

To: All Practices in Surrey and Sussex LMCs

13 July 2020

Dear Colleagues

Shielding Update

The LMC wrote to all practices on 24 June 2020 describing the Government's updated guidance on shielding; since then the Royal College of Paediatrics and Clinical Health (RCPCH) has provided further guidance in relation to shielding children, and the Government has moved towards a Covid19 response that may be localised in response to outbreaks rather than changing national guidance. I enclose a guidance letter which includes three annexes:

Annex 1: This provides a summary of the Government's latest advice to shielding patients; from 1 August, providing there is no significant change in national or local [outbreak] Covid19 incidents, shielding will be paused. Patients who are shielding remain advised to work from home until then, and children from households where a household member is shielding should only return to school if they are able to follow social distancing guidance. Children on the shielding list [see Annex 3] should not return to school before 31 July.

The national support service for people who are shielding will be paused from 31 July and new applications for support will not be accepted from 17 July, although the NHS Volunteer Service remains operating and some supermarkets will continue to provide priority support for those who are registered.

The Shielding Patient List is to be retained and updated after 1 August; those patients who, because of new diagnoses, would be extremely vulnerable to Coronavirus should still be advised they will be added to this list. This is in case the shielding programme, or a modified version of it, needs to be quickly reinstated in the future.

Annex 2: This really only notes the fact that if there are localised outbreaks, measures may need to be reinstated locally that more effectively control the risks of community transmission, and also protect those living locally who are shielding. This means giving different advice to those living in a defined geographical area than applies nationally, which requires a clear method of communication.

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Separately NHS England has noted in its recent update (see my letter of 10/7/2020) GP practices in 'outbreak' areas may temporarily operate under different national and local

contractual arrangements than are in place across the rest of England. Should this happen, practices will be contacted by their CCG and LMC, but this decision must be made by NHS England.

Annex 3: In the light of recent guidance, the RCPCH has updated its advice on the risk of Covid19 infection in children with co-morbidities, reflecting that the risks are generally low and only those with the most severe conditions should still be considered vulnerable; in particular those who were just being care for by their GP, with conditions such as asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, and kidney disease, are unlikely to need to remain on the shielding list. There will be exceptions to this, and GPs are asked to seek Consultant advice if they are unsure or if families need additional advice; the aim is to review all children currently on the shielded list before the start of the new school term in September 2020.

The RCPCH is anticipating paediatric centres will be in contact with many of the children and young people who are currently shielding and proactively discuss their status: if it is agreed such patients do not need to shield, Consultant colleagues will follow current standard advice to remove such patients from the list, which includes informing their NHS GP of this.

NHS requests to GPs

- If GPs are approached by currently shielding children or young people who are under specialist care, they should direct them to their Consultant to discuss the RCPCH advice.
- For patients who are currently shielding but not receiving on-going specialist care, GPs can:
 - Refer to Consultant colleagues (ideally by Advice and Guidance or equivalent) to identify whether a patient should be considered clinically extremely vulnerable and therefore stay on the shielding list. If not, GPs should themselves offer discussion with the young person and their family, remove them from the shielding list.
 - Follow the RCPCH advice and have this conversation themselves.

If patients are removed from the shielding list they are likely to still need to be flagged as at 'moderate' or 'low' risk.

Guidance on applying the RCPCH's update guidance and on having appropriate discussions with children and their families, is available at the RCPCH website:

<https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/resources/covid-19-shielding-guidance-children-young-people>

I hope this further update is helpful.

With best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'JP' followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Dr Julius Parker
Chief Executive