



13 April 2020

Dear colleagues,

Further to Catherine Calderwood's letter of 1 April, I am writing to you to provide an update on processes for supporting patients in the 'clinically highest risk' (shielding) group.

1. Identifying those people we cannot identify centrally

The central searches to identify patients who would be indicated for Shielding, using national data have been published at <https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/web-resources-container/covid-19-search-criteria-for-highest-risk-patients-for-shielding/>. This document details the data sources and search criteria we have utilised and will continue to be updated with any new searches that take place in the future.

There will be patients that we have not been able to identify because of limitations in the nationally held data for example some patients with severe COPD or severe asthma who do not meet the specified medications criteria. I am very grateful for your help in identifying any patients at highest risk for shielding that we will not have identified already using these national search approaches for Groups 1 to 6.

If you are unsure whether a patient has been identified, please let your health board coordinating team have the patients CHI number and group (for example Group 5.3) and NHS National Services Scotland will process (this includes a check for duplicate entries).

We are aware that Asthma UK have recently brought out further guidance for identifying patients at highest risk due to Asthma. The central searches have identified patients on long term steroids. However, there may be patients who have required emergency admissions in the last year, who are on high dose inhaled steroids, or preventative antibiotics that you feel should also be considered at



highest risk and for shielding. We appreciate you notifying your Health Board co-ordinator of these people.

Most people in the highest risk group will have received a letter by now. It is expected that letters will continue to be issued as clinicians, both in Primary and Secondary Care, continue to identify people with existing and new diagnoses. It is important to let your health board coordinating team know of these patients, so that they are on the Central List of Shielded patients and so that NHS National Services Scotland can undertake the necessary processes to support patients.

You may be contacted by patients if they think they are at highest risk, but who have not received a letter. I thank you for supporting these patients who may be worried, discussing with them the criteria and implications of shielding, and notifying your Health Board co-ordinator if appropriate to shield. There will be some patients who are worried, but for whom shielding may not be appropriate.

Guidance on who is included in the highest risk group has also been published at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/covid-shielding-contacts/pages/highest-risk-classification/> and <https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-shielding>. This may help reassure patients that shielding is only to be undertaken by those at highest risk and social distancing is the best course of action for those at increased risk.

Information for those with health conditions that put people in the *increased risk* category and not the *highest risk* category (and therefore not to shield) has been published by NHS Inform at <https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-social-distancing>. Scottish Government have also published advice on how people with specific health conditions should manage their condition though this period at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-tailored-advice-for-those-who-live-with-specific-medical-conditions/>. This will be updated as necessary.

2. Group 7 – Those at clinically highest risk of severe morbidity or mortality from infection with COVID-19, who are not included in Groups 1-6

As you are aware, we have set up a separate group to ask clinicians (both in General Practice and Hospitals) to identify individual patients who they consider to be at **highest** risk of severe morbidity or mortality of COVID-19, using their clinical judgement. Please continue to identify those at highest risk and if you consider shielding to be in their best overall interests, let your health board coordinating team know their CHI number and that they are in Group 7.

These patients will be extremely clinically high risk and not those who are in the more general 'at increased risk' group, (who roughly equate to those who would receive the flu vaccine). It is acknowledged that the extremely stringent ask of shielding comes with its risks including physical, psychological and social implications. This should be considered when identifying patients to shield.

3. Removing people previously identified to shield who you jointly agree should no longer shield

In attempting to protect all patients who are considered to be at highest risk of severe morbidity or mortality from COVID-19, some patients will be identified for whom you subsequently consider shielding not to be required. As these patients will have received a letter, **if you become aware that shielding may not be appropriate, please discuss this with your patient.**

Removing them from the shielding cohort will mean they no longer qualify for the additional support being provided. If you jointly agree that shielding is no longer required, please let your health board coordinating team know the patient's CHI number and that they are to be removed from shielding. Your health board coordinating team will then update NHS National Services Scotland (who will update the GP and Local Authority systems in turn).

4. Frequently Asked Questions about Shielding for Clinicians

The Scottish Government have published a Question & Answer document for clinicians for shielding. This is included as **Annex A**. We plan to make this available online (and updated regularly in response to feedback) in the near future, details of which will be circulated to you once the link is known.

5. People with respiratory disease – additions to Shielding criteria

a) Those on home oxygen

Patients on home oxygen have been written to with advice to shield. Whilst the intention is that these are usually patients with severe respiratory disease, I am aware that there may be a small number of patients who are on home oxygen for other reasons (for example for the management of cluster headache). We do not know the indications for home oxygen therapy of these people, therefore if you know other patients on home oxygen for non-respiratory reasons I would be grateful if you could review their ongoing need to shield.

b) Interstitial lung disease/sarcoidosis

The British Thoracic Society has recommended that patients with interstitial lung disease and sarcoidosis receive shielding advice (<https://www.brit-thoracic.org.uk/about-us/covid-19-identifying-patients-for-shielding/>). Central data searches for these patients has taken place and patients written to. However, the limitations of this data search is that systems use hospital discharge codes (which are only up to 6 months accurate) and there may be patients with newer diagnoses or who have never been to hospital.

