



[Patient Name

Patient address Line 1

Patient address Line 2

Patient address Line 3]

24 July 2020

IMPORTANT: PERSONAL

Your Community Health Index (CHI) number: [CHI NUMBER]

UPDATE ON STOPPING SHIELDING

Dear [Patient],

We're writing to advise you to stop shielding from 1 August.

This is because the rate of coronavirus (COVID-19) in Scotland is currently very low. To stay safe, you should follow advice given to everyone in Scotland about physical distancing and regular handwashing, but you do not need to carry on shielding.

Staying safe and the support you'll carry on getting

Even though the COVID-19 infection rate is very low in Scotland, we know that you may have mixed feelings about stopping shielding.

This is why we're keeping lots of shielding support open, and creating new ways of support. You'll:

- still get updates from our SMS Shielding Service – you'll soon also be able to get regular updates on the COVID-19 infection rate in your local area through the SMS Shielding Service
- be able to access help and support online – this includes up-to-date health guidance about a range of specific conditions, help in understanding what sort of activities are safer than others, and checklists on how to protect yourself in daily life
- be kept on a list of shielding people, so we can contact and update you directly if our advice changes, such as if there's an increase in infection rates (you can request to be removed from the list by asking your GP or hospital clinician)
- be able to access guidance on returning to work or school

- be able to contact our helpline on 0800 111 4000, if you need help from your local council

You can find online support at mygov.scot/shielding.

You should also take a look at the 'Quick Guide to Risk' sheet included with this letter. This sheet gives you advice about everyday things that are 'low risk' and 'higher risk'. Please keep these risks in mind when choosing what you do and where you go.

If the infection rate in Scotland goes up

The infection rate in Scotland may rise as well as fall in the coming months. Small changes will not affect the advice we've given in this letter, but if we start to see an increase in the infection rate that concerns us, we may advise you to take extra steps to stay safe. If we need to, we'll let you know by letter and through the SMS Shielding Service.

As we keep on improving our knowledge about COVID-19, we're also reviewing evidence about who needs to take extra steps to stay safe. If we find out about a change that affects you, we will contact you.

If you live in a residential care or nursing home

If you live in a residential care or nursing home, you may be able to see visitors outdoors, but a lot of the advice in this letter does not apply to you.

You can find out more about care home advice, and the Care Home Visiting pathway at gov.scot.

Buying food and the things you need

We're now advising that you can go into supermarkets and shops. If you do, we'd advise you to wear a face covering, and to follow physical distancing and hand hygiene advice.

If you'd rather get deliveries to your home, you can carry on getting priority access to online supermarket delivery slots after 1 August. This means you should be able to book an online delivery slot even if it gets busy, although we cannot guarantee you'll always get your preferred slot. If you have not already signed up for this priority access, you have until 31 July to sign up using the SMS Shielding Service or by calling 0800 111 4000.

Because you can buy the things you need either by going into shops or by ordering online, we're stopping deliveries of weekly grocery boxes at the end of July.

Joining the SMS Shielding Service

We advise you to sign up for the SMS Shielding Service to make sure you get the latest updates – this service will carry on beyond 1 August.

If you've not already, you can join the SMS Shielding Service by sending a text from your mobile phone to 0786 006 4525. The text you send should only include your CHI number.

Your CHI number is the ten-digit number shown towards the top of this letter. Once we've got your CHI number, we'll send you a text to confirm that you've joined the service. Once on, you do not need to do anything else to stay on the SMS Shielding Service.

Information about employment and schools

We have also included information in this letter about going back to work and school. This advice has been provided by the Scottish Government.

We know the last months will have been a very hard time for you. While our advice is changing after 31 July, we are still here to support you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gregor Smith', with a stylized flourish at the end.

DR GREGOR SMITH

INTERIM CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER

Shielding: medical and health advice

Keeping safe

To stay safe, we're still advising you to:

- follow the latest guidance about physical distancing - at the moment, physical distancing advice is for you to stay 2 metres away from anyone you do not live with
- regularly wash your hands for at least 20 seconds
- try to avoid touching your face, as much as you can
- avoid contact with anyone who has the symptoms of COVID-19

Face coverings

You must wear a face covering when visiting shops and on public transport, unless you have a health condition or disability that makes wearing one hard for you. You do not need proof of this.

