

Staff Briefing 4 – Shielding / Shetland Coronavirus Support Hub

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Shielding

The Scottish Government has written to a number of people in Shetland advising them to undertake 'Shielding'. Shielding is recommended for those at **highest risk** of severe illness if they contract Coronavirus (COVID-19). This group of people have been advised to take very stringent measures to protect themselves from contracting the virus.

Following the Shielding advice involves strict social isolation with no contact from the outside world beyond that absolutely necessary, for a period of at least 12 weeks from 27 April. This includes not working from their home. More information is available from:

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-shielding>

The term 'Shielding' should only be used when referring to those at the highest risk, as it is important to distinguish between the advice being provided to different groups. For those who are in the non-shielding, but still vulnerable, group, the term 'social distancing' should be used (see below). The decision of who should receive shielding letters is a medical one and adding people to the shielding list is carried out by GPs. Some individuals may have received letters and feel that they do not meet the criteria or need to be on the Shielding list. They can contact their GP and ask for their name to be removed. Those who feel that they should have received a letter, but have not, can also contact their GP.

Support for those who are Shielding

The Shielding letter provides details of the Scottish Government's support for Shielding individuals and households. The support is based on an SMS (text messaging system) whereby individuals can request:

- A free weekly food parcel to cover everyone who is Shielding in a household for a week
- Priority access to supermarket delivery and 'click & collect' slots
- Help with delivery of prescription medicines

Any issues with registering for the above service can be resolved by calling the Shetland Coronavirus Support Hub (see below).

USEFUL PHONE NUMBERS

Shetland Coronavirus
Support Hub
0800 030 8780

Non-shielding and social distancing

People who have not received a shielding letter may still find it necessary to socially distance themselves and take measures to minimise their exposure to other people as much as possible.

While social distancing (reduced social interaction between people in order to reduce the spread of COVID-19) is for everyone, some groups have been advised to be particularly stringent about minimising contact. This is primarily focused on those who are at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19, including:

- aged 70 or older (regardless of medical conditions)
- under 70 with an underlying health condition (i.e. anyone instructed to get a flu jab as an adult each year on medical grounds):
- those who are pregnant

More information is available from the NHS Inform website:

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-social-distancing>

Shetland Coronavirus Support Hub

The Shetland Coronavirus Support Hub (SCSH) has been set up to answer queries and offer support to people in Shetland who need assistance with daily living due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The SCSH can help people with a range of issues whether they are shielding or not. This includes those in the groups above, and people who may become vulnerable because of the pandemic and lockdown measures, and who would benefit from some additional support. This could include people struggling financially because of recent redundancy or furloughing, people who are isolated and people whose normal sources of support have been disrupted.

The SCSH can help people who have received a shielding letter if they are having issues accessing food parcels, priority supermarket slots or help with getting their prescriptions delivered through the Scottish Government's SMS service.

Anyone can call or email for help with any aspect of their lives that has been disrupted by the pandemic, such as food, energy, finance and benefits.

The SCSH can be contacted by phone on 0800 030 8780 or via email covid19support@shetland.gov.uk

Calls to the Scottish Government's National Helpline will also be routed to the SCSH where local solutions or advice are required.

The SCSH is currently operating 0900-1700 Monday to Friday, with an answering machine service available outwith these hours. Updates regarding SCSH will be notified through SIC's Coronavirus Support for Communities webpage:

<http://www.shetland.gov.uk/communityplanning/CoronavirusSupportForCommunities.asp>