

Advice for patients who are part of the shielding programme (July 2020)

The UK Government has set out a roadmap for the clinically extremely vulnerable on the future of the shielding programme.

The guidance changed on 6 July and will change again on 1 August.

What are the changes?

Recently, the UK Government advised that you can spend time outdoors, if you wish, with your own household, or if you live alone with another household. Following this, and alongside current scientific and medical advice the UK Government is planning to relax shielding guidance in stages.

From 6 July, the guidance changed so you can meet in groups of up to six people from outside your household – outdoors with social distancing. For example, you might want to enjoy a summer BBQ outside at a friend's house, but remember it is still important to maintain social distancing and you should not share items such as cups and plates. If you live alone (or are a lone adult with dependent children under 18), you will be able to form a support bubble with another household.

From 1 August, you will no longer need to shield, and the advice will be that you can visit shops and places of worship, but you should continue maintaining rigorous social distancing.

Why is the guidance changing now?

The roadmap has been developed in line with the latest scientific and medical advice and with the safety and welfare of those who are shielding in mind. Current statistics show that the rate of catching coronavirus in the community continues to decrease. On average less than 1 in 1,700 in our communities are estimated to have the virus, down from 1 in 500 four weeks ago.

Unless advised otherwise by your clinician, you are still in the 'clinically extremely vulnerable' category and should continue to follow the advice for that category, which can be found [here](#).

We will monitor the virus continuously over coming months and if it spreads too much, we may need to advise you to shield again.

Update on support

If you are in receipt of Government provided food boxes and medicine deliveries, you will continue to receive this support until the end of July.

Local councils and volunteers are also providing support to people who are shielding, to enable them to stay safely in their homes. The government is funding local councils to continue to provide these services to those who need them until the end of July.

What support is available to people who are shielding until the end of July?

Essential supplies

There are a number of ways that those who are shielding can access food and other essentials:

- Make use of the supermarket priority delivery slots that are available for this group. When a clinically extremely vulnerable person [registers online](#) as needing support with food, their data is shared with supermarkets. This means if they make an online order with a supermarket (as both a new or existing customer), they will be eligible for a priority slot.
- Use the many commercial options now available for accessing food, including telephone ordering, food box delivery, prepared meal delivery and other non-supermarket food delivery providers. [A list has been shared with local authorities and charities.](#)
- A free, standardised weekly parcel of food and household essentials. If you have registered for this support [online](#) before 17 July you will continue to receive weekly food box deliveries until the end of July.
- If you need urgent help and have no other means of support, [contact your local council](#) to find out what support services are available in their area.
- For anyone facing financial hardship, the government has made £63 million available to local councils in England to help those who are struggling to afford food and other essentials.

NHS Volunteer Responders

Support will continue to be available through the NHS Volunteer Responder Scheme beyond the end of July.

NHS Volunteer Responders can support you with:

- Collecting shopping, medication (if your friends and family cannot collect them for you) or other essential supplies;
- A regular, friendly phone call which can be provided by different volunteers each time or by someone who is also shielding and will stay in contact for several weeks; and
- Transport to medical appointment.

Please call 0808 196 3646 between 8am and 8pm to arrange support or speak to your health care professional for transport support. A carer or family member can also do this on their behalf. More information is available at www.nhsvolunteerresponders.org.uk

Health care

Any essential carers or visitors who support you with your everyday needs can continue to visit unless they have any of the symptoms of COVID-19 (a new continuous cough, a high temperature, or a loss of, or change in, their normal sense of taste or smell).

People in the clinically extremely vulnerable group should continue to access the NHS services they need during this time. This may be delivered in a different way or in a different place than they are used to, for example via an online consultation, but if they do need to go to hospital or attend another health facility for planned care, extra planning and protection will be put in place.

Mental health support

It is normal during these uncertain and unusual times to feel anxious or feel low.

Follow the advice that works for you in the guidance on [how to look after your mental health and wellbeing during coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#).

The [Every Mind Matters page on anxiety](#) and [NHS mental wellbeing audio guides](#) provide further information on how to manage anxiety.

In south east London we have developed the [Free your mind hub](#) to support people to look after their mental wellbeing.

If you feel you need to talk to someone about your mental health or you are looking for more support for someone else, we would urge you to speak to a GP and seek out mental health support delivered by charities or the NHS.

Income and employment support

At this time, people who are shielding are advised not to go to work. This guidance remains advisory.

Those shielding will be eligible for Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) on the basis of their shielding status until the 31 July. SSP eligibility criteria apply

From 1 August, if clinically extremely vulnerable people are unable to work from home but need to work, they can, as long as the business is COVID safe.

The Government is asking employers to work with them to ease the transition back to a more normal way of life for their shielding employees. It is important that this group continues to take careful precautions, and employers should do all they can to enable them to work from home where this is possible, including moving them to another role if required.

Where this is not possible, those who have been shielding should be provided with the safest onsite roles that enable them to maintain social distancing.

If employers cannot provide a safe working environment, they can continue to use the Job Retention Scheme for shielded employees who have already been furloughed.

What support will be available after July?

From 1 August, clinically extremely vulnerable people will continue to have access to priority supermarket delivery slots if you have registered online before 17 July for a priority delivery slot.

NHS Volunteer Responders will also continue to offer support to those who need it, including collecting and delivering food and medicines.

The NHS Volunteer Responders Scheme has been expanded to offer a new Check in and Chat Plus role. This new role has been designed to provide peer support and companionship to people who are shielding as they adapt to a more normal way of life.

If you are vulnerable or at risk and need help with shopping, medication or other essential supplies, please call 0808 196 3646 (8am to 8pm).

Government is committed to supporting local councils and voluntary sector organisations to respond to those who have specific support needs and requirements during the COVID-19 pandemic. Details of the support and advice available can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/find-coronavirus-support>

The updated shielding guidance should not affect any social care or support you were receiving prior to the start of shielding.

Individuals should continue to contact their local council if they have any ongoing social care needs.