



You can get this letter in different languages or in a way that is easier for you to understand. To ask for this letter in a different way e-mail: Shielding@gov.wales

Changes to advice for the clinically extremely vulnerable in Wales from the 22nd December

You have received this letter because you are on the Shielding Patients List (SPL). This is a list of people who are clinically extremely vulnerable to serious illness, if they catch coronavirus.

The advice to those who are clinically extremely vulnerable, previously 'shielding', has been kept under constant review. We know that the actions we asked people to take early on in the pandemic had down sides as well as benefits.

As we are seeing a sustained increase in cases in Wales and we believe this may be linked to a new strain of coronavirus, we have changed the advice. Whilst we are not asking you to take all the shielding measures we advised back in March, there are certain things you should do.

Choices you can make and action to take, to help reduce your risk

Sticking to the basics remains the best way to protect yourself:

- Keep contacts to a minimum
- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water for 20 seconds, or use hand sanitiser if hand washing facilities are not available
- Stay 2 metres or 3 steps away from people you do not live with.
- Avoid touching your face and wear a face covering where required.
- Clean surfaces regularly and avoid touching surfaces others have touched
- Ensure any enclosed areas are well ventilated.

Shielding Measures

In order to keep contacts to a minimum there are shielding measures you should follow:

- You should not attend work or school outside the home. This is particularly the case for those whose work requires them to be in regular or sustained contact with other people, or where individuals share a poorly ventilated workspace for long periods.
- You should stay at home as much as possible. You can go out for exercise, or other essential reasons e.g. medical appointments.

We know long periods of isolation can be harmful for mental and physical health, therefore you can remain part of a support bubble and go outside for exercise as long as you take care.

As from the 19th December, Wales has been placed into alert level 4. You can find more information about alert levels here: <https://gov.wales/alert-level-4>. It means that people are only allowed to only leave their home for limited reasons. This letter of advice builds on those legal restrictions to provide you with more information on how to keep yourself safe at this time. Whilst you are strongly advised to follow this information to help keep yourself safe, this remains advice, not the law, so you can choose whether or not you want to follow it.

Advice for clinically extremely vulnerable children and young people

Our current knowledge suggests that very few children are at highest risk of severe illness due to the virus. Doctors have therefore been reviewing all children and young people who were initially identified as clinically extremely vulnerable to confirm whether they are still thought to be at highest risk.

If this letter is addressed to a child or young person, and you have not yet heard from your child's hospital doctor or GP to discuss this, please contact whoever usually provides care for your child to check whether they should still be considered clinically extremely vulnerable. If you have already discussed this with your child's doctors and they have confirmed your child is still considered highest risk, your child should follow the advice as set out in this letter.

Children and young people who live with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable, but who are not clinically extremely vulnerable themselves, should still attend school.

Flu vaccine

It is extremely important to still get your flu vaccine this winter if you haven't already. Your household contacts should also have a flu vaccine as that will help give you extra protection. GP surgeries and community pharmacies have made sure it is safe for you and your household contacts to be vaccinated.

COVID-19 vaccine

When your priority group is reached you will be invited to a dedicated clinic. Whilst the clinically extremely vulnerable will receive the vaccine before the general population, to help the NHS, please wait to be invited. There will be no need to apply for or ask GPs or pharmacists for the vaccination, as invitation will be automatic. Please do not call your surgery or hospital.

If you develop symptoms of coronavirus

You will need to self-isolate if you develop one of the following symptoms:

- a new continuous cough
- a high temperature
- loss of or change to sense of smell or taste

You should also apply for a test online if you develop one of these symptoms. This can be done on the NHS website at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/get-a-test-to-check-if-you-have-coronavirus/>. Please do not visit your GP surgery or hospital to request a test, as you may infect others.

The test is only effective for those who are experiencing coronavirus symptoms and needs to be taken in the first 5 days of having symptoms. It only checks if you have coronavirus right now and not if you have already had the virus.

