

LETTER WRITTEN FOR SOMEONE DENIED ENTRY TO A PUB WITHOUT A MASK

[Date]

Dear Sirs,

I am writing to you regarding a recent attempted visit to [name] pub. My family and I attempted to visit this establishment on [date], at approximately [time], for a quick drink, as we have done on many previous occasions. We enjoy the relaxed and friendly atmosphere of the [pub name], and have been loyal customers for many years.

However, our entry was blocked by a member of staff giving her name only as "[first name]", who informed us she was the duty manager. [Name] asked me to put on a mask before I entered the pub. I explained to [name] that I have a medical exemption and cannot wear one. Nevertheless, [name] refused to grant my family and I access to the pub. My eldest son, who is autistic and was by this point extremely uncomfortable with the situation, then began filming the encounter, so we have the following footage on video.

[Name] said that I must provide evidence of my medical exemption. I told her that this is incorrect, and that the law clearly states people with medical exemptions do not have to provide proof, and furthermore, doctors have specifically stated they will not issue mask exemption letters.

Although I am extremely reluctant to disclose such sensitive and personal information to you, I do so to underline the severity of the situation and in the hope others will not endure such intolerance and discrimination as my family and I did - the reason I am exempt from wearing a mask is because I have a hidden disability. I do not wish to disclose the details of my disability to you, but hidden disabilities can include a range of physical and mental health conditions such as autism, respiratory illness, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Many survivors of severe trauma and abuse experienced having their face covered as part of their abuse and so cannot wear a face covering now, as to do so would trigger severe and crippling panic to a degree that may require emergency medical attention. So as you can see, mask exemptions, and the legal protection from disclosing the details of your exemption to a stranger in a pub, exist for very good reason.

By refusing me entry to the pub unless I produced "evidence" of my disability, [name] not only put me in an impossible position, since as I say, doctors will not issue exemption letters and they have stated this fact publicly on many occasions, but she also caused me severe distress and - perhaps most pertinent to you - broke the law. [Name] suggested I should be wearing a sunflower lanyard around my neck stating my mask exemption. In the first instance, such lanyards are not "proof" of anything as anyone can order one online for any or no reason, but secondly, and of far more importance, I do not wish to wear an identifying label stating what my personal challenges and disadvantages are, for reasons that should be perfectly obvious to any thinking person. Bigotry, intolerance and discrimination are all too real in our society, and I do not wish to publicly label myself "different", thereby putting myself at risk for attracting distressing or even dangerous attention - attention which could contravene the law, as was the case in your pub.

Under the Disabilities Discrimination Act and the Equality Act 2010, it is illegal to ask someone if they have a hidden disability or what it is. The law is very clear on the fact that if someone is asked to wear a mask and they reply that they are exempt, that is all the information they are legally required to give. To press them for further information or "proof" is illegal, and people who do this are personally liable

for a fine of up to £5,000, and punitive damages of between £900 and £9,000. Further, please note that whilst I responded to [name] in a calm and polite fashion when challenged for "proof", there is no guarantee other customers would have done similarly. As I outlined earlier, people may be exempt from mask-wearing for highly personal and distressing reasons, and could become very agitated or even aggressive if confronted and illegally and inappropriately asked to disclose highly personal information to a stranger in a public place.

[Name] informed me that she was refusing me entry without a mask because these were the instructions from head office. This concerns me very deeply, as it would therefore seem head office is illegally instructing all of its pubs. I am sympathetic to the fact these rules are very new and it is a steep learning curve for us all, and that genuine mistakes will be made, so at this stage I am not intending to take further legal action.

However, I do expect an apology and a comprehensive guarantee that head office will adjust its policy to reflect the law, and that all employees will be given thorough, clear and appropriate training on exactly what the law is.

Disabilities discrimination is a very serious offence, and it is incumbent on you as a national employer to ensure this is not something that ever happens to your customers on your premises.

Please note this letter has been hand-delivered to the [pub name] today and sent by first-class recorded delivery to the [name of chain] head office.

I look forward to hearing from you and expect a reply to this letter within 14 days of today's date.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

[Email address]