Advice for the clinically extremely vulnerable post-2 December

Stakeholder Q&A

For internal use

General:

1. **Why is the approach to shielding changing?**

   - The four-week period of National Restrictions came to an end on 2 December and new guidance has been published for the clinically extremely vulnerable, linked to the tiering system which is being reintroduced.
   - This updated guidance offers additional advice to the clinically extremely vulnerable over and above the rules for the tiers, which apply to everyone.
   - The new protective guidance is designed to offer practical and proportionate advice to help people protect themselves and minimise the need to introduce more restrictive shielding advice. This reflects the latest advice from senior clinicians, based on our current understanding of the virus.

2. **Why is the government announcing this now?**
   - On 2 December the country moved back to a tiered system of local restrictions. The government updated the guidance for clinically extremely vulnerable people, linking it to these local tiers.
   - This guidance aims to strike a better balance between providing practical steps to help keep you safe while reducing some of the potentially harmful impacts on mental and social wellbeing that were associated with previous strict shielding. It sets out the steps clinically extremely vulnerable people can take to protect themselves for each local tier.

3. **Who will the new guidance apply to?**
   - This guidance applies to those at the highest risk from COVID-19, who have been identified as clinically extremely vulnerable. If you are in this group, you will have received a letter from the NHS or from your GP telling you this, and you may have been advised to shield in the past. See the section on Definition of clinically extremely vulnerable groups for more details.
   - The Government has written out to everyone currently identified as clinically extremely vulnerable to inform them of the change to the guidance.
   - If you have registered your email address with your GP, you may also receive an email.

4. **I'm clinically vulnerable. Should I follow this new guidance?**
   - This guidance applies to those at the highest risk from COVID-19, who have been identified as clinically extremely vulnerable. If you are in this group, you will have received a letter from the NHS or from your GP telling you this, and you may have been advised to shield in the past. See the section on Definition of clinically extremely vulnerable groups for more details.
   - If you have been identified as clinically vulnerable, you should follow the same advice as the rest of the population.

5. **Does this new guidance mean I am now shielding again?**
    - No.
    - On 2 December the country moved back to a tiered system of local restrictions, which provide new rules and guidance for everyone based on the level of risk in their local area. This new guidance provides advice for the clinically extremely vulnerable to follow in addition to these measures.
    - More restrictive shielding measures will only be used in areas facing the highest risk. The Government would write to you separately to inform you if you are advised to shield.

6. **Are you planning on telling us to 'shield' again in the future?**
    - In the future, the Government will only reintroduce formal shielding advice in the very worst affected local areas and for a limited period of time. This will only apply to some, but not all 'Tier Three: Very high' areas and will be based on advice from the Chief Medical Officer.
    - The Government will write to you separately to inform you if you are advised to shield. You are not advised to follow formal shielding advice again unless you receive a new shielding letter advising you to do so.

7. **Is this new CEV guidance compulsory?**
    - As before, the new guidance for the clinically extremely vulnerable is advisory, so you can choose if you want to follow it.

8. **Why is the advice for England different to the advice in other parts of the UK?**
    - Each country has a slightly different health system and this information only applies to those living in England.
    - Chief Medical Officers will be monitoring the scientific evidence in their countries and will change their advice based on risk levels in each nation.

9. **How is the guidance changing?**
    - Rather than advising people to either shield or follow the same guidance as the rest of the population, the new guidance provides a range of advice based on the tier in a local area.
    - The Government has reintroduced a tiered system of local restrictions that introduce rules and guidance for everyone based on the level of risk in their local area. This new guidance offers additional advice for the clinically extremely vulnerable, for each of these tiers.
    - In the very highest risk areas, the Government may recommend more restrictive shielding measures, based on clinical advice and only for a limited period of time. The Government will write out to you individually if this applies to you.

10. **Isn't this just making the guidance more complicated to follow?**
    - This new guidance aims to strike a better balance between providing practical steps to help keep you safe while reducing some of the potentially harmful impacts on mental and social wellbeing that were associated with strict shielding.
    - By linking to the Government's system of local tier restrictions it means advice is based on the level of risk in your local area and ensures that any additional measures are only used where they are necessary. Any changes to the tier of your area will be clearly

communicated to you, and further information can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-restriction-tiers-what-you-need-to-know

11. **What is the advice to clinically extremely vulnerable people at each tier?**
    - Details on the advice to clinically extremely vulnerable people for each tier can be found here:

    https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19

12. **What is the difference between Tier Three: Very high and 'shielding'?**
    - Advise for the clinically extremely vulnerable to follow at each tier can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19
    - Clinically extremely vulnerable people will only be advised to shield in the most high-risk areas and only for a short period during the peak of a particular outbreak in that area.
    - This shielding advice will be more restrictive than at Tier 3 and is likely to recommend not going out to work or the shops.
    - If shielding is introduced in your area, we will write to you to inform you and provide further guidance. At that stage further support will also be made available for those who need it from your local authority and community pharmacies to help protect you during this period of heightened risk.

