



**[Patient Name]**

Patient address Line 1

Patient address Line 2

Patient address Line 3]

**IMPORTANT: PERSONAL**

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

17 February 2021

Dear [Patient],

**Important advice to keep you safe from coronavirus (COVID-19)**

We are writing to you because new research commissioned by the Chief Medical Officer has recently enabled us to identify people who may be at increased risk of becoming seriously unwell from coronavirus. This is because of a combination of their individual characteristics and their underlying health conditions.

**This research means we want to provide vaccination more quickly for you, and also offer further advice and support.**

This letter explains why you have been included in this group and what advice and support is available to you. The easiest way for us to ensure your early vaccination is to include you within the list of people who are clinically extremely vulnerable (also known as the shielded patient list).

The NHS may have been in touch with you about your vaccination already or will do so soon. The vaccine is likely to make an important contribution towards protecting you from coronavirus.

You may feel that at this stage of the pandemic, when rates of infection overall are declining, the advice is not relevant to you. However, we think it is important that you are aware of your risk status and of the support available to you, both now and for any future changes in the pandemic. This means that you can make an informed choice yourself.

You may want to read this letter with a family member or carer to make sure you understand the advice it includes.

**Why you have been identified as someone who may now be at high risk**

The Government is always learning more about coronavirus and the things that might contribute to people becoming seriously ill. They asked a team of experts to look at data from the first wave of the pandemic, to get a better understanding of the things that may mean someone is at a high risk of catching and becoming seriously unwell with coronavirus.

By putting this new evidence into a risk model with information the NHS already holds, you have been identified as someone who may be at high risk. This is likely to be because you have a combination of underlying risk factors or health issues which, when combined, indicates high risk.

An extra cautious approach has been taken, so there is a chance that your risk is lower than estimated. Your GP will be made aware that you have been identified in this way. In the future, your risk may be reviewed further and you will receive another letter if your risk level changes.

You do not need to contact your GP about this letter. However, if you do not think you are at high risk, or you are concerned about the impact of coronavirus on your health, then you can contact them or the hospital doctor you usually see. Your GP's contact details can be found below.

## **Guidance for people identified now as at high risk**

People in the high risk category are formally known as clinically extremely vulnerable. People who are in this category are currently advised by the Government to shield and stay at home as much as possible until 31 March, except to exercise or to attend health appointments (including of course for vaccination appointments). Even if they have had both vaccination doses, they should continue to follow these shielding measures as we continue to assess the impact of vaccination among all groups.

You have been added to the list of people who are clinically extremely vulnerable. This letter is a formal shielding notification and can act as evidence for your employer, including for statutory sick pay (SSP) purposes or Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), to show you cannot work outside your home whilst you are following these shielding measures. We currently advise you to follow shielding measures, including by working from home, from the date of this letter until 31 March 2021. You may be eligible for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (furlough) and you may wish to discuss this with your employer.

This is advice and not the law, so you can choose what action you take whilst continuing to follow all the basic rules that we all need to observe through the pandemic.

## **Access to care and support**

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

If you need any additional support to follow the guidance, your local council may be able to help. You can contact your council and register for support at the Shielding Support Website: [www.gov.uk/coronavirus-shielding-support](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-shielding-support). You can find your local council's details at <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-local-help>.

Further information on how to access help, including how to register for support, is in the attached guidance.

Please make sure your GP has your most up to date contact details, including home address, email address, and phone number, so that we can contact you quickly if Government guidance changes in the future.

## **How the NHS is using your personal information**

A document called the Shielded Patient List Transparency Notice provides more information about the risk model used to identify that you may be at high risk, and the factors it took into account. It also explains how the NHS uses your personal information to provide you with support. You can read this here: <https://digital.nhs.uk/coronavirus/shielded-patient-list/shielded-patient-list-transparency-notice>

You can find out more about the risk model at: <https://digital.nhs.uk/coronavirus/risk-assessment/population>

## **Keeping you updated**

We recognise that this is a very difficult time for many people. We are grateful for your help in keeping yourself and others safe as we all seek to respond to coronavirus. We will continue to update you as the situation changes, and will write to you again if the advice for clinically extremely vulnerable people (shielding guidance) is extended beyond 31 March.

This letter has been sent to you by the NHS national shielding programme, on behalf of the Department of Health and Social Care.

Contact details for your GP:

[Practice name]

[Practice phone number]

**This letter is available in different languages and formats, including easy read, on GOV.UK. For audio, braille, large print call RNIB on 0303 1239999**



## Government guidance for clinically extremely vulnerable people

This guidance is for clinically extremely vulnerable people in England.

