

COVID19 Support for Shielding People

FAQs for Third Sector organisations

Local authorities, Welsh Government and the third sector are working together to deliver support to protect shielding people. We recognise the significant effort all are putting into establishing new arrangements.

NHS Wales has identified approximately 121,000 people in Wales who are at a very high risk of severe illness from Coronavirus (COVID-19) because of specific underlying medical conditions. The Welsh Government is referring to these individuals as **Shielding People**. These FAQs specifically refer to the support package provided for these individuals only.

The list of medical conditions is very specific and has been chosen by clinical experts in agreement across UK nations. The conditions are of a severe nature e.g. cystic fibrosis, severe respiratory disorders, lung cancers, organ donation recipients, etc. It does not include other health conditions such as diabetes or less severe asthma.

For individuals who do not fall within this definition, the Welsh Government is considering what further support may be required. We encourage local authorities to consider how they, along with other public services and wider voluntary and community service providers could be utilised to help people who do not fall within the shielded group.

Shielding people are urged to stay at home, at all times, and avoid all face-to-face contact - except for with essential carers and healthcare workers - for at least 12 weeks. This shielding is designed to protect them from serious illness as well as taking pressure off the NHS providing the most acute care.

The full guidance for shielding individuals is available here:

<https://gov.wales/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-people-defined-on-medical-grounds-as-extremely-vulnerable-from-coronavirus-covid-19>

with an easy-read version available here:

<https://gov.wales/guidance-protecting-people-most-likely-get-very-poorly-coronavirus-shielding-easy-read-guide>

The Welsh Government has also launched a campaign encouraging people to look out for each other, including guidance on how to help others if people are able and well, and how to volunteer:

<https://gov.wales/safe-help>

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Support for shielding people

What support is available?

The Chief Medical Officer for Wales has sent letters to approximately 121,000 people who have been identified as needing to follow stringent shielding measures, asking them to stay at home for 12 weeks from the date they receive a letter. This number includes the recent addition of approximately 21,000, following a refinement of the medical criteria. The number of shielding people may grow due to referral from GPs and any other updates to the list.

The letter advises shielding people to rely on family, friends and other local support networks to help with anything they may need during the period they are being asked to isolate.

However, if a shielding person does not have anyone to rely on for help, they are advised to contact their local authority. We believe this is the most sensible and effective first point for contact for shielding people who are in need, and also complements local arrangements. The appropriate local authority contact details are provided in the letter (checked through WLGA).

In summary, there is a three-fold offer of support to those who are being shielding. These FAQs provide further detail on:

- Food: weekly free food box delivery direct to people's homes and priority allocation for supermarket home delivery.
- Medicines: increased capacity for community pharmacies to offer home delivery.
- Social contact / wellbeing support: local authorities and County Voluntary Councils, working together and with others, to organise what is available in the area.

<p>What are local authorities being asked to do to support this system?</p>	<p>People who have been asked to shield themselves will contact their local authority to report a need for food or other support if they do not have help from family, friends, neighbours or other community networks. Local authorities are asked to undertake a recording and signposting role.</p> <p>Local authorities must verify that the person in contact is on the shielding list and record the person's needs. Local authority call centres have been provided with a template script to help them in these calls and capture the data of those requesting food boxes.</p> <p>Local authorities should still assess whether there might be an immediate or emergency need for any assistance and respond accordingly using any local or community resources available. This might be through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Community Voluntary Councils, ○ foodbanks, ○ other third sector organisations ○ or other arrangements organised by local authorities. <p>This could include those with allergies or faith requirements for particular foods.</p>
<p>How will people know how to contact the local authority?</p>	<p>Contact details for every local authority in Wales are provided at the bottom of the shielding letter. These details were checked with local authorities through the WLGA.</p>
<p>Have all the shielding letters been issued?</p>	<p>Letters may be issued in waves because of additions to the medical criteria. Local authorities receive updated datasets at the same time as letters are posted. A person can also be referred onto the shielding list by a GP. More detailed about this is included in later sections.</p> <p>The majority of letters were issued on 24 March. Phase II letters were issued w/c 4 May and due to the bank holiday and Royal Mail capacity may not arrive until w/e 15 May.</p>

