

DATE: July 2020

Face covering guidance for the retail sector

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, Essex Police's consistent approach has been communicating clearly and encouraging people to behave responsibly.

We follow 'the 4 Es': **Engage. Explain. Encourage. Enforce.** First we will try to **engage** with someone, **explain** how we think they are breaking the rules, and **encourage** them to change their behaviour to reduce the risk to public safety and health.

If people still do not follow the rules the police can tell them to disperse, tell parents to stop their children breaking the rules or if necessary fine them. If someone continues to ignore the instructions, the police can arrest them if they think it is proportionate and necessary. Fortunately by taking the 4E's approach, the vast majority of incidents are resolved without needing to take enforcement action.

The retail sector has shown an incredible willing to adapt their approach to operating during the pandemic from implementing social distancing in store to managing customer flow and numbers. As with other aspects of the Coronavirus Regulations, it is anticipated that Police involvement should be a last resort. We have provided this guidance to assist retailers self-managing compliance and resolving any conflict around face coverings.

What are the legal requirements on face coverings?

As of Friday 24th July, it will become an offence for anyone entering a shop not to wear a face covering. It is important to remember that a face covering is any covering that covers the wearer's mouth and nose. This could be as simple as a scarf or cloth face covering. Whilst we still await publication of the government guidance below are a list of expected exemptions. The full guidance when published will be available at <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

Likely exemptions:

- A child under the age of 11 years
- Anyone unable to put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental illness or impairment, or disability
- If putting on, wearing or removing a face covering will cause you severe distress
- If you are travelling with or providing assistance to someone who relies on lip reading to communicate
- To avoid harm or injury, or the risk of harm or injury, to yourself or others
- To avoid injury, or to escape a risk of harm, and you do not have a face covering with you
- To eat or drink, but only if necessary
- To take medication
- An employee of the shop
- An emergency responder acting in their capacity as an emergency responder

There are also scenarios when you are permitted to remove a face covering when asked:

- If asked to do so by shop staff for the purpose of age identification
- If speaking with people who rely on lip reading, facial expressions and clear sound. Some may ask you, either verbally or in writing, to remove a covering to help with communication
- If a police officer or other official requests you remove your face covering

It is expected that as with any new legislation, it will take the public time to adapt to the new requirements and understand their responsibilities in protecting themselves and others. Essex Police seek the support of the retail industry in engaging with the public in a positive manner to help to increase the compliance of wearing face coverings in shops.

Advice when dealing with customers

It is anticipated there will be occasions where customers enter your business without wearing a face covering. We encourage businesses to follow the 4E's and take a proportionate approach to managing any customers who may not be complying with face covering requirements. By taking this approach it will help you to maintain the safety of your staff and customers

When dealing with potential conflict consider utilising the 5 step appeal process

Ethical appeal

Ask the individual to comply with your request to utilise a face covering, (or if the situation has escalated) your request for them to leave the premises.

Reasoned appeal

Reinforce the reasoning for wearing a face covering i.e. government legislation and to protect others. If the situation has escalated and perhaps you have asked them to leave, reinforce why you have asked them to leave and refer to their behaviour which has caused the request.

Personal appeal

Appeal to the individual- Explain they may be jeopardising values that are important to them e.g. public embarrassment by their behaviour, loss of respect by friends or family or potentially even loss of free time if arrested. Explain the impact the behaviour is having on other customers and staff.

Practical appeal

Tell the individual what is required and that the incident cannot continue. Ask if there is anything you can reasonably do to assist them to comply with your request.

1 Engage

If you become aware of someone not wearing a face covering when required to do so, speak to the individual politely. Identify your position and role as a representative of the business.

2 Explain

Explain to the individual that you have approached them because they are not wearing a face covering within the business. Explain to them that there is a requirement set in law by the government that they must wear a face covering when in a shop. Consider explaining that the face covering is there to protect everyone and reduce the risk of transmission of Covid-19. Some people may have found the face covering guidance confusing and unclear. Providing this clarity for your customers and reassuring them that you welcome their custom will reduce the risk of conflict.

3 Encourage

Encourage the individual that they are welcome within your business and will need to wear a face covering. Explain any immediate options to obtain a face covering – it may be that they have one easily accessible to them nearby. Reiterate that the requirement on face coverings is set in law by the government not your business. Remind the customer that you welcome their custom.

4 Enforce

No Business employee should have to face violence or anti-social behaviour in the workplace. Through utilising the 4E's and appeals approach this will resolve many incidents. It is anticipated that businesses will be able to resolve most incidents themselves without a need to call the Police, however we understand there are times when you may need to call the Police:

When to call the Police?

Call 999 immediately if:

- A **serious** offence is in progress or has just been committed
- Someone is in **immediate** danger
- Property is in danger or being damaged
- A **serious** disruption to the public is likely

If an incident is not happening **then and there** or the offender has left then you can report online at <http://www.essex.police.uk> or telephone the non-emergency line on 101.