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

This advice applies to you only, and not to any other people you live with. If you do live with other people, they should continue to follow the public health rules for the general population, for as long as they are in place, regardless of whether they or you have received vaccination.

### Socialising

The new national lockdown guidance, which applies to everyone, means that you must not leave or be outside of your home and garden, except for limited purposes which are set out in that guidance. [www.gov.uk/guidance/national-lockdown-stay-at-home](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-lockdown-stay-at-home)

We are advising clinically extremely vulnerable people to stay at home as much as possible.

You can still go outside for exercise or to attend health appointments, but try to keep all contact with others outside of your household to a minimum, and avoid busy areas.

You can still meet with your support bubble, but you cannot meet others you do not live with unless they are part of your support bubble. Outdoors, you can meet one person from another household for exercise. This is part of the wider national regulations that apply to everyone.

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.

You may want to speak to your employer about taking on an alternative role or change your working patterns temporarily to enable you to work from home where possible.

If you need support to work at home you can apply for Access to Work. Access to Work offers support for the disability-related extra costs of working that are beyond standard reasonable adjustments an employer must provide. Details can be found at: [www.gov.uk/access-to-work](https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work)

If you cannot make alternative arrangements, 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. Details at: [www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme)

As you are being advised not to attend work, you may be eligible for Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) or Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). The formal shielding letter you receive can act as

evidence for your employer and the Department for Work and Pensions that you are advised to shield and may be eligible for SSP or ESA.

Members of the same household who are not clinically extremely vulnerable should continue to attend work if they are unable to work from home, in line with the wider rules set out in the national lockdown guidance. [www.gov.uk/guidance/national-lockdown-stay-at-home](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-lockdown-stay-at-home)

## **Travel**

You are advised to stay at home as much as possible and not to travel unless essential (e.g., to attend health appointments).

## **Shopping**

You are advised not to go to the shops. If you can, ask others to collect and deliver shopping for you (friends and family, local volunteers or NHS Volunteer Responders (<https://nhsvolunteerresponders.org.uk/>)). If you already have priority access to a supermarket delivery slot, that will continue – you do not need to do anything further. If you would like to request priority access, because you do not have anyone who can do shopping for you, you can register at the Shielding Support Website: [www.gov.uk/coronavirus-shielding-support](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-shielding-support). When registering you will be asked for your NHS number. You can find it on any letter the NHS has sent you, or on a prescription.

If you are on a supermarket database or customer list (most people are) they should contact you within a week confirming that you have priority access to book slots, if not it may take a little longer.

Please be aware that delivery slots may not be immediately available and registering on the site does not mean you'll definitely get a delivery slot.

If you need help accessing food, including support to register for priority access to supermarket delivery slots, you should contact your local council directly. Find out how your local council can help at: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-local-help>

## **Medicines**

You are strongly advised not to go to a pharmacy. In the first instance, you should ask if any friends, family or volunteers can collect medicines for you.

If friends and family are not able to collect your medicines for you, and you and/or the pharmacy are unable to arrange for a volunteer, 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**

You can still receive informal care at home from people within your support bubble. [www.gov.uk/guidance/making-a-support-bubble-with-another-household](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/making-a-support-bubble-with-another-household)

You can still receive care at home from professional social care and medical professionals.

We urge you to continue using 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 [www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/online-services/nhs-app/](http://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/online-services/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 ([www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/](http://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/)) 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, we urge you to make contact with a local health professional immediately. [www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/mental-health-services/where-to-get-urgent-help-for-mental-health/](http://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/mental-health-services/where-to-get-urgent-help-for-mental-health/)

Any carers or visitors who support you with your everyday needs can continue to visit. This also applies for those of a child or young person in your care. They should follow social distancing guidance where close or personal contact is not required. [www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing)

You should 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 health appointments. [www.nhsvolunteerresponders.org.uk](http://www.nhsvolunteerresponders.org.uk)

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

### **Registering for additional support**

If you need additional help to follow this guidance, your local council may be able to help. If you are advised to shield you will be able to register yourself or someone else to:

- request priority access to a supermarket delivery slot (if you have already got priority access that will continue – you do not need to do anything further)
- tell your council if you need support to follow shielding guidance, especially if you are unable to arrange this yourself or with the help of friends, family or other support networks
- make sure your details, such as your address, are up to date

When registering you will be asked for your NHS number. You can find it on any letter the NHS has sent you, or on a prescription. It is helpful if you register even if you do not have any support needs at this time. You can log in and update your needs if circumstances change at any time. <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-shielding-support>