

First Minister
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport

**Evaluation of the Scottish Government's Shielding Programme – COVID-19
Shielding Programme (Scotland) Impact and Experience Survey – Publication
of Results**

Purpose

1. To note that the first results from the evaluation of the Shielding Programme are to be published by Public Health Scotland on Wednesday 23 September at 12 noon. These are the results from a survey of over 12,500 shielding individuals and their carers about their experiences of shielding until that point (June 2020, prior to and overlapping with FM's announcement on changes to the shielding guidance).

Priority

2. Routine – for information.

Background

3. PHS has overall responsibility for delivering the Shielding Evaluation, with accountability to the SG (as commissioners) through the Public Health Scotland Board. PHS first committed resource to supporting an evaluation on 10 April 2020 and PHS' s evaluation work has complemented ongoing analytical work by the Scottish Government to support the development of the shielding policy and programme.
4. Between 1 and 14 June 2020, Public Health Scotland ran an online survey of individuals who had received a letter from the Scottish Chief Medical Officer advising them to follow shielding guidance. Individuals caring for someone who had received a letter were also able to participate. A total of 12,851 individuals participated in the survey (around 7% of those on the shielding list at that time).
5. The survey explored a range of experiences of those shielding from March to June 2020, including: their thoughts on the support they had received; their health, wellbeing, and quality of life; adherence to the shielding guidance; and their thoughts about the future of shielding.
6. This first piece of survey work was provided to support the rapid pace of work on shielding undertaken by the Scottish Government and initial results have fed into policy development.
7. The full reporting from the evaluation is expected in early 2021.

Key Findings

8. A summary of the key findings is available at **Annex A**. Overall, the findings show that the negative impacts of shielding have been pronounced, with negative impacts shown on mental and physical health, quality of life, and educational impacts. The report suggests these impacts were worse for those already at socio-economic disadvantage, those aged younger than 65, respondents caring for someone who is shielding, respondents living on their own or in larger households (with two or more other people in their household), and respondents with children in their household. It may be hard to fully disentangle what are impacts specific to shielding and what are impacts felt because of Covid-19 restrictions more generally.
9. 64% report adhering to the shielding guidance 'completely', with another 15% saying they 'choose' not to adhere fully. 21% report being 'unable' to follow the guidance fully. However, when asked about specific measures of adherence, the 64% 'completely' adhering to the guidance reduces to 41%. PHS are reporting this as a 'large proportion of respondents are following the shielding guidance'. There is room for interpretation here and there may be media interest in the figure of 41%.
10. The report also raises concerns about the shielding support offer and its impacts on adherence to the shielding guidance and on whether the support that was offered could have been better targeted to those most in need.

Communications Handling

11. The report will be published by PHS at their website. The link and an associated animation will be tweeted from the PHS account. SG will include the link on mygov.scot and will retweet from the ScotGov Health account.
12. SG and PHS Comms have discussed relevant handling processes and respective roles. A reactive Q&A is being drafted, with questions about sampling and interpretation of the findings will be for PHS and SG will handle policy-related queries.
13. Local authorities and third sector partners will be apprised of publication in advance.

Recommendation

14. Ministers are asked to note that:
 - the report of the COVID-19 Shielding Programme (Scotland) Impact and Experience Survey will be published on Wednesday 23 September by Public Health Scotland (PHS); and
 - the summary of key points from the report (Annex A).

Health and Social Care Analysis
and Shielding Division
18 September 2020

Copy List:	For Action	For Comments	For Information		
			Portfolio Interest	Constit Interest	General Awareness
First Minister Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport		X			X

Chief Medical Officer	
Chief Nursing Officer	
Permanent Secretary	
DG Health & Social Care	
Jason Leitch, National Clinical Director	
Liz Sadler, Director, Population Health	
John Harden, Clinical Advisor, Shielding	
Liz Lloyd, Special Advisor	
Davie Hutchison, Special Advisor,	
Orlando Heijmer-Mason, Shielding Division	
John Froggatt, Shielding Division	
Linda Pollack, Shielding Division	
	Shielding Clinical Policy
	Shielding Policy
Name Redacted	Shielding Engagement
Redacted	Shielding
	y, Shielding Delivery
	HSCA
	ites, HSCA
Lynne Nicol, Deputy Director, Planning and Quality	
COVID Comms	
COVID Policy	
Health Comms	

Annex A: Summary of Key Findings

1. **64% report adhering to the shielding guidance 'completely'**, with another 15% saying they 'choose' not to adhere fully. 21% report being 'unable' to follow the guidance fully. However, when asked about specific measures of adherence, the 64% 'completely' adhering to the guidance reduces to 41%. PHS are reporting this as a 'large proportion of respondents are following the shielding guidance'. There is room for interpretation here and there may be press interest in the figure of 41%.
2. **The negative impacts of shielding are quite pronounced.** 87% of respondents report a negative impact on their quality of life; 85% report a negative impact on how much physical activity they do; 72% report a negative impact on their mental health; 79% of young people in education report negative impacts on their education.
3. Despite the above, **71% of respondents said they were coping 'OK'** with shielding. PHS suggest that this is because it was those reporting 'very negative' impacts that felt less able to cope, while others may be experiencing some negative impacts, but were still able to cope. Those respondents who did not understand why they had been asked to shield were less likely to report coping OK. Coping OK did not necessarily correlate with better adherence to the guidance – PHS suggest this finding shows the need for tailored advice and guidance.
4. **Negative impacts were more likely to be felt by those at socio-economic disadvantage**, in terms of coping, negative impacts on mental health, knowing where to seek support, and struggling to access food that meets their needs.
5. Negative mental health impacts specifically, were more common among those respondents aged younger than 65, respondents caring for someone who is shielding, respondents living on their own or in larger households (with two or more other people in their household), and respondents with children in their household.
6. Home delivery of medicines appears to enable respondents to avoid leaving their home to pick up their medication.
7. However, **the relationship between the other parts of the support offer and adherence to the guidance is less clear.** Those respondents who were receiving a free food box were *more likely* to leave their home to shop for essential supplies than those who did not receive a box. Those who received mental health support by phone or videoconference were *more likely* to leave their home for mental health support, and those who received GP or hospital appointments by phone or videoconference were also *more likely* to leave home for healthcare appointments. PHS state that there are reasons to explain this behaviour – seeking health support may lead a clinician to advise you to leave home for further help – but suggest that this behaviour raises some questions about how best to support people to shield.

8. **The findings suggest there may have been more scope to target the support offer to those most in need.** 25% of respondents who received free food boxes would have struggled to get food without the free food boxes – but the remainder would not have struggled.

The full survey findings can be found [here](#)



Pre-release
COVID-19 Shielding

Please treat as restricted until publication on **12 noon Wednesday 23 September 2020.**

Name Redacted

Senior Research Officer

Name Redacted

Principal Researcher