Your assistance in identifying patients you consider to be at highest risk would be gratefully appreciated. Please send their CHI number and 'Group 4' to your health board coordinating team. Similarly, you may identify that shielding may not be in some people's best interests and if so, please follow the process above for discontinuing shielding.

6. Patient Update on Keeping Safe from Coronavirus – Getting Support

Last week, a second letter began to go out to all patients identified so far (from Deputy First Minister John Swinney). This provides shielded people with more detail on getting support including delivery of food and prescription medication. I have included this in **Annex B**.

7. Issuing patient letters at the time of new diagnoses – a delay before successful registration with the national SMS service

For patients you identify and notify to your health board/NHS National Services Scotland, the letters to patients will be issued centrally by NHS National Services Scotland; this will be processed as soon as possible, and we are mindful to avoid any delays. NHS National Services Scotland then send patient details to NHS Education for Scotland Digital Service who host the national SMS service. By the time your patient receives their centrally issued letter, they should be able to register using the SMS service for social support.

Some colleagues have helped to issue patient letters directly so that patients can follow the shielding advice (for example when people are newly diagnosed with conditions included in the highest risk group). However if patients try to register for the SMS service at this point, before we have received central notification, they will receive an error message as they require to be validated to receive support. We have therefore updated the patient letter that clinicians can provide to patients (if

they choose) whilst awaiting a centralised letter from NHS National Services Scotland, which does not contain the SMS number.

The letter that we would like you to give to patients (if you decide to do this) is included in **Annex C**. Please continue to let your health board coordinating team know your patient's CHI number in order that they get a central letter (which will contain the SMS number), their GP is notified of them being in the shielding group, and that they can access social support (if this is required).

8. Easter Bank Holiday – Delays for newly identified people to be shielded

The mail service used for issuing central letters was not operational from Friday 10 April to Monday 13 April (inclusive). This means that new people identified to shield may have experienced delays in receiving centrally issued letters. For people newly identified, where urgent social support may be required (before patients receive their central letter and can use the SMS service), I have attached contact details for Local Authority teams (**Annex D**) so that if you provide these to newly identified patients, they can call their Local Authority team to access social support at short notice.

9. Immunosuppression Flow Chart

The Scottish Government published a flow chart to aid with the identification of patients on immunosuppressive therapies, incorporating as best as possible advice from multiple professional societies. Whilst this was released with the intention of supporting clinical decision making, I appreciate this cannot be fully comprehensive because of the broad range of patients, age groups, conditions and therapies provided to patients. Therefore, your clinical judgement in identifying which of your patients should be shielded is of prime importance.

For those immunosuppressed patients you advise to shield (if not in Groups 5.1, 5.3 or 5.4), please let your health board coordinating team know the CHI numbers and that they will be in Group 5.2 (this includes individual clinical decision making and automatically results in a central letter being issued without secondary searches being done centrally). It is recognised that further specialist guidance continues to be issued by various specialist organisations. I would encourage individual clinicians to use their expertise and guidance from relevant specialist societies where the flow chart may not be relevant.

10. Update to GP IT Systems

The first batch of around 90,000 shielded patient CHI numbers were added to GP systems at the beginning of April (EMIS) or the beginning of last week (Vision). There are approximately an additional 28,000 patients in a second batch. For this group of patients EMIS and Vision pushed out an update to your systems at the end of last week, so that this group of patients should have been coded into your systems by Saturday 11th April 2020. Additionally, approximately a further 20,000 patients have been identified for shielding over the last few days, particularly the patients at risk from immunosuppression. These patients are not included in the current update to your system and there will be third update to add these patients.

11. Patient Access to Healthcare

It is vital that people who are being shielded get the care they need when they require it in the safest way possible. This may be routine or urgent primary care. To ensure this happens in a safe and timely manner their needs should be assessed by a clinician and then a risk assessment done to determine where, when and how the patient is seen.

In some circumstances you may decide that it is appropriate to carry out a consultation over the telephone or via NHS Near Me. For NHS Near Me all that is needed for the patient is a device that has a camera (e.g. smartphone, tablet, laptop) and connection to the internet.

A face to face consultation may be required by way of a home visit, but equally after assessment of infection risk, clinical need and service capacity may involve the patient travelling to a practice or centre to be seen. This risk assessment is part of the care that GPs and other health professionals do every day to meet the needs of their patients and should continue whilst bearing in mind the special requirements of patients who are shielding.

12. National Helpline for High Risk Patients

A new national helpline is being set up to provide essential assistance to those who don't have a network of support but who are in the 'high risk' group.

The service will offer help to those who do not have family or existing community support and cannot get online and who are over 70, disabled, require the support of mental health services, are pregnant or receive a flu jab for health reasons. This service is in addition to localised support already available for people who have received letters advising them to shield themselves. **However, any of those in the**

shielding category who are not yet receiving assistance, who do not have family and cannot get online can access support via this new helpline.

The helpline – **0800 111 4000** – will initially operate during core working hours of 09:00 to 17:00 while plans are developed and implemented to extend it to operate for a longer period each day.

