



Department
of Health &
Social Care

From Jo Churchill MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Prevention,
Public Health and Primary Care

39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

PO-1254453

020 7210 4850

The Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP
By email to: george.howarth.mp@parliament.uk

4 March 2021

Dear Sir George,

Thank you for your correspondence of 8 September to Matt Hancock on behalf of a number of your constituents about COVID-19 and face coverings. I apologise for the delay in replying, which has been caused by an unprecedented volume of correspondence in recent months and work to ensure frontline services are delivered.

We know that people across the UK have different communication requirements, particularly those with a hearing impairment, and we have been working to ensure that everyone can access the healthcare that they need.

In the second half of 2020, the Department procured 250,000 transparent face masks from ClearMask, which we piloted in health and social care systems. The ClearMask pilot is now complete and the feedback has been assessed.

Based on the pilot, we will be running an assessment of other masks from a range of manufacturers. These have been sourced from trust research and development teams, and from manufacturers in the UK that have engaged with our innovation team.

The assessment and engagement will also assess the appropriateness of different masks for each user and setting. For example, a different mask may be needed in an intensive care unit than for speech and language therapists. We are aware that different masks may suit the needs of lip readers or patients with dementia.

We will be trialling these masks across the devolved administrations and in a range of health and social care systems. Masks for testing will be sent to a variety of users over the coming weeks.

We know how important it is to deliver sufficient good-quality, clinically secure transparent masks to those who need them, and are working with our partners to ensure that we achieve this.

I hope this reply reassures your constituents that we are treating this matter with the utmost seriousness.

JO CHURCHILL