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UPDATED ADVICE – YOU DO NOT NEED TO SHIELD AFTER 16 AUGUST 2020

You have received this letter because you are on the Shielding Patients List (SPL). This letter confirms you can stop shielding after 16th August 2020.

Why is my advice changing?

When I first advised you to shield, the coronavirus infection rate was much higher than it is now. Shielding at home was the best way for you to stay safe. Infection rates in Wales are now very low and so your chances of catching coronavirus (COVID-19) are much lower.

In all of my advice to you I have tried to find the right balance between the risks of coronavirus, and the harm that asking you to continue to shield can cause. Staying at home for long periods of time can harm your mental and physical health.

We know that you may be worried about stopping shielding but there are a number of things you can do to help keep you safe:

- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water for 20 seconds.
- Stay 2 metres or 3 steps away from people you do not live with or are not part of the one other household your family may be joined with (also known as an extended household).
- Eat healthily and take regular exercise.
- Remember to take any medication your doctor has told you to take.
- Get your free NHS jabs to protect you from other diseases such as measles (you can speak to your doctor about this).
- Get your free NHS annual flu jab when it becomes available in the autumn (you can speak to your doctor about this).

After 16th August:

- You no longer need to stay 2 metres or 3 steps away from people you live with or who are part of your extended household;
- you can go to work, if you cannot work from home, as long as the business is COVID-secure (has taken reasonable measures to minimise risk to employees);
- children who have been shielding can return to school when schools re-start;

- you can go out for any reason, including going to shops to buy food but you should stay 2 metres or 3 steps away from other people.

How we will support you after 16 August

Even though I have advised that you can stop shielding after 16th August:

- we will keep a record of the people who were shielding, so we can contact you and update you if we need to;
- You will still be able to access priority slots for supermarket deliveries;
- The prescription delivery service will continue until the end of September.

Food boxes will be stopping. If you currently receive a food box, you will receive your last delivery in the week ending 16th August, on your usual delivery day.

If you still need support after the 16th August and you do not have anyone to help you, speak with your local council. The contact details for each local council are at the end of this letter.

In the event of high numbers of coronavirus cases in a local area in Wales I will consider whether I need to ask people in that local area to shield. If this happens or advice changes for your area we will communicate with the public via local radio and television, and I will also write to you if I need to advise you to shield again.

Future changes to shielding advice

In the future, if we need to advise people to shield, we are aiming to do so on an individual basis where your doctor can look at your own risk and decide what is the best advice for you. The first group we will do this for is children. We are learning more about coronavirus all the time and now know that children are unlikely to get very sick from the coronavirus, so in most cases do not need to shield.

If you are 18 or under on 16th August 2020 then your paediatrician or GP has been asked to review your record to check if you need to remain on the Shielding Patients List. You will receive a letter containing the confirmation of the outcome of this review. In some cases clinicians may need to speak with you about this and will contact you directly. We aim to write to children again by early September.

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/



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 everyday between 9am and 5pm. It is free to call.

Things you should be doing to stay safe

- **DO** keep 2m or three steps away from other people outside your home or extended household.
- **DO** regularly wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds.
- **Do** plan ahead. Think about the availability of places to rest when going for a walk, or toilet facilities when further away from home. Take hand sanitiser in case hand washing facilities are not available.
- **DO** work from home if you can or return to your workplace if it is COVID secure (has taken reasonable measures to minimise risk to employees).
- **DO** contact your local supermarket for priority online shopping if you do not feel ready to do your own food shopping yet. If you do go to a supermarket, choose quieter times of the day.
- **DO** use telephone or online services to contact your GP, pharmacy or other day-to-day services.
- **DO** contact your local council if you have no one who can help you. The number is at the end of this letter.

Things you should not be doing to stay safe

- **DO NOT** get close to anyone who is showing signs of coronavirus. These could be any or all of the following: high temperature (above 37.8 °C), a new and continuous cough, a loss of taste or smell.
- **DO NOT** take unnecessary risks, such as attending large gatherings indoors where physical distancing is not possible.
- **DO NOT** go to your GP or hospital without phoning first. If you need to contact the NHS you should let them know you have been shielding.

What if I get coronavirus?

If you develop symptoms of coronavirus – a high temperature (above 37.8 °C), a new and continuous cough or loss of smell or taste – you should use the online coronavirus service (www.gov.wales/check-if-you-need-coronavirus-medical-help) or, if you do not have access to the internet, call 111. You should book a test straight away.

If you get coronavirus and you need to go to hospital, take a bag with the things you need for an overnight stay. Take an emergency contact number and any medication you have been prescribed.

If you have an advance care plan, please include it.

Carers and support workers who come to your home

Carers or support workers who support you with your everyday needs can continue to visit you, unless they have signs of coronavirus.

All carers or support workers must wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds when they enter your home and often while they are in your home.