Callers will be automatically connected to their local authority who will support them to access the service they need, such as:

- essential food and medication
- links to local social work services for vulnerable children or adults
- emotional support
- contact with local volunteer groups.

Thank you for your help with identifying patients in these seven groups who may be in your clinical service. I am grateful for all the efforts you are making to protect the health of the people of Scotland during this challenging time.

Yours sincerely



DR GREGOR SMITH

INTERIM CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER FOR SCOTLAND

Clinician FAQs on Shielding

What is shielding? What are the benefits? What are the risks?

Shielding is a measure to protect extremely vulnerable people from coming into contact with coronavirus, by minimising all interaction between them and others. The benefit is that, by following the extremely stringent process of avoiding contact with others, this will minimise the chance of catching COVID-19. However, this is a very challenging ask of people because of the negative physical, psychological and social consequences of isolating themselves for such a long period of time.

Who should be shielded?

Those people who are at the clinically **highest** risk of severe morbidity and mortality of COVID-19. It does **not** include all people eligible for the flu vaccine, only a very specific sub-set considered to be at highest risk of severe illness and hospitalisation from COVID-19. It does not include those who may be vulnerable, at risk, or needing support for other reasons. Groups of people at clinically highest risk are:

1. Solid organ transplant recipients
2. People with specific cancers
 - People with cancer who are undergoing active chemotherapy or radical radiotherapy for lung cancer
 - People with cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma who are at any stage of treatment
 - People having immunotherapy or other continuing antibody treatments for cancer
 - People having other targeted cancer treatments which can affect the immune system, such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors
 - People who have had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months, or who are still taking immunosuppression drugs
3. People with severe respiratory conditions including all cystic fibrosis, severe asthma and severe COPD. This includes those long-term home Oxygen for chronic respiratory conditions.
4. People with rare diseases, including all forms of Interstitial Lung Disease/Sarcoidosis, and inborn errors of metabolism that significantly increase the risk of infections (such as SCID, homozygous sickle cell)
5. People on immunosuppression therapies sufficient to significantly increase risk of infection
6. People who are pregnant with significant heart disease, congenital or acquired

Who agreed this list?

The 4 UK Chief Medical Officers following expert advice.

What about other patients who are extremely clinically vulnerable/at highest risk of severe morbidity or mortality of COVID-19?

We have added a mechanism where patients, who in your clinical judgement, need to be shielded as they are clinically at 'highest risk' of severe morbidity or mortality from COVID-19, but are not included in the above six groups, can be included. In Scotland we call this Group 7.

How did you identify people in this highest risk group?

National held databases for dispensed prescriptions from general practice and hospital based episodes of care have been used to identify the majority of people that are in this highest risk group. However, we do not have national data for all of the groups. We have published the approach used to identify patients using national data on the Public Health Scotland website at: <https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/web-resources-container/covid-19-search-criteria-for-highest-risk-patients-for-shielding/>

There are limitations with some of our national data, which means that we may over-identify some (who you recognise may not need to shield) and under-identify others (who you recognise should follow shielding advice).

As a result, we are grateful to both colleagues in General Practice and Hospitals for assisting with the identification of other people who will not have been written to, using national data.

How long will patients be recommended to shield for?

When writing to patients we are advising to shield for at least 12 weeks. If this changes, we will write to those patients and update you as clinicians.

How will I know if my patients have been advised to shield by NHS Scotland?

NHS National Services Scotland are coordinating a database of patients who have been identified through 3 mechanisms: centrally using national data sets, from colleagues in General Practice, and from colleagues in Hospitals. All those identified to shield from these three routes should be known to NHS National Services Scotland.

In General Practice, NHS National Services Scotland will send flags into VISION and EMIS PCS to update General Practice colleagues of those patients in their practice who have been written to (identified either using national data or from Hospital colleagues). There may be several phases to this process. When colleagues in General Practice identify patients not already with a flag on their record, please add the code 9d44. with a flag/alert to their record and send the patient's CHI number to your Health Board Coordinating team, along with the criteria risk group e.g. group 4. If they don't fit into any of the existing risk groups but you feel they qualify due to other medical conditions, please identify as Group 7. The Health Board Coordinating team will then compile a list of CHI numbers of newly identified patients and send these to NHS National Services Scotland, who will write to your patient and let Local Authorities know that the patient is eligible for social support.

In Hospital Practice, NHS National Services Scotland will send updated lists of patients identified in their region to local Health Board coordinating teams. Local Health Board coordinating teams are asked to share with Hospital colleagues; local arrangements for doing this may differ.

I feel one of my patients should be shielded, but they have not yet received a letter?

Please let your health board coordinating team know the patient's CHI number and the group for shielding e.g. group 2. Your local health board coordinating team will then update NHS National Services Scotland who will write out to your patient, update their GP record with a flag (unless you are a GP practice in which case we ask you to add the flag to your record), and activate social support for your patients should they require this during the shielding period.

What about newly diagnosed patients in the future? Will shielding advice apply to future patients?

