leave the premises.

However, police or environmental health officers can also issue a fixed penalty for breaches of these requirements. A first offence is punishable by a penalty of £60 (which doubles for each subsequent offence up to a maximum of £1,920). Repeat offenders could also be prosecuted in court where there is no limit to the fine that may be issued.

Other circumstance for not having to wear a face-covering

In settings where face-coverings are required in England, there are some circumstances where people may not be able to wear a face-covering. Please be mindful and respectful of such circumstances, noting that some people are less able to wear face-coverings, and that the reasons for this may not be visible to others. More information about when you do not need to wear a face-covering can be found [here](#).

Exemption Cards

Those who have an age, health or disability reason for not wearing a face-covering should not be routinely asked to give any written evidence of this, this includes exemption cards. No person needs to seek advice or request a letter from a medical professional about their reason for not wearing a face-covering.

Some people may feel more comfortable showing something that says they do not have to wear a face-covering. This could be in the form of an exemption card, badge or even a home-made sign. Face-covering exemption cards are available on the Covid19 Resource Hub or via accessing the hyperlink below.



This is a personal choice and is not necessary in law.

[Access exemption card templates](#)

For exemptions in different parts of the UK please refer to the specific guidance for [Scotland](#) and [Wales](#).

When at work the rules for PPE still apply and you will need to remove your face-covering and refer to the services PPE policy to ensure you wear the correct equipment if required.