

LETTER WRITTEN FOR SOMEONE MASK-EXEMPT TOLD THEY CAN'T BOOK A SIGHT TEST WITHOUT A DOCTOR'S LETTER

Dear [Name],

I am a local resident here in [town], and have been following your business on social media for quite some time. I am very impressed with the quality service you are offering to the local community. I am a big proponent and supporter of small, local businesses and always, wherever I can, try to invest my custom with independent enterprises like yours, rather than the big chains and multinationals. It's clear that you provide an excellent, bespoke, and quality service, and I hope to be able to support you in your endeavours for many years to come.

I visited your premises last week, to see if I might be able to arrange a sight test. Even though I am over 60 and so could get these free on the NHS, I would rather come to you, as I know I will get a much higher calibre experience. I was greeted at the door by a receptionist, and explained to her that I would like to book a sight test, but that I am unable to wear a mask. The receptionist went in to check what the situation was regarding masks, and returned to tell me this would be okay, provided I had a doctor's note. I decided not to challenge this at the time, but rather that I would put my concerns to you in writing.

It seems that, unfortunately, many businesses are not familiar with the legalities surrounding mask exemptions, which I would like to detail here. In the first instance, doctors have publicly stated they will not be providing mask-exemption letters, and in the second, neither medical certification nor any other form of "proof" (such as the sunflower lanyard) is required by law for the mask-exempt - please see the official guidelines on the government's website, below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own>

There are a wide range of mask exemptions contained within law, and some of these pertain to hidden disabilities, such as autism and PTSD, whereby covering the face would be too traumatic or "triggering" for the individual involved. To avoid such trauma being exacerbated, disabilities discrimination law states that it is illegal to ask someone if they have a hidden disability or what it is, and this is underlined in both the Disabilities Discrimination Act and the Equality Act 2010. How this translates to the current rules surrounding mask-wearing is that the mask-exempt are only required, upon being asked to wear a mask, to state that they are exempt; they are not legally required to give any further details, and it is in contravention of the law for anyone to ask them to. It is critical for businesses, especially small businesses, to know this, as breaking this law carries with it a potential fine of £5,000 and punitive damages of between £900 and £9,000.

I wanted to draw your attention to this as I am very keen to protect small, local enterprises from falling foul of this law, which I know the government has not made clear enough to business owners. I would very much like to book an appointment with you for my sight test, but as I say, I am unable to wear a mask and doctors will not issue exemption letters - please see below:

<https://www.burtondocs.co.uk/2020/07/21/face-mask-exemption-letters-no-gp-medical-letter-needed/>

If upon receipt of this information, you are happy for me to visit your premises without a mask, please let me know and I will book my sight test at once.

Best regards,

[Name]