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| Directorate for Chief Medical Officer Dr Gregor Smith Chief Medical OfficerSt Andrews House | Regent Road | Edinburgh | EH1 3DG |  |

XX July 2021

**IMPORTANT: PERSONAL**

**Your Community Health Index (CHI) number: <<CHI>>**

**Updates for people at highest risk if they catch Covid**

Dear [forename] [surname],

I’m writing to you to let you know about how recent news about Covid and Scotland’s move to Level 0 on 19 July affects you. I’m now asking you to follow the same advice as for the rest of the population. I want to provide reassurance that we are taking these steps based on strong clinical evidence. We continue to take a cautious approach to easing restrictions.

**About the current figures**

The current numbers of Covid-19 cases are high, but hospitalisation and death rates are much lower than they were in the first and second waves of the virus.

This is because the vaccination programme is working well. It continues to ensure vaccination is offered to those at risk. As the number of people who have been vaccinated rises, we’re all benefitting from greater protection. This is true even if you are one of the small number of people who cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons.

**My advice for you from 19 July**

On 19 July, the whole of Scotland will move to Level 0. One of the main changes from this date is around physical distancing. We’re reducing the physical distancing requirement when you’re indoors from two metres to one metre. This is because my clinical advisers and I have reviewed the evidence in light of the numbers of people who have been vaccinated, and this is telling us it’s now safe to make this change.

We’re maintaining physical distancing rules outdoors for a bit longer than we had planned, however. People will still be required to sit one metre from people in other households when they are in parks, gardens, or the outdoor areas of pubs and cafés.

Rules about face coverings will stay in place at Level 0.

You can find out more about the Level 0 rules at [www.gov.scot/levelzero](http://www.gov.scot/levelzero) or by phoning the free National Assistance Helpline on 0800 111 4000 (Monday - Friday, office hours).

**Going into work, education and childcare**

At Level 0 we’re continuing to encourage everyone to work from home to reduce the transmission of the virus. However, it’s safe for you to go into work if you cannot work from home. It’s also safe for you to use public transport. Children and young people can also go to school, university and college, and childcare. I’ll let you know if this advice changes.

Earlier this year I sent you a letter you could use in a similar way to a fit note to stay off work if you couldn’t work from home and your area went up to Level 4. It was valid until 30 June. I do not now expect to see any areas returning to Level 4 so this letter is no longer needed. You can find workplace safety advice for staff and employers in the extra information attached to this letter.

**Following the public health advice**

We’re continuing to remind everyone in Scotland to keep following the public health advice around wearing face coverings, physical distancing, keeping hands and surfaces clean, and good ventilation. Keep windows open to let air circulate if you can. This advice applies in workplaces too.

We strongly recommend that you attend any medical appointments you need.

**Moving beyond the levels**

As we continue to make good progress, we’ll move away from the current levels system. I’ll write to you again before this happens. At the moment we expect this to be from 9 August, but that date depends on all the conditions for us to do this safely being met.

We’ll still need to manage outbreaks as and when they arise and can still go back to using the levels system to help us do that if needed.

**Why I’m now saying 'highest risk' instead of 'shielding'**

You're in a group of people who I might have asked to shield in the past. Most adults in Scotland will soon have had both doses of the vaccine. This means people at highest risk are now much less likely to catch Covid.

There are now other ways of reducing your risk, including vaccination, and ensuring you and everyone else in Scotland continues to follow the advice we give to protect you. I also know that shielding was very difficult at times, so we now see it as a last resort and have no plans to ask you to shield again.

You do not have to shield now, and this is why I’m now using the words ‘highest risk' instead of 'shielding' to talk about you and other people in this group.

