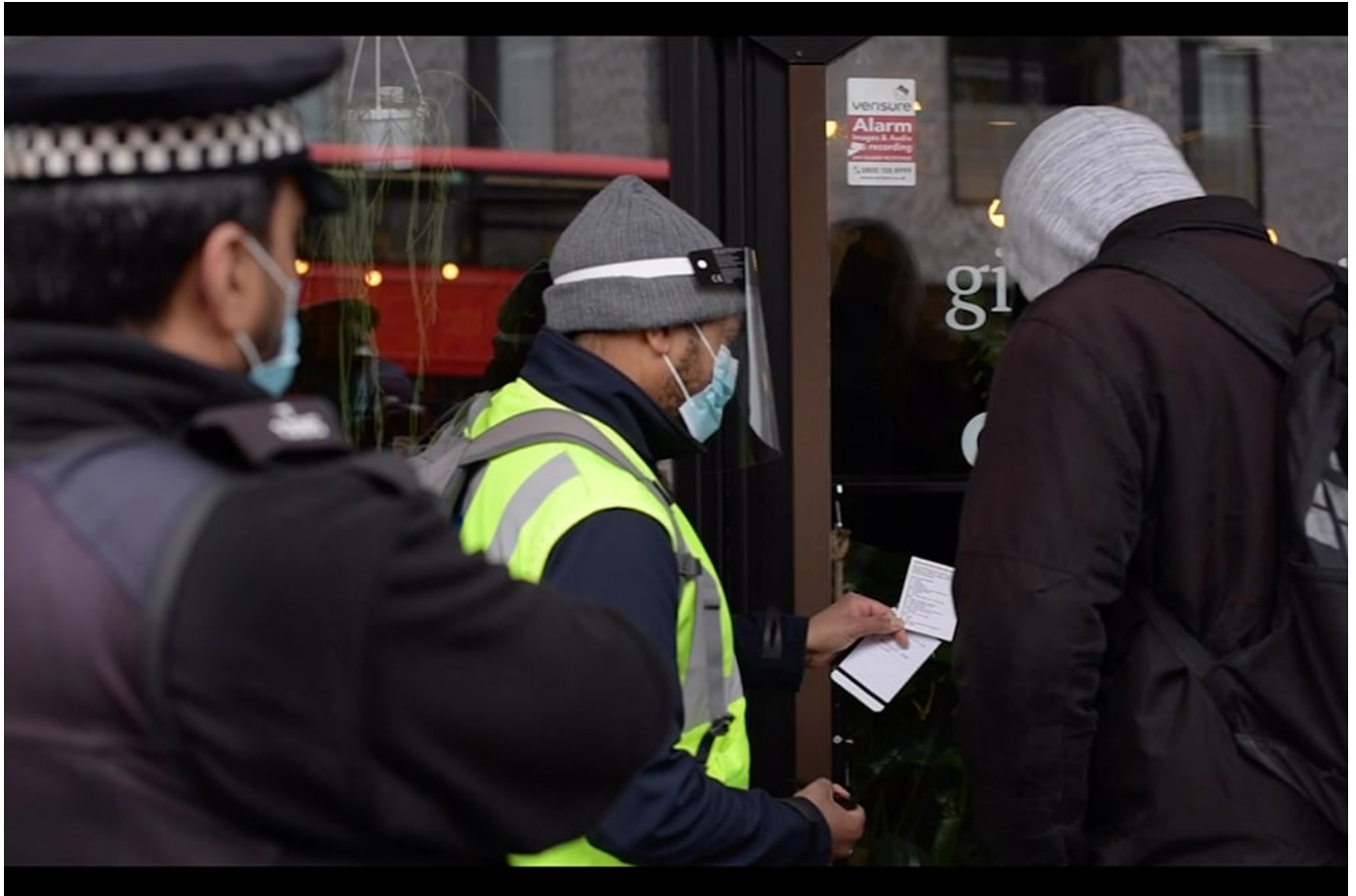


TfL takes hard line against minority flouting face covering regulations

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Transport for London (TfL) has again stepped up its enforcement of face coverings seven months after the measure became mandatory on public transport. Figures show strong public support for the use of face coverings on the network and around 90 per cent compliance at the busiest times of the day, with only a selfish minority who are not exempt continuing to ignore the regulation and putting themselves and their fellow passengers at risk. TfL has expanded its team of enforcement officers and is handing out more fines to non-compliers and prosecuting those who do not pay.

