

13 May 2020

SHIELDING: ACTION REQUESTED

1. Review the patients identified as splenectomy for shielding using the new EScro searches and return the CHIs for those who now need to shield to COVIDSHielding@ggc.scot.nhs.uk by close of business on Wednesday 20 May.
 2. When you issue a shielding letter to a patient, please ensure that their CHI and the group they are in for shielding is returned to the covid email address.
 3. Where new diagnoses or prescriptions render a patient newly eligible for shielding, please issue a shielding letter and return their CHI with a note of the shielding category to the covid shielding address.
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Dear colleagues,

NHSGGC PRACTICE UPDATE ON SHIELDING

I'm writing to provide you with an update on shielding within NHSGGC. I'd like to start by thanking everyone in practices for their hard work, patience and perseverance in supporting the shielding work, despite the ever-changing landscape and the pressure that this brings at what is already an incredibly challenging time. I have also attached the latest shielding update for GP practices from the Deputy Chief Medical Officer.

Progress with data collection to identify additional patients

Colleagues in our pharmacy support team have been working with Albasoft, the developer of the EScro search tool to identify patients who meet the Scottish criteria for shielding. Many of these patients have already been notified to ISD (now known as Public Health Scotland), and letters will follow, with associated 9d44. codes being added in batches to practices by EMIS and VISION. You can identify these newly coded patients by searching for 9d44., and then searching this group for those who lack the code 8CB or 8CB-2. This combination will give you the newly coded patients who will need to be contacted for a shielding discussion as per previous guidance from the CMO.

The most complex part of the shielding process has been identifying those who meet the criteria for group 5, immunosuppression. This has required us to combine EScro data on prescribing and comorbidity with hospital biologic prescribing data in order to identify some patients who should shield. This work is almost complete and the data has been passed to PHS as described above. Practices will need to run the 9d44. and 8CB/8CB-2 searches to find the newly coded patients.

Splenectomy

Splenectomy has now been added as a criterion for shielding. The Scottish Government have asked for a further development of EScro to search for splenectomy patients. The numbers of patients identified will be very small for each practice and so following discussion we are asking practices to **forward the CHIs for all their splenectomy shielding group** to the COVIDShielding@ggc.scot.nhs.uk address directly by close of business on Wednesday 20 May. The splenectomy patients can be found within tabs in the EScro tool. The request from Scottish Government is included in the letter from the interim CMO. In this letter new codes are described which are being deployed. **Please only use the existing codes 9d44., 8-CB, and 8CB-2 for the moment.**

Shielding letters

We have been working to ensure that the data flows in this complex endeavour work well. There have been some delays to letters being issues centrally and we have been working with PHS and Scottish Government on this. It can take up to 2 weeks for a patient's details to update on local authority shielding support lists. I appreciate the impact this has on patients and on practices. In addition we have had some challenges where patients who have had letters issued directly by the practice have not been able to access shielding resources. We would remind practices that if you are issuing a letter to a patient directly, please ensure that the CHI is returned so that PHS can add the patient to the shielding register which is shared with local authorities. A new word document for shielding is enclosed which includes the current date for shielding to end.

Patient enquiries

The board has been receiving a significant number of enquiries about shielding from patients, either directly or via Scottish Government. I appreciate that patients are very anxious about shielding, with some wishing to be shielded, and others wanting to be removed from shielding. This is also a major issue for practices and in itself create anxiety and workload. Where the enquiry relates to clinical eligibility for shielding, we inform patients that this is a clinical decision and that this has to be agreed with their doctors – both GPs and secondary care. In doing this we are not trying to push back work to you, but to clarify that shielding is a complex decision in which our role is to support GPs to make the decision on the basis of existing guidance. It is not our role to second-guess clinical decisions. GPs know their patients better than anyone else in the system. If the complaints relate to shielding policy, we pass these to Scottish Government.

Keeping the shielding register up to date

No decision has yet been made on how the register will be kept up to date but we are working with Scottish Government to reach an agreement on how this will be managed. At the moment the shielding date extends to at least 18 June 2020. Until there is clarity on the future arrangement for shielding and updating of the register, we would ask practices to consider new diagnoses and prescribing which would place a

patient in a shielding category. I appreciate that this is complex and imperfect, as some of the data for this comes from secondary care. We will work to agree an approach to support practices with this in the longer term.

For new shielding patients please issue a shielding letter, code the patient and **send the CHI** with a note of your practice ID and group number, e.g. 'April 4xxx group 2' to COVIDShielding@ggc.scot.nhs.uk . We will keep you informed of the future arrangements as soon as these are agreed.

I'm grateful to practices for all that you are doing at this time. I appreciate that shielding is an immensely complex, time-consuming and anxiety-provoking activity. If you have any concerns please contact me at pcph@ggc.scot.nhs.uk

Please stay safe.

Yours faithfully,

John

John O'Dowd

Clinical Director

Encs 2

CMO letter

Word shielding letter