



## Face coverings: briefing for forces – England

This briefing provides information on face coverings for police officers and police staff and should be used to inform the development of force policies. It has been developed to accompany the procurement and distribution of face coverings to forces.

The following key points apply.

- Evidence suggests that wearing a face covering does not protect the wearer. However, if the wearer is infected but asymptomatic, a face covering may provide some protection for others with whom they come into close contact.
- Maintaining social distancing where possible, washing hands regularly with soap and water, and using hand sanitiser remain the most effective way to prevent transmission of disease.
- Policing is dynamic and situations can change without notice. If an officer or staff member are undertaking a policing activity with less than two metres between them and a member of the public, they should be wearing a fluid repellent surgical IIR mask, or a higher grade of protection as directed in the **PPE guidance**. This may necessitate, where practicable, the safe removal of a face covering before fitting PPE.
- A face covering is not to be used in conjunction with any other form of face mask, as this may cause breathing difficulties.

### Hospitals

In line with current government guidance, police officers and staff attending hospital settings should wear a form of face covering where appropriate. For up-to-date information on face coverings in a healthcare setting, see **New government recommendations for England NHS hospital trusts and private hospital providers**

### Public transport

In line with regulations, no person without reasonable excuse will be able to use public transport without wearing a face covering unless they are a police officer or PCSO acting in the course of their duty (other exemptions apply). For further information on wearing face coverings on public transport, see **College of Policing COVID-19 face coverings briefing**

Forces are responsible for setting their own local policy regarding where officers and staff will be expected to wear face coverings. The decision to use face coverings must be based on a local assessment that considers the threat and risk, equality impact, and any relevant legislation and government guidance. This policy should also cover relevant 'off duty' concerns, such as travelling to and from work.

## The distinction between PPE and face coverings

### PPE:

PPE protects the user against health or safety risks at work.

It can include items such as **gloves, eye protection, aprons** and **high-visibility clothing**. It also includes respiratory protective equipment, such as **face masks**.

Where you are already using PPE in your work activity, you should continue to do so.



### Face coverings:

Face coverings are not intended to protect the wearer. They are intended to protect against transmission of the disease to others if the wearer is infected but asymptomatic.

This is an example of a face covering.



See [Public Health England \(PHE\) guidance on face coverings](#)

## How to wear, remove and look after your face covering

Always follow the manufacturer's instructions on wearing, removing and cleaning face coverings.

The following is generic information and provides a template for how to communicate instructions to staff.

A face covering is not the same as a PPE face mask, such as the fluid-repellent surgical IIR mask, FFP2 or FFP3 respirator mask. To ensure that a face covering can be as effective as possible, it must be maintained correctly.

### Putting on the face covering

- Before handling your face covering, exercise good hand hygiene protocols by using a hand sanitiser gel, or by washing your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds then drying them.
- When placing the covering on your face, avoid touching your face or the inner surfaces of the covering.
- Place the face covering in the palm of your hand, with the outer surface touching your hand and the straps hanging out of the way. Place the covering against your nose and mouth. Place the straps behind the ears and adjust them until the covering fits firmly but comfortably over the nose and mouth.

### Removing the face covering

- When removing the covering, place your hand over the outer surface and hold the covering against your face. Remove the restraining straps and take the covering away from your face. Fold the face covering together and store it away from any clean face coverings.
- Exercise good hand hygiene protocols by using a hand sanitiser gel, or by washing your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds then drying them.
- Do not lay the face covering down on surfaces.
- When storing clean face coverings, always fold the covering together so as not to expose the inner layers. Store clean coverings separate from used ones.
- The face covering should be used for the shortest period of time possible. If it becomes damp or soiled, it should be replaced.
- If the face covering is damaged, it should be replaced.

### Cleaning the face covering

- The face covering should be laundered in accordance with the manufacturer's instruction. You do not need to separate coverings from your household wash. Do not tumble dry or iron face coverings.
- Do not share face coverings with colleagues or family members.