

## LETTER TO LEISURE ARCADE OPENLY FLOUTING THE LAW ON DISABILITIES DISCRIMINATION

[Date]

Dear Sirs,

I am writing to you regarding a highly distressing visit to the [name] leisure establishment on [date]. My husband, son and I had travelled to the town of [name] for a family day out, something we had been looking forward to immensely in these extremely challenging times.

My husband took our young son into your venue to enjoy some of the entertainments on offer, but was shocked and dismayed to be accosted at the entrance by two members of staff, who later disclosed they were the manager and the owner, to be informed that he and our son were not permitted to enter, due to the fact my husband was not wearing a mask.

My husband explained that he had an exemption, to which the owner replied, "I've heard a lot about exemptions, but they don't apply here."

My husband, being entirely conversant with the law, which is that exemptions apply everywhere, explained to the owner that the universality of mask-exemptions are detailed on the government's own website, and also alerted the owner to the Equality Act 2010, which, by denying the mask-exempt entrance, [venue name] and its staff were in breach of. Nevertheless, both the owner and the manager insisted my husband and son left. My husband asked for their names. The owner refused to give his, and the manager gave hers only as "[first name]".

Not wishing to compound our son's distress any further, my husband returned him to me, whilst he went back to [venue name] and I sat on a nearby bench so I could witness the further exchange. The staff once again insisted that because my husband wasn't wearing a mask, he had to leave. At that point, my husband felt the staff became aggressive and intimidating, so he tried to call the police on 101. When he couldn't get through, he called 999. The officer he spoke to agreed that the [venue name] staff needed educating, and suggested my husband tried 101 again. He was able to get through this time, and the officer he spoke with said it was a Trading Standards issue. My husband then left [venue name] and came to join my son and I on the bench, at which point the owner announced that he was ringing the police. We replied that this was a good idea, and we hoped the owner would be receptive to the police's comments and advice.

Shortly after this, the manager, [name], came out to see us and told us that the owner had not, in fact, called the police. So clearly, the owner making this baseless "threat" was nothing more than an attempt to frighten and intimidate us. The owner then came out, and stated that barring the mask-exempt from entering his establishment was his company's policy. I told him this was illegal

discrimination under the Equality Act 2010, and showed him the government's web page regarding mask exemptions. He admitted he hadn't previously seen this, but stated that he didn't care, and maintained his position, even when I informed him that contravening this law carried with it the possibility of hefty fines.

To be clear, discriminating against the mask-exempt is illegal under both the Disabilities Discrimination Act and the Equality Act 2010. A common reason that people are mask-exempt is that they have a hidden disability, and the law states that discriminating against those with hidden disabilities, e.g. by denying them entrance to a business, is illegal, and carries with it a potential fine of up to £5,000 and punitive damages of between £900 and £9,000. The law protects those with hidden disabilities from disclosing either that they have a hidden disability or providing "proof" of what it is, and so those not wearing masks should not be challenged, as it should be assumed that they are legally and medically exempt. If they are challenged, all they are required to state is that they are exempt, and it is illegal to either ask for evidence of their exemption, or to discriminate against them on the basis of their exemption.

Although my husband and I made every attempt to impart the above information to the staff of [venue name], they remained completely impervious, and resolute in their determination to openly flout the law with their discriminatory and exclusionary policies.

My husband, son and I are deeply shaken and distressed by this episode, and expect to receive a full apology, as well as an assurance all [venue name] and [parent company] staff will receive appropriate training regarding mask exemptions, the law, and disabilities discrimination. If this assurance cannot be provided, then we will, regrettably, have no choice but to pursue further legal action, which may result in a fine for the staff in question of up to £5,000 and punitive damages of between £900 and £9,000.

Please reply to this letter within 14 days of today's date. Please note this letter has been sent to both the [venue name] premises and the [parent company] head office.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

[Email address]