

ALL EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION FROM THE MANAGING DIRECTOR - COVID-19, NO 24, 22 JULY 2020

I hope that this latest briefing finds you and your family well. This briefing provides guidance on the use of face coverings when at work as I am aware that the official government advice on face coverings has changed over time and there may be confusion regarding how the current rules apply to the work environment.

Over the past 4 months, there has been much debate both nationally and globally around the wearing of face coverings to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. At the start of this pandemic, there was little scientific evidence to support the use of face coverings and the UK experts believed that anything other than a surgical face mask was pointless. However, that evidence has changed and there is now an understanding that symptomatic (infected) people are not the only way the virus is shed and the focus has shifted from how to avoid getting the virus to how to avoid spreading it through the wearing of face coverings. The Scottish Government therefore recently decided that the wearing of face coverings should be mandatory when using public transport (when both as a passenger on transport and when entering public transport premises such as a bus or railway station) or entering shops.

It is important to recognise that the optimal way to prevent transmission of COVID-19 is to use a combination of interventions from across the hierarchy of controls; hence the main advice and emphasis from the World Health Organisation (WHO), Health Protection Scotland (HPS) and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is a combination of **physical distancing and hand washing (or sanitizing where soap and water is not available)** as the main lines of defense and not face masks or face coverings.

What is a face covering?

Face coverings are described by the Scottish Government as a cloth or textile which can cover the mouth and nose but still allow the wearer to breath, for example a scarf. Face coverings can be made from a variety of fabrics, such as cotton, silk, or linen. They may be factory made, sewn by hand, or improvised from household items such as bandanas, scarves, or woven fabrics, such as cotton t-shirts etc.

A face covering is not a certified, surgical or medical grade face mask.

Am I required to wear a face covering when at work?

As the government guidance stands currently, the only time a Tayside Contracts' employees will be required to wear a face covering when at work, is when they are required to enter a shop, merchant or are required to use public transport as part of their duties. Tayside Contracts will provide employees with an appropriate face covering for this purpose.

Further to this, for those employees who share transport when at work i.e. to travel from one location or site to another, specific guidance has been developed in consultation with our 3 recognised Trade Unions. This guidance can be found [here](#). Tayside Contracts will not force any employee to travel in a vehicle with another employee and instead will work with the employee to discuss and address any concerns they may have associated with this.

Can I choose to wear a face covering when at work?

Tayside Contracts recognises that some employees may choose to wear a face covering when at work as this may alleviate any potential anxiety they have and allow them to feel more in control of their own health. We are happy to support this as long as the following guidance is adhered to:

How should a face covering be worn?

- ✓ Wash a new face covering before you wear it, and after each use or at least once a day
- ✓ Wash your hands before and after putting on and taking off or adjusting your face covering
- ✓ Do not touch your eyes, nose, or mouth when putting on, taking off or adjusting your face covering
- ✓ Discard used disposable face coverings responsibly or launder after each use if using a reusable covering
- ✓ Place used reusable face coverings in a bag until they can be washed and laundered
- ✓ Do not share face coverings with others, even people you live with
- ✓ Discard face coverings that have stretched out or no longer stays over your nose and mouth, has damaged ties or straps, or holes or tears in the fabric

Face coverings used should:

- ✓ Cover the nose and mouth and fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face
- ✓ Be secured to the head with ties, straps, or ear loops, or wrapped around the lower face
- ✓ Include multiple layers while allowing for breathing without restriction
- ✓ Be able to be cleaned regularly without damage or change to shape

Face coverings used should NOT:

- X Be football scarfs
- X Be offensive, concerning to the public or compromise the professional image of organisation
- X Interfere with or compromise existing control measures
- X Be worn in the Catering environment due to food hygiene regulations

I have a health condition or disability that prevents me from wearing a face covering, what should I do?

Government advice states that an individual is exempt from wearing a face covering if they have a health condition or are disabled and a face covering would be inappropriate because it would cause difficulty, pain or severe distress or anxiety or because an individual cannot apply a covering and wear it in the proper manner safely and consistently. If you are required to wear a face covering at work and have a health condition or disability that prevents you wearing a face covering, please make your line manager aware.

Should you have any questions about any of the topics covered in this briefing or are seeking support please do not hesitate to contact your line manager. Please continue to refer to Tayside Contracts' website www.tayside-contracts.co.uk on a regular basis to check for further updates.

If you have not already done so and wish to provide your email address to us in order to benefit from electronic access to communications such as these, please forward your email address to Communications@tayside-contracts.co.uk We will not forward your email address onto any third parties or use it for any other purpose other than to communicate with you.

Iain C Waddell, Managing Director, 22 July 2020