You may become aware of patients under your care who have new diagnoses or therapies which would result in being in the highest risk group where shielding is advised. Please provide your patient with advice to shield and highlight further information being available at NHS Inform. Please also let your health board coordinating team know your patient's CHI number and their group (e.g. group 2). NHS National Services Scotland will write to the patient with a letter which includes their CHI number, allowing the patient to register for social support if this is required; NSS will also send a flag to the GP IT system; this process will happen as fast as possible. Some clinicians may choose to provide a copy of the generic patient letter so that the patient receives the advice of the letter sooner; this is optional; we have provided clinicians with a copy of the generic Clinician-issued patient letter in an update on 8/9 April 2020.

My patient has been advised to shield but this may not be appropriate. What should I do?

Please discuss this with your patient. If it is agreed that shielding is not appropriate or in their best overall interests, please send their CHI number and group to your local health board coordinating team, highlighting that the patient is no longer to shield. Your health board coordinating team will update NHS National Services Scotland that the person is no longer to shield.

I have received notification from a hospital clinician/GP identifying one of my patients as at highest clinical risk. I do not agree with this. What do I do now?

Please discuss this with the other clinician. If it is agreed that the person should not be shielding, please discuss this with your patient who will have received a letter, and follow the advice in the last answer.

A patient has asked that they be shielded, however I do not consider that they are in the highest risk group. What should I do?

The decision to shield is a clinical one – there are benefits and risks. If, following a discussion with the patient, you agree that they should be shielded then please let your Health Board coordinating team know. If, following a discussion with the patient, you do not feel that the patient should be shielded, but they fall into the at risk group, then strict social distancing measures should be followed. Social support is provided only for those who require shielding.

Should I be advising that all those in a household should shield or only the person at highest risk?

The rest of the household are not required to adopt shielding measures for themselves; only those identified to shield. However the rest of the household should support the shielded person by stringently following social distancing measures.

F/T: 0300 244 4000
E: dfmcse@gov.scot

[Patient Name]

Patient address Line 1

Patient address Line 2

Patient address Line 3]

7 April 2020

IMPORTANT: PERSONAL

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

UPDATE ON KEEPING SAFE FROM CORONAVIRUS

Dear [Patient],

I hope you are keeping well in these challenging times. You've been sent this letter because you, or a person you're caring for, is shielding at home due to high risk of severe illness from coronavirus. This letter provides a reminder of the steps you need to take to keep yourself safe. It also lets you know about how you can get the food or household items you need, including if you do not have a mobile phone, and other support that can be offered.

Reminder - how to keep yourself safe by shielding at home

You should have already had a letter that explained you:

- must stay at home for at least 12 weeks
- avoid as much face to face contact as you can
- should join the SMS Shielding Service for information and support. This now includes priority access to supermarket deliveries

Getting support to you and others

It's important that you join the SMS Shielding Service or contact your local council's support phone line. We need to be able to check that everyone who's shielding is getting the support they need.

If you do not want support, you should still get in touch to let us know by contacting your local council's support line. This will help us focus on those who need support.

Your local council's support phone number is listed at the end of this letter.

If you need help to get the food or household items you need

If you buy online, or have someone who's able to get the food and household items you need, you should carry on getting things in this way.

If you're not able to get these things, we can send you free grocery packs.

How to get free weekly grocery packs if you have a mobile phone

Step 1: join the SMS Shielding Service, if you have 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. It is an automated system, so to get the most effective service please do not add extra information.

Once we've got your CHI number, we'll send you a text to confirm that you've joined the service.

Please note the 0786 006 4525 number only accepts text messages. It does not take voice calls.

Step 2: Text us to get a free weekly grocery pack

To get a free weekly grocery pack text **1BOX** to 0786 006 4525. This is all you should include in the text. If you and someone else in your household both need a grocery pack and you have no means of getting groceries, text **2BOX** instead.

Your first pack will take up to a week to arrive from the day you send the text. After that, you'll get your free pack once a week.

You can stop the service at any time by texting **STOPBOX** to 0786 006 4525.

If you do not have a mobile phone and need a free grocery pack

If you cannot join the SMS Shielding Service, you can phone your local council's support line for free weekly grocery packs. You can also call about any other help that you need.

New ways we'll be able to help you in the future

You'll soon be able to get access to:

- home delivery slots from local supermarkets for online orders, reserved only for people who are shielding.
- a new national telephone number, launching shortly, to help give you advice and support – this number will put you quickly in touch with local support in your area, run by your local council
- support with getting access to the internet, if you do not have access at the moment or need help using online services

Priority access to supermarket deliveries

We're working with the biggest supermarkets in Scotland, such as Asda, Tesco, Sainsbury and Morrisons, to make sure you're first in line when it comes to getting a home delivery. You'll pay for these groceries, but having a guaranteed delivery slot will allow you to choose what you want each week.

The simplest way to find out more about this service is to make sure you've joined the SMS Shielding Service. As soon as we can, we'll contact you using the SMS Shielding Service with details of how to get priority supermarket deliveries.

Even when this service is launched, you'll still be able to carry on getting free grocery packs, if you need them.

Get help online

You can find the latest online health advice on NHS Inform at www.nhsinform.scot .

For the latest Scottish Government updates on coronavirus, visit gov.scot or mygov.scot.

