



**[Patient Name]**

Patient address Line 1  
Patient address Line 2  
Patient address Line 3]

30 October 2020

**IMPORTANT: PERSONAL**

**Your Community Health Index (CHI) number: [CHI NUMBER]**

Dear [Patient]

This letter is going to every adult with Down's syndrome in Scotland. By 'adult', we mean everyone over 18 years of age.

We are writing to you for two reasons:

1. To tell you that you have been added to the shielding list in Scotland.
2. To tell you about the way you can keep safe and protect yourself.

**Firstly**, this letter is not asking you to start shielding, but we want to talk about why we are adding you to the shielding list in Scotland.

A recent study has identified that **adults with Down's syndrome are at a higher risk of severe illness if they catch Coronavirus**. From today, you have been added to the list of people in Scotland who will receive additional advice and support to keep you safe during the pandemic. This list allows us to help people who are at the highest risk from the coronavirus infection.

**Secondly**, let's talk about the changes about how to keep you safe.

The First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon MSP, has announced that we will now have **five new protection levels** in Scotland. The protection level in your area will be put in place by looking at the spread of the infection in your local area. There is different advice and guidance for each of the five protection levels and there is advice especially for you. **You should follow the guidance for your local area**. The protection level for your area will soon be available at [www.gov.scot/coronavirus](http://www.gov.scot/coronavirus). The new levels will come in from **Monday 2 November 2020**.

We have enclosed an **Easy Read** document that explains these changes, they are about keeping you safe during the pandemic.

Because you are now on the shielding list, you can now get **extra advice as you are considered at higher risk from coronavirus**. At the very least, you should follow the protection level guidance that everyone in Scotland should follow. We are also giving you extra advice for areas like work, shopping and contact with others. You can find this extra advice in the table that comes with this letter.

It is important that your **individual situation informs your approach to keeping safe**. This means finding out about the number of cases of coronavirus in your local area, looking at your own health situation and getting advice from your Doctor/GP, hospital consultant or clinician. We also need you to think carefully about different activities and the risk that they carry. **To help you with this, we will shortly send you a guide that will let you, and the people that support you, develop a protection plan which is right for you.**

We will now support you in three ways:

1. We will keep you on the list of people who we will contact if there are any changes. You can ask to be removed from the list by talking to your Doctor/GP or hospital consultant.
2. We will send you information and updates on local outbreaks and we will do this by sending texts to your mobile phone if you would like us to. We explain how to do this below.
3. To help you understand your individual risk and what you can do to keep yourself safe every day, we will send you a guide and give you access to up-to-date advice and guidance at [www.mygov.scot/shielding](http://www.mygov.scot/shielding).

## **Text Messaging**

Many people who are on the list that you are now on have joined the text messaging service from the Scottish Government. This is so they can receive updates and changes straight to their mobile phones.

If you would like to join this service and receive updates by text to your mobile phone, this is what you have to do:

- Copy the long number in red at the top of this letter into a text on your mobile phone and send it to **07860 064525**.

The number in red at the top of this letter is called your Community Health Index number or your CHI number for short. You do not need to text any other information, just your CHI number. Once we get your CHI number, we will send you a text to confirm that you have joined. Please note that the service only accepts text messages. It does not take voice calls.

If you cannot join the text messaging service or need to ask a question about joining this list, please call the free national helpline number on **0800 111 4000**. The helpline is open Monday to Friday, from 9am to 5pm, and will put you in touch with someone from your local council.

## **Keep up-to-date**

We will tell you straight away if we think you need to start shielding to stay safe. You can keep up to date with any changes by listening to the First Minister's daily briefings on television or online. You can find the latest advice at [www.mygov.scot/shielding](http://www.mygov.scot/shielding).

There is also information on the NHS website called 'NHS Inform' and you can view that information at [www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-shielding](http://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-shielding).

**Down's Syndrome Scotland** is also operating a helpline which you can call between 8am and 8pm from Monday to Friday if you are looking for advice and support. The number to call Down's Syndrome Scotland and speak to one of their Family team is **0300 030 2121**. All calls to this number are charged at the price of a local call and many mobile phone providers include 0300 numbers in their 'free-to-call' bundles.

The Scottish Government has included further advice and information about available support with this letter. Please read it carefully. You can access the full coronavirus guidance for Scotland at [www.mygov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19](http://www.mygov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19).

**We are using the word 'FACTS' to remind everyone how to keep safe. Please follow the FACTS rules:**

- F**ace coverings – wear them in shops, inside restaurants and cafes, and on public transport
- A**void crowded places
- C**lean your hands regularly and for at least 20 seconds
- T**wo metre distance – maintain physical distancing from anyone who's not in your household
- S**elf-isolate and book a test if you have symptoms

### **The NHS is open for everyone**

Looking after your health and wellbeing is important. The NHS 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. Hospitals and GP surgeries have taken steps to reduce the risk of coronavirus and make sure your visits are safe.

Please read the rest of this letter for more information on what the new protection levels mean for those more at risk of becoming very ill if they get coronavirus. There is also information about free vitamin D supplements and a reminder about flu vaccinations.

Yours sincerely,



**DR GREGOR SMITH**  
INTERIM CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER

# **INFORMATION AND SUPPORT TO HELP KEEP YOU SAFE**

## **PLEASE READ**

### **Protect Scotland app**

Download the free Protect Scotland app to help stop COVID-19 spreading again. The app sends alerts to people who have been in close contact with someone else using the app who has tested positive. Being 'in close contact with someone' means being less than 2 metres away from them for at least 15 minutes. The alert will ask you to self-isolate for 14 days.

If you start to develop symptoms you should call 111.

