

Policy/guidance name – Guidance on shielding and protecting people defined on medical grounds as extremely vulnerable from COVID-19

Summary – Outlines the guidance for shielding people, including children, who are at particularly high risk from severe illness if they contract COVID-19 due to underlying health conditions. The guidance is written for those directly impacted and their friends and family.

Key points

Who are the extremely vulnerable

- The list includes organ transplant recipients, those with specific cancers, severe respiratory conditions (e.g. cystic fibrosis, severe asthma and COPD), rare diseases with increased risk of infection, people on immunosuppression therapies with increased risk of infection and pregnant women with significant heart disease.
- **People with these conditions will be sent a letter by NHS England by Sunday 29 March.** We are undertaking mapping to understand this population in Surrey.

Advice for the extremely vulnerable

- People with these specific conditions are being **advised to stay at home at all times and avoid all face to face contact for at least 12 weeks from when they receive the letter.** This includes avoiding all non essential contact with other members of their household e.g. sleeping in a separate bedroom, using a different bathroom, eating separately where possible.
- Essential health and social care visits should continue but all visitors should be extra vigilant with washing their hands. The extremely vulnerable are advised to contact their local authority for further advice on accessing care.
- Those who live with the extremely vulnerable are not required to follow shielding measures for themselves but should stringently adhere to social distancing.
- All those who fall within the criteria are being advised to follow these guidelines, but it is advice so any support offer needs to consider that people may wish not to follow the advice particularly if they have a terminal illness.
- If people in this group need prescriptions picked up they are currently advised to ask someone else to pick up for them, or to ask their pharmacy to help them find a volunteer.
- **The government is setting up a dedicated support webpage** gov.uk/coronavirus-extremely-vulnerable for people to register for the support they need with essentials such as food shopping and picking up medicine. This is due to go live **from Tuesday 24 March.**

What is the difference between shielding and social distancing

- Social distancing measures should be followed by everyone, but particularly those who are aged 70 or over, those eligible for flu jabs and pregnant women. **Shielding measures are advised for a smaller but more medically vulnerable group of people** (defined above as the 'extremely vulnerable').
- Social distancing does not require someone to stay in their house, for example they are still able to go to the shop for food and to pick up medicine. Please see [guidance on social distancing](#).
- Shielding requires someone to stay home for at least 12 weeks and avoid all face to face contact, including non essential contact with other members of their household.

Implications for Surrey

- We need to **know who the extremely vulnerable are in Surrey** and ensure additional measures are taken to keep these residents shielded from COVID-19. Mapping is underway to inform this and will link into a new Surrey vulnerability hub which is being established.
- The information contained in this guidance will be added to the advice available through the SCC dedicated COVID-19 helpline and webpages.
- These measures also apply to those living in long term care facilities and **specific action will need to be taken by care workers in both community and residential settings** with [further guidance](#) available on this. This includes carers stringently following social distancing measures for themselves. A revised care plan will need to be made with all those already receiving health and social care.
- Those existing service users with mental health needs, or with a learning disability or autism may need to work with their keyworker or care coordinator to develop a safety or crisis plan to mitigate the impact of isolation.
- We are working to **ensure our efforts to match volunteers to those with specific needs are joined up with the new measures being put in place by government.** We are expecting further clarity on this shortly.