



You can get this letter in different languages or in a way that is easier for you to understand. To ask for this letter in a different way e-mail: Shielding@gov.wales

Please keep this letter in a safe place as further copies will not be provided.

Advice for the clinically extremely vulnerable in Wales as further relaxations are introduced.

You have received this letter because you are on the Shielding Patient List (SPL). This is a list of people who are clinically extremely vulnerable to serious illness if they catch coronavirus.

The advice to those who are clinically extremely vulnerable, previously 'shielding', has been kept under constant review. In all of the advice to you we have tried to find the right balance between the risks of coronavirus and the harm that asking you to continue to follow shielding measures can cause. Staying at home for long periods of time can harm your mental and physical health.

Whilst we have seen an increase in the numbers of cases in Wales, this has not resulted in the same rise in people becoming very sick and needing to go to hospital or dying as we saw in the first and second wave. This is largely due to the success of the vaccination programme. Vaccines are very successful in protecting people from getting very sick in most cases. As the risk of becoming very sick is lower I am continuing to advise everyone on the Shielding Patient List that it is not necessary to follow shielding measures at this time and I do not expect to need to advise 'shielding' again in the future. I would encourage you to get your vaccine if you have not done so already.

Some people on the Shielding Patient List have been advised against having the vaccine by their own doctor or people will still have conditions where they have been advised by their own doctor to continue to shield. If you have received personal advice which is different from this letter you should follow the advice of your own doctor, including on precautions you should take.

Coronavirus Control Plan for Wales

As the higher number of cases is not leading to lots of serious illness and hospital admissions, the other harms linked to the response, including those created by the restrictions, become more important. Welsh Government has reviewed all of the restrictions and will be reducing them over the next few weeks.

From 17 July, Wales will move fully into alert level 1 and also start to introduce some elements of alert level zero from the Coronavirus Control Plan. You can find more details on the plan here <https://gov.wales/coronavirus-control-plan-alert-level-0-zero>. The Welsh Government hopes to move fully to level 0 on 07 August.

For some of you, the changes to the restrictions which have helped to keep us safe will be concerning. When making decisions we have remembered those who cannot have the vaccine or who may not have a good immune response. At alert level 0 there will still be a number of measures in place to reduce the spread of the virus. These include:

- People should continue to work from home wherever possible.
- Face coverings will remain a legal requirement indoors in public places, such as on public transport, in shops and when accessing healthcare. The use of face coverings in the workplace should also be considered by businesses and employers as part of their coronavirus risk assessment.
- Carrying out a coronavirus risk assessment will continue to be a legal requirement for businesses, employers and event organisers.
- Businesses, employers and other organisations will still be required to take reasonable measures to manage the risk of coronavirus at their premises.

Choices you can make and action to take, to help reduce your risk

Sticking to the basics remains the best way to protect yourself:

- Keep contacts to a minimum
- Meet others outside where possible
- Ensure any enclosed areas are well ventilated.
- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water for 20 seconds, or use hand sanitiser if hand washing facilities are not available
- Stay two metres or three steps away from people you do not live with.
- Avoid touching your face and wear a face covering where required.
- Clean surfaces regularly and avoid touching surfaces others have touched

How we will support you

Even though you are advised that you do not need to follow shielding measures we will continue to keep a record of the people who are on the shielding patient list, so we can contact you and update you if we need to.

Priority slots for supermarket deliveries continue to be available in Wales at the present time. The major food retailers now have much more capacity for deliveries so there is less need to have separate arrangements. These arrangements have already ended in some other areas of the UK.

If you need support and you do not have anyone to help you, you can speak with your local council <https://gov.wales/find-your-local-authority>. If you need help with collecting medicines and have no one to help you, please contact your pharmacy directly.

If advice changes for your area we will communicate with the public via local radio and television, and you will also receive a letter if you are advised to follow shielding measures again.

COVID-19 vaccine

The vaccine continues to be the best way to prevent serious illness and the spread of COVID-19 and I strongly urge you to take up the vaccination offer, if you have not already done so. Even if you have a condition or take medication that affects your immune system, please have the vaccine, as some protection is better than none at all. The vaccine programme is still open and available for all eligible adults in Wales and it is never too late to arrange an appointment. You can find out who to contact here <https://gov.wales/get-your-covid-19-vaccination-if-you-think-you-have-been-missed>.

Make sure you get both doses of the vaccine to get maximum protection. Public Health England research shows two doses of vaccine offers strong protection against the Delta variant which we are continuing to closely monitor in Wales.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has announced an autumn booster campaign will begin in September 2021, to maximise protection in those who are most vulnerable to serious infection, ahead of the winter months. Adults aged 16 years and over who are considered to be clinically extremely vulnerable are part of stage 1 and will be offered a third dose COVID-19 booster vaccine, alongside their annual influenza vaccine, as soon as possible from September 2021.

Ongoing review

As has been the case throughout the pandemic, the four UK CMOs will continue to keep the Shielding Patient List under review. This could mean more people are added, but could also result in some conditions or groups being removed from the list. Children are one of the groups currently being reviewed, as very few children have become seriously ill or died as a result of a coronavirus infection. If your inclusion on the list changes as part of this ongoing review, we will write to you.

