

## FACE COVERINGS DISTRIBUTION Q&A

### **Why are supplies of free face coverings still being offered to transport bodies?**

The offer to transport bodies of contingency face coverings for use by passengers and workers, at zero cost has been extended to reflect the current expectation and recommendation that people wear face coverings in crowded areas such as public transport, as well as help reduce transmission rates during the winter period.

The Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) currently holds a strong stock of PPE including the Type II and Type IIR masks, which can be used as a face covering for source control. To support the upcoming winter period, we are able to take advantage of the DHSC stock. These are being offered as a contingency supply for passengers to encourage high face covering usage across the transport network, to all transport bodies in England providing public transport services.

### **How can the face coverings be used?**

These face coverings can be distributed to members of the public if they do not have a face covering of their own. These face coverings should be offered as a contingency supply only. These face coverings can also be distributed to transport workers.

These face coverings are for the use of passengers and workers in the transport network. They should not be passed on to other sectors or sold.

### **What kind of face coverings are being offered?**

We are distributing blue pleated disposable surgical masks, which have become a familiar sight during the pandemic, for use as face coverings by the public when travelling and transport workers.

### **Aren't surgical masks classed as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)?**

In some settings and scenarios, when used appropriately, surgical masks can be classed as PPE. However, in the context of transport settings, these masks will be classed as face coverings. A face covering is something which safely covers the nose and mouth. Clinical advice received from Public Health England (PHE) says that surgical masks may be used as face coverings as they act as a barrier around the nose and mouth, reducing droplet and aerosol emissions (i.e. source control).

### **How does this affect current guidance on face coverings?**

We currently continue to expect and recommend that face coverings are worn in crowded areas such as public transport. If Plan B is enacted and face coverings do become mandatory on public transport throughout England, this programme will be in place to facilitate higher face covering usage.

### **Should we be advertising to passengers that free face coverings are available?**

These face coverings should be viewed as a contingency supply. If a passenger has forgotten their face covering or is unable to wear their own face covering because it has become soiled or wet for example,

you will be able to offer them a free one. This could be advertised locally – for example, signs advising people to speak to a member of staff if they have forgotten their face covering.

People are still personally responsible for bringing their own face covering and that has not changed. Most people are aware of this and surveys suggest that the use of face coverings is relatively high. We do not intend to widely advertise that free face coverings are available, and we do not want to create a situation where a free face covering is expected, and people stop bringing their own.

### **How many face coverings are you going to give us?**

The government holds a healthy surplus of these face coverings and we believe we can meet demand. We will be asking you to tell us how many face coverings you think you will need to distribute in the way set out above. We don't want to distribute face coverings if they won't get used, or if storage and distribution is going to cause problems for transport bodies. You should be aware that although the offer has been extended until 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021, it remains a time-limited offer.

### **How big are the boxes / pallets?**

Face coverings are distributed in cartons, one carton typically contains around 2000 face coverings split into smaller boxes each containing around 50 coverings. A carton is a medium sized container which could be carried by one person.

Larger deliveries will be sent in pallets of around 20 cartons, consisting of roughly 40,000 face coverings. A pallet would be around w1.2 x d1.2 x h1.8 m in size.

### **How will the face coverings get to us?**

DHSC are working with logistics experts, to facilitate the delivery of the face coverings to transport operators.

Smaller deliveries of 1 to 3 cartons (roughly 2000-6000 face coverings) can be sent out via Royal Mail. If a larger delivery is required, at least one full pallet of 40,000 face coverings must be delivered. We can also delivery multiple pallets to one location where demand is high.

Where possible, please order the full amount of face coverings you expect to need until 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021 in one delivery. This will help us to keep costs to a minimum. If you anticipate needing multiple pallets but do not have sufficient storage space, please get in touch and we will see what can be arranged.

You will need to provide a point of contact, a back-up point of contact and full delivery details to arrange delivery, including details of the gate / loading bay the pallet needs to be sent to.

### **When do the face coverings have to be used by – do they have an expiry date?**

Face coverings are not classified as PPE and do not have a defined expiration date. However, they should not continue to be used if they are damaged or no longer safely and securely cover the nose and mouth.

We want to avoid a situation where unused face coverings sit in storage so please order the amount of contingency face coverings you think you will be required by passengers and workers up to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021.

### **Why do you still have such a large stockpile of face coverings to give away?**

The government has procured a sufficient stock of PPE to be resilient across a range of scenarios. We have set up an organisation within DHSC to manage the national PPE supply chain.

Covid-19 is an unfamiliar disease, and therefore procurement is purposefully undertaken on a 'worst-case scenario' basis. Accordingly, the government has bought enough PPE to both meet usage requirements and ensure a level of inventory large enough to cope with a range of possible scenarios.

Because of this, and the robust and resilient supply chain for PPE that DHSC has now set up, we are now in a position which enables us to support people using the transport network to comply with the guidance as the winter period approaches.

### **Why can we only order face coverings until the 31<sup>st</sup> of December?**

We have a strong supply of face coverings and given the upcoming winter period we are extending the offer until the end of December, after which we will reassess the status of the programme.

### **Can the face coverings be distributed to the devolved nations?**

The face coverings can only be distributed within England as this policy is owned by DHSC and hence applies only to England. The devolved nations procure and maintain their own stocks and have their own face covering policies, so any equivalent distribution outside of England would be a matter for each nation to consider and is not for England to presume.

### **Where can I go to get more info?**

If you are interested in receiving a delivery of face coverings please complete the request template and return to [dftppequeries@unipart.com](mailto:dftppequeries@unipart.com).

Please speak to your usual DfT point of contact if you have any other questions and we will aim to get back to you as soon as we can.