autism
wellbeing

Wearing a face covering – some things to consider.

Face coverings are to become compulsory for some people in some social situations. The guidance and rules vary across each part of the UK and are likely to be continually reviewed and amended during this phase of the Covid-19 pandemic. It is important to understand what the rules are for your own circumstances, and for where you live.

- Some people may find the change in rules difficult to comprehend or accept – they may personally disagree with the guidance, or they may see other people disregarding the guidance and feel frustrated and fearful. It is likely that this will be distressing for some people.

- Seeing people wearing face coverings in public may be a new experience to process. People will also be processing changes in sensory information; changes in social etiquette; and changes in familiar systems, rules, and places. This may feel distressing or overwhelming for some people.

- Wearing a face covering may feel unpleasant for some people. Some autistic people's experience of tactile or proprioceptive sensory information is atypical. This means they may find the warm sensation of their breath under a face covering uncomfortable; they may find the material of a face covering or mask painful against their skin; the tightness of the face covering could feel overwhelming and restrictive; it may be difficult to put on, adjust or take off their face covering because of the fastenings.

- Some autistic people may find the sight of other people wearing face coverings distressing – Autism Wellbeing have produced some information and tips about this: www.facebook.com/autismwellbeinguk

- Face coverings are not PPE. This means people have more choice about what they use. Some people may like to make their own face covering out of an old piece of clothing that feels and smells right to them. A drop of an essential oil or other familiar smell may make the experience of wearing a face covering more acceptable.

- Try different materials to find one that feels and smells best. If you wash the face covering, then be aware that it may smell "wrong" for a while. It may be better to have several that you rotate so that they lose their freshly laundered smell.

- Fastenings may be tricky to do up or feel uncomfortable. Try using items like sportswear and outdoor shop neck tubes as face coverings. They come in a variety of colours and breathable materials.

- If you are supporting someone on public transport – take spare face coverings so you don't get stranded if the person throws their face covering away.