Other people who do not need to wear a face covering include children under 5, people taking certain types of medication and people who are communicating with someone who lip reads.

If outdoors, our advice is to maintain physical distancing as much as you can. This is the best way to stay safe. If you do this, you do not need to wear a face covering outside.

If, for any reason, you think there's a chance you may not be able to maintain physical distancing while outside, you may want to wear a face covering.

By face coverings, we do not mean the wearing of a surgical or other medical grade mask, but a facial covering of your mouth and nose. This can be made of cloth or other textiles, for example a scarf, through which you can breathe.

Even if you're wearing a face covering, you should still try to maintain physical distancing as much as you can.

Access to healthcare

It is vital that you get the care you need in the safest way possible. This may be the doctor or team who usually support you, but also includes other routine or urgent GP or hospital care. To ensure we can provide the care you need in a safe and timely manner, your needs will be assessed by a clinician as part of any GP or hospital care. They will do a risk assessment and decide where, when and how you are seen. This risk assessment is part of the care that doctors and other health professionals do every day to meet the needs of their patients.

Following a risk assessment, it may be that your clinician decides it is best to carry out a consultation or appointment over the telephone or via Near Me (a video calling service used by the NHS). Other times, a face to face consultation or appointment may happen at your home, but equally (after assessment of infection risk and clinical need) may involve you going to a practice, health centre or hospital to be seen.

Before COVID-19 arrived, clinicians may have advised a small number of people to not go out and meet other people or do certain things because of their specific health condition or their treatments. If your clinician provides you with advice about this, you should follow this advice as they know you personally. If this happens to you, it does not mean you are being advised to shield again because of an increase in the levels of COVID-19. If you're ever

unsure about any health advice or treatment, you should discuss this with your healthcare team.

If you have symptoms of coronavirus

If it's an emergency, whether related to coronavirus or not, phone 999.

If, at any point, you think you have developed symptoms of coronavirus, phone the NHS on 111. Symptoms include a new, continuous cough, a high temperature (above 37.8 °C) and/or a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste.

If you, or the person you care for, has cancer

If you, or the person you care for, feel unwell and have had chemotherapy or radiotherapy for a cancer (including a blood cancer) within the last 6 weeks, you should phone either the emergency Scottish Cancer Treatment Helpline on 0800 917 7711 or the emergency number given to you by your consultant or specialist nurse. You should call even if you do not think feeling unwell is due to coronavirus.

Data Protection Statement

We would like to reassure you that while you have been identified from either your GP practice, local Health Board or securely stored national data, in order that we could write to you, this information has been shared in a limited way within the NHS in Scotland and did not include your medical record. During this outbreak, we will keep your contact details in case we need to contact you again. We will also notify your GP and your Health Board that you have been contacted in order that they can provide appropriate support. Should we need to, in order to provide some of the additional support noted above, we will share your contact details only with your local authority (your council) in order that they can support you during this difficult time. We would highlight that this action is only being taken due to the current coronavirus outbreak, and would assure you that your local authority would not receive any details of your medical condition or health record. You can request your contact details to be removed by asking your GP or hospital clinician.

Mental health and wellbeing

You can now book GP and NHS appointments as normal. If you feel worried and want to speak to someone, your GP or other healthcare provider can help make sure you get the support you need.

You can also find help online from the Scottish Association of Mental Health (SAMH) at www.samh.org.uk and over the phone from:

- Breathing Space - 0800 83 85 87
- Samaritans - 116 123

Influenza vaccine

If you're able to get the flu vaccine, you should consider getting this for your health as soon as it's available, even though it will not protect against COVID-19.

Going back to work from 1 August

Our advice is that you should carry on working from home, if you can.

If you cannot work from home, you can return to a workplace from 1 August. You do not need to get a return to work note from your GP or care provider to go back.

When at work, you should follow physical distancing advice. If you cannot, your employer must have put other measures in place to help keep you safe.

If you're worried about going back to work, you should speak to your employer about your concerns. We have given guidance to employers in Scotland about keeping their employees safe at this time, and what they need to do for those who are at higher risk from COVID-19. A key part of this is a workplace risk assessment tool that can help you and your employer understand your personal risks and what kind of support you may need. You can access the risk assessment online at mygov.scot/shielding.