<p>When does the shielding period end?</p>	<p>15 June for all letter recipients and GP referrals regardless of when an individual began shielding.</p> <p>The four UK Chief Medical Officers will meet in due course to consider their original advice and whether there is a need to extend the period for those shielding beyond the initial 12 weeks. In the meantime, and until 15 June, the advice remains the same - shielding should stay at home.</p>
<p>We have been contacted by someone who says they are vulnerable but isn't on the shielding list – how should we respond?</p>	<p>Give the caller advice about social distancing https://gov.wales/staying-home-and-away-others-guidance and signpost them to their local authority or any local arrangements which may be able to support them.</p> <p>Only those appearing on the shielding list are currently eligible for food boxes funded by the Welsh Government (GP referrals will take 10 days to appear on the list – see below). This is to ensure we can support the most at-risk people who have been asked to undertake the most stringent protective measures. However, if the person is in urgent need of food, the local authority can take a food request and check in two weeks if the person's name is on the shielding list.</p> <p>We understand there is a greater number of individuals in need for various medical, social, economic and cultural reasons. Local authorities should endeavour to help individuals who are in need using local resources.</p> <p>GPs have received patient lists of the shielding people we have identified centrally. GPs can refer people onto the shielding list and issue them with a letter should an individual have been missed, or has become newly diagnosed.</p> <p>Local authorities are able to use their discretion to order a food box for an individual they believe is a genuine GP referral, before the person appears on the local authority held datasets, which can take up to 10 days. Local authorities should ask for some evidence of the GP issued</p>

	<p>shielding letter, perhaps through the person emailing a photograph or a scanned version, or texting a photograph of it. However, if this is not possible, local authorities may take it on trust that the person is in possession of a shielding letter.</p> <p>It is important then, however, for local authorities to check against the shielding datasets 10-14 days afterwards to verify the person's details have appeared on the shielding dataset, and we have asked local authorities to keep a record of these cases. If the name and address does not materialise on the shielded dataset, local authorities should contact the person to have a further discussion about verification of the GP shielding letter and their entitlement to a food parcel. Local authorities can refer to the Welsh Government if they are unable to resolve this so that we can investigate further.</p> <p>If an individual has further queries or complaints about their inclusion or not on the list, please ask them to check with their GP or relevant healthcare professional (this could be a hospital team or a specialist clinician). We understand local authorities are receiving a number of queries from people who have been referred directly to the local authority. GPs have received full guidance and we have escalated these reports to relevant colleagues.</p>
<p>A person hasn't appeared on the shielding dataset but claims their GP agrees they should be – how should we respond?</p>	<p>Advise the person to re-contact their GP. GPs can refer people onto the shielding list (if they meet the medical criteria) and issue them with a letter should an individual have been missed, or becomes newly diagnosed.</p> <p>Data from GP referrals will flow through automatically to local authority held datasets on a weekly basis (via Newport Council Intelligence Hub).</p> <p>It may take up to 10 days for a GP referral to appear in local authority datasets. Authorities</p>

	<p>may wish to ask the person to call back in 10 days, or take contact details.</p> <p>Local authorities are able to use their discretion to order a food box for an individual they believe is a genuine GP referral, before the person appears on the local authority held datasets, which can take up to 10 days. Local authorities should ask for some evidence of the GP issued shielding letter, perhaps through the person emailing a photograph or a scanned version, or texting a photograph of it. However, if this is not possible, local authorities may take it on trust that the person is in possession of a shielding letter.</p> <p>It is important then, however, for local authorities to check against the shielding datasets 10-14 days afterwards to verify the person's details have appeared on the shielding dataset, and we have asked local authorities to keep a record of these cases. If the name and address does not materialise on the shielded dataset, local authorities should contact the person to have a further discussion about verification of the GP shielding letter and their entitlement to a food parcel. Local authorities can refer to the Welsh Government if they are unable to resolve this so that we can investigate further.</p>
<p>What are you doing to arrange priority delivery slots with supermarkets?</p>	<p>All supermarkets offering home delivery in Wales have received the datasets on shielding people.</p> <p>This helps to offer the personalised choice many people will want, may help to meet dietary requirements and also enables those wishing to pay for their own food to do so.</p>
<p>Will arrangements for the shielding group change in light of the announcements about</p>	<p>At the moment, no decisions have been made about the shielding period post-June, although as you will expect, discussions have already begun. We will be working with the UK Government and the other devolved</p>

