



31 July 2020

**IMPORTANT: PERSONAL**

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

**YOU HAVE BEEN ADDED TO THE SHIELDING LIST**

Dear Patient,

You've been sent this letter because your clinician has identified you as being at very high risk of developing severe illness should you catch coronavirus. This is because you have an underlying disease or health condition. For this reason you have been added to the shielding list.

If you're the parent or carer of the person named at the top of this letter, this advice applies to them.

**Shielding is being paused from Saturday 1 August**

Coronavirus (COVID-19) infection rates in Scotland are now very low. This means that your chances of catching coronavirus are low. Recently, the First Minister announced that from 1 August, people on the shielding list can follow the same guidance given to everyone else in Scotland.

To stay safe, please:

- stay 2 metres away from anyone you do not live with
- regularly wash your hands for at least 20 seconds
- try to avoid touching your face
- avoid contact with anyone who has any of the symptoms of COVID-19

**If you live in a residential care or nursing home**

If you live in a residential care or nursing home, there is specific advice for you in the guidance for care homes. This can be found at [www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-adult-care-homes-visiting-guidance](http://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-adult-care-homes-visiting-guidance).

## Guidance and support for people shielding

Though shielding has stopped, we'll continue to support you by:

- keeping you on the list of shielding people, so we can contact you and update you if our advice changes – you can request to be removed from the list by asking your GP or hospital clinician
- giving you access to up-to-date health guidance about your specific condition
- sending updates by text from our SMS Shielding Service – this will soon include updates on the infection rate in your local area
- providing guidance online at [www.mygov.scot/shielding](http://www.mygov.scot/shielding) – to help you understand what you can do to protect yourself in daily life

We have also included a 'Quick Guide to Risk' within this letter. This will help you to understand what sorts of activities are safer than others.

### Join the SMS Shielding Service to get the latest updates by text

To join the SMS Shielding Service, send a text from your mobile phone to 07860 064525. The text you send should include your Communicaty Health Index (CHI) number. Your CHI number is the ten-digit number shown towards the top of this letter. You do not need to text any other information.

Once we've got your CHI number, we'll send you a text to confirm that you've joined.

### Keeping up-to-date

You can also keep up-to-date with any changes we make by checking online. You'll find the latest shielding advice on [mygov.scot/shielding](http://mygov.scot/shielding) and on NHS Inform. When you join our SMS Shielding Service we'll send you the latest updates direct to your mobile phone.

If you cannot join the SMS Shielding 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.

### Information about employment and schools

We have also included information in this letter about going back to work and school. This advice has been provided by the Scottish Government.

If you're worried about money, check [www.gov.scot/publications/covid-shielding](http://www.gov.scot/publications/covid-shielding) for details about things like furlough, statutory sick pay and benefits.

Yours sincerely,



**DR GREGOR SMITH**  
INTERIM CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER

## **Shielding: medical and health advice**

You can access the full coronavirus guidance for Scotland at [www.gov.scot/coronavirus](http://www.gov.scot/coronavirus).

### **Face coverings**

You must wear a face covering when visiting shops and on public transport. This is unless you have a health condition or disability that makes wearing one hard for you. You do not need proof of this. Other people who do not need to wear a face covering include:

- children under 5
- people taking certain types of medication
- people who are communicating with someone who lip reads

If outdoors, our advice is to maintain physical distancing as much as you can. This is the best way to stay safe. If you do this, you do not need to wear a face covering outside.

By face coverings, we do not mean the wearing of a surgical or other medical grade mask. It is a facial covering of your mouth and nose. This can be made of cloth or other textiles, for example a scarf, through which you can breathe.

When wearing a face covering, you should maintain physical distancing as much as you can.

### **Access to healthcare**

It is vital that you get the care you need in the safest way possible. This may be the doctor or team who usually support you. It could also include other routine or urgent GP or hospital care. Your needs will be assessed by a clinician as part of any GP or hospital care. They will do a risk assessment and decide where, when and how you are seen. This is part of the care that health professionals do every day to meet the needs of their patients.

Your clinician may decide it is best to carry out a consultation or appointment over the telephone. Another option is to use Near Me – a video calling service used by the NHS. Other times, a face to face consultation or appointment may happen at your home. Equally, this may involve you going to a practice, health centre or hospital to be seen.

Before COVID-19, clinicians advised a small number of people to stop doing certain things or meeting with other people. This was because of their specific health condition or treatment. You should follow the advice your clinician provides as they know you personally. This does not mean you are being advised to shield because of an increase in the levels of COVID-19. You should ask your healthcare team if you're unsure about any health advice or treatment.

### **If you have symptoms of coronavirus**

If it's an emergency, whether related to coronavirus or not, phone 999. If you think you have developed symptoms of coronavirus, 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 coronavirus.

