

Encouraging Visitors to Wear Face Coverings in HSC Settings

- Key Principles for Staff

Everyone coming into a HSC setting must wear a face covering. A face covering is any item which encloses the person's nose and mouth. However, some people may find it difficult to wear face coverings and some may be exempt from doing so. It is important that staff are aware of these exemptions, which include:

If you need to seek medical assistance or to provide care to someone who needs assistance, such as a vulnerable person or in an emergency

If you have a physical or mental illness, disability or impairment that means you can't put on, wear or remove a face covering

If putting on, wearing or removing a face covering would cause you severe distress

If you are with someone who relies on lip reading to communicate

If you need to remove it to avoid harm or injury or the risk of harm or injury to yourself or others

If you need to eat, drink, or take medication

Further detail is available at:

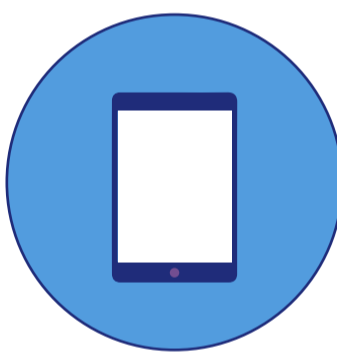
<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-face-coverings>

If someone is not exempt, research suggests that engaging with them to understand why they are reluctant to wear a face covering can be helpful. You have an opportunity to educate them and reinforce the reasons for wearing a face covering – to protect their own health, and that of healthcare workers and other visitors/patients.

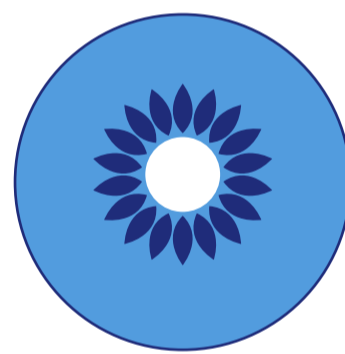
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Where possible, let people know **in advance** that they need to wear a face covering when coming into an HSC setting.



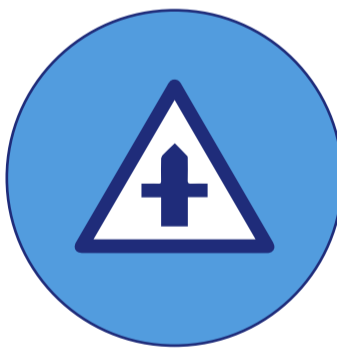
If appropriate, check whether wearing a face covering will be an issue – if so, consider alternatives such as a virtual consultation/visit.



- Be respectful - the reasons for not wearing a face covering may not be visible.
- Those with hidden disabilities may carry something to indicate this (eg Sunflower lanyard/wristband)



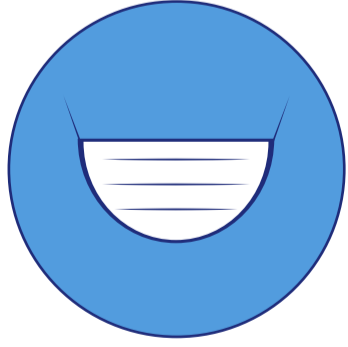
Without being intrusive, try to explore why the person doesn't want to wear a face covering.



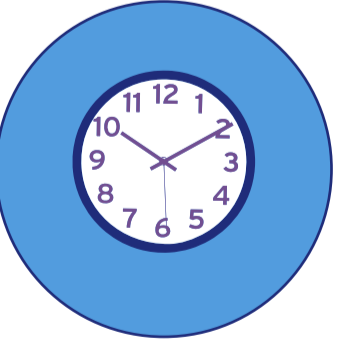
Tailor your approach to the reasons someone gives for not wearing a face covering.

- You don't need a letter from a doctor or the government to show that you can't wear a face covering.

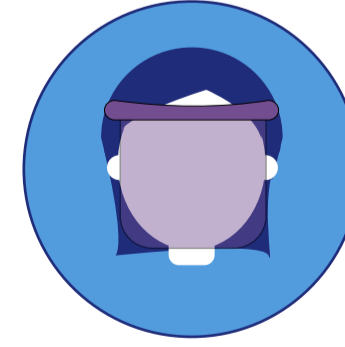
- Use encouraging positive language when asking people to wear face coverings, and use 'we' rather than 'you', eg "by wearing a face covering we can help prevent transmission of the virus".



Offer a face covering if someone doesn't have one. Consider whether they might need help to put it on or take it off.



If someone seems anxious about wearing a face covering, reassure them they'll only need to wear it for as short a time as possible.



If someone is exempt from wearing a face covering, consider if they could wear a clear mask/visor instead, in line with the Protocol for use of the clear mask.

There may be occasions when we have to accept that we cannot influence everyone with these types of approaches. It is important to apply mitigations such as 2m social distancing and hand sanitisation.