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# Information for businesses on face coverings



All information in this leaflet was correct at the time of publication 31 July however, you should always check government guidance available at [www.gov.uk/coronavirus/business-support](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/business-support) to ensure you are following the latest advice.

People at the Heart  
of Everything We Do

## What is a face covering?

In the context of the coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak, a face covering is something which safely covers the nose and mouth. This could be a reusable or single-use mask, or a scarf, bandana, religious garment or hand-made cloth covering that securely fits round the side of the face. Face coverings are not classified as PPE (personal protective equipment).

## Why are face coverings now mandatory in shops and other public settings?

Coronavirus (Covid-19) usually spreads by droplets from coughs, sneezes and speaking. These droplets can also be picked up from surfaces, if you touch a surface and then your face without washing your hands first. This is why social distancing, regular hand hygiene and covering coughs and sneezes is so important in controlling the spread of the virus.

The best available scientific evidence is that, when used correctly, wearing a face covering may reduce the spread of coronavirus droplets in certain circumstances, helping to protect others.

Because face coverings are mainly intended to protect others, not the wearer, from coronavirus (Covid-19) they are not a replacement for social distancing and regular hand washing.

## Where must customers wear face coverings?

From 24 July 2020, it is mandatory by law for customers to wear a face covering in retail environments. These include:

- indoor shopping centres
- shops and supermarkets
- a shop within a different type of premises that does not require a face covering
- buying food or drink to takeaway.

From 8 August 2020, it will become mandatory by law for customers to wear a face covering in more indoor public settings. This includes:

- cinemas
- museums and galleries
- places of worship.

Customers are expected to wear a face covering before entering any of these settings and must keep it on until they leave.

All businesses should continue to monitor updates over the coming weeks and months as there may be additional announcements that require more businesses to request customers to wear face coverings.



## Are businesses required to support this law?

Shops, supermarkets and other premises where face coverings are required are encouraged to take reasonable steps to promote compliance with the law and could refuse entry to anyone who does not have a valid exemption.

Businesses are encouraged to display signage at the entrance to the store and other points as needed in the store, to remind customers of the law. A suitable poster has been included with this leaflet.

If staff are challenged, they can explain to customers why the government has adopted this new law:

- it is to keep others safe and limit the transmission of Covid-19
- many people have asked for this policy to be implemented.

## Who is exempt from wearing a face covering?

Customers do not need to wear a face covering if they have a legitimate reason not to. This includes (but is not limited to):

- young children under the age of 11
- not being able to put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental illness or impairment or disability
- if putting on, wearing or removing a face covering will cause severe distress

- if providing assistance to someone who relies on lip reading to communicate
- to avoid harm or injury, or the risk of harm or injury, to themselves or others
- to avoid injury, or to escape a risk of harm and they do not have a face covering with them
- to eat or drink if reasonably necessary (this includes in shops or supermarkets with cafés or seating areas, allowing customers to removing a face covering in this area only)
- in order to take medication
- if a police officer or other official requests removal of 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. However, this is a personal choice and is not necessary in law. 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.



## Can staff ask customers to remove face coverings?

Customers are permitted to remove a face covering when asked:

- if asked to do so in a bank, building society or post office for identification
- if asked to do so by shop staff or relevant employees for identification, the purpose of assessing health recommendations, such as a pharmacist, or for age identification purposes including when buying age restricted products such as alcohol.

The Retail of Alcohol Standards Group (RASG) has issued a new poster alerting customers that look under 25 that they may be asked to remove their face coverings to help check their age. This poster has been included with this leaflet.

## Should staff wear face coverings?

It is not currently mandatory in law for shop or supermarket staff to wear face coverings. However, the government strongly recommends that employers consider their use where appropriate and where other mitigations are not in place.

Businesses are already subject to legal obligations to protect their staff under existing employment law. This means taking appropriate steps to provide a safe working environment, which may include face coverings where appropriate, alongside other mitigation such as Perspex screens to separate workers from customers.

Business should follow the Covid-19 secure guidance relevant to their industry, found at [www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19)

## Further information:

Detailed government guidance for businesses can be found at [www.gov.uk/coronavirus/business-support](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/business-support).

This includes guidance on:

- funding and support
- your responsibilities as an employer
- how to run your business safely
- businesses that should be closed.

Newham Council has a dedicated section of the website with important information for businesses that can be found at [www.newham.gov.uk/Businesssupportcovid19](http://www.newham.gov.uk/Businesssupportcovid19)

If you still unsure about how to follow relevant regulations please contact [trading.standards@newham.gov.uk](mailto:trading.standards@newham.gov.uk)