13. **Why are different areas at different tiers?**
    - We now have better data on the risk level in local areas. This means that the Government is able to provide more specific advice based on the local level of risk. It also enables us to have a more consistent approach to local lockdown restrictions and measures across the country.

14. **How will I know which tier my area is in?**
    - You can find out what level of restrictions are in place in your area by using the postcode search tool here: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-restriction-tiers-what-you-need-to-know

15. **Are changes in tiers linked to the R rate?**
    - A broad range of factors are considered when placing an area into a particular tier.

16. **How will the government communicate changes between tiers?**
    - You can find out what level of restrictions are in place in your area by using the postcode search tool here: www.gov.uk/find-coronavirus-local-restrictions

17. **Will I receive a letter each time my local tier changes?**
    - No. We will only contact you by letter if you live in a n area of extremely high risk and you are advised to shield.

18. Why are you not telling people to shield if rates in my area are high and rising?

- Local tiered guidance for the clinically extremely vulnerable reflects many epidemiological factors which are taken into account prior to the assignment of tiers.
- The Government also recognises that the wider context to keep us all safe has changed since shielding was first introduced, with national measures in place that apply to everyone (e.g. rule of six, wearing of facemasks) and businesses being Covid-secure for their staff and customers. All these measures provide protection to the most vulnerable.
- While we advise that Clinically Extremely Vulnerable individuals take extra caution where possible, shielding is a restrictive measure intervention and we do not want to be advising anyone to follow these measures for longer than is necessary.

19. Will I be able to meet up with friends and family?

- Everyone must follow the restrictions in place in their local area. You can find out what level of restrictions are in place in your area by using the postcode search tool here: www.gov.uk/find-coronavirus-local-restrictions
- Details on the additional advice to clinically extremely vulnerable people at each tier can be found here
- https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19

20. Can I go outside to exercise?

- You are encouraged to go outside for exercise because of the benefits that this brings.
- In Tier One: Medium and Tier Two: High you can exercise outside in a group of up to six people.
- At Tier Three: Very high, we still advise clinically extremely vulnerable people to continue to go outside for exercise, but to avoid busy areas to minimise the chance of coming into close contact with others.

21. Is there still a shielded patient list?

- The shielded patient list is still in use. If you have been identified as clinically extremely vulnerable, you will have received a letter from your GP, hospital or (if identified nationally) from our national service. More information about the shielded patient list can be found here https://digital.nhs.uk/coronavirus/shielded-patient-list

22. Are you adding new groups to the shielded patient list?

- The shielded patient list is monitored regularly, and if scientific evidence shows that other groups face a very high risk of severe illness from COVID-19 then they would be added to the shielded patient list and informed of this.

23. Will you be taking people off the shielded patient list?

- The decision to remove anyone from the shielded patient list will only be taken following a consultation with their GP or clinician. It would be based on a clinical decision, and the individual would have the opportunity to discuss this with them.

24. **Will my GP/clinician be informed about this change or be given any guidance?**
    - GPs and clinicians will always be informed about any new updates and will be provided with the relevant guidance.

25. **Can I still attend a hospital or doctor's appointment?**
    - Yes. It is vital that you access NHS services if you need them and you should attend any hospital or doctor's appointments that you have. You should also contact the NHS if you have an urgent or emergency care need. All NHS services that you access will be provided in a COVID-secure setting.

Support

26. **Will there be support available to clinically extremely vulnerable people in Tier One: Medium, Tier Two: High and Tier Three: Very high?**
    - You may wish to ask friends and family for help with shopping and collecting medicines. If this is unavailable, support is available from NHS Volunteer Responders for the collection of medicines, shopping and other essentials in all tiers. You can call them for free on 0808 196 3646. There may also be other voluntary services available in your area which can provide support.
    - If you are a clinically extremely vulnerable person living in a Tier Three (very high risk) area who does not have someone you can rely on to go shopping for you then you can register priority access to supermarket deliveries, at this website: https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-shielding-support. Registration is not available at the lower tiers.
    - Please contact your Local Authority if you need further assistance in following the guidance.

