**East Renfrewshire Council**

**Sensory Support Service**

**Guidance on the wearing of face masks – SECONDARY**

Communication for pupils with hearing loss (and other additional support needs and EAL) relies in part on being able to see someone’s face clearly. This new guidance will make learning and socialising extremely challenging for many of our young people.

We recommend the following strategies to support young people with hearing loss in accessing learning:

* Where possible a mask with a lip reading window should be worn
***Whilst clear face masks are clearly preferable to opaque face masks it should be noted that clear face masks may still introduce communication challenges as it may muffle the voice of the person wearing the mask.***
* Ensuring the listening environment is as quiet as possible and making use of any other hearing technology used by a child (such as a radio aid)
***Note the radio aid mic may need to be closer to the mouth than the usual recommended 10-15cm.***
* Ensuring as much of the lesson as possible can be visual – hand-outs, written form, practical demonstrations
* Ensuring that any video clips have subtitles. Remember auto-generated subtitles must be checked for errors
* Using alternative forms of communication such as writing things down depending on the individual needs of the child
* Use of [dictation or translation apps](https://www.ndcs.org.uk/blog/apps-to-help-conversation-with-deaf-children-and-young-people-speech-to-text/) (such as Live Transcribe or Otter AI) can provide a speech to text option although there are limitations with these apps
* Considering the need for face-to-face meeting, and whether a video call could work as an alternative for individual deaf children
* Temporarily removing the face mask/covering and communicating within the current safety guidance (e.g. ensuring hand washing before and after, not touching the face when the mask/covering is removed and remaining within the social distancing guidelines of staying 2 metres apart)