

**[Patient Name**

Patient address Line 1  
Patient address Line 2  
Patient address Line 3]

November 2020

**IMPORTANT: PERSONAL**

**Your NHS number: [NHS NUMBER]**

Dear [Patient],

**Important advice to keep you safe from coronavirus**

We are writing to let you know about government advice for people who are thought to be clinically extremely vulnerable and at highest risk of becoming very unwell if they catch coronavirus (also known as COVID-19).

This is because, as someone with Down's syndrome, you are now considered to be in this highest risk category, following review by your GP.

More evidence is now available than at the start of the pandemic about which people are more likely to become very unwell if they catch coronavirus. Because of this, the Chief Medical Officer has agreed that adults with Down's syndrome should be added to the list of people thought to be at highest risk.

A large number of people are thought to be highest risk – around 1 in 20 adults. The risk of becoming very unwell is still small, but the Government recommends that you take extra precautions.

Measures which everyone needs to follow

Coronavirus cases are rising rapidly across the whole of the UK, and that is why, from 5 November, the Government has taken the following action:

1. Requiring people to stay at home, except for specific purposes.
2. Preventing gathering with people you do not live with, except for specific purposes.
3. Closing certain businesses and venues.

These new national restrictions are rules that everyone must follow. The full details of these rules can be found online at [gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus).

Additional guidance for those who are clinically extremely vulnerable

In addition, the Government has issued new guidance to clinically extremely vulnerable people, which advises the additional things you can do to keep yourself safe, whilst continuing to stay generally fit and well. This guidance is set out in the following pages. It is also available online at [gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus).

This guidance is advisory, which means that whilst it is strongly suggested that you follow it, you can choose whether or not to do so.

From 5 November, you should stay at home as much as possible but are encouraged to go outdoors for exercising and attending health appointments. You are strongly advised to work from home. If you cannot work from home, then you should not attend work. This letter is a formal shielding notification and can act as evidence for your employer to show that you cannot work outside your home until 2 December, including for statutory sick pay (SSP) purposes.

The national restrictions, as well as this specific advice for clinically extremely vulnerable people, will apply across England for four weeks up to Wednesday 2 December. At the end of this period, the Government expects to reintroduce guidance that is specific to each region, based on the latest data. The Government will write to you with further information then.

Please remember that the **NHS is open**, and we urge you to continue to access all the NHS services that you need. It is safer for you to use the NHS than to try to manage alone.

We recognise this is a difficult time for you. Thank you for your efforts to keep yourself and others safe.

Yours sincerely,

[Clinician]

[Practice Phone no]

## **Government guidance for clinically extremely vulnerable people**

This guidance is for everyone in England who has been identified as clinically extremely vulnerable. The full guidance can be found online at [gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus). This is additional guidance for clinically extremely vulnerable people, to help you protect yourself from the virus by following these shielding measures.

This guidance applies to clinically extremely vulnerable individuals only. Others living in a household with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable are not advised to follow this guidance.

### **Socialising**

The new National Restrictions from 5 November, which apply to everyone, mean that you must not leave or be outside of your home, except for limited purposes which are set out in that guidance.

The Government is advising clinically extremely vulnerable people to stay at home as much as possible, except to go outdoors for exercise or to attend essential health appointments. You may wish to meet up with one other person from outside your household or support bubble to exercise outdoors, for example in an outdoor public place, but it is suggested that you always try to do so as safely as possible.

Try to keep all contact with others to a minimum and avoid busy areas. Whenever you go out continue to maintain strict social distancing, wash your hands regularly and avoid touching your face.

You should also try to stay 2 metres away from other people within your household, especially if they display symptoms of the virus or have been advised to self-isolate.

### **Work**

You are strongly advised to work from home. If you cannot work from home, then you should not attend work for this period of restrictions.

If you cannot attend work for this reason, you may be eligible for Statutory Sick Pay (SSP), Employment Support Allowance (ESA) or Universal Credit. Other eligibility criteria will apply.

You will be able to use this letter as evidence for your employer to show that you should not work outside your home until 2 December, including for statutory sick pay purposes. You can also use this letter for the Department for Work and Pensions to show that you are advised to follow shielding guidance for ESA or Universal Credit purposes.

