

Dear Ms Gadhok,

Thank you for your correspondence of 2 November about face coverings in healthcare settings. I have been asked to reply and I apologise for the delay in doing so.

I appreciate your concerns.

The wearing of face coverings is no longer mandated by law. However, it remains at the discretion of the individual premises whether they are required when entering.

On 1 June, the NHS published a letter to NHS organisations setting out recommendations for mask-wearing by patients and staff. The full letter can be found at www.england.nhs.uk/publication/national-infection-prevention-and-control. This guidance explains that patients, visitors and individuals accompanying patients may be asked to wear them following a local risk assessment conducted by each trust.

The Department of Health and Social Care is not responsible for setting the guidance for clinical settings. Instead, this guidance is set by the NHS Infection Prevention and Control team, with reference to evidence from the UK Health Security Agency.

Supporting frontline workers remains a priority for the Government. It has extended its offer of free personal protective equipment to frontline health and social care staff in England until the end of March, thereby facilitating the use of face coverings in health and care settings.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

J Rawlinson
Ministerial Correspondence and Public Enquiries
Department of Health and Social Care