Receiving a letter like this for the first time

If you are receiving a letter like this for the first time, it is because your health record shows you have a serious health condition. This may put you at risk of severe illness if you catch coronavirus and so you have been added to the Shielding Patient List. If you have not been advised of this before, you may want to talk with your GP or hospital doctor. You should follow the guidance set out in this letter. You can find further advice on shielding at gov.wales/shielding

You can get up to date information about coronavirus in **Easy Read** and **BSL** here: shielding@gov.wales



Welsh Government:

www.gov.wales/coronavirus

www.gov.wales/find-support-affected-coronavirus

Public Health Wales:

www.phw.nhs.wales/topics/latest-information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/



If you have a learning disability, and you need support to understand this letter please contact the **Wales Learning Disability Helpline:**



By e-mail: helpline.wales@mencap.org.uk



Or by phone: 0808 8000 300

The Wales Learning Disability Helpline is open Monday to Friday and Bank Holidays between 9am and 5pm.

Work

You are strongly advised to work from home if you can. If you cannot work from home, then you should not attend work for the period specified.

If you cannot work from home, your employer may be able to furlough you under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, which has been extended until the end of April 2021. You should have a conversation with your employer about whether this is possible. If you are self-employed you may be eligible for the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme.

If you cannot work from home or cannot be furloughed, you may be eligible for Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) or Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and Universal Credit (UC). This letter is evidence for your employer and/or the Department for Work and Pensions that you are advised to shield and may be eligible for SSP, ESA and UC. Other eligibility criteria will apply.

Other people you live with who are not clinically extremely vulnerable themselves can still attend work if they cannot work from home.

Ongoing support

Being on the Shielding Patients List gives you access to priority slots for supermarket deliveries. If you are unable to access them from your usual online account with a supermarket, please try others who may have better availability.

You can also use the following link for help with food support here: <https://gov.wales/getting-food-and-essential-supplies-during-coronavirus-pandemic>

The food box scheme and the National Volunteer Prescription Delivery Scheme has now ended but if you need help to get your medicines, please speak to your local pharmacy.

If you need support and you do not have anyone to help you, please speak with your local council. The contact details for each local council are at the end of this letter and they have a list of people in their local area who are in receipt of this letter.

Support with daily living

If you are struggling to keep your home warm or cope with your energy bills the Nest scheme offers a range of free, impartial advice and, if you are eligible, a package of free home energy efficiency improvements such as a new boiler, central heating or insulation. This can lower your energy bills and benefit your health and wellbeing. You can find more information at www.nest.gov.wales or call 0808 808 2244.

If you do not have enough money to pay your bills, it is important to seek help and to do this as early as possible. Call Citizen's Advice free on 03444 77 20 20 or visit the Citizens Advice website: www.citizensadvice.org.uk

If you need help from the welfare system, you can also visit: www.gov.uk/universal-credit or call the Universal Credit Helpline on 0800 328 5644 (0800 328 1744 for Welsh language).

You can also apply online for the Welsh Government's Discretionary Assistance Fund payment at: www.gov.wales/discretionary-assistance-fund-daf/how-apply or by calling free on 0800 859 5924.

If you feel that you have been treated unfairly by your employer, or somebody who gives you a service, then the Equality Advisory and Support Service (EASS) offers a free advice service which you can access by calling 0808 800 0082, by text phone on 0808 800 0084 or by visiting their website: www.equalityadvisoryservice.com

If you have concerns about your health and safety at work, you can raise them with any union safety representatives, or ultimately with the organisation responsible for enforcement in your workplace, either the Health and Safety Executive, at www.hse.gov.uk/contact/concerns.htm, or your local authority.

Looking after your wellbeing

Information about staying well is available at the Public Health Wales website: www.phw.nhs.wales/topics/latest-information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/how-are-you-doing/

ACTivate Your Life is a four session taught course that aims to teach people about stress and suffering caused by emotional issues, like worry, or chronic pain. To start go to phw.nhs.wales/activateyourlife.