If you were on payroll before 30 October 2020 you may also be eligible for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (furlough), which is being extended until 2 December. Please speak to your employer if you think you are eligible.

Other people you live with who are not clinically extremely vulnerable themselves can still attend work if they cannot work from home, in line with the wider rules set out in the new National Restrictions from 5 November.

## **Education settings**

More evidence has emerged that shows there is a very low risk of children becoming very unwell from COVID-19, even for children with existing health conditions. Most children originally identified as clinically extremely vulnerable no longer need to follow this advice. Speak to your GP or specialist clinician if you have not already done so, to understand whether your child should still be classed as clinically extremely vulnerable.

Those children whose doctors have confirmed they are still clinically extremely vulnerable are advised not to attend school whilst this advice is in place. Your school will make appropriate arrangements for you to be able to continue your education at home. Children who live with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable, but who are not clinically extremely vulnerable themselves, should still attend school.

## **Travel**

You should avoid all non-essential travel by private or public transport, this includes not travelling to work, school or the shops. You should still travel to hospital and GP appointments unless told otherwise by your doctor. If you need help to travel to an appointment, you can speak to your health care professional to arrange transport support. They can arrange this with NHS Volunteer Responders.

## **Shopping**

You are advised not to go to the shops. Use online shopping if you can, or ask others to collect and deliver shopping for you (friends, family, or a volunteer, including NHS Volunteer Responders). If you already have a priority delivery slot with a supermarket that will continue, you do not need to do anything further.

If you cannot access food, your local council can offer support. This may include helping you to request a priority supermarket delivery slot (if you do not already have one) or help with shopping. See below for details on how to register for support.

## **Medicines**

You are advised not to go to a pharmacy.

You are encouraged in the first instance to ask a friend, family member, carer or a volunteer (for example one of the NHS Volunteer Responders) to collect your medicines for you. If none of these are available, then you will be eligible for free medicines delivery. Please contact your pharmacy to inform them that you are clinically extremely vulnerable and need your medicines delivered, and they will arrange this free of charge.

## **Accessing care and support**

It is important that you continue to receive the care and support you need to help you stay safe and well.

You are urged to continue to seek support from the NHS and other health providers for your existing health conditions and any new health concerns.

You can access a range of NHS services from home, including ordering repeat prescriptions or contacting your health professional through an online consultation. To find out more

visit [www.nhs.uk/health-at-home](http://www.nhs.uk/health-at-home), or download the NHS App. If you have an urgent medical need, call NHS 111 or, for a medical emergency, dial 999.

If you do need to receive care in person, you can. Your local NHS services are well prepared and will put in measures to keep you safe.

It is also really important to look after your mental health. Go to the Every Mind Matters website for advice and practical steps that you can take to support your wellbeing and manage your mental health during this pandemic. If you or someone you care for are experiencing a mental health crisis, you are urged to make contact with a local health professional immediately.

Any carers or visitors who support you with your everyday needs or those of a child or young person in your care can continue to visit. They should follow social distancing guidance where close or personal contact is not required.

If you need any additional support to help you to follow this guidance, your local council may be able to help. You can contact your council and register for support at the Shielding Support website mentioned below.

You should also continue to access support from local charities and organisations, as well as NHS Volunteer Responders. As well as helping with shopping and medicines delivery, NHS Volunteer Responders can help with a regular, friendly phone call, and transport to and from medical appointments.

Call 0808 196 3646 between 8am and 8pm to arrange support or visit NHS Volunteer Responders website.

## **Registering for Support**

You will be able to use a new online service to register yourself, or on behalf of someone else, to:

- request access to a priority supermarket delivery slot (if you have already got priority supermarket deliveries, you will keep them).
- tell your council if you need support in order to follow this guidance that you are unable to arrange yourself and cannot be provided by friends, family or other support networks
- make sure your details such as your address are up to date

This new online service can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-shielding-support> and is now live for you to register for support. You'll be asked for your NHS number, which you can find at the top of this letter. It is helpful if you register even if you do not have any support needs at this time so we know to focus on caring for others who need it. You can log in and update your needs if circumstances change at any time.

If you need to register your needs by phone, or have an urgent need, contact your local council directly.

Find out what help you might be able to get from your local council at <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-local-help>