We are determined to make sure you receive the support you need at this time.

Yours sincerely,

John Swinney

General help & support for those at high risk of severe illness from coronavirus

Shielding and staying safe – why it's not the same as advice to other people

Because you're in a high risk group, you need to stay at home and avoid as much face to face contact as you can.

You should try and stay at least 2 metres away from people, including those you live with, and everyone in your household should follow advice about regular hand washing.

You can go out into your garden or step out onto your doorstep for fresh air, so long as you stay at least 2 metres away from other people.

We know this advice is hard to follow, and is not the same as advice to people in lower risk groups, but it's advice you need to follow to protect your health and the NHS.

Other people who live with you

Other people in your household do not have to shield themselves at home for 12 weeks. This means that if they have to leave the house to go to work, such as if they're a key worker, they can carry on doing so. However, to help keep you safe, they must follow guidance on social distancing and reducing their contact outside the home where they can.

In your home, you should:

- minimise the time you spend with others in shared spaces (kitchen, bathroom and sitting areas) and keep any shared spaces well ventilated
- aim to keep 2 metres away from others and encourage them to sleep in a different bed where possible
- use separate towels and, if possible, use a separate bathroom from the rest of the household or, if this is not possible, clean the bathroom with cleaning products after every use
- avoid using the kitchen when others are present, take your meals back to your room to eat where possible, and ensure all kitchenware is cleaned thoroughly, using a dishwasher set to 60 degrees if you can, or in very warm, soapy water

If the rest of your household are able to follow this guidance to help keep you safe, there is no need for them to wear any special medical clothing or equipment.

How long you'll be able to get support from the SMS Shielding Service

You'll be able to access the SMS Shielding Service for as long as you're advised you need to stay at home. At the moment, this is for at least 12 weeks from the date you got your first letter asking you to stay at home.

You'll get updates from the SMS Shielding Service if the length you're advised to stay at home changes.

If you need to speak to someone to ask a question

You can contact your local council's support line.

What's in a free grocery pack

Your free grocery pack will include enough basic food and household items to last a week. At the moment, everyone will get the same grocery pack, so it might not meet your personal dietary and religious needs.

Over the coming weeks, we'll try to offer packs to better meet dietary and religious needs. You'll get an update on this as soon as we can give one.

This is what's currently in the standard grocery pack:

Product	Quantity
Coffee	1x50g
Tea bags	40 bags
Biscuits	1x300g
Bread	1x800g
Cereal	1x500g
Baked Beans	2x415g
Soups	4x400g
Pasta	1x500g
Rice / Cous Cous/ Noodles	1 x 500g
Fruit 1	1x5 count
Fruit 2	1x5 count
Shower Gel	1xunit
Semi-skimmed UHT MILK.	2x1ltr
Cooking Sauce - jar	1x350g
Pre potato (whole, washed)	1x2kg
Tinned Meat	1x340g
Tuna	1x145g
Veg (peas probably)	2x300g
Chopped Tomatoes	2x400g

Tinned Fruit	1x410g
Toilet Roll	2xroll

Your grocery pack will normally be delivered to your door by Brakes or Bidfood. Sometimes, your local council, a supermarket, charity or emergency service may also make the delivery.

Whoever delivers your pack will leave it outside your door. This means that they will let you know they're at the door by ringing a bell or knocking, but will then step away to a safe distance. If there is no answer then they will post a card through your door.

If you're worried that you should have had a grocery pack and it's not been delivered, contact your local council's support line.

If you cannot lift the grocery pack to bring it in from outside, you may need to bring items inside a few at a time. You can also try your local council's support line to see if they can help you bring your pack inside.

If the address you're living at is different to the one on this letter

If you want your grocery pack delivered to an address that isn't the same as the one on this letter, you need to contact your local council's support line to give them your new address.

When you can expect a grocery pack

If you've asked to get a weekly grocery pack, it may take up to a week to reach you. After this, deliveries will be made once a week on the same day every week. Delivery times are between 6am - 10pm.

If you have symptoms of coronavirus

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

If, at any point, you think you have developed symptoms of coronavirus, such as a new, continuous cough and/or a high temperature (above 37.8 °C), phone the NHS on 111. Because you're in a high risk group, you should call 111 if you get any symptoms of coronavirus.

If you are currently within 6 weeks of having received chemotherapy or radiotherapy for a cancer (including a blood cancer), and feel unwell, whether or not you think it might be the coronavirus infection, then you should phone the emergency Scottish Cancer Treatment Helpline number 0800 917 7711, or the emergency number given to you by your consultant or specialist nurse. You should do this whether you think you have Covid-19 or are unwell in any other way, just as you would have done before this Covid-19 epidemic.

Prescriptions

Your local pharmacy should be sending you any prescription medicines that you need. Your prescriptions should also cover the same length of time as usual. If you do not have your prescription medicines sent to you, or want someone you know to pick them up, you can arrange this by:

- asking someone you know to pick them up and to leave them at your door (this is the best option, if possible)
- contacting your local council's support line - they will be able to arrange for your medicines to be delivered to your home

If you get medicines or equipment from your hospital care team, they will arrange to have these delivered to you.

