



Department  
of Health &  
Social Care



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government

# Guidance for clinically extremely vulnerable is changing from 1 April

[The original print makes reference to external websites. As these addresses are sometimes quite lengthy, they have been moved to the end of the document. A superscript number marks the point of reference within the text and the website addresses are preceded with the corresponding number.]

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# **[Letter]**

17 March 2021

On 22 February the Government published a roadmap out of the national restrictions for the whole population, which explains how restrictions will be eased over time. As part of this roadmap, we can now inform you that from 1 April 2021 you are no longer advised to shield.

Since the national restrictions and shielding measures were introduced in January, cases of COVID-19 have fallen considerably across all parts of the country and over 22 million people have had at least one dose of the vaccine. We know that shielding has not been easy for you and we would like to thank you for your efforts during this challenging time.

Although clinically extremely vulnerable people will no longer be advised to shield,

we still recommend that you take extra precautions to protect yourself while the virus is still spreading in our communities. The updated guidance provides practical steps that cover things like socialising, travel and going to work and school. These are not rules but advice, so you can choose whether you wish to follow them or not. You can find the full guidance at the end of this letter and at [www.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus).

In addition to this advice, you **must** continue to follow the regulations that are in place for everyone during the pandemic. This includes rules on mixing with people from other households.

## **Summary of advice that applies from 1 April 2021**

Until the social distancing rules are eased more widely, it is important that you continue to keep the number of social interactions that you have low and try to

reduce the amount of time you spend in settings where you are unable to maintain social distancing.

Everyone is advised to continue to work from home where possible, but if you cannot work from home you should now attend your workplace. Your employer is required to take steps to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace and should be able to explain to you the measures they have put in place to keep you safe at work.

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (furlough) has been extended until 30 September as has the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS). You may continue to be eligible throughout this period.

From 1 April you will no longer be eligible for Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) or Employment and Support Allowance

(ESA) on the basis of being advised to shield.

Clinically extremely vulnerable pupils and students should return to their school or other educational settings.

## **COVID-19 vaccinations**

If you are aged 16 or older, you should already have been offered your first dose of the vaccine. **If you have not yet received your first dose, please contact your GP.**

For children aged 12 to 15 years, vaccination may be appropriate for those with severe neuro-disabilities. This option should be discussed between parents/guardians and the child's clinician or GP. For other children aged 15 and under, whilst further research is being done, vaccination is not yet recommended.

If you have received your first dose, you should still ensure you take up your second dose of the vaccine when it is offered to you. Having two doses should further increase your level of protection.

No vaccine is 100% effective and therefore even if you have had both doses, there is still no absolute guarantee that you will not become ill from COVID-19. Therefore, you should continue to take the extra precautions set out in this guidance to help protect yourself.

## **Access to support**

Local councils and supermarkets will continue to provide support to follow shielding advice until 31 March. Councils will look to provide assistance wherever possible after that date and, if you have already registered for priority access to supermarket delivery slots, supermarkets will continue to offer priority access until 21 June. If you have yet to register for

support but are in need, please do so online at <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-shielding-support> by 31 March. If you do not have internet access, please contact your local council who will be able to connect you to the support that is available in your local area.

After 31 March, if you are struggling as a result of Coronavirus please visit [www.gov.uk/find-coronavirus-support](https://www.gov.uk/find-coronavirus-support) or contact your local council to find out what support is available.

## **Access to health and care**

Please remember that the **NHS is open**, and we urge you to continue to access all the NHS services that you need. It is likely to be safer for you to use the NHS than to try to manage alone.

If you are concerned about the impact of COVID-19 on your health, speak to your GP, hospital clinician or use NHS111. Further information on accessing help and

support can be found in the attached guidance.

## **Contacting you if this guidance changes in the future**

Please make sure your GP has your most up to date contact details, including your home address and, if possible, a personal email address, so that we can contact you quickly in the event that the guidance changes in the future.

Once again, we thank you for your efforts to keep yourself and others safe.

Yours sincerely,



Matt Hancock  
Secretary of State for Health and Social  
Care



Robert Jenrick.

Robert Jenrick  
Secretary of State for Housing,  
Communities and Local Government

**This letter will be available in different languages and formats, including easy read, on GOV.UK. For audio, braille, large print call RNIB on 0303 1239999**

## **Ongoing advice for clinically extremely vulnerable people (1 April 2021)**

Shielding advice is being paused nationally from 31 March. From 1 April you are no longer advised to shield, but you **must** continue to follow the rules in place for everyone under the current national restrictions.

The government has published 'COVID-19 Response – Spring 2021', which sets out the roadmap out of the current lockdown in England. This explains how restrictions will be eased over time. You can find these rules by searching for 'roadmap' on [www.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus).

