



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

Please keep this letter in a safe place as further copies will not be provided.

Advice for the clinically extremely vulnerable in Wales from 01 April 2021 – you are no longer advised to follow shielding measures from this date.

You have received this letter because you are on the Shielding Patient 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. In all of the advice to you we have tried to find the right balance between the risks of coronavirus and the harm that asking you to continue to follow shielding measures can cause. Staying at home for long periods of time can harm your mental and physical health.

As cases in Wales have reduced significantly and trends continue downwards, you are no longer advised to follow shielding measures after the current period of advice ends on 31st March.

From 1st April:

- you can go to work, if you cannot work from home, as long as the business is Covid-secure (has taken reasonable measures to minimise risk to employees);
- children who have been following shielding measures can return to school when appropriate for their year group;
- in respect of going out and meeting others, you should follow the rules in place for everyone in Wales, but be particularly careful about social distancing and hand and surface hygiene.

How we will support you from April 1st

Even though you are advised that you can stop following shielding measures:

- we will keep a record of the people who are on the shielding patient list, so we can contact you and update you if we need to;
- you will still be able to access priority slots for supermarket deliveries.

If you still need support from April 1st and you do not have anyone to help you, you can speak with your local council. The contact details for each local council are at the end of this

letter. If you need help with collecting medicines and have no one to help you, please contact your pharmacy directly.

In the event of high numbers of coronavirus cases locally or nationally in Wales the advice will be considered again. If advice changes for your area we will communicate with the public via local radio and television, and you will also receive a letter if you are advised to follow shielding measures again.

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 two metres or three 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.

Ongoing review

As has been the case throughout the pandemic, the four UK CMOs will continue to keep the Shielding Patient List under review. This could mean more people are added, but could also result in some conditions being removed from the list. If your inclusion on the list changes as part of this ongoing review, we will write to you.

Covid-19 vaccine

Everyone on the Shielding Patient List has been offered the Covid-19 vaccine. If you think you have been missed, you can find details of how to contact your local Health Board here - www.gov.wales/get-your-covid-19-vaccination-if-you-think-you-have-been-missed.

The removal of advice to follow shielding measures is not linked to vaccination, but instead is based on levels of the coronavirus in our communities. We are still learning about the protection the vaccine offers, particularly with new strains of the virus and so the public is advised to continue to follow social distancing and hand and surface hygiene advice strictly, even after vaccination.

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 five 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:

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 and school

When planning a return to work, it is advisable to talk with your employer as early as possible about how employees are being kept safe. There is advice on the Welsh Government website at <https://gov.wales/workplace-guidance-employers-and-employees-covid19> and information on the Health and Safety Executive website with steps employers should be taking to make a workplace COVID secure.

For children, we now know that coronavirus does not usually make them very sick and so when levels of coronavirus are not high, the negative impact of not attending school is bigger than the risk of catching coronavirus. If you are concerned about returning to school then speak to the school or Local Authority to discuss how children are being kept safe.

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.

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.

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