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[**Patient Name**

Patient address Line 1

Patient address Line 2

Patient address Line 3]

## September 2020

**Your Community Health Index (CHI) number: [CHI NUMBER]**

**IMPORTANT UPDATES AND INFORMATION TO KEEP YOU SAFE**

Dear [Patient],

Firstly, I hope you are keeping safe and well. You are receiving this letter because you are on the shielding list. I am writing to give you an update on what we are continuing to do to keep you safe. I hope you will find this reassuring.

We continue to monitor Coronavirus (COVID-19) infection rates across Scotland carefully.
At this time, though there has been a small rise in the number of cases, generally the rates of infection are low. This means that your chances of catching the virus are low. That is why we are asking you to follow the same guidance as everyone else in Scotland right now.

If you are living in a residential nursing or care home, please follow their guidance. This may be different to the advice for the wider population.

There have been some local outbreaks in some areas of Scotland. There is no need for you to start shielding again during these outbreaks. This is because we are taking quick action to manage these, contain the spread of the virus and keep you safe.

We let people in those areas know about the changes in restrictions through a Scottish Government text messaging service. There is more information about the service later in this letter. We encourage you to sign up to it if you have not already done so.

We will tell you immediately if we think you need to shield again to stay safe. We understand the harms that shielding can cause to mental and physical health, and need to balance these harms against the risk that the virus poses to you. We are basing all our decisions and actions on protecting and supporting you.

The First Minister will announce any changes to restrictions or guidance. You can also keep up-to-date by checking [www.mygov.scot/shielding](http://www.mygov.scot/shielding). We will also alert you by sending a text message to your phone if you have joined our text messaging service.

I also wanted to remind you that the NHS in Scotland is open. Please contact your GP, consultant or clinician if you have any concerns about your condition or access to treatment.

The Scottish Government have included further advice and information about available support with this letter. Please do read it carefully. You can access the full COVID-19 guidance for Scotland at [www.mygov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19](http://www.mygov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19).

Yours sincerely,

**DR GREGOR SMITH**

INTERIM CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER

**INFORMATION AND SUPPORT TO HELP KEEP YOU SAFE**

**PLEASE READ**

**Protect Scotland app**

Download the free Protect Scotland app to help stop COVID-19 spreading again. The app sends alerts to people who have been in close contact with someone else using the app who has tested positive. Being ‘in close contact with someone’ means being less than 2 metres away from them for at least 15 minutes. The alert will ask you to self-isolate for 14 days.
If you start to develop symptoms you should call 111.

You can also use the app to send anonymous alerts to let other people know if you test positive. The app does not use up much data, and does not record your identity or location. For more information and to download the app visit [www.protect.scot](http://www.protect.scot). Please ask your friends and family to download it too. We know not everyone will be able to or want to access the app. However, they will still benefit from the protection that it offers all of us in Scotland.

**Case numbers in your area**

You can find information on the number of COVID-19 cases in your area at [www.mygov.scot/shielding](http://www.mygov.scot/shielding).

There is a link to a dashboard that Public Health Scotland update daily. We are also working hard on a new tool to show you in more detail what’s happening in your local area. We will let you know further updates on that through the text messaging service soon.

**Text messaging service**

Many people on the shielding list have joined the text messaging service from the Scottish Government. This is so they can receive alerts and updates straight to their mobile phones.

If you would like to join, please send a text from your mobile phone with your Community Health Index (CHI) number to **07860 064525**. Your CHI number is the ten-digit number shown at the top of this letter. You do not need to text any other information.

**National helpline**

If you cannot join the text messaging service, or need to ask a question about shielding,
call the free national helpline number on 0800 111 4000. The helpline is open Monday to Friday, from 9am to 5pm, and will put you in touch with someone from your local council.

**Priority access to supermarket slots**

Priority access to delivery slots will continue for anyone who had signed up before 31 July.

**Support when returning to work**

You may already have returned to work, or be considering how you can make a safe return to work. The Scottish Government and medical professionals have made guidance available to you and your employer. You can access this at [www.mygov.scot/shielding](http://www.mygov.scot/shielding). It can help ensure measures are put into place to give you confidence in returning to the workplace.
The guidance should not replace medical advice.

**Help with money**

If you’re worried about money, you can get help and support online, through the Money Talk Team at [www.moneytalkteam.org.uk](http://www.moneytalkteam.org.uk/). Or you can call them on 0800 085 7145.

**Mental health and wellbeing**

If you’re feeling overwhelmed, anxious, stressed, depressed or worried, please call:

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| Breathing Space | 0800 83 85 87 | Monday to Thursday: 6pm – 2amFriday to Monday: 6pm – 6am |
| Samaritans | 116 123 | Every day: 24 hours a day |
| British Red Cross | 0808 196 3651 | Every day: 10am – 6pm |

You can also book GP appointments for support. Help is available online too from the Scottish Association of Mental Health at [www.samh.org.uk](http://www.samh.org.uk).