[Patient Name]

Patient address Line 1

Patient address Line 2

Patient address Line 3]

Date

LETTER SENT FROM YOUR GP OR HOSPITAL SPECIALIST

IMPORTANT: PERSONAL

Dear [Patient],

Your CHI number: [CHI NUMBER]

IMPORTANT ADVICE TO KEEP YOU SAFE FROM CORONAVIRUS

I am writing to you to help you stay safe during this difficult time.

The NHS has identified you, or the named person you care for, as someone at risk of severe illness if you catch Coronavirus (also known as COVID-19). This is because you have an underlying disease or health condition that means if you catch the virus, you are more likely to be at risk of serious illness than others.

The government will be offering support to help you self-isolate, including the delivery of food packs and medications. It would be helpful for us to have your mobile phone number, so that we can get in touch with you through an SMS service to offer you this support.

As your GP practice or Hospital specialist team have sent you this letter directly, there may be a short delay before support is available to you. They will let the wider NHS organisation in Scotland know that you have been asked to follow the guidance in this letter. This may take a couple of days before all necessary systems are updated with your details. You will then receive a second letter with your details printed on a letter similar to this at which point you will be able to access further support if needed. The second personalised letter which you will receive will also contain a mobile phone number that you can text to arrange support. Further details will be in the letter to follow.

This service is for you as someone at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19. This will help you to make sure you have the food and medicines you need while you stay at home. It will let us keep you up to date with the latest information. You can see more details at

www.nhsinform.scot . **If you need urgent support with groceries you should phone your local assistance centre.** Their contact details are included with this letter and also available at www.gov.scot/publications/covid-shielding-contacts .

If you do not have a mobile phone, you will still be able to access support with daily living by calling your local assistance centre.

We know that this is a very worrying time, especially for patients with significant underlying illnesses. Your safety and the continued provision of the care and treatment you need is a priority for the Scottish Government and the NHS in Scotland. This letter gives you practical and detailed advice on how to protect yourself and access the care and treatment you need.

The safest course of action is for you to stay at home at all times and avoid all face-to-face contact for at least twelve weeks from today, except from carers and healthcare workers who you must see as part of your medical care.

We recognise this is difficult, and it may feel like a big step, but by doing this it will help to protect you from coming into contact with the virus, which could be very dangerous for you.

If you are in touch with friends, family or a support network in your community who can support you to get food and medicine, follow the advice in this letter. If you do not have contacts who can help support you, more advice is given at Section 5 in this letter.

Over the coming days, councils and health professionals will be working together to keep in contact with you to make sure you have access to food supplies and any medicines you need.

If, at any point, you think you have developed symptoms of coronavirus, such as a new, continuous cough and/or high temperature (above 37.8 °C), seek clinical advice by phoning the NHS on 111. **Do this as soon as you get symptoms.**

This is different to the advice that we are giving people who do not fall into the very high risk group, who are only being asked to contact the NHS if they feel very unwell. **We are asking you to get in touch sooner than we are advising everyone else.**

Patients in the 'highest risk' groups are all currently receiving this same letter. There is specific advice below for those patients reading this letter who know they have cancer. If you do not have cancer, please follow the advice in the rest of this letter (but not the paragraph which follows):

If you, or the person you care for, is currently within 6 weeks of having received chemotherapy or radiotherapy for a cancer (including a blood cancer), and feel unwell, whether or not you think it might be the coronavirus infection, then you should phone the emergency Scottish Cancer Treatment Helpline number 0800 917 7711, or the emergency number given to you by your consultant or specialist nurse. You should do this whether you think you have Covid-19 or are unwell in any other way, just as you would have done before this Covid-19 epidemic.

Things you should be doing to stay safe.

You, or the person you care for, should:

- **DO STRICTLY AVOID** contact with anyone who is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). These symptoms include high temperature (above 37.8 °C) and/or a new and continuous cough. You might want to have a thermometer at home to check your temperature if you are worried that you may have a fever.
- **DON'T** leave your home.
- **DON'T** attend any gatherings. This includes gatherings of friends and families in private spaces e.g. family homes, weddings and religious services.
- **DON'T** go out for shopping, leisure or travel. When arranging food or medication deliveries, these should be left at the door to minimise contact.
- **DO** keep in touch using remote technology such as phone, internet, and social media.
- **DO** use telephone or online services to contact your GP (for non-coronavirus issues) or other essential services.
- **DO** regularly wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds. Ask carers or support workers who visit your home to do the same.

The rest of your household need to support you to stay safe and must stringently follow guidance on social distancing, reducing their contact outside the home. In your home, you should:

- minimise the time you spend with others in shared spaces (kitchen, bathroom and sitting areas) and keep any shared spaces well ventilated
- aim to keep 2 metres away from others and encourage them to sleep in a different bed where possible
- use separate towels and, if possible, use a separate bathroom from the rest of the household, or clean the bathroom with cleaning products after every use
- avoid using the kitchen when others are present, take your meals back to your room to eat where possible, and ensure all kitchenware is cleaned thoroughly using a dishwasher at the 60 degrees setting if possible, otherwise in very warm soapy water.

