

DHSC recognises the importance of transparent face masks to make communication easier

News story

Since September 2020, DHSC has been working on a coordinated range of initiatives to enable the creation and availability of safe and effective transparent face masks to health and social care.



- A transparent face covering was piloted in September 2020. The feedback from this pilot demonstrated the benefit of transparent masks and highlighted that additional technical standards were needed to enable manufacturers to upgrade transparent face coverings into transparent face masks suitable for medical use
- The resulting new technical specification, which was drawn up in collaboration with PHE, HSE, MHRA, the NHS and SMTL (Surgical Materials Testing Laboratory) and approved by the IPC (Infection Prevention and Control) from all 4 nations, gives design and performance requirements for single-use transparent face masks, enabling manufacturers to design and manufacture suitable face masks for use in health and social care settings
- These new face masks will meet comparable performance and safety requirements as existing non-transparent type IIR face masks. See the [transparent mask technical specification](#)

A recent DHSC-led transparent mask stakeholder engagement event on 7 June was proof of the continued demand for a product to be made available to health and social care providers. The event also highlighted how there are different requirements depending on settings. For example, a different mask may be needed in an intensive care unit (ICU) or for speech and language therapists,

or to suit the needs of lip readers or patients with dementia.

DHSC continues to actively encourage manufacturers to develop new, innovative products which meet the standard for transparent face masks. Although no transparent face masks have demonstrated they meet the new technical specification yet, we are aware of many products currently in development and we expect that suitable masks will soon meet the standard.

DHSC has allocated funding for a pilot of new transparent masks in health and social care settings. A Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) is being put in place to enable the speedy purchase and distribution of masks for piloting. Masks will be distributed for pilot in a variety of health and social care settings with input from end users involved in the September 2020 pilot. Once the products are approved and in use, DHSC social researchers will gather user feedback on the masks.

We anticipate that these initiatives will result in the availability of safe and effective transparent face masks to health and social care workers.

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