



Chief Executives NHS Boards
Chief Officers HSCPs
Health Board Shielding Executive Leads
Health Board Shielding Teams
Hospital Clinicians
Medical Directors
Nurse Directors
Primary Care

For immediate cascade to Primary Care, Hospital Clinicians and Health Board Shielding Teams

24 July 2020

Dear colleagues,

UPDATES ON SHIELDING IN SCOTLAND

I am very grateful for all that you have done for your patients in relation to shielding. I write with several updates about shielding in Scotland.

1. Shielding advice to pause in Scotland from 1 August

The prevalence of COVID-19 is now very low which means that, from 1 August 2020, the advice to shield will be paused. From 1 August, those on the shielding list will be advised to follow the guidance issued to the general population in Scotland, while highlighting the importance of stringent physical distancing and hygiene measures to decrease exposure to COVID-19. This is the same advice currently provided to those in the 'at risk' group, for example those who would normally receive the influenza vaccine. However, this change in advice does not apply to those who live in a residential care or nursing home.

This will allow children who would normally be at school to return to school. Scottish Government will publish 'Guidance on preparing for the start of the new school term in August 2020' on gov.scot from 30 July.

Those who work should carry on working from home if they can, as with the rest of the population in Scotland. For those who cannot work from home, employees should discuss a return to work with their employer and arrangements made to ensure workplaces are safe. Scottish Government will provide guidance to employers in Scotland about keeping their employees safe at this time, and what they need to do for those who are at higher risk from COVID-19. This includes a workplace risk assessment tool that can help employees and their employer understand risks and the

support that may be required. This will be available on the Scottish Government website shortly. Patients on the shielding list do not need to get a note from their healthcare provider in order to restart work.

Condition-specific advice for patients in the main shielding groups has also been produced and continues to be updated on the Scottish Government website.

The latest updates on shielding are available at:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/covid-shielding/>

I am writing to all patients on the shielding list to outline this new advice and highlight support and guidance produced by Scottish Government. I have included a copy of this letter to patients (Annex A) for your information.

I expect most people on the shielding list to be able to follow the advice provided to the wider population in Scotland, with stringent physical distancing and hygiene measures. However, I am aware that there may be rare exceptions where patients would not normally be following the same advice as the wider population, even before COVID-19. If you consider that any of your patients should not follow this population-wide advice, I would be grateful for you to make contact with them to provide individual advice.

I am aware that the transition to shielding advice ending will be an anxious time for those on the shielding list, and I am very grateful for your support with patients who may contact you in relation to their health.

2. Maintaining the Shielding List

The shielding list will be maintained even after the advice to shield has paused. This is because Scottish Government will continue to monitor the prevalence of COVID-19 across Scotland. Scottish Government continue to work closely with a clinical advisory group for shielding in Scotland. In the event of significant increase in virus level, we may advise patients to follow new advice. If so, I will contact those patients and also inform you. It is important to maintain an up-to-date shielding list in Scotland to allow this process to be activated at short-notice. I am therefore grateful to you for continuing to add newly diagnosed patients under your care and remove those who no longer meet the Shielding criteria after discussion and agreement with the patient, using the existing processes outlined in my previous letters. I have included the identification and data process guidance (Annex B).

3. Evidence of those at highest clinical risk of COVID-19

The current clinical criteria for shielding is based on expert consensus in the United Kingdom at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. A risk stratification model is being

developed by the University of Oxford which will enhance our national understanding of those at highest clinical risk of COVID-19. It is expected that a risk stratification tool will be available in September 2020 and I will write to you with further details in the near future.

Thank you again for all that you have done and continue to do.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Smith', with a large, stylized 'G' and a long, sweeping horizontal stroke at the end.

DR GREGOR SMITH

INTERIM CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER