



Xx August 2021

IMPORTANT: PERSONAL

Your Community Health Index (CHI) number: <<CHI>>

Moving beyond Level 0 and keeping some precautionary measures

Dear [forename] [surname],

The First Minister recently announced that all of Scotland will move beyond Level 0 restrictions from Monday 9 August. However, we will still be asking everyone in Scotland to continue to follow some important precautionary measures.

We are able to take this next step because the vaccination programme is helping reduce new case numbers. The numbers of people getting seriously unwell and having to go to hospital because of Covid is also falling. And more people getting vaccinated every day also means anyone who cannot be vaccinated has extra protection too.

All of this gives us the confidence that moving beyond Level 0 is the right thing to do. So there is much to be optimistic about.

However, it's important to be clear that this does not mean we are going back to life as it was before the pandemic. Some very important precautionary measures will stay in place to help protect you.

Precautionary measures that will remain in place

Face coverings

Firstly, it will continue to be the law that face coverings must be worn in all the same indoor places where this has been a legal requirement for some time, except for people who are exempt. This includes public transport, shops and indoor public places including workplaces. There are separate arrangements in schools and other educational establishments. We expect this to be a requirement for some time to come.

Keeping a safe distance

Secondly, we will continue to advise the public that avoiding crowded places and keeping a safe distance, especially indoors, from people who are not in your own households will minimise risk. This will not be a legal requirement from Monday 9 August, but it is all of our collective responsibility to continue to protect those around us.

Returning to the workplace

And thirdly, we are continuing to encourage employers to support working from home, or flexible working, where possible and appropriate. Most businesses are not planning wholesale return to the workplace and are taking a gradual approach. My advice is that you can go into the workplace along with others if you want to, or if your employer requires this. Employers should not discourage you from returning to the workplace, or from working from home if that is not your choice or in your best interests.

There is further information and advice about employer responsibilities to make the workplace safe for everyone and using an individual risk assessment to support discussions and decisions about individual circumstances. There is also advice and information on additional safety steps to take at www.gov.scot/highest-risk-work-safety

My advice to you

As a result of the vaccination programme, and retaining these precautionary measures, it remains my view that it's safe for you to follow the same rules as the rest of the population. **There is no need for you to continue to shield**, unless this is on the individual advice of your clinician.

My advice is that children and young people on the highest risk list can follow the same advice as the rest of the population. This includes attending nursery, schools, colleges and university, unless their clinician has advised them otherwise individually.

Think about your mental health

I know that many of you will feel worried about the move beyond Level 0. The Scottish Government is very aware of that and we are very aware of the impact of feeling isolated for long periods of time on people's mental health.

That's why we've included a leaflet with this letter which has been written with people at highest risk in mind, with advice on coping with anxiety, stress and feeling down. There is also information on where you can go to for more support if you're finding things particularly hard. Please do read the leaflet and get in touch with someone to help you if your mental health is being impacted. There is no shame or stigma in doing this. Support is there for anyone who needs it.

Getting the vaccine

I would also strongly advise anyone who hasn't yet had the vaccine and who is able to, to please take up the offer of both doses. I understand that a small number of people have felt unwell after their vaccination for a short period of time and this can be off-putting. But the longer-term benefits far outweigh the short-term side-effects.

More than 93% of people like you on the highest risk list have now received at least one dose of the vaccine. There are only a very small number of people who can't get the vaccine, so if you're unsure whether you can get the vaccine, please consult your clinician.

It's also now much easier for you to get your vaccination. You don't need to wait for an appointment but can go along to a drop-in clinic at a time to suit you. Find your nearest one at www.nhsinform.scot/vaccinedropinclinics

And if you need help with transport to get to and from your vaccination, please do call the National Assistance Helpline on 0800 111 4000 (Monday-Friday, office hours) as they will be able to help arrange this for you.

Vaccine effectiveness in the highest risk group in Scotland

Evidence continues to emerge about how well the vaccine works for people who are immunosuppressed and on the highest risk list. A new report from the University of Edinburgh clearly shows that, for the majority of people in the highest risk group, one dose of the vaccine is just as effective as it is for people without risk conditions.

We know more work is needed to understand the impact of the vaccine on people in some high risk groups, such as solid organ transplant recipients. We're awaiting further guidance from the Joint Committee on Vaccinations and Immunisation (JCVI), whose advice informs our approach to vaccinations in Scotland. They are currently reviewing all the evidence to advise if any additional doses of vaccine would be required for some of these high risk groups.

The JCVI also recently published interim advice on a potential Covid booster programme ahead of the winter months. The JCVI advises that adults aged 16 years and over who are immunosuppressed or are considered clinically extremely vulnerable, and adult household contacts of immunosuppressed individuals, should be offered a third dose booster vaccine from September. We are currently planning on this basis, but we will be able to confirm this when the JCVI publishes its final advice in the coming months. We will be in touch with more information about this after the JCVI has published its final advice.

Flu vaccines

The JCVI has also stressed the importance of taking up the flu vaccine this autumn/winter if you are eligible. The public health measures put in place to suppress Covid in Scotland and reduce the harm caused by it meant that the circulation of flu viruses was very low last season. As restrictions continue to lift and we get back to living our lives more normally it is important this year, more than ever, that you receive your flu vaccine if you are eligible.

Vaccinations for children and young people

Since I last wrote to you, there have been some changes to the criteria for vaccinating children and young people. All young people 16 to 17 years of age will now be offered a first dose of the coronavirus vaccination in Scotland. In line with the latest advice from the JCVI, they will be offered the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine.