**New ways to get your vaccination**

You and anyone over the age of 16 who lives with you can now be vaccinated at a drop-in clinic. You do not need an appointment and can go at a time that suits you. You can find your nearest drop-in clinic on the NHS inform website at [www.nhsinform.scot/vaccinedropinclinics](http://www.nhsinform.scot/vaccinedropinclinics)

Encouraging your friends and family to get vaccinated is an important way to keep you safe. We’re currently vaccinating younger people aged 18-29, so if you know anyone in this age group who hasn’t been vaccinated yet, I would encourage them to take up the offer of a vaccine as soon as they can in order to protect you and others at high risk, as well as themselves. There’s more information about vaccinations, including getting help with transport to and from your vaccination appointment, or getting a vaccination at home, in the pages attached to this letter.

**If you’re immunosuppressed**

I know that many of you on the highest risk list are immunosuppressed. Evidence continues to emerge about how well the vaccine works for people in this group. While there are some encouraging signs, until we have a clearer picture I would ask that you strictly follow the advice for Level 0.

**Q&A with Jason Leitch**Professor Jason Leitch is the National Clinical Director for the Scottish Government. He’ll be hosting a Question and Answer session exclusively for people at highest risk from Covid. You can email any questions for Professor Leitch to questionsforjason@gov.scot before 4 August. We’ll aim to ask Professor Leitch as many of your questions as we can, but he may not be able to answer them all. I’ll let you know where and when you’ll be able to see the Q&A in my next letter.

**Let us know what you think**

I’d like to thank the many thousands of you who so kindly participated in research over the past months to helps us better understand how the pandemic has been affecting you, and how we can best support you.

If you would like to let us know what your thoughts and feelings are as we ease restrictions, please go to [www.mygov.scot/shielding](http://www.mygov.scot/shielding) before 26 July to participate in a short survey. It should take around 10 minutes to complete and will be invaluable in helping us understand the issues affecting you and what further support we can offer.

Please look at the extra information attached to this letter to find out more about vaccinations, mental health and wellbeing support, free lateral flow tests, workplace safety, and supermarket priority slots.

Yours sincerely,

**DR GREGOR SMITH**

CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER

**Extra information**

**Checking and booking vaccination appointments**

Anyone can check if they have an appointment scheduled for their first or second vaccine dose on the NHS Scotland website at <invitations.vacs.nhs.scot>

If you do not already have an appointment and would like to book one rather than going to a drop-in clinic, phone the Scottish Covid Vaccination Helpline on 0800 030 8013 (8am to 8pm).

**If you cannot leave home or need help getting to your vaccination**

Phone the Scottish Covid Vaccination Helpline on 0800 030 8013 (8am to 8pm). They can help you if you:

* cannot leave your home and need to arrange to have your vaccination at home
* need help getting to and back from your vaccination

**If you cannot get the vaccination**Due to some health conditions, some people cannot receive the vaccination, or may not fully benefit from being vaccinated. If you’re unsure, you should speak with your clinician. Children and young people under 16 will only be vaccinated under exceptional circumstances, after an individual risk assessment with their clinicians.

If you cannot get the vaccination, over-16s who live with you can help reduce their risk of passing Covid to you by:

* getting vaccinated as soon as they can
* taking lateral flow tests twice a week to check they have not caught Covid

**Get free lateral flow tests for Covid**

Lateral flow tests are at-home Covid tests that give quick results. You do not need to go to a testing centre. These tests are only for people who do **not** have Covid symptoms.

You can get them by:

* ordering online at [www.gov.scot/covidtestshielding](http://www.gov.scot/covidtestshielding)
* phoning the National Testing Centre on 0300 303 2713
* collecting from a Covid testing centre between 3.30pm and 8pm
* collecting from some pharmacies

Find your nearest testing centre or participating pharmacy online at:

[maps.test-and-trace.nhs.uk/findatestcenter](https://maps.test-and-trace.nhs.uk/findatestcenter)

Lateral flow tests help to find people who do not have symptoms and would not know they have Covid. If adult members of your family or household get a positive test, they can take steps to reduce the risk of them passing Covid to you by self-isolating away from you.

**Making your workplace safe**

Employers have a legal duty to make the workplace safe for all staff. It is your employer’s responsibility to regularly carry out workplace checks called risk assessments. They must take steps to reduce Covid risk. Employees also have a responsibility to follow safe working practices. There’s more information at [www.gov.scot/shielding-work-safety](http://www.gov.scot/shielding-work-safety) including additional steps you can take to keep yourself safe.

