

Advice for convenience retailers

What are the rules?

From 24th July, it will be mandatory by law for customers to wear a face covering in retail environments. The Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984 has been amended to allow police to issue fines of up to £100 to people who fail to wear a face covering.

A face covering must be worn by all people using a shop, which is any indoor establishment which offers goods or services for sale or hire, when the shop is open. This includes convenience stores, supermarkets, post offices and banks. Face coverings do not need to be worn in seating areas or cafes for customers to eat-in but are required when buying food or drink to takeaway. It is recommended, but not mandatory, that staff wear face coverings.

The wearing of face coverings must not be used as an alternative to other precautions such as physical distancing, hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene.

How can you help customers?

Display signage at the entrance to the store and other points as needed in the store to remind customers of this policy.

ACS' face covering posters are available at [ACS.org.uk](https://www.acs.org.uk).

Explain to customers that the use of face coverings in stores is a legal requirement, in order to keep others safe and limit the transmission of Covid-19.



How will the rules work in practice?

Retailers and colleagues are not required to enforce customers wearing face coverings in shops but should explain the law. If customers refuse to wear a face covering, retailers and store colleagues do not have to stop customers from entering the store or from being served. The responsibility to wear a face covering rests with the individual.

Customers are expected to provide their own face coverings, and businesses will not be required to provide them for customers, but retailers may wish to have their own stocks of face coverings available as an initial encouragement to those customers without face coverings.

Colleague safety

Explain but do not seek to enforce your face coverings policy if customers become aggressive or are not willing to follow this policy:

- In an emergency, call 999.
- To report incidents of abuse, intimidation or violence, call 101 and collect information: recorded images, details of the crime and details of the perpetrator.
- Guidance on reporting violence and abuse is available in ACS' 2020 Crime Guidance (pg.3) and ACS' animation on managing violence and abuse in convenience stores (both available at [ACS.org.uk](https://www.acs.org.uk))

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Colleague use of face coverings

There is no requirement for store colleagues to wear face coverings, but the Government recommend that store colleagues use face coverings unless they are behind plastic or perspex screens. However, the use of face coverings by store colleagues sends a strong message to the public and clearly demonstrates your store policy on the use of face coverings.

The wearing of a face covering can be uncomfortable and may not be appropriate for long durations of time. Retailers should therefore consider providing opportunities for store colleagues to temporarily remove face coverings in non-public areas.

Face coverings and age restricted sales

You can ask customers to temporarily remove their face coverings in the event that you have to identify someone against a proof of age card for selling age-restricted products. If customers refuse to remove their face covering and you cannot confirm their age, in line with Challenge 25 policy, you should refuse to serve the customer.

What qualifies as a face covering?

A face covering is defined as any type of protective clothing which covers a person's nose and mouth while allowing them to breathe comfortably. This includes fabric face coverings, scarves, bandanas or PPE face masks. A face visor can also be used, but it must cover a person's nose and mouth completely.

When applying or removing the covering, it is important that people wash or sanitise their hands first and avoid touching their face. After each use, the face covering should be stored in a plastic bag and washed according to fabric washing instructions or safely disposed of.

Who needs to wear a face covering?

Customers in retail environments will be required to wear a face covering. Exemptions include:

- Children under 11 years old
- People with health conditions who cannot put on, wear or remove a face covering because of any physical or mental illness or impairment or disability or without severe distress
- If people need to take medication or to eat or drink where reasonably necessary
- Temporary removal to comply with a request by a relevant person or another person acting in the course of their duties
- For customers with a hearing impairment and those who lip-read, and remove the face coverings, as necessary, to provide advice, information, or assistance
- For age-related sales customers are asked to ensure that they remove face coverings in accordance with requests from staff
- In some food-handling settings where the wearing of a mask could compromise the hygiene practices that are already in place to ensure food safety

Some people may use an exemption card or badge to indicate that they are exempt from wearing a face covering. This is a personal choice and is not necessary in law. Exemption cards and badges are available to download at [ACS.org.uk](https://www.acs.org.uk).

Retailers and store colleagues who regularly pass between areas that have customers present and non-customer facing areas are encouraged to wear face coverings, unless they are:

- Predominantly based in non-customer facing areas, such as stock-rooms
- In customer-facing areas if there is 1m+ physical distancing or a partition such as a perspex screen between customers and staff
- Outside store opening hours