A guide for people who could get very ill from coronavirus (shielding)
August 2020
A guide about coronavirus

Who is this guide for?

This guide is for very vulnerable adults, children and young people in England who are shielding from coronavirus.

If you are very vulnerable your GP or hospital doctor will:

- send you a letter
• tell you in person.

When England had a lot of coronavirus cases very vulnerable people were given advice about shielding.

Shielding guidelines help to protect very vulnerable people who could get very ill if they catch coronavirus.

From 1 August government advice is that you do not need to shield.
It is your choice to follow the advice.

You do not need to shield because there are less people with coronavirus in the community.

If there is a local lockdown in your area you will get government advice about what to do.

A local lockdown is when people who live or work in an area need to follow local rules about coronavirus.
What has changed?

You can go **outside** as much as you like and:

- only meet a **few people** in person

**• keep your distance** from most people

If you are a very vulnerable person:

- you do not need to **shield** any longer
• you should carry on working at home if you can

• you can go back to work if your workplace is safe from coronavirus

Very vulnerable children can go back to school.

This is because schools and special schools are starting to open.
You can visit:

- supermarkets
- pubs
- shops
- restaurants
You should:

- stay **2 metres away** from others when you can

- stay **at least 1 metre** away, at all other times

- carry on washing your hands carefully for about **20 seconds**

- carefully **clean** surfaces at home or work that a lot of people touch, such as **door handles**
The National Shielding Service will no longer:

- deliver **free food parcels**
- deliver **medicine** to your home
- provide **basic care**
You can get:

- support from local people by contacting your **local council**

- deliveries from **NHS Volunteer Responders** of prescriptions, essential items and food that you buy

- **priority times** for supermarket deliveries, if you signed up for free food parcels
What happens if coronavirus cases go up?

If there are more coronavirus cases in your local area you may get advice to shield again.

Your name will be kept safely by NHS Digital on the Shielded Patient List.

If the advice changes, we will tell you about:

• changes in your local area
If there is a local lockdown:

• you should go to your local council’s website for more information

• you should not visit any areas on local lockdown

• changes in England
Who is very vulnerable?

Scientists in England have told us why very vulnerable people can get very ill if they catch coronavirus.

The reasons include:

- how serious their illness is
- their medical history
• the **type of treatment** they get

Very vulnerable people can be:

• anyone who has had a **transplant** such as heart, liver or kidney

• people with certain types of **cancer**

• people with cancer who are having **chemotherapy treatment**

**Chemotherapy** is a drug that treats cancer
• people with lung cancer who are getting radiotherapy treatment

• people with cancer getting treatment for their immune system to treat the cancer

Our immune system helps us to fight infections.

• people getting cancer treatment that makes them more likely to get a disease
people with cancers of the blood or **bone marrow** who are getting treatment

**Bone marrow** is in the middle of your bones.

people who have had:
- **bone marrow transplants**
- **stem cell transplants**
in the last 6 months

**Stem cells** are found in bone marrow. **Stem cells** help to repair the body.
• people who are taking drugs after bone marrow transplants or stem cell transplants

• people with serious breathing problems, such as those with:
  o cystic fibrosis, which is a disease that affects the lungs
  o serious asthma
  o Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease a group of diseases that makes it hard to breath
• people with rare diseases that mean they are likely to get sick from other illnesses

• people getting treatment that means they are likely to get sick from other illnesses

• women who are pregnant who also have a serious heart disease

For more information about very vulnerable people go to the NHS Digital website digital.nhs.uk
If your health problem is not listed and you are still worried, you should talk to your GP or hospital doctor.
Going to work

You should carry on working at home if you can.

You can go back to work if your workplace is safe from coronavirus.

You may be able to:

- do a different job at your organisation
• change the **days** and **hours** that you work

If you need support to work at home or in the workplace you can apply for **Access to Work**.

**Access to Work** gives disabled people extra money or support so that they can go back to work.
Your rights at work

If you are worried about your job you can get advice by:

- going to the ACAS website
  www.acas.org.uk
- calling the ACAS Helpline
  on 0300 123 1100

ACAS is an organisation that gives advice and support to workers.
If you are worried about your health and safety at work, you should speak to:

- your **trade union**, such as UNISON, if you are a member

A **trade union** is an organisation whose members work in the **same trade** and work together to **sort out problems**.

- the **Health and Safety Executive**, which is a government organisation that helps with **health and safety** in the workplace

- your **local council**
Sick pay

From 1 August you cannot get sick pay because you have been shielding.

If you cannot work at home your employer should:

- help you to safely go back to work
- support you to keep your hands very clean
• support you to **keep your distance** from other people at work

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**Support from NHS Volunteer Responders**

Support from the **NHS Volunteer Responders** will carry on until **December 2020**.

**NHS Volunteer Responders** can help if your friends and family cannot support you:

• to collect your **shopping**
• to get your **medication**

• to get other **important things** you need

• to get **friendly phone calls** from a volunteer who has been shielding or other volunteers

• to travel to **medical appointments**, such as visiting your GP
To get support, you can call **0808 196 3646**

from **8 am** to **8 pm**.

You could also speak to **your GP** about getting support to travel.

For more information go to [nhsvolunteerresponders.org.uk](http://nhsvolunteerresponders.org.uk)
Support from carers

You can still get support from any carers or visitors who support you at home with your daily needs.

If your carer or visitor has any coronavirus symptoms, they should stop visiting you.

If your carer or visitor does not need to be close to you, they should:

• stay 2 metres away when they can

• stay at least 1 metre away at all other times
If you live in a local lockdown area

If you are very vulnerable and there is a local lockdown:

• the government will write to you and tell you if you need to stay at home and shield

• your local council can provide you with an Easy Read version of the local lockdown rules

If you cannot work from home or work outside the local lockdown area,

your employer may be able to furlough you under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.
The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme was set up by the government to help keep people in their jobs during coronavirus.

Furlough means the government pays for some of your wages if you cannot work because of coronavirus.

You can only get your wages paid by the government if you have been furloughed.

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme will run until 31 October 2020.
You may be able to get **sick pay** from your employer if you cannot work because you are **shielding**.

If there is a **local lockdown**:

- go to your local council website for more information
- follow the guidance for your local area
Very vulnerable children and young people

Experts in children’s medicine have looked at all the information about the risk to children and young people from coronavirus.

They told us that for most children and young people there is a low risk of serious illness.

If a child or young person is taken off the Shielded Patient list,
they **will not** need to shield.

Your **GP** or a **specialist** will decide

if a child or young person is removed from the **Shielded Patient List**.

If you are a parent or carer of a very vulnerable child, a **health professional** will contact you this summer to talk about this.
Annual flu programme

As part of the 2020 to 2021 flu vaccine programme,

everyone who lives in a household with a very vulnerable person can get a free flu jab.