If the rest of your household are able to follow this guidance to help keep you safe, there is no need for them to wear any special medical clothing or equipment.

We want to reassure you that you will still get the usual medical care you need during this period. Due to the situation, demand for all health services is very high and your GP practice will be in touch with you as soon as they can to arrange with you how best to ensure that. Please only get in touch with them if you have any significant concerns.

Other advice you may find helpful:

1. Carers and support workers who come to your home

Any essential carers or visitors who support you with your everyday needs can continue to visit, unless they have any of the symptoms of coronavirus. All visitors should wash their

hands with soap and water for 20 seconds when they arrive, before and after preparing food and frequently during their visit.

It is also a good idea to speak to your carers about what happens if one of them becomes unwell. If you need help with care but you're not sure who to contact please visit <https://careinfoscotland.scot/topics/how-to-get-care-services>

2. Medicines that you routinely take

The government is helping pharmacies to deliver prescriptions, prioritising those who are not currently able to leave the house. Prescriptions will continue to cover the same length of time as usual. If you do not currently have your prescriptions collected or delivered, you can arrange this by:

- Asking someone who can pick up your prescription from the local pharmacy, and leave them at your door for you (this is the best option, if possible).
- Contacting your local assistance centre to ask them to help you find someone (who will have been ID checked) to deliver it to you.
- If you get medicines or equipment from your hospital care team, they will make arrangements to have them delivered to you.

3. Planned GP practice appointments

Wherever possible, we will provide care by phone, email or online. But if we decide you need to be seen in person, we will contact you to arrange a visit.

4. Planned hospital appointments

NHS Scotland has written to your hospital to ask them to review any ongoing care that you have with them. It is possible that some clinics and appointments will be cancelled or postponed. Your hospital or clinic will contact you by phone or letter if any changes need to be made to your care or treatment. Otherwise you should assume your care or treatment is taking place as planned. Please contact your hospital or clinic directly if you have any questions about a specific appointment or the care you usually get from hospital.

5. Support with daily living

The government will be offering support to help you self-isolate, including the delivery of food packs and medications. It would be helpful for us to have your mobile phone number, so that we can get in touch with you through an SMS service to offer you this support.

Once you have the second official letter, if you have a mobile phone, please text your CHI number (which will be included in the second official letter) to 0786 006 4525. This will help us match your phone number to your other details in our system. **Do not include any other information in your text, as it is an automated service.** You will receive an automatic reply to confirm you are connected to the text message service.

This service is for you as someone at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19. This will help you to make sure you have the food and medicines you need while you stay at home. It will let us keep you up to date with the latest information. You can see more details at www.nhsinform.scot . **If you need urgent support with groceries you should phone your local assistance centre.** Their contact details are included with this letter and also available at www.gov.scot/publications/covid-shielding-contacts

If you do not have a mobile phone, you will still be able to access support with daily living by calling your local assistance centre.

If you do not have anyone who can help you, here is a selection of organisations who can advise you and can signpost you to other services:

Young Scot: <https://young.scot/>

<https://www.readyscotland.org/coronavirus/where-to-find-additional-support/>

Age Scotland: Freephone 0800-12-44-222

And for support in dealing with anxiety around impacts of Coronavirus:

<https://breathingspace.scot/>

<https://www.samh.org.uk/>

<https://www.supportinmindscotland.org.uk/>

6. Financial assistance

This letter is evidence for your employer, to show that you cannot work outside the home. You do not need to get a separate fit note from your GP.

If you've been financially affected by coronavirus, and if you're eligible, you should apply for Statutory Sick Pay, Universal Credit or Employment and Support Allowance. The UK Government has introduced some temporary changes to make this process easier. Find out more at <https://www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk/coronavirus/>

Money Talk Team, from the Citizens Advice network in Scotland, can help you see what benefits you might be entitled to, and offer you advice to help make your money go further. You can call the team on 0800 085 7145 or visit the Money Talk Team website at <https://financialhealthcheck.scot/home>.

7. Urgent medical attention

If you have an urgent medical question relating to your **existing** medical condition (ie not Coronavirus), or the condition of the person you are caring for please contact your GP practice, or your specialist hospital care team, directly. Where possible, you will be supported by phone or online. If your doctor decides you need to be seen in person, we will arrange to visit you in your home, or where necessary, see you in a hospital.

To help the NHS provide you with the best care if you need to go to hospital as a result of catching coronavirus, we ask that you have ready a single hospital bag. This should include your emergency contact, a list of the medications you take (including dose and frequency),

any information on planned appointments and essential things you would need for an overnight stay (snacks, pyjamas, toothbrush, medication etc). If you have an anticipatory care plan, please include that.

8. Looking after your mental well-being

We understand that this may be a worrying time and you may find staying at home and having limited contact frustrating. At times like these, it can be easy to fall into unhealthy patterns of behaviour, which can make you feel worse. Simple things you can do to stay mentally and physically active during this time include:

- look for ideas for exercises to do at home on the NHS website
- spend time doing things you enjoy – reading, cooking, jigsaws and other indoor hobbies
- try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, drink enough water, exercise regularly, and try to avoid smoking, alcohol and recreational drugs
- try spending time with the windows open to let in fresh air, arranging space to sit and see a nice view (if possible) and get some natural sunlight. Get out into the garden or sit on your doorstep if you can, keeping a distance of at least 2 metres or 6 feet from others.

