

Re. Transparent face masks approved for use by NHS Transparent Mask Panel

I hope this letter finds you well. As CEO of the National Deaf Children's Society, I wanted to share some good news with you around transparent face masks.

You may be aware that for deaf children young people and adults, patients and staff alike, opaque facemasks create a serious communication barrier. The increased use of facemasks during the pandemic, although necessary to reduce the spread of infection, has made lip-reading and understanding visual cues from facial expressions impossible. This has left deaf people (and I include myself here) struggling to communicate. The implications of misunderstanding medical information due to these new barriers could be very serious.

To address these issues, a UK wide working group was set up by NHS England and NHS Improvement to work on the development of transparent PPE, which the National Deaf Children's Society has been supporting. We understand that this has included input from Northern Ireland health professionals. The group produced a new technical specification which gives testing, design and performance requirements for single-use transparent face masks which provide comparable protection to that of a Type IIR mask. The technical specification has been published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/technical-specifications-for-personal-protective-equipment-ppe/transparent-face-mask-technical-specification>

Three products have now completed this process and are available for use in healthcare settings as an equivalent to the Type IIR mask. These masks are not yet on the NHS supply chain, but they are available for purchase and use by NHS Trusts immediately. It is our expectation that the Infection Control group within the Public Health Agency will have endorsed these decisions, and that Trusts in Northern Ireland are therefore in a position to commission these products.



**We are the National Deaf Children's Society,
the leading charity for deaf children.**

Chief Executive: Susan Daniels OBE | President: Sir Christopher Benson FRICS DL
Registered Office: Ground Floor South, Castle House, 37–45 Paul Street, London EC2A 4LS
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We would encourage you to purchase a supply of these masks so they are available for use with deaf patients and staff. Their use could be regarded as a reasonable adjustment under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and we will be encouraging all our members to ask services to try them. Polly's experience below shows how clear face masks can make a huge difference.

'The use of clear face masks by all hospital staff when communicating with me was invaluable during a recent post-surgery recovery period. I was so tired after my operation that I didn't have the energy to struggling with the communication barrier caused by standard face masks. They didn't fog up and seemed easy to wear... I found my inpatient experience to be the easiest hospital experience from a deaf perspective that I've had in a long time, which is all down to these clear face masks. This is because they enabled me to lipread and communicate with everyone - from surgeons and anaesthetists to physiotherapists and psychologists - easily.'

Polly, 17, on her recent experience at a London children's hospital.

Contact details for suppliers of the compliant products are below:

| Supplier | Contact Person | E-mail |
|---|-----------------|--|
| Britannia Safety Ltd (Smile Shield) | Chris Endicott | chris@britannialtd.co.uk |
| C & P Medical Trading Ltd (Smile Shield) | Peter Shaw | petershaw@c-pmedical.com |
| Creative Activity (Smile Shield) | Edward McMullan | edward@creative-activity.co.uk |
| Opulent Collection Ltd (Smile Shield) | Irfat Chowdhury | info@opulentcollection.co.uk |
| Scientific Laboratory Supplies Ltd (Smile Shield) | Alison Hill | slstender@scientific-labs.com |
| Solar Medical & Chemical (Smile Shield) | Rebecca Jordan | becky@solarmedchem.co.uk |
| Springfield Papers Ltd (Smile Shield) | Roland Coldrick | roland@springfieldpapers.com |
| Contechs Consulting Ltd (Contechs) | Andy Marsh | amarsh@contechs.co.uk |
| Globus (shetland) Ltd (Alpha Solway Haika-MXC) | Mark Websper | mark.websper@globus.co.uk |

The Department for Health and Social Care was planning on running a pilot across a range of settings but this has been cancelled. Instead they are asking for users to log feedback here -

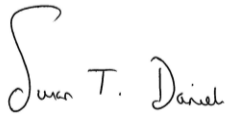
<https://form.jotform.com/220301536099350>. If you have any questions

about the work of the Transparent PPE group please email:
england.pperis@nhs.net.


We would also be keen to know how you find using these transparent masks if you do so, so if you can, please also do contact campaigns@ndcs.org.uk with your feedback.

I'm grateful to Kath Lewis, President of the British Academy of Audiology for her support and co-signing of this letter. We look forward to hearing from you and many thanks in anticipation of your assistance.

Yours sincerely

Handwritten signature of Susan T. Daniels in cursive script.

Susan Daniels
Chief Executive
National Deaf Children's Society

Handwritten signature of K.M. Lewis in cursive script.

Kath Lewis
President
British Academy of Audiology