

From: Dr Michael McBride

Chief Medical Officer for Northern Ireland

To: [Patient Name]

Date: [] November 2020

Important advice to keep you safe from Covid-19

Dear [patient]

This letter is going to every adult with Down's syndrome in Northern Ireland. By adult, we mean everyone aged 18 years and over.

We are writing to let you know about new government advice for people who are thought to be clinically extremely vulnerable and at highest risk of becoming very unwell if they catch coronavirus (also known as COVID-19). This includes adults with Down's syndrome who have been identified in a recent study as being at higher risk of severe infection if they catch coronavirus.

As a result of the new evidence referred to above, you have been added to the shielded persons list in Northern Ireland. This does not mean that you need to start shielding now. Since shielding was first introduced, a number of important changes have taken place in our approach to managing coronavirus and reducing its transmission. This includes a greater awareness of the importance of social distancing, the requirement to use face coverings, Covid secure workplaces and greater adherence to respiratory and hand hygiene.

The following information tells you:

- i) What action you can take to reduce your risk of infection
- ii) What measures the Government have in place to ensure your protection and support.

It is important that you continue to be particularly careful in following the advice on limiting household contacts, keeping social distance, hand washing and wearing a face covering.

If you need to travel, walk or cycle if you can. For longer journeys, or if you are unable to walk or cycle, try to minimise the number of people you come into close contact with.

Avoid public transport as much as possible or consider travelling outside peak hours to reduce the number of people with whom you come into contact. Travelling by car is likely to mean fewer social contacts than travelling by public transport. You should avoid sharing a car with people outside of your immediate household or support bubble.

Consider shopping or going to the pharmacy at quieter times of the day.

You might also want to ask friends, family or volunteers to collect medicines for you.

If it is possible for you to work from home, you should continue to do this. However, if your employer has taken the proper measures to ensure social distancing in your place of work, and you can travel to work in a way which allows for social distancing, you can continue to work.

If you have any concerns about your safety in the workplace, you are encouraged to discuss these with your employer or human resources department.

They will be best placed to advise on appropriate measures for your particular role and workplace at this time, including, for example, if there might be scope to re-design your role, change your working pattern or location, or reduce contact with others.

More information on how to keep safe is available on the website at https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-clinically-extremely-vulnerable-and-vulnerable-people#toc-9_ and in the enclosed easy-read document.

This information on shielding will be kept under review and we will not hesitate to update our shielding advice if we need to. Because you are on the shielded persons list, we will be able to contact you to let you know if there are any changes to the rules, or anything more you need to do to keep yourself safe.

Please remember that the health service is open for everyone, not just for coronavirus patients. Keep your medical appointments, and let your GP or consultant know about any new illnesses or issues you have. It is safer for you to use the health service than to try to manage alone. Details of other sources of support are also available at <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-clinically-extremely-vulnerable-and-vulnerable-people>.

We recognise this is a difficult time for you. Thank you for your efforts to keep yourself and others safe.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Michael McBride