



Brighton 30/06/2020

This letter was produced by the community of parent carers of children who are deaf.

Parent carers of children and young people who are deaf urge the council to consider the needs of our children in their planning around PPE. There are 250 CYP who are deaf living in the city, and many more adults who rely on lip reading to support their communication.

As well as muffling the speech of the wearer, masks cut off the primary means that deaf individuals have for communication in a Hearing world, through lip patterns and also facial expression and other non-verbal cues.

As one parent says, 'Having everyone wear mask with no clear panel would have a detrimental effect on my son. He uses spoken language and lip pattern to be able to understand what is being said to him. Without the access of lip pattern he would feel very isolated and lack the understanding of people I feel would be a very scary thing for him'

Widespread use of masks that shield the view of a speakers mouth would have a significant and for some, devastating impact upon our CYP's independence and ability to interact and function in their daily lives and activities, leading to increased isolation and risking mental health.

A popular children's book by Julia Donaldson called 'Freddie and the Fairy', which educates children about how to communicate with individuals with a hearing loss, gives the three 'golden rules', all essential for communication with someone who is deaf:

- Don't mumble
- Don't cover your mouth
- Don't turn away

Full coverage face masks have the impact of breaking the first two rules. The masks muffle the sound of speech which has the effect of reducing it to a mumble, and completely cover the mouth of the speaker.

PaCC asks that you consider ways to support our community in your planning, including

- encouraging the public to wear masks with clear panels

- increasing awareness of the needs of the deaf community
- considering the risks to our community in your risk assessments and guidelines.

Parent Carer concerns: here are a selection of concerns raised by local parents of children who are deaf...

“One of the toughest periods for my son at school, was when other boys chose to cover their mouths, to exclude him from their conversations. It was so isolating and humiliating for him, not to be able to hear or lip-read what everyone else was sharing. I hate to think of our children facing that wall, each day in the classroom”

“Our son is due to start Reception class in September. He relies heavily on lip reading and this is the main way he is able to understand people. We are very concerned that his teachers and support staff may want to wear masks, if they were to wear a mask without a panel, our son would not be able to understand anything. Meaning his start at school will be impacted heavily. We want our son to feel comfortable and confident and he’s progressed so well during his life. For him to be taught in a mask without a panel would have a detrimental effect on him”

“As a nurse myself and being faced with wearing a mask 😊 at all times at work whether dealing with patients or not (all due to the new track and trace system) it is really clear moving forward as we deal with Covid ,that face masks with a clear panel are extremely important for everyone and more so for the wider community with children and adults with hearing loss and hearing difficulties”

“I didn’t realise until I wore a mask all the time, how much I rely on seeing the person’s lips ☹️. The mask muffles the sound and it’s really difficult to hear and make out what the other person is saying. And I’m supposed to be a hearing person!”

“Please make face masks with clear panel compulsory for everyone.”

“The impact on the deaf community has been massive due to the guidelines of wearing face mask. As a parent with a young child that lip-reads it has been impossible to on bus that he enjoys doing due to him not being able to speak to the driver. All his senses have been taken away because of the mask: his hearing, his smell and being able to lip read everyone”

“Please can we try and get clear mask for all public transport and keyworks so that I don’t have to be explaining to a 4 year that it’s his fault people are wearing masks.”

“I feel the impact of this is discriminating against anyone with a hearing loss we are a diverse county so there must be a way around this situation.”

“My young person will need to tell anyone with a facemask, that the conversation is likely to need to be supplemented with her repeating back to clarify she has understood and them writing down on a piece of paper if needs be and holding it up. The 2m rule lowers audibility,



inability of the speaker to wear the radio mic and lack of lip reading with a mask will be a triple whammy“

“Could you imagine being in public full of masks not been able to read people’s faces or lip patterns let alone a quiet muffled voice that you wouldn’t make out, what an isolating world , also for the kids in taxis to school, do taxi drivers have face masks too?”

*The PaCC representatives have talked widely with other parent carers to harness a wide range of views. This letter is a summary of these views. PaCC welcome any communication on any of the issues contained in this letter. You can contact us by emailing Fiona England PaCC Chair fiona@paccbrighton.org.uk or calling **01273 234862***

*The Parent Carers’ Council (PaCC) is a parent-led forum, which represents parent carers with children and young people with any kind of physical disability, learning disability, complex or long-term medical/health condition, or special educational need. The group was formed to enable parent carers to work closely together to help improve services and support. It aims to help parents get more directly involved in the strategic delivery of services for disabled children in Brighton & Hove and now has over **430 signed up members**. This position statement was developed through discussions with our Steering Group members and our ten partner groups: Barnado’s Link Plus, Brighton Pebbles, Extratime, Fresh Youth Perspectives (FYP), Autism Support and Awareness Promotion (ASAP), mASCot, T21, Sweet Peas, Amaze Face 2 Face and Children’s Hearing Services Working Group (CHSWG). Find out more here <https://paccbrighton.org.uk/>*