

Letters to clinically extremely vulnerable patients - FAQs for Local Authorities

Introduction

In the light of recent changes to guidance for clinically extremely vulnerable individuals, the Government wrote to 2.3million individuals on the Shielded Patient List (SPL). This note provides a quick explainer on this process and on the next steps.

How are individuals identified as clinically extremely vulnerable?

The NHS has been, and continues to, identify individuals that are classified as clinically extremely vulnerable to Covid-19 on medical grounds and has written to these individuals notifying them. GPs and specialists have also been, and continue to, identify individuals who are clinically extremely vulnerable. In brief, this includes organ transplant recipients; those with specific cancers, severe respiratory conditions; certain rare diseases and inborn errors of metabolism; people on certain immunosuppressants; adults with Down's syndrome; adults with stage 5 chronic kidney disease; and pregnant women with significant heart disease. Individuals who believe they fit the criteria but have not been notified should contact their GPs or hospital specialists.

What is the role of GPs / hospital clinicians?

GPs and specialists have been identifying individuals who are clinically extremely vulnerable. They are also responsible for reviewing whether someone is still classified as clinically extremely vulnerable and to let them know if they are being removed from the SPL. If an individual is added to the SPL by their GP / hospital clinician, they will receive a copy of the letter available here:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/coronavirus/shielded-patient-list/guidance-for-general-practice#how-to-flag-patients-as-high-risk>

How is a patient told they are no longer clinically extremely vulnerable?

Where this is the case, patients should be informed by their GP or specialist clinician that they are being removed from the SPL and are no longer clinically extremely vulnerable. Removal from the SPL can only occur at the discretion of a clinician so any individuals who are concerned that they should not be on the list, should speak to their GP in the first instance. If an individual is removed from the SPL by their GP / hospital clinician, they will receive a copy of the letter available here:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/coronavirus/shielded-patient-list/guidance-for-general-practice#how-to-flag-patients-as-low-or-moderate-risk>

Have you now informed all clinically extremely vulnerable individuals of the new guidance?

In light of national restrictions announced by the Prime Minister to control the spread of Covid-19 on 31 October, the Government issued a letter to all those on the SPL. This letter sets out advice on how individuals should protect themselves and how they can access further support. All 2.3million letters were posted by 13 November. However, we are aware that delays in the post are holding up the prompt delivery of some letters. We advise anyone who has an email address to register it with their GP surgery so they can receive any a copy of further letters digitally, as well as by post.

Where can I find an accessible version of the patient letter?

Accessible versions of the patient letter including versions in different languages and easy read can be found on gov.uk. These are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-letters-to-clinically-extremely-vulnerable-people>

Some individuals are yet to receive a letter which they need as proof for their employer to claim Statutory Sick Pay, what should they do?

All letters have been posted. If someone has not received a letter but believes they should have they should:

- Contact their GP to ask for a version of the new additions letter; or
- Contact the SPL query mailbox (SPLQuery@nhs.net) to receive another copy of the letter

Digital letter request options are being explored but at this time people can register an email address with their GP surgery to receive further updates in both email and letter formats.

Individuals are reporting that they are / are not on the SPL but believe they should / shouldn't be?

This can be caused by a lag between notification of additions/removals from the SPL and the SPL's regular data updates. Individuals who believe they fit / or do not fit the criteria for being classed as clinically extremely vulnerable but have not been notified should contact their GP or hospital specialist for further advice.

Deceased individuals are receiving copies of the letter.

We are sorry for instances where letters are sent to deceased individuals. The SPL is regularly reviewed and updated, including to remove those who have recently passed away. However, it may take time for this to be reflected on the SPL due to the death registration and reporting processes. Local authorities should pass on any such instances to the SPL query mailbox (SPLQuery@nhs.net) so they can investigate and ensure people are removed from the SPL.

Why hasn't there been much change in the number of people on the SPL?

The number of people on the SPL remains mostly stable at present. As we have learnt more about Covid-19 who is considered clinically extremely vulnerable has changed and some people have been removed from the SPL (such as some children and young people) whilst other people have been added to the SPL (such as adults with Down's Syndrome and people with stage 5 chronic kidney disease).

Do you plan to write again to the clinically extremely vulnerable individuals?

Yes, our intention is to write to all those classified as clinically extremely vulnerable to coronavirus in early December to inform them of the new advice for them. We will aim to share copies of this letter with local authorities in advance.