

Re. Transparent face masks in the NHS

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

While I am aware that the legal requirement to wear facemasks in health settings is coming to an end, I am also aware that guidance still strongly recommends their use. As such, I understand health boards will continue to require a supply of facemasks.

You may be aware that for deaf patients and staff alike, opaque facemasks create a serious communication barrier. The increased use of facemasks, although necessary to reduce the spread of infection during the pandemic, 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 to work on the development of transparent PPE, which the National Deaf Children's Society has been supporting. 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. Three products have now completed this process and are available for use in healthcare settings as an equivalent to the Type IIR mask.

I understand that plans are afoot to pilot one of these masks in parts of Wales, which is fantastic news. I would welcome your assurances that your health board will support the swift introduction of this pilot and ensure that quick progress is made to allow wide availability of transparent masks across your health board area.



**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
The National Deaf Children's Society is a registered charity in England and Wales (1016532)
and in Scotland (SC040779). Company limited by guarantee registered in England no. 2752456

We would also like to highlight that, in addition, to the mask in the upcoming pilot, there are also two other masks that are compliant with the technical specification and are also now available.

We strongly welcome use the of transparent masks with deaf patients and staff. Their use could be regarded as a reasonable adjustment under the Equality Act 2010. The experience of ‘Polly’, a 17 year old member of the National Deaf Children’s Society, 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 children’s hospital.

It is imperative that deaf patients and staff are able to access these communication aids at the earliest opportunity. While the National Deaf Children’s Society and British Academy of Audiology do not endorse any particular mask, we would encourage you to consider how your health board could best utilise procurement of any of the compliant masks alongside the pilot in order to ensure transparent masks are quickly and widely available across the region.

The contact details for suppliers of the compliant products are outlined below:

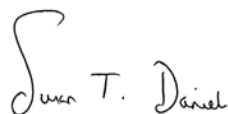
Supplier	Contact Person	E-mail
----------	----------------	--------

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

We would also be keen to know how you find using these transparent masks if you do purchase them. So if you can, please 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



Susan Daniels
Chief Executive
National Deaf Children's Society



Kath Lewis
President
British Academy of Audiology