

Shielding Announcement Update 230620

Overview

There are around 2.2 million clinically extremely vulnerable people in England with underlying severe health conditions who must be protected from coronavirus and have been advised to follow shielding guidance.

Across West Sussex this figure is currently around **35,000**

The government previously advised those shielding in England that from **1 June**, they can safely spend time outdoors with members of their immediate household and those living alone can meet outside with one other person from another household.

It is acknowledged that for some people shielding, adapting to the relaxation of shielding will take some time, hence the announcement made on 22 June indicates that there will be two stages to implementation: first from **6 July**, and then again from **1 August**.

From **6 July**: the guidance for the clinically extremely vulnerable will be relaxed to allow shielded individuals to meet up to 5 people from other households outdoors, socially distanced, and to form support bubbles if they live alone or are a lone adult with a dependent under 18.

During July the support provided by government for those shielding will continue.

From **1 August**: the clinically extremely vulnerable can stop shielding but if they do go outside, they should continue to take particular care to minimise contact with others outside their household (unless they are in a support bubble) and robustly practising good, frequent hand washing.

The relaxation of the guidance will mean people who are clinically extremely vulnerable will be advised they can go to work or to the shops, as long as they are able to maintain social distancing.

Contact with shielding individuals

Government intends to contact individuals receiving the free food box by phone during July as well as including a letter in their regular delivery. They will be signposted to contact their local authority if they are concerned about support after 1 August. This will be a generic message and not provided with specific West Sussex contact details.

The Community Hub has well established outbound call approaches and from next week will proactively contact the 11,500 individuals across West Sussex who currently receive the government wholesaler food parcel delivery. We will offer information, advice and guidance as to how to access the online/telephone delivery services available from supermarkets. For those most vulnerable who require additional assistance (e.g. unable to use digital, continued ill health) we will work alongside to ensure that they have appropriate ongoing support to reduce the potential impact on Health Services or Adult Social Care.

We will use the range of social media and communication tools provided by MHCLG to share the changes in shielding advice. We will work with our District & Boroughs and wider partners including the voluntary and community sector, to ensure that joint messages direct individuals with questions or concerns to contact the Community Hub.

Residents can contact the Community Hub between 8am-8pm 7 days per week either by phone on 0330 222 7980 or www.westsussex.gov.uk/covid19communityhub to discuss their needs.

Future shielding

The categorisation of 'clinically extremely vulnerable' will remain in place indefinitely and people in this cohort should continue to follow the guidance specific to them as communicated by their GP or clinician. This is because community transmission and the R number will continue to be closely monitored and the government will tighten advice to this cohort as needed. Guidance for clinically extremely vulnerable people will be regularly refreshed.

The NHS will continue to maintain the Shielded Patient List allowing us to target advice and support to this cohort. We will continue to receive data updates and be able to tailor our response accordingly.

Food and essential support

The food and medicine boxes facilitated by the National Shielding Service will stop as of 1 August as individuals are advised they can visit shops and pharmacies.

Access to priority delivery slots with the seven major supermarkets will continue for those currently clinically extremely vulnerable beyond the end of July. Final registrations for food support and access to priority supermarket delivery slots will close on the 17 July, to allow for support to reach individuals ahead of this end date of 31 July.

From 1 August, NHS Volunteer Responders will also continue to offer support to those who need it, including collecting and delivering food and medicines.

Future of Community Hub

The Community Hub will continue to provide the central point of coordination for information, advice and guidance for residents during the foreseeable future. The Community Response Team will be available to meet urgent requests for food, medicine and welfare checks during the transition phase as restrictions on shielding are relaxed.

The development of a Local Outbreak Plan will necessitate the Community Hub offer to support those shielding in response to Test and Trace and we are working with health partners to support those needing to shield pre or post hospital admission for surgery.

Longer term proposals regarding the future scope of the Community Hub are being considered in conjunction with health and social care and our District & Borough partners.

Emily King

Acting Director of Communities

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