If you're not able to go back to work

If the risks to you and the kind of job you do mean it's hard for you to return to a workplace, some employers may be able to offer you leave. Beyond the annual leave you're able to take as normal, known as your statutory leave entitlement, it's up to your employer and you to decide what's best if you're not able to return to work. Options include:

- If you have been furloughed for at least a full 3-week period prior to 30 June, your employer may be able to apply for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. Under this scheme you can be furloughed and receive 80% of your regular wages, up to a cap of £2,500. The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme runs until the end of October.
- You will be able to get Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) until 31 July. After that, if you feel you're not able to return to work, you can discuss your fitness for work with your GP or specialist care provider.

Going back to school

We expect all children who are shielding to be able to return to school in August, unless given advice from a GP or healthcare provider not to.

We expect children will be able to return to school because we now know that children are at much lower risk of severe illness from coronavirus than adults, and also less likely to pass on the virus to other people.

If you're worried about this, you can speak to your child's school about how they're getting ready to open fully in August. We'll also be publishing detailed 'Guidance on preparing for the start of the new school term in August 2020' on gov.scot from 30 July, though our advice remains to speak to your child's school if you have concerns.

Support you can get while shielding at home

If you need to ask a question

Please note that the SMS Shielding Service number only accepts text messages. It does not take voice calls. Also, because the SMS Shielding Service is not checked by a person, it cannot respond to general questions you send by text. The SMS Shielding Service is only able to respond with a single pre-programmed reply to general questions.

You can call a free helpline if you cannot join the SMS Shielding Service and want to request access to support. The free helpline number is 0800 111 4000 and is currently open Monday to Friday, from 9am to 5pm. This helpline number will direct you to local support from your council.

Priority access to supermarket online delivery slots

If you're finding it hard to book a delivery from a supermarket in Scotland, you can request priority access to online delivery slots. We've partnered with Asda, Tesco, Morrisons, Sainsbury's, Iceland and Waitrose to offer these slots.

Priority access should make it easier for you to get a delivery slot with a supermarket. Unfortunately, we cannot guarantee you'll always get your preferred slot.

How to get priority access to online delivery slots

After you've joined the SMS Shielding Service, you'll be sent a text asking you to confirm that we can share your details with supermarkets. Once you've confirmed that we can share your details, this is what will happen next:

- if you're already signed up as an online customer with one of the supermarkets we're partnered with, they'll get in touch with you by email to let you know how to access the delivery service – they'll send your email to the email account you have registered with them
- if you're not signed up as a customer, we'll send you a text to let you know how to sign up with a supermarket that can deliver in your area

If your child is shielding and you're their parent or guardian, you can still request priority access to delivery slots. Your child's details will be shared with the supermarkets, and it will be your child's details you'll need to register with a supermarket in order to access the priority service.

Help with money

If you're worried about money, you can get help and support online, through mygov.scot and [GOV.UK](https://gov.uk).

If you need to speak to someone about debt or employment, you can talk to Citizens Advice Scotland on 0800 028 1456.

A quick guide to risk for the shielding group

The number of people who are infectious is much lower. However, the risk is still the same if you were to become infected with the virus. You may want to consider this when making decisions about what is important to you.



Keep 2 metres apart

Wash hands regularly

Let in fresh air

Reduce exposure time

	Low risk	Higher risk
Being active	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exercising outdoors alone Outdoor non-contact activities Going swimming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outdoor contact sports Indoor non-contact activities Going to the gym
Health and care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Getting personal care at home Seeing your GP or clinician Going to a pharmacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing care for others Sitting in a busy waiting room Visiting a day centre
Meeting others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting people outdoors Forming an extended household 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting people indoors Physical contact with people you do not live with
Shopping and leisure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Going to an outdoor market Going to the shops Getting your haircut 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Going to a museum Going to a busy beach Going to the cinema
Travel and holidays	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pay for petrol at the pump Self-catering accommodation Travelling outwith your area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Going in someone else's car Staying at a hotel Travelling by bus or train
Eating and drinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Picnic outside with others Sitting outside a café, restaurant or pub 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having people over for a meal Sitting inside a café, restaurant or pub