If you develop symptoms of coronavirus

You will need to self-isolate if you develop one of the following symptoms:

- a new continuous cough
- a high temperature
- loss of or change to sense of smell or taste

You should also apply for a test online if you develop one of these symptoms. This can be done on the NHS website at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/get-a-test-to-check-if-you-have-coronavirus/>. Please do not visit your GP surgery or hospital to request a test, as you may infect others.

The test is only effective for those who are experiencing coronavirus symptoms and needs to be taken in the first five days of having symptoms. It only checks if you have coronavirus right now and not if you have already had the virus.

Text and email alerts

You can help us to communicate with you more quickly by signing up for email or text alerts. We can send updates about shielding direct to your phone or email address. If you are interested in receiving information this way, you can sign up via the following link

www.gov.wales/shieldingalerts. Signing up will not change the paper notifications you receive. If you have already signed up and have any changes to make to your telephone or email address, please re-subscribe at the same link as above with your new details.

Receiving a letter like this for the first time

If you are receiving a letter like this for the first time, it is because your health record shows you have a serious health condition. This may put you at risk of severe illness if you catch coronavirus and so you have been added to the Shielding Patient List. If you have not been advised of this before, you may want to talk with your GP or hospital doctor. You should follow the guidance set out in this letter. You can find further advice on shielding at gov.wales/shielding.

You can get up to date information about coronavirus in **Easy Read** and **BSL** here:

Welsh Government:

www.gov.wales/coronavirus

www.gov.wales/find-support-affected-coronavirus



Public Health Wales:

www.phw.nhs.wales/topics/latest-information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/

mencap cymru

Llais anabledd dysgu
The voice of learning



If you have a learning disability, and you need support to understand this letter please contact the **Wales Learning Disability Helpline:**

By e-mail: helpline.wales@mencap.org.uk



Or by phone: 0808 8000 300



The Wales Learning Disability Helpline is open Monday to Friday and Bank Holidays between 9am and 5pm.

Work

If you have concerns about your health and safety at work the first conversation you have should be with your employer. You can raise any ongoing issues with any union safety representatives, or ultimately with the organisation responsible for enforcement in your workplace, either the Health and Safety Executive, at www.hse.gov.uk/contact/concerns.htm, or your local authority.

If you feel that you have been treated unfairly by your employer, or somebody who gives you a service, then the Equality Advisory and Support Service (EASS) offers a free advice service which you can access by calling 0808 800 0082, by text phone on 0808 800 0084 or by visiting their website: www.equalityadvisoryservice.com

Looking after your wellbeing

Information about staying well is available at the Public Health Wales website: www.phw.nhs.wales/topics/latest-information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/how-are-you-doing/

ACTivate Your Life is a four session taught course that aims to teach people about stress and suffering caused by emotional issues, like worry, or chronic pain. To start go to phw.nhs.wales/activateyourlife.

SilverCloud is an online course which offers support for anxiety, depression, and much more, all based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). You can sign up at nhs.wales.silvercloudhealth.com/signup/.

CALL Mental Health Listening Line provides a confidential mental health listening and emotional support line which is open 24/7. CALL can also signpost to support in local communities and a range of online information. Call 0800132737, text "help" to 81066 or visit callhelpline.org.uk/.

Mind Active Monitoring provides six weeks guided self-help for, anxiety, depression, self-esteem, and more. To get started, talk to your GP, any other health professional, or sign up directly at: <https://www.mind.org.uk/get-involved/active-monitoring-sign-up/active-monitoring-form/>.

The Young Person's Mental Health Toolkit links young people, aged 11 to 25, to websites, apps, helplines, and more to build resilience. You can access the toolkit at bit.ly/ypmhten.

Older people, their family, friends, carers, or professionals can also contact Age Cymru's Advice Line on 08000 223 444.

You can contact your local council to discuss what other help is available in your area from voluntary and community organisations. Please also discuss any concerns with your GP.

If you do not have enough money to pay your bills, it is important to seek help and to do this as early as possible. Call Citizen's Advice free on 03444 77 20 20 or visit the Citizens Advice website: www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Use of data

Electronic patient data held by GPs and hospitals was used to identify people most at risk of serious illness caused by Covid-19. We used this data to write to you to provide you with advice and guidance on how to protect yourself. Information about you, which did not

include medical information, was shared with Welsh Government so that it could ensure essential support was put in place.

Welsh Government shared that data with local authorities, water companies, community pharmacies and supermarkets so that they could provide essential support, including prioritised access to food and medication deliveries where needed.

During the outbreak we will keep your contact details in case we need to contact you again. We are continually reviewing whether our partners need the data that has been provided and will ensure that it is returned to us or securely destroyed when we have determined it is no longer needed. You can find a copy of our Covid-19 Privacy Statement on this link www.gov.wales/coronavirus-covid-19-supporting-vulnerable-people-privacy-statement.html

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