Your medicines

If you do not feel ready or able to collect your own prescriptions you can:

1. Ask someone to pick up your prescription from your local pharmacy to help (this is the best option).
2. If you do not have anyone who can help, telephone your pharmacy and ask them to deliver your prescription. Let them know you are in a high-risk group.

You may also need to arrange any special medication prescribed to you by your hospital care team to be collected or delivered to you.

GP and hospital appointments

Wherever possible, GP appointments will continue to be provided by phone, email or online. If you need to be seen in person, your GP practice will contact you to let you know what you should do.

Your hospital or clinic will contact you if any changes need to be made to your care or treatment. Please phone your hospital or clinic if you have any questions about your appointment.

It is recommended that you should wear a medical mask when you need to visit your GP surgery or hospital. If you do not have one, you can ask for one to be provided to you on arrival.

Attending work and school

As the level of coronavirus in our communities is low, it is now safer for you to return to work or school as long as precautions are in place. It is impossible to eliminate all risk but there is a lot that employers can do to minimise the risk to their employees.

When planning a return to work it is advisable to talk with your employer as early as possible about how employees are being kept safe. There is advice on the Welsh Government website at <https://gov.wales/workplace-guidance-employers-and-employees-covid19> and information on the Health and Safety Executive website with steps employers should be taking to make a workplace COVID secure.

For children, we now know that coronavirus does not usually make them very sick and so when levels of coronavirus are low, the negative impact of not attending school is bigger than the risk

of catching coronavirus. If you are concerned about returning to school then speak to the school or Local Authority to discuss how children are being kept safe.

Support with daily living

Please discuss any ongoing needs you have with your carers, family, friends, neighbours or local community groups to see how they can support you. If you do not have anyone who can help you, please contact your local council. The contact details for each local council are at the end of this letter.

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

If you need help from the welfare system, you can also visit: www.gov.uk/universal-credit or call the Universal Credit Helpline on 0800 328 5644 (0800 328 1744 for Welsh language).

You can also apply online for the Welsh Government's Discretionary Assistance Fund payment at: www.gov.wales/discretionary-assistance-fund-daf/how-apply or by calling free on 0800 859 5924.

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

These changes may be very positive news for some people, but for some it may be frightening. Taking care of your mental wellbeing is important. These are some ideas about how you can do that:

- **Noticing how you are doing** and thinking about if you can do anything differently. Thinking about ways to take care of your wellbeing can help.
- **Not judging yourself when you are having a hard day.** There are different ways you may be able to reassure yourself. Why not try some calming activities, such as relaxation exercises or talking to others.
- **Take it one step at a time.** Plan small things you can do to come out from the isolation of shielding. A short walk with a friend or a visit to a small shop to build your confidence.
- **Focusing on what you can control**, like your thoughts and behaviours. This will have a big impact on how you are feeling.
- **Connecting with others.** Reach out and ask for help from friends and family or from local organisations.

Further 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/

If you need to speak to someone, the CALL Helpline provides confidential listening and emotional support in Wales, 24 hours a day – call 0800 132 737 or visit:
www.callhelpline.org.uk/

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.

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

Your local council's contact details

<u>Blaenau Gwent CBC</u>	01495 311556	www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk
<u>Bridgend CBC</u>	01656 643643	www.bridgend.gov.uk
<u>Caerphilly CBC</u>	01443 815588	www.caerphilly.gov.uk
<u>Carmarthenshire CC</u>	01267 234567	www.carmarthenshire.gov.uk
<u>Ceredigion CC</u>	01545 570881	www.ceredigion.gov.uk
<u>City & County of Swansea</u>	01792 636363	www.swansea.gov.uk
<u>City of Cardiff Council</u>	029 2087 1071	www.cardiff.gov.uk
<u>Conwy CBC</u>	01492 574000	www.conwy.gov.uk
<u>Denbighshire CC</u>	01824 706000 Out of Hours: 0300 123 30 68	www.denbighshire.gov.uk
<u>Flintshire CC</u>	01352 752121	www.flintshire.gov.uk
<u>Gwynedd Council</u>	01766 771000	www.gwynedd.gov.uk
<u>Isle of Anglesey Council</u>	01248 750057	www.anglesey.gov.uk
<u>Merthyr Tydfil Council</u>	01685 725000	www.merthyr.gov.uk
<u>Monmouthshire Council</u>	01633 644644	www.monmouthshire.gov.uk
<u>Neath Port Talbot Council</u>	01639 686868	www.npt.gov.uk
<u>Newport City Council</u>	01633 656656	www.newport.gov.uk
<u>Pembrokeshire CC</u>	01437 764551	www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk
<u>Powys County Council</u>	01597 827460	www.powys.gov.uk
<u>Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC</u>	01443 425020	www.rctcbc.gov.uk
<u>Torfaen CBC</u>	01495 762200	www.torfaen.gov.uk
<u>Vale of Glamorgan Council</u>	01446 700111	www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk
<u>Wrexham CBC</u>	01978 292000	www.wrexham.gov.uk