A new cohort of TfL enforcement officers completed training in December. This boosts TfL's enforcement team to around 500 officers who are ensuring compliance of coronavirus safety regulations, as well as tackling aggression, fare evasion and providing greater visibility and reassurance. The new recruits are now in operation on the transport network, working alongside police officers from the Metropolitan Police Service (Met) and British Transport Police (BTP) and carrying out enforcement operations on the transport network every day across the capital. Operations are regularly carried out at stations with low compliance, and bus stops at Victoria, Brixton and Stratford have been targeted - with an operation taking place near Walthamstow bus station last Tuesday morning.

TfL's latest customer survey found 75 per cent are supportive of face covering enforcement, rising to 86 per cent among those aged 65 and over. Station staff counts and analysis of CCTV show the vast majority of passengers are wearing a face covering over their nose and mouth when on public transport and in stations, unless they are exempt. Those who are exempt from wearing a face covering have the option to order a free card or badge from the [TfL website](#).

Over the last seven months around 128,000 people have been stopped from boarding services until they have put on a face covering, around 9,300 have been prevented from boarding, and around 2,100 have been ejected from services. Around 1,700 Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) have been issued to those who have travelled on the network without a face covering and who are not exempt. Customers who do not pay their fine within 28 days face prosecution and around 650 people have been prosecuted for not wearing a mask on the network. Fines have been as much as £660 for those convicted for a first offence, with one repeat offender having to pay £1,170.

Siwan Hayward, Director of Compliance, Policing Operations and Security at TfL, said: "People should only be travelling if they have a legitimate reason and ensuring the network is safe for those customers, which include NHS and other key workers, is our top priority.

"Wearing face coverings, unless exempt, has been mandatory for seven months now and we continue to communicate the requirement in stations, on platforms and on-board services, so there really is no excuse for not wearing one properly for your entire journey when travelling on our network. London is at a critical point in this pandemic and this is no time to be complacent with the measures we take to protect ourselves and others.

"I want to thank all our staff for their hard work throughout the pandemic, including our enforcement team who have been doing an excellent job."

Superintendent Gary Taylor from the Met's Roads and Transport Policing Command, said: "We are almost a year into living with this virus and by now everyone should know how to protect themselves and those around them. Wearing a face covering on public transport is just one of the ways to stay safe.

"Alongside our Transport for London partners, my officers will be out across London making sure those who use public transport are wearing a face covering. If officers on patrol see someone who isn't complying with the rules, unless that person is exempt, they can expect to receive a fixed penalty notice.

"Londoners continue to respond brilliantly to this virus and I would like to thank the vast majority of transport users that are complying with the rules by wearing a face covering."

Chief Superintendent Martin Fry, of British Transport Police, said: "We operate across the rail, Tube and tram network in London daily, engaging with members of the public, explaining the current restrictions, encouraging compliance and where necessary issuing fines.

"I'm pleased to say our frontline officers report the vast majority of people at stations and on-board trains are wearing face coverings, or are willing to wear one when challenged.

“Coronavirus is a very real and present danger. Wearing a facemask on the rail network and abiding by the current restrictions is very important, it saves lives and ensures the railway is safe for those who absolutely need to use it, such as those who work in the NHS.

“We’ll continue to fully support TfL and the wider rail industry.”

The Government’s message is that everyone must stay at home unless for a legally permitted reason. A reasonable excuse for leaving home includes travel to work where it cannot be undertaken from home, to shop for necessities, seek medical assistance, visit a support bubble or for education. As full a service as possible is running for those who must travel, and Londoners are also encouraged to use London’s network of safe walking or cycling routes where possible and to use TfL’s travel tools to plan journeys by public transport during the quieter times. These are currently between 08:15 and 16:00 and after 17:30 on weekdays, and before noon and after 18:00 on weekends on public transport.

Enforcement complements other rigorous measures TfL is taking to support a safe, reliable and clean network that gives people who need to travel the confidence to do so. The enhanced cleaning regime deployed at the start of the pandemic, using hospital-grade cleaning substances, continues to make the network cleaner than ever, and more than 150 ultraviolet light sanitising devices were installed on escalators on the Tube network in October. Good hand hygiene also remains essential and more than 1,100 hand sanitiser units across the network continue to dispense free Dettol hand sanitiser.

More Enforcement Officer roles will be created in the coming months and advertised on the [TfL website](#).

Photo credit: Transport for London