lockdown for the wider public?	administrations to plan the next steps and to communicate to people who are shielding in good time, so they know what to expect.
The advice has changed for people leaving the house - can I go out for exercise now?	Advice to those who are shielding remains the same, stay at home until mid-June . We will be contacting all those shielding before the end of this period with further advice.
Do I still need to keep to the same social distancing rules in the house?	Yes. As much as possible please try to minimise the time spent with others in shared spaces. You should aim to keep two metres apart, eat meals separately, keep areas well ventilated and sleep in separate beds if possible. Other members of the same household should take extra precautions when leaving and entering the home to keep the shielding person protected.
Will I still get my supermarket priority delivery slot / food box / pharmacy delivery service?	Yes. Support for those shielding who cannot access help from friends, family or the community remains in place. This includes priority delivery slots with major food retailers and having your medicine delivered by your community pharmacy. If you need to receive a weekly food parcel please contact your local authority.
Can my friends and family visit me?	The advice on seeing people remains the same – do not have visitors to your home and any deliveries need to be left at the door. Keep in touch with friends and family on the phone, the internet and social media.
My child is shielding – what ongoing support is available to them?	Working with all education settings, we have launched a plan to keep young people learning and to keep them safe. We have also announced investment in providing learners in most need with kit to help them continue with their education.

<p>I've read that workplaces are reopening – what does that mean for me and my family?</p>	<p>The advice in Wales remains that everyone should work from home wherever they can.</p>
<p>I understand that garden centres, libraries and municipal recycling centres are starting to open up in Wales. If people in my household are allowed to go out more what does that mean for me a shielded person.</p>	<p>If someone who is shielding lives with others, the rest of the household does not need to undertake shielding measures, but they must follow guidance on social distancing https://gov.wales/coronavirus-social-distancing-guidance. We recognise these will be very difficult behaviours for many people. Other members of the same household should take extra precautions when leaving and entering the home to keep the shielding person protected.</p>
<p>If schools do reopen, as a shielding parent should I send my child in?</p>	<p>There are currently no plans to reopen schools in the next three weeks – we will give you further advice as the situation develops</p>

Submitting food box orders to Welsh Government

Will individuals know when they can expect a food box delivery?

Unfortunately no, due to the scale of the national operation. We regret that delivery dates and times cannot be communicated to the individual.

The suppliers endeavour to make the first delivery to an address within 7 days of receiving an order. Boxes may be delivered at any time between 8am and 10pm. The supplier will then aim to deliver a box on the same day each week.

If there is no answer at the address, the box will be left outside and a calling card posted through the letter box.

What's in the food boxes that are delivered to individuals?

Subject to availability, each food box contains:

- hot beverages (coffee, tea bags)
- biscuits
- bread
- cereal
- tinned vegetables
- potatoes
- long life milk
- tinned protein (fish, cold meat excluding pork, corned beef)
- fresh fruit
- pasta sauce
- pasta and rice
- toilet tissue
- hand soap or shower gel.

Boxes will not be labelled on the outside with personal information such as the residents name or address.

Some items such as bread may be frozen and defrosting en-route therefore the expiry date may not be accurate.

<p>Who decided what is included in the food box?</p>	<p>The contents were agreed between the Welsh Government and the supplier, based on similar arrangements in England and Scotland. The contents have been checked by Food Innovation Wales for sufficient nutritional value.</p>
<p>Is there any way to change the contents of the food box to reflect allergies, dietary or religious needs?</p>	<p>In the current phase of support we regret there is no scope to amend the order for allergies or particular faith and dietary requirements.</p> <p>We are reviewing this and assessing the suitability of other arrangements.</p> <p>Local authority officers have been asked to make this clear to callers who are requesting food. The box itself includes a note alerting those with allergies and special requirements to check the ingredients of each item.</p>
<p>Does the box provide any pet food or sanitary items?</p>	<p>No. Unfortunately the need to standardise the boxes has meant we cannot include these items.</p> <p>Individuals who are shielding should rely on others to provide these items, order through priority supermarket delivery, or make their needs clear to local authorities.</p>
<p>How many people does the parcel supply for?</p>	<p>A food box provides items for 1 shielding person for 1 week. If there is more than one shielding person in a household, each person will receive a box (if they have ordered one).</p> <p>Only those identified as for shielding are eligible to receive a box.</p>
<p>What if I think a shielding person is in immediate need of food?</p>	<p>We hope this should not arise given the offer of supermarket priority allocations, community networks and other local arrangements which are already in place to support the person until a food box arrives.</p> <p>In the rare event that it does, third sector organisations should refer the shielding person to their local authority who will need to find a localised solution, drawing on support through</p>