## **Mental health and wellbeing**

If you feel worried and want to speak to someone you can now book GP and NHS appointments as normal. Your GP or other healthcare provider can help make sure you get the support you need. You can also speak to someone over the phone from:

- Breathing Space - 0800 83 85 87
- Samaritans - 116 123

You can find help online from the Scottish Association of Mental Health at [www.samh.org.uk](http://www.samh.org.uk).

## **Influenza vaccine**

If you're able to get the flu vaccine, you should consider getting this for your health as soon as it's available. The flu vaccine will not protect against COVID-19.

## **If you need to ask a question**

Please note that the SMS Shielding Service number only accepts text messages. It does not take voice calls. The SMS Shielding Service is not checked by a person. It cannot respond to general questions you send by text. The SMS Shielding Service can only respond with a single pre-programmed reply.

You can call a free helpline if you cannot join the SMS Shielding Service and want to request access to support. The helpline number is 0800 111 4000 and is currently open Monday to Friday, from 9am to 5pm. This helpline will direct you to local support from your council.

## **Data Protection Statement**

We would like to reassure you that while 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, this information has been shared in a limited way within the NHS in Scotland and did not include your medical record. During this outbreak, 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. Should we need to, in order to provide some of the additional support noted above, we will share your contact details only with your local authority (your council) in order that they can support you during this difficult time. We would highlight that this action is only being taken due to the current coronavirus outbreak, and would assure you that your local authority would not receive any details of your medical condition or health record.

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

## **Work and school**

Our advice is that you should carry on working from home, if you can. If you are going into work, you should follow physical distancing advice. If you cannot, your employer must have put other measures in place to help keep you safe.

If you're worried about going back to work, you should speak to your employer about your concerns. We have given guidance to employers about keeping their employees safe at this time. This includes specific guidance for what they need to do for those who are at higher risk from COVID-19. A key part of this is a workplace risk assessment tool. This will help you and your employer understand your personal risks and the support you may need. You can access the risk assessment online at [www.mygov.scot/shielding](http://www.mygov.scot/shielding).

### **If you're not able to go back to work**

The risks to you and the kind of job you do may mean you cannot return to a workplace. In these cases, some employers may be able to offer you leave. Beyond the annual leave you're able to take as normal, it's up to your employer and you to decide what's best if you're not able to return to work. Options include:

- If you have been furloughed for at least a full 3-week period prior to 30 June, your employer may be able to apply for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. Under this scheme you can be furloughed and receive 80% of your regular wages, up to a cap of £2,500. The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme runs until the end of October.
- If you feel you're not able to return to work, you can discuss your fitness for work with your GP or specialist care provider.

### **Going back to school**

We expect all children who are on the shielding list to be able to return to school in August. This is unless they are given advice not to from their GP or healthcare provider.

Children are at much lower risk of severe illness from coronavirus than adults. They are also less likely to pass on the virus to other people.

If you're worried about this, you can speak to your child's school about how they're getting ready to open fully in August. We have also published 'Guidance on preparing for the start of the new school term in August 2020' on [www.gov.scot/coronavirus](http://www.gov.scot/coronavirus).

### **Help with money**

If you're worried about money, you can get help and support online, through the Money Talk Team at <https://financialhealthcheck.scot/home>.

If you need to speak to someone about debt or employment, you can talk to Citizens Advice Scotland on 0800 028 1456.

## A quick guide to risk for the shielding group

The number of people who are infectious is much lower. However, the risk is still the same if you were to become infected with the virus. You may want to consider this when making decisions about what is important to you.



	Low risk	Higher risk
<b>Being active</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exercising outdoors alone</li> <li>Outdoor non-contact activities</li> <li>Going swimming</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outdoor contact sports</li> <li>Indoor non-contact activities</li> <li>Going to the gym</li> </ul>
<b>Health and care</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Getting personal care at home</li> <li>Seeing your GP or clinician</li> <li>Going to a pharmacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing care for others</li> <li>Sitting in a busy waiting room</li> <li>Visiting a day centre</li> </ul>
<b>Meeting others</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meeting people outdoors</li> <li>Forming an extended household</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meeting people indoors</li> <li>Physical contact with people you do not live with</li> </ul>
<b>Shopping and leisure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Going to an outdoor market</li> <li>Going to the shops</li> <li>Getting your haircut</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Going to a museum</li> <li>Going to a busy beach</li> <li>Going to the cinema</li> </ul>
<b>Travel and holidays</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pay for petrol at the pump</li> <li>Self-catering accommodation</li> <li>Travelling outwith your area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Going in someone else's car</li> <li>Staying at a hotel</li> <li>Travelling by bus or train</li> </ul>
<b>Eating and drinking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Picnic outside with others</li> <li>Sitting outside a café, restaurant or pub</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Having people over for a meal</li> <li>Sitting inside a café, restaurant or pub</li> </ul>