

Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

Sent by email to: transportsecretary@dft.gov.uk

CC to: rupesh.mehta@dft.gov.uk

dftspecialadvisers@dft.gov.uk

18 June 2020

Dear Mr Shapps,

We have been watching the changing guidance around face coverings on public transport with interest - the issue is very important to our members. Families of deaf children and deaf young people themselves, regularly let us know how concerned they are about the widespread use of face masks and coverings.

It's encouraging that guidance released over the weekend exempts those accompanying people who rely on lip reading from wearing face coverings on public transport. This understanding that some people will be disproportionately affected by facemasks, despite their benefits, is welcomed.

However, it's important that the public realise these exemptions exist. Many deaf young people are already anxious about going to places where face coverings are being worn, given the challenges they are likely to experience understanding others and also making themselves understood, particularly if their own speech is not clear. If they or the person accompanying them was challenged around not wearing a face covering by an ill-informed member of the public, this could have a serious impact on a young deaf person's confidence and well-being.

We believe there is a clear need to ensure that communications around face coverings consider the needs of everyone, including deaf people, and are widely shared. Information should also be shared around deaf awareness and the beneficial use of transparent facemasks, which allow for lip reading and ensure facial expressions can be seen. These measures will ensure that deaf



**We are the National Deaf Children's Society,
the leading charity for deaf children.**

Chief Executive: Susan Daniels OBE | President: Sir Christopher Benson FRICS DL
Registered Office: Ground Floor South, Castle House, 37–45 Paul Street, London EC2A 4LS
The National Deaf Children's Society is a registered charity in England and Wales (1016532)
and in Scotland (SC040779). Company limited by guarantee registered in England no. 2752456

people are supported in the best way possible during an extremely challenging time.

With this in mind can I ask that:

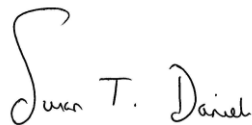
- you highlight the specific exemptions to the guidance for deaf people and our tips for communication (attached) at the daily briefing when you next lead it,
- raise these issues with transport companies and ask them to ensure that staff and passengers are aware of the exemptions,
- include our tips for communication in the guidance and;
- share them on your social media channels?

We can also offer you the opportunity to meet virtually with some deaf young people, who will be able to explain in more detail how this is impacting their lives. Please do contact Beccy Forrow on Rebecca.forrow@ndcs.org.uk if you'd like to take up this offer.

I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Thanking you in anticipation

Yours sincerely



Susan Daniels
Chief Executive, National Deaf Children's Society

Amanda Casson-Webb, Lesley Frearson and Sue Mountford, Joint Chief Executives, Royal Association for Deaf people

Craig Crowley MBE, Chief Executive Officer, Action Deafness and Chair, UK Council on Deafness

Steph Halder, President British Association of Teachers of the Deaf (BATOD) and Paul Simpson, National Executive Officer, British Association of Teachers of the Deaf (BATOD)

Linda Richards, Chair, British Deaf Association and Damian Barry, Executive Director, British Deaf Association

James Watson-O'Neill, Chief Executive, Sign Health