



Stakeholder Q&A

This is an internally facing document to assist you in communicating and explaining the changes announced to the shielding guidance for those that are shielding in Wales. All the information in this document will be in the public domain from 12:30pm on 16th July and can be published on any websites if required or used in messaging on social media from this time.

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Shielding from the 6th July

What guidance should I be following from 6 July?

- Those who have received a shielding patient letter at the start of June should continue to shield until the 16th August and follow the advice in the letter. One significant addition to this letter is that from the 6th July those that are shielding can join an extended household. The updated guidance can be found here [Welsh Government Shielding Guidance](#)

From 6 July, who can I join an ‘extended household’ with?

- From 6 July, two households will be able to join together to form an “**extended household**”. In effect the people in the two households become part of a single household and need to agree how members of that household should behave in order to keep all members safe.
- It does not matter who you extend your household with, but it must be with only one other household, and that arrangement must be exclusive. You cannot change it.
- Households who both have people who are shielding can still join to become an extended household

Are ‘extended households’ safe?

- There are key principles for how you can form an ‘extended household’ safely. These are critical to keeping you – and your friends and family safe:

The **key rules** are that

- No person can be part of more than one extended household, with the exception of children who live in two homes (for example because their parents have separated and have joint custody).
- All individuals in one home must belong to the same extended household.
- All of the adult members of each household must agree to join the same extended household.
- Once you have agreed and joined an extended household, you cannot change this arrangement.
- If one member of an extended household develops symptoms of coronavirus, **the entire extended household should self-isolate**, not just those living together.
- It is also useful for people to **keep a record of who is in their extended household** and their contact details, so [contact tracers](#) can get in touch with them quickly in the event that they need to.

Can I let people into my house now?

- If you are not in an 'extended household' with another household, you must not meet other people indoors.
- Essential carers can continue to visit your home but they should follow advice on good hygiene. They should maintain social distancing where close or personal contact is not required and where this is possible.

I'm worried about catching coronavirus – am I still at significant risk?

- Those that are shielding are still at risk of severe illness if they catch coronavirus and should continue to take precautions, even as the prevalence of coronavirus in the community continues to decline.
- You should strictly follow physical distancing (2 metres or 3 steps away from another person).
- You should regularly wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds or use a hand sanitiser.

Can I see my family and friends?

- Those that are shielding can leave home to exercise or meet outside with people from another household.
- Those who are shielding will be able to create an 'extended household' with one other household. However, physical distancing should continue where possible. All those in an 'extended household' can spend time together indoors.
- You should strictly follow physical distancing (2 metres or 3 steps away from another person) and you should practice good hand hygiene and avoid touching things touched by others.

Can I exercise outside? If so, how often and for how long?

- Yes, from 1st June the shielding guidance was updated to advise that those that are shielding may wish to spend time outdoors, including for exercise.

- If you do go out, you should take extra care to minimise contact with others by maintaining strict physical distancing (2 metres or 3 steps away from another person). This can be in a public outdoor space, or in a private garden.
- There is no advised limit to how often and how long to spend outside, that is up to you, but you should follow physical distancing guidelines and always practise good hand hygiene.

Does this mean I can go shopping/to the pharmacy?

- The current advice to those who are shielding is to not spend time in any other buildings or covered areas apart from your own home (apart from if you are in an 'extended household' from 6 July).
- Those that are shielding have access to priority supermarket delivery slots and pharmacy deliveries as-well as other local support including food boxes. Consult your CMO shielding letter for further details.
- If you join an extended household from the 6th July, other members from that extended household can help you with your shopping and pharmacy needs.

Shielding from the 16th August

Why will the advice for those shielding be changing after the 16th August?

- The Chief Medical Officer for Wales has indicated that, should prevalence of coronavirus continue to fall within our communities, he will be able to pause his advice to those who are shielding. Those who are shielding will no longer need to do so after the 16th August.
- A letter will be sent to all those who are shielding before 16th August to confirm this advice.
- The Chief Medical Officer for Wales has made this decision in line with CMOs across the other UK nations; recognising that shielding was put in place to protect those at the most significant risk of harm at a time when prevalence of the coronavirus in our communities was rising.
- There are significant harms associated with continuing to shield and we must focus on helping people to make steps toward returning to the lives they lived before shielding.

Will I still receive a food box?

- For those who are receiving food boxes these will remain in place until 16th August. After this date they will no longer be available.
- Your last food box delivery will take place in the week ending 16 August, depending on your usual delivery day.

Why are food boxes ending?

- Food boxes were established as an emergency solution to an inability to go shopping or to obtain an online delivery slot. The advice for shielding people

is that they can go out shopping, paying particular attention to physical distancing and good hygiene.

- We are giving you advance notice of the end to the food box scheme so you have time to put alternative options in place.

