



Department
of Health &
Social Care

23 August 2021

Dear Patient,

Important information for you about COVID-19

We are writing to you because your child has previously been identified as clinically extremely vulnerable to COVID-19, meaning they were thought to be at high risk of serious illness if they caught the virus. They may have been advised to shield in the past.

As you know, shielding was paused on 1 April, and on 19 July people previously identified as clinically extremely vulnerable, including children and young people, were advised to follow the same guidance as the rest of the population. Recent clinical studies [weblinks to studies listed below] have shown that children and young people are at very low risk of serious illness if they catch the virus. We are pleased to let you know that your child is therefore **no longer considered to be clinically**

extremely vulnerable and should continue to follow the same guidance as everyone else, which can be found at www.gov.uk/coronavirus. For a very few individual children specific clinical advice may be given, and this should continue to be followed.

You have received this letter as your child was under the age of 18 when it was processed. If your child has recently turned 18, please ignore this letter.

[Weblinks:]

<https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2021.07.01.21259785v1>

<https://www.researchsquare.com/article/rs-689684/v1>

<https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2021.06.30.21259763v1>

COVID-19 risk for children and young people

At the start of the pandemic, we knew very little about the threat posed by COVID-19 and made the difficult decision to advise several million people, including many children and young people,

to shield to protect themselves. That was the right decision at the time and helped keep the most vulnerable safe while we learned more about COVID-19.

We have learnt a lot since the start of the pandemic, particularly around the impact of COVID-19 on specific groups. The results of the recent clinical studies were discussed by a panel of experts who recommended that children and young people should no longer be considered clinically extremely vulnerable and therefore should not be retained on the Shielded Patient List, the national database of people considered clinically extremely vulnerable. This recommendation was agreed to by the Chief Medical Officers of the UK.

It is important that your child continues to attend their school or other educational settings. A lack of schooling is known to have a significant negative impact on children, reducing their life chances and making physical and mental health issues worse. All early years providers, schools and colleges are continuing to put in place measures to help minimise the risk of spreading COVID-19. More information can be found at www.gov.uk/coronavirus/education-and-childcare.

A very small number of children and young people will have been advised to isolate or reduce their social contact for short periods of time by their specialist, due to the nature of their medical condition or treatment rather than because of the pandemic. If this is the case for your child, they should continue to follow the advice of their specialist.

COVID-19 vaccination

Vaccination is now available for all 16-17 year olds. Some 12-15 year olds are also eligible for vaccination because of the very specific risks they face and the particular benefits they will receive from the vaccine. However, being eligible for vaccination does not mean that your child is considered to be clinically extremely vulnerable or needs to shield.

Accessing NHS services

It is important that your child continues to receive the care and support they need to stay safe and well. Providers of social care and medical services are making every effort to ensure services remain open and as safe as possible.

Your child should continue to seek support from the NHS for their existing health conditions. They can access a range of NHS services from home,

including ordering repeat prescriptions or contacting their health professional through an online consultation. To find out more visit www.nhs.uk/health-at-home, or download the NHS App. If you are concerned about your child's health, speak to their GP, hospital clinician or use NHS111 or, for a medical emergency, dial 999.

The pandemic and successive periods of lockdown and easing has increased stress and anxiety in some children and young people, and this can be a perfectly normal response. NHS experts have published blogs with practical tips for young people (www.england.nhs.uk/blog/what-to-do-if-youre-a-young-person-and-its-all-getting-too-much-2/) and families or carers (www.england.nhs.uk/blog/advice-for-parents-guardians-and-carers-on-how-to-support-a-child-or-young-person-if-youre-concerned-about-their-mental-health/) and signposting to further help such as the Every Mind Matters website (www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters). NHS mental health services are working as usual and children and young people, their families and carers should ask for specialist help when needed. The NHS has online information on how to access mental health help and support (www.nhs.uk/mental-health/nhs-voluntary-charity-services/nhs-services/how-to-access-mental-health-services/).

We know that the pandemic has been a difficult time for everyone and recognise that it has been particularly hard for those who have been advised to take extra precautions. The decision to include your child as part of the clinically extremely vulnerable group was made to help keep them safe, based on the information that we had at the time. Now that we have more evidence, we hope that you will be pleased to know that your child is no longer considered to be clinically extremely vulnerable to COVID-19.

Yours sincerely,



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