

Wearing face coverings at your workplace

Napo is aware of our members concerns over the use of Face Coverings following revised Government guidance and what this may mean for you in your workplace. Please remember that, where you can work at home you should continue to do so. For most of our members working completely at home is not an option so they will need to be in the workplace part or all of the time.

In our engagement across all of the employers where Napo are recognised we have insisted that before any workplace is reopened or where the number of face to face interviews with clients and families are to be increased, a risk assessment process which includes control measures such as social distancing and hygiene measures as well as PPE, must have been conducted and have had appropriate trade union involvement. We have secured additional time for our accredited representatives to be able to assist in this work.

We now know that Face Coverings are compulsory when people are using public transport and soon to be when in a shop but the Government advice on what to do at work has understandably caused members to raise questions with us. The following statement from Napo seeks to add clarity to the guidance issued by HMPPS:

The guidance note circulated by HMPPS remains accurate but for the avoidance of doubt, even when social distancing is maintained exhalations may spread virus particles and this may be more of a risk in areas used by multiple people. Following the PPE and social distancing guidance we expect employers to ensure safe working practices across their estates. Whilst the current Public Health England guidance does not require the use of a face covering in workplaces where social distancing is possible, Napo acknowledges that members may wish to use a face covering when entering and leaving their workplace and when moving around their building. Members may prefer to remove their face covering whilst situated at their personal workspace and when settled in an interview or group room with a client. As noted in the guidance face coverings are not PPE and offer little protection for the wearer but may assist in limiting the spread of the virus by the wearer when used in accordance with widely available advice.

For security reasons members working in prisons are prevented from covering their face in the prison except when the 2m social distance cannot be maintained. In these circumstances PPE provided for this purpose by the Prison can be used.

The advice remains that if you are able to work at home you should do so. For work that cannot be done at home, in situations where a 2m social distance cannot be maintained members should be using appropriate PPE as previously advised and detailed in the HMPPS guidance. Suitable PPE (along with training in its use) for these circumstances will be provided by the employer.

Members who may have particular difficulties in fitting face coverings or face masks (perhaps due to a disability) or cannot wear face coverings or a mask due to a disability must raise this with their line manager as part of their individual risk assessment.

In addition to this advice, members are reminded that all staff and clients should maintain 2m social distance from all others and carry out regular hand hygiene.