

# People at the Centre Update 4



## Face covering restrictions lead to prejudice against those living with lung conditions

A survey of people living with lung conditions in Scotland has uncovered widespread prejudice against those who are unable to wear face coverings. The survey, conducted by the Asthma UK and British Lung Foundation Partnership, found that:

- Over 20% of people living with lung conditions in Scotland could not wear a mask because of their condition.
- Of those who are unable to wear a mask in Scotland, over 30% have faced prejudice as a result.
- More people report instances of such prejudice in Scotland (over 30%) than those in Northern Ireland (less than 10%) and Wales (less than 10%).
- A majority of respondents in Scotland agreed that there should be an exemption card or badge scheme.
- And 77.1% in Scotland said that they would use a card or badge if they were available.

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Bringing these statistics to life, individual accounts from people who have been targets of such prejudice are included in the Asthma UK and British Lung Foundation Partnership's report:

"I was criticised by people when I said my breathing gets heavy/harder to breathe when wearing a mask. They said they find it 'uncomfortable' to wear as well, so I should just get on with it."

"Other occasions include refusal of taxi rides and access to shops. The general understanding of it not just being discomfort or that I don't want to wear one, but it is physically harder to breathe. On occasion when I have tried to use a mask I have needed my inhaler beside me for several hours afterwards."

As a result, Joseph Carter, Head of the Asthma UK and British Lung Foundation Partnership, is calling for the creation of official exemption cards or badges for those living with lung conditions to reduce confusion amongst the general public:

"It is unacceptable that people are facing discrimination due to their medical conditions.

"We believe that the time is now right to introduce an official Scottish Government-backed scheme that would give the card or badge an elevated level of authority, and thus allow those unable to wear them to feel more confident to use public transport or to go to places where social distancing can be more difficult, such as shops."

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The survey also highlights the wider detrimental impact of COVID-19 on people living with lung conditions in Scotland:

- Anxiety has increased over the summer as a result of COVID-19 (from 56% to 69%).
- 79% of shielders were particularly anxious about the pausing of shielding announced in July.
- Around 40% of shielders plan to continue to shield despite the end of official advice and support.
- A majority of respondents in Scotland believe that lockdown restrictions have been lifted too quickly.
- The number of people reporting long-term breathing problems after having COVID-19 symptoms has increased since May, with 58% (up from 37%) saying their breathing was worse or much worse.
- One in three people have avoided seeing their GP or hospital consultant, with a quarter of these reporting that their symptoms have got worse as a result.

[More information on the findings of this survey is available on the Asthma UK website.](#)