

PPE challenges and Behaviour Support

These strategies could be helpful if you support someone who struggles when staff wear PPE. They are general strategies, so please feel free to adapt them to meet the needs of the person you support.

Recognising faces

Some people may struggle to recognise you when you are wearing a mask and visor. Here is a strategy that might help.

1. Take a photo of yourself with a friendly, smiling expression.
2. Print out several copies on A4 sized paper (you will dispose of them when you dispose of your PPE).
3. Stick the photo to the front of your gown
4. Stand facing the person from at least 2 meters away **with your mask and visor off**
5. Get the person's attention by saying their name
6. Say, "Hello, it is [say your name]. I am going to put my mask on now, and then we will [state what will be happening next – see *Creating a nice association*]"

Creating a nice association

If a person does not like their staff member wearing a mask, you may be able to help them get used to it by making a connection between the mask itself and something they enjoy.

1. Think about something the person really likes to do – for example, having tea with a favourite cake, using the iPad.
2. Follow the steps in *Recognising Faces* above, and then support the person to do the thing they really enjoy whilst you wear the mask – for example:

Say, "Hello, it is [say your name]. I am going to put my mask on now, and then we will have a cup of tea and a hot cross bun."

Alternatively, if you can spare a mask or visor, you may be able to let the person handle a spare one while joking with them or doing an enjoyable activity. Make sure you throw it away afterwards.

Making PPE predictable

Where possible, give the person you support prior warning that you will be wearing PPE. For example, if the person you support uses visual schedules, you could put a picture of a mask next to the picture for personal care.

If people still struggle, giving them a choice of when to do the activity that requires staff to wear PPE might help.

Social stories

Social stories can be a helpful way of explaining the need for staff to wear PPE. You can use words or picture, or both.

Try creating a story using these headings:

When

Example script: *I will use the mask and visor whenever I get close to you, like when I help you in the shower*

What

Example script: *Here is a picture of the things I will be using* (or show them the actual items – you can even let the person handle spares as described in *Creating a nice association*)

How

Example script: *This is how I will put things on* (and show them how you put on your PPE)

Why?

Example script: *I wear this so I can help you do the things you like without giving you a [virus, cold, bug – whatever word the person understands]*

If the person grabs your mask

To decrease the likelihood of someone grabbing your mask, encourage them to do something with their hands while you are wearing it (if their hands are occupied, they will not be able to grab the mask).

Other ideas

- Have a PPE fashion show to make the use of PPE fun
- Wear a plastic conference style photo badge with your photo inside so the person recognises you
- Write your name of your apron with a smiley face
- Draw a smile on your mask
- Wear colours, clothes or hats that the people you support recognise
- Identify local craft groups that might be able to make patterned masks that might look more friendly to people