SilverCloud is an online course which offers support for anxiety, depression, and much more, all based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). You can sign up at nhs.wales.silvercloudhealth.com/signup/.

CALL Mental Health Listening Line provides a confidential mental health listening and emotional support line which is open 24/7. CALL can also signpost to support in local communities and a range of online information. Call 0800132737, text "help" to 81066 or visit callhelpline.org.uk/.

Mind Active Monitoring provides six weeks guided self-help for, anxiety, depression, self-esteem, and more. To get started, talk to your GP, any other health professional, or sign up directly at: <https://www.mind.org.uk/get-involved/active-monitoring-sign-up/active-monitoring-form/>.

The Young Person's Mental Health Toolkit links young people, aged 11 to 25, to websites, apps, helplines, and more to build resilience. You can access the toolkit at bit.ly/ypmhten.

Older people, their family, friends, carers, or professionals can also contact Age Cymru's Advice Line on 08000 223 444

You can contact your local council to discuss what other help is available in your area from voluntary and community organisations. Please also discuss any concerns with your GP.

Use of data

Electronic patient data held by GPs and hospitals was used to identify people most at risk of serious illness caused by Covid-19. We used this data to write to you to provide you with advice and guidance on how to protect yourself. Information about you, which did not include medical information, was shared with Welsh Government so that it could ensure essential support was put in place.

Welsh Government shared that data with local authorities, water companies, community pharmacies and supermarkets so that they could provide essential support, including prioritised access to food and medication deliveries where needed.

During the outbreak we will keep your contact details in case we need to contact you again. We are continually reviewing whether our partners need the data that has been provided and will ensure that it is returned to us or securely destroyed when we have determined it is no longer needed. You can find a copy of our Covid-19 Privacy Statement on this link www.gov.wales/coronavirus-covid-19-supporting-vulnerable-people-privacy-statement.html

Your local council's contact details

<u>Blaenau Gwent CBC</u>	01495 311556	www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk
<u>Bridgend CBC</u>	01656 643643	www.bridgend.gov.uk
<u>Caerphilly CBC</u>	01443 811490	www.caerphilly.gov.uk
<u>Carmarthenshire CC</u>	01267 234567	www.carmarthenshire.gov.uk
<u>Ceredigion CC</u>	01545 570881	www.ceredigion.gov.uk
<u>City & County of Swansea</u>	01792 636363	www.swansea.gov.uk
<u>City of Cardiff Council</u>	029 2087 1071	www.cardiff.gov.uk
<u>Conwy CBC</u>	01492 575544	www.conwy.gov.uk
<u>Denbighshire CC</u>	01824 706000 Out of Hours: 0300 123 3068	www.denbighshire.gov.uk
<u>Flintshire CC</u>	01352 752121	www.flintshire.gov.uk
<u>Gwynedd Council</u>	01766 771000	www.gwynedd.gov.uk
<u>Isle of Anglesey Council</u>	01248 750057	www.anglesey.gov.uk
<u>Merthyr Tydfil Council</u>	01685 725000	www.merthyr.gov.uk
<u>Monmouthshire Council</u>	01633 644644	www.monmouthshire.gov.uk
<u>Neath Port Talbot Council</u>	01639 686868	www.npt.gov.uk
<u>Newport City Council</u>	01633 656656	www.newport.gov.uk
<u>Pembrokeshire CC</u>	01437 776301	www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk
<u>Powys County Council</u>	01597 827460	www.powys.gov.uk

<u>Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC</u>	01443 425020	www.rctcbc.gov.uk
<u>Torfaen CBC</u>	01495 762200	www.torfaen.gov.uk
<u>Vale of Glamorgan Council</u>	01446 729592	www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk
<u>Wrexham CBC</u>	01978 292000	www.wrexham.gov.uk

SAMPLE