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Lewis Macdonald, MSP
Convener
Health and Sport Committee

By email

13 October 2020

Dear Lewis

Development of Exemption Cards

Following my announcement at the First Minister's briefing on 6 October, I am writing to update you on Scottish Government's plans for a physical and digital exemption card for people who are exempt under the regulations from wearing face coverings. .

As you know, the Scottish Government policy on exemptions to wearing face coverings, which was developed with Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs), is that people should not have to prove their exemption and that the public should be understanding.

However, despite clear guidance reinforced by public health messaging, we are aware through the media and discussions with third sector stakeholders of reports of incidences of hate crime and of people being denied access to shops, essential services and products when not wearing a face covering. I have therefore agreed that we should produce an exemptions card (in a physical and digital format) to support people who are exempt to feel more confident and safe when accessing public spaces and using public services.

Production of the card and a system whereby members of the public can request it are well underway and we aim to launch the exemption card later by the end of October.

Our approach has been developed with advice from stakeholders, particularly those from third sector organisations. It will be branded with the NHS Scotland and Healthier Scotland logo and produced under the FACTS campaign. In order to target it effectively the card will be accessible through a third sector organisation via a helpline or online contact form.

We will be running a marketing campaign, alongside the launch, to raise awareness of the exemption card, to engage with our stakeholders (including retail and transport) and to continue to reinforce the need for understanding and compassion.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeane Freeman', written in a cursive style.

JEANE FREEMAN