You must continue to follow the national restrictions, which apply to everyone. We are also advising clinically extremely vulnerable people to continue to take extra precautions to protect themselves.

You are advised to follow the practical steps described below to minimise your risk of exposure to the virus.

## **Socialising inside and outside the home**

Continue to maintain social distancing, wash your hands regularly and avoid touching your face.

Continue to minimise the number of social interactions that you have. The fewer social interactions you have, the lower your risk of catching COVID-19.

When the rules allow you to meet with others from outside of your household, your risk of catching COVID-19 is lower if you meet them outdoors.

When you are allowed to meet others indoors, keep the area well ventilated with fresh air, for example by opening the window. Please see the COVID-19:

ventilation of indoor spaces <sup>1</sup> guidance for more information.

Try to reduce the amount of time you spend in settings where you are unable to maintain social distancing, or where other people's activities may reduce the likelihood of individuals maintaining social distancing.

You can continue to form or maintain existing support bubbles <sup>2</sup> and childcare bubbles. <sup>3</sup>

You can find more information online about how to stop the spread of coronavirus. <sup>4</sup>

## **Work**

Everyone is currently advised to work from home where possible.

If you cannot work from home, you should go to work. Your employer is required to take steps to reduce the risk of exposure

to COVID-19 in the workplace and should be able to explain to you the measures they have put in place to keep you safe at work. Some employers may introduce regular testing of employees as part of these measures. You may also want to consider how you get to and from work, for example, if it is possible to avoid using public transport during rush hour.

Separate Government guidance has been issued on how employers can make workplaces COVID-safe <sup>5</sup> including how they can maintain social distancing and a system of risk management in your workplace. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has also published guidance on protecting vulnerable workers, <sup>6</sup> including advice for employers and employees on how to talk about reducing risks in the workplace. <sup>7</sup>

If you need support to work at home or in the workplace you can apply for Access to Work. <sup>8</sup> Access to Work may provide

support for the disability-related extra costs of working that are beyond standard reasonable adjustments an employer must provide.

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (furlough) <sup>9</sup> has been extended until 30 September. You may continue to be eligible throughout this period, even when shielding is paused, providing your employer agrees. The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) <sup>10</sup> has also been extended until 30 September.

From 1 April you will no longer be eligible for Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) or Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) on the basis of being advised to shield. You may be eligible for SSP or ESA if you are sick or incapable of work, either due to coronavirus or other health reasons, subject to meeting the eligibility conditions. If you have concerns about your health and safety at work you can raise them with your workplace union,

HSE or your local authority. Where employers are not managing the risk of COVID-19, HSE and local authorities will take action which can range from the provision of specific advice, issuing enforcement notices, stopping certain work practices until they are made safe and, where businesses fail to comply with enforcement notices, this could lead to prosecution.

The existing employment rights framework provides protections against discrimination, unfair dismissal and detriment. Specific guidance has been published for employers and workers on work absences due to coronavirus (COVID-19).<sup>11</sup>

The Citizen's Advice Bureau<sup>12</sup> also has information about your rights at work and how to solve problems in the workplace. If you have concerns you can also get advice on your specific situation and your employment rights by visiting the Acas

website <sup>13</sup> or calling the Acas helpline on 0300 123 1100.

## **School, college and other educational settings**

Clinically extremely vulnerable pupils and students should return to their school or other educational setting from 1 April 2021. Children who live in a household with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable are not advised to shield and should have returned to school or college on 8 March.

The use of rapid lateral flow tests allows us to identify individuals with coronavirus (COVID-19) who do not have symptoms, which make up around a third of all cases. Finding asymptomatic cases, along with other infection prevention and control measures such as social distancing, can help us manage the spread of the virus.



Therefore to safeguard the health of the teaching workforce and keep as many staff, pupils and students in school and college as possible, we have made rapid lateral flow coronavirus (COVID-19) tests available <sup>14</sup> to schools and colleges.

Lateral flow tests can also be accessed directly for households, childcare and support bubbles of primary and secondary school pupils and for households, childcare and support bubbles of primary and secondary school staff. This testing will also help keep safe those in the community who are clinically extremely vulnerable and their families.

In addition to asymptomatic testing, secondary schools and colleges are continuing to put in place a range of protective measures <sup>15</sup> to help minimise the risk of spreading COVID-19. These include social distancing, handwashing, use of face coverings in specific situations, bubbles, enhancing cleaning

and ventilation and managing confirmed cases.

## **Travel**

If you need to use public transport, you must wear a face covering <sup>16</sup> unless you are exempt. Consider travelling outside peak hours to reduce the number of people with whom you come into contact.

