

Charities for deaf people call for more see-through face masks

Level 3 • Advanced

1 Warmer

During the coronavirus pandemic, many activities have been banned in order to protect people from the virus. Which of these did you miss (or do you still miss) the most? Rank them in order from 1 (most missed) to 6 (least missed).

- | | |
|----------|---|
| 1. _____ | a. travelling abroad |
| 2. _____ | b. going to class as a teacher or a student |
| 3. _____ | c. eating in restaurants |
| 4. _____ | d. meeting friends and family |
| 5. _____ | e. travelling to work each day |
| 6. _____ | f. shopping in department stores |

2 Key words

Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words from the text.

lip-reading
gesture

transparent
outpatient

exempt
guidance

prototype
cognition

abuse
impact

1. An _____ is someone who receives medical treatment at a hospital but does not stay there overnight.
2. A _____ is a movement that communicates a feeling or instruction.
3. _____ is the technique of looking at someone's lips in order to understand what they are saying because you cannot hear them.
4. If you are _____ from something such as a rule, you are allowed to ignore it.
5. _____ consists of angry, offensive comments.
6. _____ is advice about what you should do or how you should behave.
7. A _____ material is clear or thin enough for you to see things through it.
8. A _____ is the first form of something new, made before it is produced in large quantities.
9. The _____ of something is the effect or influence it has.
10. _____ is the process by which people recognize and understand things.

3 Find the information

Find the following information in the text as quickly as possible.

1. At the time the article was written, where did face coverings have to be worn in England?
2. What percentage of people over 70 suffer from hearing loss?
3. What does PPE stand for?
4. What does BSL stand for?
5. How many people in the UK are deaf or suffer from some form of hearing loss?
6. What three deaf-awareness tips are suggested in the article?

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Face coverings causing communication difficulties for the 12m people in UK who are deaf or have hearing loss

Nicola Davis

16 June, 2020

- 1 See-through face masks should be made widely available, leading deaf charities have said, warning that the growing use of face coverings is causing communication difficulties among the 12 million people in the UK who are deaf or have some form of hearing loss.
- 2 Face coverings must be worn in England on public transport and by hospital visitors and outpatients, while all hospital staff must wear surgical masks. Face coverings have also been recommended more widely, including in Scotland, in cases where social distancing is difficult.
- 3 “The main issue is that people who are deaf and have hearing loss rely heavily on visual clues for effective communication – that includes body language, gestures, facial expression and lip-reading,” said Ayla Ozmen, head of research and policy at Action on Hearing Loss. “British Sign Language (BSL) users also rely heavily on seeing lip patterns as well as facial expressions to understand BSL.”
- 4 While those who are travelling on public transport in England with someone who relies on lip-reading are exempt from wearing face coverings, something Action on Hearing Loss welcomed, Ozmen said little had been done to publicize this, raising concerns that those legitimately not wearing masks may face abuse.
- 5 And there are other problems, Ozmen said, noting the rules around masks and face coverings in hospitals come into conflict with the Accessible Information Standard, which puts an obligation on health and social care providers to meet people’s communications needs.
- 6 “There has been no guidance from the government on how to handle that conflict in both health settings and social-care settings,” she said, adding that with more than 70% of people over 70 having hearing loss, many people admitted to hospital with coronavirus may experience difficulties in communication. “We absolutely understand the public health need for wearing PPE (Personal Protective Equipment), but there is also a really significant concern, a safety concern, if people aren’t able to communicate,” said Ozmen.
- 7 Holly Parker, an 18-year-old from Essex who is profoundly deaf and largely relies on lip reading, said she had encountered problems as a result of face coverings. “My main method of communication is taken away. In shops, I am no longer able to understand shopkeepers, and this causes me a lot of anxiety,” she said, adding that she was deeply worried about the prospect of going to university if face masks had to be used during practical lessons.
- 8 Deaf charities, including Action on Hearing Loss, said they welcomed the development of transparent masks, something Parker and others said would make life easier if widely used.
- 9 Philip Gerrard, chief executive at Deaf Action, said the charity had been testing several prototypes of transparent face masks within the deaf community and hoped it would shortly roll these out to members of staff, clients and the wider community.
- 10 “We would also like to see the government support the development of deaf-friendly face masks that are PPE-approved in hospitals and care settings throughout the UK,” he said. Ian Noon, head of policy at the National Deaf Children’s Society, agreed, adding: “In the meantime, if people pick up some deaf-awareness tips like being patient, writing things down or using gestures if a deaf person needs them to, this would also have a big impact.”
- 11 The Deafness, Cognition and Language Research Centre at University College London also issued a statement calling for greater awareness of the challenges around hearing difficulties and face masks but said transparent face shields were a better solution because they let the whole face be seen. But, it added, dialogue with deaf communities was crucial, noting: “Deaf and hard-of-hearing people are best placed to advise on design needs and ensure any products are fit for purpose.”

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4 Comprehension check

Choose the best answer according to the text.

- Why are face masks a problem for many deaf people?
 - because face coverings can make it difficult to breathe properly and this causes anxiety
 - because they rely on visual clues for effective communication
 - because all hospital staff must wear surgical masks
- Why might someone who is on public transport with a deaf person experience abuse?
 - because they can't understand what people are saying to them
 - because they can't hear public announcements
 - because people don't realize that they are exempt from wearing face coverings
- What is Holly Parker particularly worried about?
 - that she doesn't know what shopkeepers are saying to her
 - that she won't be able to understand practical lessons at university if people are wearing face masks
 - that she will have to wear a face mask during practical lessons at university
- What, according to experts at University College London, is a better solution to this problem?
 - the use of transparent face shields
 - the use of surgical masks
 - the use of gestures and written messages

5 Find the word

Find the following words and phrases in the text. The paragraph numbers are given to help you.

- a two-word adjectival phrase meaning *transparent* (para 1)
- an adverb meaning *legally* (para 4)
- a four-word verb phrase meaning *be different in a way that prevents agreement* (para 5)
- a noun meaning *something that you expect or know is going to happen in the future, or the thought of this* (para 7)
- a two-word phrasal verb meaning *introduce a new product or service* (para 9)
- a two-word phrasal verb meaning *learn* (para 10)
- a three-word adjectival phrase meaning *unable to hear well* (para 11)
- a three-word adjectival phrase meaning *good enough to do the job it was designed for* (para 11)

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6 Adverb collocations

Complete the phrases from the text using these adverbs.

profoundly

deeply

widely

heavily

absolutely

widely

- _____ available
- rely _____ on
- _____ deaf
- _____ used
- _____ worried
- _____ understand

7 Word-building

Complete the sentences using the correct form of the word in brackets at the end of each sentence.

- Deaf people often rely on body language, gestures and _____ expression. [FACE]
- Health and social care _____ have an obligation to meet people's communication needs. [PROVIDE]
- There have been calls for greater _____ of the challenges around hearing difficulties and face masks. [AWARE]
- The rules around face coverings in hospitals are in conflict with the _____ Information Standard. [ACCESS]
- _____ is a condition that affects millions of people in the UK. [DEAF]
- Holly Parker's inability to understand shopkeepers causes a lot of _____. [ANXIOUS]

8 Discussion

Discuss the statements.

- Face masks are a waste of time because they don't stop viruses from spreading.
- Everyone should wear a face mask during a pandemic.
- If in doubt, don't go out.