In addition, we also advise that you carry out an individual risk assessment using a COVID-age tool to look at your individual risk from COVID-19. This can help you to highlight your individual risk to your employer in order to discuss any additional changes that may be needed to make your workplace and duties safer for you, if you cannot work from home. Find individual risk assessment guidance at [www.gov.scot/covid-workplace-risk](http://www.gov.scot/covid-workplace-risk).

Speak to your employer to ensure all appropriate protections are in place. If you are concerned, you should ask your employer for copies of the risk assessments for your workplace.

If you still feel unsafe at work after speaking to your employer, you can get more advice from:

* Occupational Health Services (if your employer offers them)
* the Health and Safety representative in your workplace
* your employer’s Human Resources (HR) team, if there is one
* your trade union or professional body
* the Citizens Advice website at [www.cas.org.uk](http://www.cas.org.uk/) or the free Citizens Advice Helpline on 0800 028 1456, (Monday to Friday, office hours)
* the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS)

**We’re still giving you the same support**

The support the Scottish Government gives people at highest risk is not changing. We'll still:

* send you letters about any important changes
* send you text message updates (if you've signed up for them by texting your CHI number to 07860 064525)
* offer you access to priority supermarket delivery slots

**You can still get priority access to supermarket online delivery slots**

If you, your child or someone you care for is on the shielding list, you can still sign up for priority online delivery slots with Asda, Tesco, Morrisons, Sainsbury’s, Iceland and Waitrose. You’ll then see online delivery slots further in advance. We cannot guarantee you’ll always get the slot and supermarket you want. Registration can take a few weeks to process.

**How to register for priority online delivery slots using our text message service**

If you’re registering on behalf of a person on the shielding list, register using their name.

* If you’re already on the Scottish Government Shielding text messaging service, sign up by texting **1SHOP** to 07860 064525 from your mobile.
* If you’re not on our text messaging service,join it by texting your Community Health Index (CHI) number to 07860 064525. Your CHI number is the 10-digit number at the top of this letter. Then text **1SHOP** to 07860 064525 to sign up for priority online delivery slots.

**How to register for priority online delivery slots by phone**

Phone the free National Assistance Helpline on 0800 111 4000 (Monday-Friday, office hours). A friend or carer can phone for you if you cannot phone yourself.

**If you already shop online with Asda, Tesco, Morrisons, Sainsbury’s, Iceland or Waitrose** Once you’ve signed up for priority delivery slots, your supermarket will email you to let you know how to access the delivery service. If you do not get an email, check that the email address you’ve registered with the supermarket is still correct, and check your junk mail folder.

**If you’re new to online supermarket shopping**Once you’ve signed up for priority delivery slots, you’ll get texts from GOV.SCOT about the supermarkets offering online deliveries in your area. The texts will explain how to access these.



Use the subject line ‘translation request’ if you send an email. Include these details about the person who needs the different format:

* name
* address and postcode
* CHI number
* format or language required

Please tell us if we should always send information in this format. If you’ve asked before for translations of the information we send, it’s on its way to you.

Find translations and other formats for past shielding letters at [www.gov.scot/shielding-letters](http://www.gov.scot/shielding-letters)

 **Data Protection Statement**

You have been identified from either your GP practice, local Health Board or securely stored national data in order that we could write to you. We want to reassure you that this information has only been shared in a limited way within the NHS in Scotland and did not include your medical record. During this time, we will keep your contact details in case we need to contact you again. We will also notify your GP and your Health Board that you have been contacted in order that they can provide appropriate support. To provide some of the support noted above, we may share your contact details only with your council. This is only so that they can support you during this difficult time. This action is only being taken due to the current COVID-19 outbreak. We want to assure you that your local council would not receive any details of your medical condition or health record.

You can request your contact details to be removed from the shielding list by asking your GP or hospital clinician.