	Community Voluntary Councils and local food banks if necessary.
<p>How will we know who can't carry a box into their house, and when they will be getting their delivery?</p>	<p>Food boxes will not be carried into the home, it will be left on the doorstep in line with social distancing guidance.</p> <p>When ordering a food box for a shielding person, local authorities should ask what help they need unpacking the box, or other accessibility concerns e.g. people with visual impairments and those that won't be able to read the labels.</p> <p>If the individual requires additional support, the local authority should direct them to any local support efforts in place in their area or signpost them to support through the Community Voluntary Council.</p>
<p>Individuals are contacting us about dietary requirements, why is this?</p>	<p>In the standardised box delivered to shielding individuals there is an A4 note which explains that dietary, allergy, cultural and religious requirements have not been met.</p> <p>The note tells the person to put aside any items they do not wish to consume, and to contact their local authority if they have concerns about the amount of food they can eat.</p> <p>Local authorities should discuss this with the person and draw on local arrangements to meet the person's need, where possible.</p> <p>We hope to be able to supply a greater range of products in the future.</p>

Medicines supply

<p>How will medicines be delivered to people who are shielding?</p>	<p>Anyone who is shielding has been asked in their letter from the Chief Medical Officer to continue with existing delivery arrangements, or arrange for the collection of medicines by family or friends.</p> <p>If they do not have a support network to help with this, they should contact their community pharmacy who will be able to help.</p> <p>Pharmacies will be able to access additional delivery capacity.</p>
<p>How should we direct people who need help with their medicines delivery?</p>	<p>Anyone in need of support in getting access to their medicines should be asked to contact the local community pharmacy they would normally use.</p> <p>In all instances controlled drugs will be distributed by community pharmacy employees and verified employees/volunteers.</p>
<p>What about non-shielding people who want advice about medicines delivery?</p>	<p>We are advising anyone who is self-isolating to follow the same advice by having a family or friend collect their medicines for them.</p> <p>Only those who have no support network for collection should arrange for pharmacy delivery. This is to enable pharmacies to prioritise those most in need.</p> <p>If people don't have family, friends or neighbours who can help them and would like to have some support, they can also be directed to other services through their Community Voluntary Council.</p>

Volunteering

What advice should we give volunteers supporting those who have been identified as shielding individuals?

Shielding is a measure to protect those at very high risk of severe illness from coronavirus (due to a serious underlying health issue) by minimising interaction between those who are shielding and others.

Volunteers should avoid entering the homes of shielding individuals and should take care to keep a distance of at least 2 metres away from the shielding person – leaving any shopping or other essential supplies on the doorstep, but making sure that they have been collected before leaving. The provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is not necessary in these circumstances.

However, in exceptional circumstances the shielding person may not be able to carry supplies from the door-step and if there is no-one else such as a carer who can, then the local authority may consider it appropriate for the volunteer to enter the home of the shielding person. In such circumstances, the local authority must provide volunteers with advice and guidance including on maintaining social distancing in the home, hand hygiene and spending no more time in the home than is necessary. It will be for the local authority or community organisation to provide the PPE in these limited and exceptional circumstances.

Volunteers assisting with pharmacy deliveries to shielding people have received training on handling and delivering medicines. They should seek advice from their allocated community pharmacy with any specific questions.

Non-shielding people and wider needs

What about other people who are in need of support but do not appear on the shielding list?

The shielding support is in place for those who have been identified.

Many local authorities already have some local arrangements in place to help various groups of people. We would encourage local authorities to consider how wider voluntary and community service providers can provide further support to others who have requested it.

If people don't have family, friends or neighbours who can help them and would like to have some support for shopping, collecting medicines etc, they can be directed to their local Community Voluntary Council or use other arrangements put in place by the local authority

The Welsh Government is urgently considering whether the existing mechanisms for support meet the needs of a wide range of individuals.

The UK Government has launched a helpful signposting tool which provides a broad range of advice for people with particular concerns:
<https://www.gov.uk/find-coronavirus-support>