You can also use the app to send anonymous alerts to let other people know if you test positive. The app does not use up much data, and does not record your identity or location. For more information and to download the app visit [www.protect.scot](http://www.protect.scot). Please ask your friends and family to download it too. We know not everyone will be able to or want to access the app. However, they will still benefit from the protection that it offers all of us in Scotland.

### **Case numbers in your area**

You can find information on the number of COVID-19 cases in your area at [www.mygov.scot/shielding](http://www.mygov.scot/shielding).

There is a link to a dashboard that Public Health Scotland update daily. We are also working hard on a new tool to show you in more detail what's happening in your local area. We will let you know further updates on that through the text messaging service soon.

### **If you have symptoms of COVID-19**

If it's an emergency, whether related to COVID-19 or not, phone 999. If you think you have developed symptoms of COVID-19, phone the NHS on 111. Symptoms include:

- a new, continuous cough
- a high temperature (above 37.8°C) and/or
- a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste

### **If you, or the person you care for, has cancer**

This advice is for anyone who has had chemotherapy or radiotherapy for a cancer within the last 6 weeks. If you feel ill, phone someone straight away. Call the emergency Scottish Cancer Treatment Helpline on 0800 917 7711 or the emergency number given to you by your consultant. You should call even if you do not think feeling unwell is due to COVID-19.

### **Mental health and wellbeing**

If you're feeling overwhelmed, anxious, stressed, depressed or worried, please call:

Breathing Space	0800 83 85 87	Monday to Thursday: 6pm – 2am Friday to Monday: 6pm – 6am
Samaritans	116 123	Every day: 24 hours a day
British Red Cross	0808 196 3651	Every day: 10am – 6pm

You can also book GP appointments for support. Help is available online too from the Scottish Association of Mental Health at [www.samh.org.uk](http://www.samh.org.uk).

## **Access to healthcare**

It is vital that you get the care you need in the safest way possible. To make sure this happens, your needs will be assessed by a clinician as part of your GP or hospital care.

Your clinician may decide it is best to carry out an appointment over the telephone. They might also suggest Near Me – a video calling service used by the NHS. Other times, a face to face appointment may happen at your home or in a practice, health centre or hospital.

You should follow the advice your clinician provides as they know you and your condition personally. Before COVID-19, clinicians would have advised some people to stop doing certain things or meeting with other people. This was because of their specific health condition or treatment. You should always ask your healthcare team if you're unsure about any health advice or treatment.

## **Flu Vaccine**

You should soon be receiving a letter inviting you and anyone else in your household for a free flu vaccination. If you're able to get the flu vaccine, you should get this as soon as possible. The flu vaccine will not protect against COVID-19 but it will help protect you and your household from this year's flu.

Call 0800 22 44 88 if you have not received a letter in the next few weeks.

## **Face coverings**

You must wear a face covering when visiting shops, when in most indoor public places, on public transport and in communal areas at your workplace. You must also wear them inside cafes, restaurants when not eating and drinking. This is unless you are exempt, such as having a health condition or disability that makes wearing one hard for you. You do not need to provide written proof you are exempt. Other people who do not need to wear a face covering include:

- children under 5
- people taking certain types of medication
- people who are communicating with someone who lip reads

By face coverings, we mean a facial covering of your mouth and nose. This can be made of cloth or other textiles, for example a scarf, through which you can breathe.

If outdoors, you should maintain physical distancing as much as you can. This is the best way to stay safe. If you it is difficult to maintain physical distancing, we advise you to wear a face covering outside.

## **Getting outdoors and staying active**

We know that going out of your front door can be an anxious time for some people. Getting outside can have lots of physical and mental health benefits. Try to remember that COVID-19 is much less likely to pass from person to person when you're outdoors.

Staying active is good for your mental health and wellbeing. When you are feeling able to, we encourage you to do whatever level of physical activity feels comfortable for you.

You may find that you need to improve your strength and balance if you haven't been as active as you would like. There are lot of things you can do to help you stay steady and reduce your chances of falling. You can find more information at [www.mygov.scot/shielding](http://www.mygov.scot/shielding).

## Vitamin D

Vitamin D is very important for keeping your bones and muscles healthy. Sunlight is our main source of Vitamin D. The amount of sun needed varies from person to person.

Around 10-15 minutes of unprotected Scottish sun exposure is safe for all. This is one of the many benefits of getting outdoors if you can. Remember to use sunscreen to protect your skin if you are staying in the sun for longer than 15 minutes.

We recommend that everyone consider taking a daily 10 microgram (10µg) supplement of vitamin D. Particularly during the autumn and winter months when we are unable to make vitamin D from sunlight. Find more information at [www.mygov.scot/shielding](http://www.mygov.scot/shielding).

## Going to work

We continue to urge all employers to support staff to work from home wherever possible. We ask employers to take particular account of those who are on the shielding list.

For those who are unable to work from home, the Scottish Government and medical professionals have made guidance available to you and your employer. A key part of this is a workplace risk assessment tool. You can access this at [www.mygov.scot/shielding](http://www.mygov.scot/shielding). The guidance should not replace medical advice. It can help ensure measures are put into place to give you confidence in going to your workplace.

## Help with money

If you're worried about money, you can get help and support online, through the Money Talk Team at [www.moneytalkteam.org.uk](http://www.moneytalkteam.org.uk). Or you can call them on 0800 085 7145.

## Going to school

We expect all children who are on the shielding list to be able to go to school as normal. Unless they are given advice not to from their GP or healthcare provider.

You can find information about your child's safety when going to school on the Parent Club website at [www.parentclub.scot/articles/reopening-schools-faqs](http://www.parentclub.scot/articles/reopening-schools-faqs). If you're worried about this, you can speak to your child's school.

## 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-19 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 shielding list by asking your GP or hospital clinician.