You can find additional advice and support at www.nhsinform.scot .

I hope you find this advice useful. The NHS, your local council, and the Scottish Government want to help you during this difficult time.

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

ANNEX

List of diseases and conditions considered to be very high risk:

1. Solid organ transplant recipients
2. People with specific cancers
 - People with cancer who are undergoing active chemotherapy or radical radiotherapy for lung cancer
 - People with cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma who are at any stage of treatment
 - People having immunotherapy or other continuing antibody treatments for cancer
 - People having other targeted cancer treatments which can affect the immune system, such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors
 - People who have had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months, or who are still taking immunosuppression drugs
3. People with severe respiratory conditions including all cystic fibrosis, severe asthma and severe COPD
4. People with rare diseases, including all forms of Interstitial Lung Disease/Sarcoidosis, and inborn errors of metabolism that significantly increase the risk of infections (such as SCID, homozygous sickle cell)
5. People on immunosuppression therapies sufficient to significantly increase risk of infection
6. People who are pregnant with significant heart disease, congenital or acquired
7. You may have received this letter, even if the above conditions are not relevant to you, if your GP or Hospital Specialist thinks that you would benefit from following the advice in this letter.

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 appropriately within the NHS in Scotland and did not include your medical record. During this outbreak we will maintain 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 Covid-19 outbreak, and would assure you that your local authority would not receive any details of your medical condition or health record.

LOCAL ASSISTANCE CENTRES

For contact email addresses and local websites please go to: www.gov.scot/publications/covid-shielding-contacts	
Aberdeen City	0800 0304 713
Aberdeenshire	0808 196 3384
Angus	03452 777 778
Argyll and Bute	01546 605 524
City of Edinburgh	0131 200 2388
Clackmannanshire	01259 45 2275
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar	01851 600 501
Dumfries and Galloway	01387 260 600
Dundee City	0300 123 1403
East Ayrshire	01563 554 400
East Dunbartonshire	0141 777 3345
East Lothian	01875 824300
East Renfrewshire	0141 577 3093
Falkirk	0808 100 3161
Fife	0800 952 0330
Glasgow City	0141 276 1185
Highland	01349 886 669
Inverclyde	01475 715 274
Midlothian	0131 270 7500
Moray	0808 196 3384
North Ayrshire	01294 310 000
North Lanarkshire	03005 550 407
Orkney Islands	01856 879 900
Perth & Kinross	0345 301 1100
Renfrewshire	0300 300 0230
Scottish Borders	0300 100 1800
Shetland Islands	01595 744 400
South Ayrshire	0300 123 0900
South Lanarkshire	0303 123 1009
Stirling	01786 404040
West Dunbartonshire	01389 737000
West Lothian	01506 281 000



Coronavirus (Covid-19) Dos and Don'ts

You may wish to keep this sheet handy so you can refer to it when needed.

As always – if you have a critical medical emergency, whether related to the coronavirus or not, phone 999.

If, at any point, you think you have developed symptoms of coronavirus, such as a new, continuous cough and/or a high temperature (above 37.8 °C), seek clinical advice by phoning NHS 111 . **Do this as soon as you get these symptoms.**

- **STRICTLY AVOID** contact with anyone who is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). These symptoms include high temperature (above 37.8 °C) and/or a new and continuous cough. You might want to have a thermometer at home to check your temperature if you are worried that you may have a fever.
- **DON'T** leave your home.
- **DON'T** attend any gatherings. This includes gatherings of friends and families in private spaces
- **DON'T** go out for shopping, leisure or travel. When arranging food or medication deliveries, these should be left at the door to minimise contact.
- **DO** keep in touch using remote technology such as phone, internet, and social media.
- **DO** use telephone or online services to contact your GP (for non-coronavirus related matters) or other essential services.
- **DO** regularly wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds. Ask carers or support workers who visit your home to do the same.
- **DO** minimise the time you spend with others in shared spaces (kitchen, bathroom and sitting areas) and keep any shared spaces well ventilated.
- **DO** aim to keep 2 metres (3 steps) away from others and encourage them to sleep in a different bed where possible.
- **DO** use separate towels and, if possible, use a separate bathroom from the rest of the household, or clean the bathroom with cleaning products after every use.
- **DO** avoid using the kitchen when others are present, take your meals back to your room to eat where possible, and ensure all kitchenware is cleaned thoroughly, using a dishwasher at the 60 degrees setting if possible, otherwise in very warm soapy water.

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North Lanarkshire	03005 550 407
Orkney Islands	01856 879 900
Perth & Kinross	0345 301 1100
Renfrewshire	0300 300 0230
Scottish Borders	0300 100 1800
Shetland Islands	0800 030 8780
South Ayrshire	0300 123 0900
South Lanarkshire	0303 123 1009
Stirling	01786 404040
West Dunbartonshire	01389 737000
West Lothian	01506 281 000