**Getting outdoors and staying active**

We know many of you have been missing getting outside in the fresh air. We also know going out of your front door can be an anxious time for some people. Getting outside can have lots of physical and mental health benefits. Try to remember that COVID-19 is much less likely to pass from person to person when you’re outdoors.

Staying active is good for your mental health and wellbeing. When you are feeling able to, we encourage you to do whatever level of physical activity feels comfortable for you. If you have not been very active for the last few months, you may wish to take things slowly at first.

You may find that you need to improve your strength and balance if you haven’t been as active as you would like. There are lot of things you can do to help you stay steady and reduce your chances of falling. You can find more information at [www.mygov.scot/shielding](http://www.mygov.scot/shielding).

**Vitamin D**

Vitamin D is very important for keeping your bones and muscles healthy. Sunlight is our main source of Vitamin D. The amount of sun needed varies from person to person.
Around 10-15 minutes of unprotected Scottish sun exposure is safe for all. This is one of the many benefits of getting outdoors if you can. Remember to use sunscreen to protect your skin if you are staying in the sun for longer than this.

We recommend that everyone consider taking a daily 10 microgram (10µg) supplement of vitamin D. Particularly during the autumn and winter months when we are unable to make vitamin D from sunlight. Find more information at [www.mygov.scot/shielding](http://www.mygov.scot/shielding).

**Flu Vaccine**

You should soon be receiving a letter inviting you and anyone else in your household for a free flu vaccination. If you’re able to get the flu vaccine, you should get this as soon as possible. The flu vaccine will not protect against COVID-19 but it will help protect you and your household from this year’s flu.

Contact your GP if you have not received a letter in the next few weeks.

**Follow FACTS to stay safe**

**F**ace coverings – wear them in shops, inside restaurants and cafes, and on public transport

**A**void crowded places

**C**lean your hands regularly and for at least 20 seconds

**T**wo metre distance – maintain physical distancing from anyone who’s not in your household

**S**elf isolate and book a test if you have coronavirus symptoms

**If you have symptoms of COVID-19**

If it’s an emergency, whether related to COVID-19 or not, phone 999. If you think you have developed symptoms of COVID-19, phone the NHS on 111. Symptoms include:

* a new, continuous cough
* a high temperature (above 37.8°C) and/or
* a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste

**If you, or the person you care for, has cancer**

This advice is for anyone who has had chemotherapy or radiotherapy for a cancer (including a blood cancer) within the last 6 weeks. If you feel ill you should phone someone straight away. Call the emergency Scottish Cancer Treatment Helpline on 0800 917 7711 or the emergency number given to you by your consultant or specialist nurse. You should call even if you do not think feeling unwell is due to COVID-19.

**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.

**Staying safe** with daily activities (for those at highest risk)

There are simple things you can do to help you stay safe as you do more activities outside your home.

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| **Seeing friends and family** | * Think about how likely it is that the person you are meeting up with has come into contact with the virus
* Stay outdoors or open windows if inside
* Wash your hands or use a hand sanitiser often
* Bring your own food, plates and cutlery if eating together
* Not eat from the same bowl as others
 | **Going shopping** | * Avoid queues by choosing to go at quieter times
* Put on your face covering before wiping the handles of your trolley or basket
* Use self-scan or self-checkout so it’s only you touching your items
* Consider using contactless payment
* Wash your hands or use a hand sanitiser as soon as you can
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| **Eating and drinking** | * Choose quieter times or sit in quiet areas
* Stay outside if you can and sit in an outdoor seating area
* Avoid going into 1 metre zones
* Sit facing away from people not with you
* Wash your hands or use a hand sanitiser before and after eating
* Consider using contactless payment
 | **Leisure venues** | * Avoid queues and book in advance
* Choose times that are likely to be quiet
* Avoid going into 1 metre zones
* Avoid touching hard surfaces and use a hand sanitiser if you do
* Choose businesses with enhanced hygiene measures
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| **Public transport** | * Book tickets in advance if you can
* Choose times that are likely to be quiet
* Put on your face covering before getting on
* Avoid touching hard surfaces and use a hand sanitiser if you do
* Sit near an open window if you can
* Wash your hands or use a hand sanitiser as soon as you get off
 | **General hygiene** | * Try to avoid touching your face when outside your home
* Wash or dispose of your face covering after using
* Take a bag to put used tissues into
* Take a hand sanitiser and use it regularly
* Avoid anyone with symptoms
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