Children aged 12 to 15 can now be vaccinated if they have:

- severe neurodisabilities
- Down's syndrome
- Immunosuppression
- a diagnosis of learning/intellectual disability

Children and young people aged 12 to 17 who live with, or spend a large amount of time with, an immunosuppressed person can also be vaccinated. The NHS will shortly be writing to people who are eligible with an invitation to get their vaccination.

These recommendations are based on evidence that these groups can particularly benefit from the protection of the vaccine. This is especially the case for children and young people who are in contact with immunosuppressed adults.

Generally, the risk of severe illness from Covid for children and young people - even those who have complex health needs - is very low. Additionally, the results of recent studies show that the clinical risks of Covid are far outweighed by the harm that children have felt due to loneliness, being apart from family and friends, and missing out on nursery, school and college.

Watch our Q&A with Professor Jason Leitch online soon

Thank you to those who submitted questions for Professor Jason Leitch to answer. We received over 250 questions in total and, while he won't be able to answer them all, there are some popular questions that came up time and again. Professor Leitch will answer as many of these as possible during the session, which you'll be able to watch online in the coming weeks. We'll also be providing a written version which we'll post on our social media channels when it's live, and send a text message too. If you're not yet signed up to the SMS service, you can do so by texting your CHI number (the 10-digit number at the top of this letter) to 07860 064525. Further details on the points Professor Leitch covers will be included in my next letter.

I know that, once again, there is a lot of information in this letter, some of which may give you cause for concern. Please do be assured though that every decision we take is taken with people like you, who are at highest risk from Covid in mind, and is based on solid clinical evidence.

Please note that there is also some information for you about priority supermarket delivery slots attached to this letter.

Yours sincerely,



DR GREGOR SMITH
CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER

Priority supermarket delivery slots are available until 30 September

If you have already registered for priority access to supermarket delivery slots, supermarkets will continue to provide priority access until 30 September 2021. After this we will no longer ask supermarkets to provide this service.

We are pausing this offer for now rather than stopping it. This means that if you have signed up with a supermarket, they can hold on to your details so that we can quickly restart the offer if we need to. Some supermarkets may still choose to continue with the offer for you and they will tell you if this is the case.

We are doing this because the Chief Medical Officer's advice is that you can follow the same advice as for the rest of the population and this includes shopping in store.

If you prefer not to shop in person, there are still a number of alternative options available. Supermarkets have increased the availability of regular on-line delivery slots meaning that it is now much easier to book a slot. They also now offer a wide range of ways to shop including click and collect, home deliveries, phone ordering, grocery boxes, and gift cards so someone else can shop for you. Supermarkets are continuing with measures to make it safer to shop in-store. Further information on all of these options can be found on our website at www.gov.scot/publications/covid-highest-risk/pages/shopping

If you, your child or someone you care for is on the highest risk list and have not yet signed up for priority online slots, you can still register with Asda, Tesco, Morrisons, Sainsbury's, Iceland and Waitrose until 3 September 2021. You'll then see online delivery slots further in advance. We cannot guarantee you'll always get the slot and supermarket you want. Registration can take a few weeks to process. After that date there will be no new registrations unless we re-start the offer.

We will keep the decision to pause the offer of priority supermarket delivery slots under review and have worked with supermarkets to ensure we can quickly restart these if we need to.

How to register for priority online delivery slots using our text message service

If you're registering on behalf of a person on the highest risk list, register using their name.

- If you're already on the Scottish Government free text messaging service, sign up by texting **1SHOP** to 07860 064525 from your mobile.
- If you're not on our text messaging service, join it by texting your Community Health Index (CHI) number to 07860 064525. Your CHI number is the 10-digit number at the top of this letter. Then text **1SHOP** to 07860 064525 to sign up for priority online delivery slots.

How to register for priority online delivery slots by phone

Phone the free National Assistance Helpline on 0800 111 4000 (Monday-Friday, office hours). A friend or carer can phone for you if you cannot phone yourself.

If you already shop online with Asda, Tesco, Morrisons, Sainsbury's, Iceland or Waitrose

Once you've signed up for priority delivery slots, your supermarket will email you to let you know

how to access the delivery service. If you do not get an email, check that the email address you've registered with the supermarket is still correct, and check your junk mail folder.

If you're new to online supermarket shopping

Once you've signed up for priority delivery slots, you'll get texts from GOV.SCOT about the supermarkets offering online deliveries in your area. The texts will explain how to access these.

This resource may also be made available on request in the following formats



 **PHS.HealthData@phs.scot**

 **0800 111 4000**

Use the subjectline 'translation request' if you send an email. Include these details about the person who needs the different format:

- name
- address and postcode
- CHI number
- format or language required

Please tell us if we should always send information in this format. If you've asked before for a translation of the information we send, it's on its way to you.

Find translations and alternative formats for past letters to the highest risk group at www.gov.scot/highest-risk-letters

Data Protection Statement

You have been identified from either your GP practice, local Health Board or securely stored national data in order that we could write to you. We want to reassure you that this information has only been shared in a limited way within the NHS in Scotland and did not include your medical

record. During this time, we will keep your contact details in case we need to contact you again. We will also notify your GP and your Health Board that you have been contacted in order that they can provide appropriate support. To provide some of the support noted above, we may share your contact details only with your council. This is only so that they can support you during this difficult time. This action is only being taken due to the current Covid outbreak. We want to assure you that your local council would not receive any details of your medical condition or health record. You can request your contact details to be removed from the highest risk list by asking your GP or hospital clinician.