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News

## Face covering exemption cards launched

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Part of: [Health and social care](#), [Public safety and emergencies](#), [Communities and third sector](#), [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) in Scotland](#), [Children and families](#)

Supporting everyone to feel safer.

The Scottish Government has produced a face covering exemption card, to support those who are unable to wear one to feel more confident and safe when accessing public spaces and using public services.

Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People Shirley Anne Somerville said:

“Everyone who can do so is legally obliged to wear a face covering where it is mandated by law. But there are some people who cannot, due to health conditions, disabilities or other special circumstances where a face covering may cause difficulty or distress.

“Discrimination against people in this situation is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

“We have developed this card in conjunction with a range of equality stakeholders as something which can clearly communicate to others if you are exempt from the regulations.”

The face covering exemption card is branded with the Healthier Scotland and NHS Scotland logos under the FACTS for a Safer Scotland campaign.

A physical card can be requested from Disability Equality Scotland to wear on a lanyard or hold in a wallet, while a digital card is also available to be displayed on a phone, tablet or other device.

Morven Brooks, Chief Executive Officer of Disability Equality Scotland, said:

“Since face coverings became mandatory, we have been inundated with calls from our members, many of whom cannot wear face coverings for a variety of health reasons.

“The launch of the Scottish Government exemption card will help disabled people to feel more comfortable and confident to go about their daily lives free from fear of harassment and abuse.”

Joseph Carter, Head of Asthma UK and British Lung Foundation Scotland, said:

“We are pleased that a Government backed exemption card has been created and we hope this will ensure no one faces any more prejudice during this very stressful time.”

Physical and digital cards are available to request online from 29 October at [www.exempt.scot](http://www.exempt.scot) or via a free helpline on 0800 121 6240.

## Background

The Scottish Government was the first of the devolved administrations to produce guidance on the use of face coverings – recognising exemptions where people are unable to, or it would be inappropriate to, wear a face covering. These include exemptions due to health conditions or disabilities, or for those providing care for someone with a health condition or disability, or if a face covering cannot be applied and worn in the proper manner safely and consistently.

The exemption policy was developed in consultation with a disabled people’s organisation and the initial message received was that the onus should be placed on society to be accepting and understanding of exemptions, rather than for the individual to prove their exemption. However, following further consultation with a range of equality stakeholders it was determined that a card be created to provide people who are exempt with a tool to help them feel comfortable to actively participate in society without fear.

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