Statement from the Medical Officer of Health on the use of cloth masks

Position statement by the Medical Officer of Health on the use of home-made cloth masks:

There has been recent public interest in the use of cloth masks. Medical Officer of Health, Dr Ivan Muscat, has outlined the current public health position regarding their use in Jersey.

“There is limited direct data and evidence on the use of cloth masks and the effect they have on reducing the spread of Coronavirus within the community, so it would not be appropriate to produce a definitive direction that these must be used.

“However, they may very well provide benefit and reduce transmission and they do not do any harm if used properly so some general advice for those who choose to use them is appropriate.

“Using a cloth mask may well reduce the transmission of large respiratory droplets onto others. They may also reduce the risk of the wearer acquiring infection. However, they must be used appropriately to avoid further contamination, including, being changed every 2 hours, washed, tumble dried and ironed. Wash your hands after removing a mask. Scarves and snoods covering the mouth and nose may also be effective.

“Wearing a cloth mask is absolutely not a substitute for appropriate social distancing, stay at home guidance or good hand and respiratory hygiene.

“Using a mask to cover your nose and mouth could be used in addition to social distancing during the 2-hour outdoor time, in particular for example, when buying food. They could also be used by essential and critical workers when travelling to and from work and at work.

“Under no circumstances would a cloth mask be a substitute for personal protection equipment (PPE) in any clinical setting. Medical grade PPE is the only acceptable form of
PPE in these settings. Medical grade masks are not recommended for use by the public or in social situations. They are designed for clinical use only."

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Notes to Editors

1. For further information, please contact the press office on 01534 440430 or pressoffice@gov.je