If you need to travel, walk or cycle if you can. For longer journeys, or if you are unable to walk or cycle, try to minimise the number of people you come into close contact with.

Please do not car share with people from outside your household or support bubble and ensure you use a face covering when using taxis.

## **Going to shops and pharmacies**

While you are not advised to avoid going to the shops, you may wish to continue

using online delivery for food and essential shopping, or to rely on family and friends. If you do go out to the shops or pharmacy, consider going at quieter times of the day. You must wear a face covering <sup>17</sup> in all shops unless you are exempt.

If you have already registered for priority access to supermarket delivery slots using the Shielding Support website or through your council by 31 March, then we can confirm that the participating supermarkets will continue to offer priority access until 21 June. After this date individuals can continue to book deliveries from a supermarket.

If you need support to access shopping for food and essentials before 31 March, and are unable to arrange this yourself or through friends, family, or other support networks, you can still register to request priority access to a supermarket delivery slot at the Shielding Support website,

[www.gov.uk/coronavirus-shielding-support](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-shielding-support) by 31 March. You will no longer be able to register using this website after midnight on 31 March.

You might still want to ask friends, family or volunteers to collect medicines for you. The NHS Volunteer Responders programme is still available to help support those who need it. Volunteers can collect and deliver shopping, medication and other essential supplies. Call 0808 196 3646 between 8 am and 8 pm, 7 days a week to self-refer or visit [www.nhsvolunteerresponders.org.uk](http://www.nhsvolunteerresponders.org.uk) for further information. There may also be other voluntary or community services in your local area that you can access for support.

## **If you require additional care and support**

It is important that you continue to receive the care and support you need to help you

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.

You should continue to seek support from the NHS for your existing health conditions. You can access a range of NHS services from home, including ordering repeat prescriptions or contacting your health professional through an online consultation. To find out more visit [www.nhs.uk/health-at-home](http://www.nhs.uk/health-at-home), or download the NHS App. <sup>18</sup> If you have an urgent medical need, call NHS 111 or, for a medical emergency, dial 999.

It is also important to look after your mental health. Go to the Every Mind Matters <sup>19</sup> website for advice and practical steps that you can take to support your wellbeing and manage your mental health during this pandemic and beyond. The Let's Talk Loneliness <sup>20</sup> website also has

a variety of tips, advice and further resources that you may find helpful.

If you or someone you care for experiences a mental health crisis, we urge you to make contact with a local health professional <sup>21</sup> immediately. NHS Mental Health Trusts have established 24/7 telephone lines to support people of all ages to get the help they need, when they need it.

Any carers or visitors who support you with your everyday needs can continue to visit. They should continue to follow social distancing guidance <sup>22</sup> where close or personal contact is not required.

You can also access additional support from your energy supplier. Energy suppliers are required by the regulator, Ofgem, to hold a register of customers in a vulnerable circumstance, called a Priority Service Register. If you are clinically extremely vulnerable you can be

added to this register. For information about how to be added to the register and the additional services your supplier can provide you, please visit Ofgem's website.<sup>23</sup>

Telecom providers are also required by their regulator, Ofcom, to support their vulnerable customers. For information about the additional services your supplier can provide you as a vulnerable customer, please visit Ofcom's website.<sup>24</sup>

## **[Website Addresses]**

1 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-ventilation-of-indoor-spaces-to-stop-the-spread-of-coronavirus>

2 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/making-a-support-bubble-with-another-household>

3 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/making-a-childcare-bubble-with-another-household>

4 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-stop-the-spread-of-coronavirus-covid-19/how-to-stop-the-spread-of-coronavirus-covid-19>

5 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

6 <https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/working-safely/protect-people.htm>

7 <https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/working-safely/talking-to-your-workers/index.htm>

8 <https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work>

9 <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme>

10 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/self-employment-income-support-scheme-grant-extension>



11 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/if-you-need-to-self-isolate-or-cannot-attend-work-due-to-coronavirus>

12 <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/work/>

13 <https://www.acas.org.uk/contact>

14 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/rapid-lateral-flow-testing-for-households-and-bubbles-of-school-pupils-and-staff>

15 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/what-parents-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-covid-19#guidance>

16 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own>

17 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own>

18 <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/the-nhs-app>

19 <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/>

20 <https://letstalkloneliness.co.uk/>

21 <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/mental-health-services/where-to-get-urgent-help-for-mental-health/>

22 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-stop-the-spread-of-coronavirus-covid-19/how-to-stop-the-spread-of-coronavirus-covid-19>

23 <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/consumers/household-gas-and-electricity-guide/extra-help-energy-services/priority-services-register>

24 <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/about-ofcom/what-is-ofcom/consumer-vulnerability>