Can I still get a priority shopping slot after the 16th August?

- Yes, priority online delivery slots will remain available. If you are unable to get a priority slot with your usual supermarket we recommend trying an alternative supermarket. Local Authorities can also assist with putting you in touch with a volunteer who can assist you with shopping if required.

I am worried about going to the supermarket, how can I get food?

- The information on the link below has information on different ways to get food including online delivery, commercially available food boxes and arrangements for volunteer shopping and sessions for vulnerable people.
- <https://gov.wales/getting-food-and-essential-supplies-during-coronavirus-pandemic>

Can I still get my medicines delivered after 16th August?

- The volunteer medicine delivery scheme will be available until the end of September.

Can my employer force me to come into work?

- After 16 August you should be able to return to work, if infection rates remain low in Wales, and your employer should help you to transition back to work safely and support you to keep to social distancing in your workplace (if you cannot work from home).
- Employers should be mindful of the particular needs of different groups of workers or individuals.
- Help is available for employees if they encounter difficulties. They may wish to engage with ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service), who offer free advice to employers and employees alike, in resolving disputes. A link to their specific advice on Coronavirus is here <https://www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus> - whilst this is their free helpline number is [0300 123 1100](tel:03001231100).

I am worried about my health and safety in my workplace?

- The Welsh Government has already issued guidance to employers on taking measures to make the workplace safe <https://gov.wales/your-responsibilities-employer-coronavirus>
- 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 or your local authority.
- If you're self-employed support is available through the Self-employment Income Support Scheme.

Can I still get statutory sick pay when shielding advice is paused?

- No, once shielding is paused on 16th August your entitlement to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) will also end. However you may be entitled to Universal Credit or New Style Benefits.
- Individuals can only claim Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) because of Coronavirus if you are:
 - self-isolating because you or someone you live with has coronavirus symptoms
 - self-isolating because you've been notified by the NHS or public health authorities that you've come into contact with someone with coronavirus
 - <https://www.gov.uk/statutory-sick-pay>

Will my furlough end when shielding is paused?

- If both the employer and the employee agree, staff can be kept on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme until it closes at the end of October. The amount the UK Government will pay towards the scheme will gradually decrease to 60% and employers will be asked to contribute to ensure staff receive a minimum of 80% of their wages whilst on furlough.
- From 1 July, employers will be able to flexibly furlough employees – this means they can bring employees back to work for any amount of time, and any shift pattern. If employers choose to flexibly furlough staff, they'll need to agree this with employees (or reach collective agreement with a trade union). Employers need to make sure that the agreement is consistent with employment, equality and discrimination laws.

Is my name being kept on a shielding list?

- Yes, The NHS will continue to maintain the Shielded Patient List allowing us to maintain targeted advice and support to those who are most vulnerable and to change advice and support if necessary.

Will we be asked to 'shield' again in the future?

- The latest scientific evidence shows that the chance of encountering coronavirus in the community has continued to decline. The CMO regularly monitors this position and if the rates of infection in the community rise, then it may be necessary to advise that more restrictive measures should be taken.
- Those who have received a shielding patient letter remain on the Shielding Patient List. The guidance will continue to be updated to reflect the most recent advice from the CMO. If there is a significant change to the advice, the CMO will write to all patients on the list setting out any changes.
- It is possible that local outbreaks may require advice to be specific to a geographical area in future. If this is the case, only those in the affected area would receive a CMO letter.

Why is the advice for Wales different to the advice for other parts of the UK?

The only aspect of the advice that differs in Wales is the date that shielding will pause. Shielding is not mandatory, it is advice. If people no longer wish to shield then they do not need to.

Changes to shielding for Children and Young people

Does my child need to continue to shield?

- Yes, until shielding is paused for all (children and adults) on the 16th August (unless your own clinician has told you otherwise).
- At some point we expect that the majority of children will be removed from the shielding list and we are working through the process on how this guidance can be implemented over the summer.
- This means they would not be asked to shield again in the future. We expect that only those on certain treatments, such as for cancer care or those at risk of severe infection due to an immunodeficiency will stay on the shielding list and so may be advised to shield again in the future.

What evidence are you using to inform this decision?

- The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) has recently published guidance on Shielding for Children and Young people.
- The guidance from RCPCH indicates that not all those children and young people who are currently advised to shield need to continue to do so.
- <https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/resources/covid-19-shielding-guidance-children-young-people>.

Can my child return to school after shielding is paused from the 16th August?

- From 16 August, children and young people no longer need to shield which means they can go back to school or college/university.

If my child is no longer shielding will I be fined if I decide not to send my child back to school?

- Parents should have a conversation with the school in the first instance. It may be possible to resolve any ongoing concerns around safety through a discussion or visit to the location.
- It is unlikely that fines would be necessary or appropriate in these circumstances but this will be kept under review.