27. **Is shielding/support package being scaled back to save money?**
    - No. The new guidance and support is based upon detailed consultation with medical professionals and has been updated now that we have a better understanding of the social and economic implications of shielding advice and have well established measures such as the 'rule of six' and mandating the use of face coverings in many settings. The new system allows measures to be targeted only where they are necessary, so that those who are clinically extremely vulnerable in low risk areas can continue to lead less restrictive lives.

28. **Will I get access to food parcels if my area is Tier One: Medium, Tier Two: High or Tier Three: Very high?**
    - Government food parcel deliveries ended on 31 July 2020.
    - If you are receiving priority access to supermarket deliveries this will continue. However, please note that Asda have temporarily suspended priority access between 6 November and 23 December, and CEVs will only be able to see and book the same slots as non-CEV customers.
    - If you live in Tier Three (very high risk) and do not have someone you can rely on to go shopping for you, then you can register via https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-shielding-support to request priority access to supermarket deliveries.

- If you require assistance with food shopping, NHS Volunteer Responders may also be able to help. You can call them for free on 0808 196 3646.
- Please contact your Local Authority if you need further assistance in following the guidance.

29. Will I get priority access to supermarket deliveries if my area is in Tier One: Medium, Tier Two: High or Tier Three: Very high?

- If you are already accessing priority supermarket delivery slots, then you will continue to be able to do so. However, please note that Asda have temporarily suspended priority access between 6 November and 23 December, and CEVs will only be able to see and book the same slots as non-CEV customers.
- If you are a clinically extremely vulnerable individual living in a Tier Three (very high risk) area and do not have someone you can rely on to go shopping for you then you can register via https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-shielding-support to request priority access to supermarket deliveries.
- You will need to either have or create an online account with the supermarkets of your choice in order to receive priority access to deliveries. You should be aware that some supermarkets may apply some additional conditions on access to priority slots.
- If you are finding it difficult to get a delivery slot with your preferred supermarket you may wish to consider different supermarkets. You can set up accounts with as many of the 7 supermarkets as you want to maximise the chance of being able to access a slot when you need it (although delivery charges and minimum basket charges will vary).

30. How do I get access to food/ supermarket deliveries if I can't get online?

- You may wish to ask friends and family for help with shopping, friends and family can also register you on your behalf for access to priority supermarket deliveries. They will require your NHS number and current address.
- If you require assistance with food shopping, NHS Volunteer Responders may be able to help. You can call them for free on 0808 196 3646. There may also be other voluntary services available in your area which can provide support.
- Please contact your Local Authority if you need further assistance in following the guidance.

31. Will I get access to free medicines delivery if my area is in Tier One: Medium, Tier Two: High or Tier Three: Very High?

- In Tier One: Medium areas, the risk level is deemed to be low enough to enable you to collect your medicine unaided. You can further mitigate any concerns by collecting at quieter times of the day and by strictly observing good hand hygiene and maintaining social distancing as much as possible
- For those in Tier Two: High, you should consider asking friends or family to help with collecting medicines.
- For those or Tier Three: Very high, you are advised to ask people in your household or support bubble to collect medicines for you.
- For both Tier 2 and 3, if friends or family are unable to assist, NHS Volunteer Responders are may be able to help. You can call them for free on 0808 196 3646.

- We recognise that a small number of individuals that live in Tier Three: Very high areas may require additional support to follow the guidance safely. Please contact your Local Authority if you need assistance

32. Will I get support if I am told to shield again?

- Support will be available for those clinically extremely vulnerable people who need it in any areas where shielding is introduced. You are advised not to go to the shops. Use online shopping if you can, or ask others to collect and deliver shopping for you (friends and family, or NHS Volunteer Responders).You can register via https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-shielding-support to request access to priority supermarket deliveries if you do not have someone you can rely on to go shopping for you. You can also use this website to tell your council if you need support to follow shielding guidance, especially if you are unable to arrange this yourself or with the help of friends, family or other support networks.
- If you already have a priority delivery slot with a supermarket, that will continue.
- Community pharmacies will also offer free medicines delivery.
- There may also be other voluntary services available in your area which can provide support.

33. Why is the Government offering vitamin D supplements to the clinically extremely vulnerable?

- During the autumn and winter months everyone is advised to take a supplement of vitamin D every day to support general health and in particular for bone and muscle health.
- This advice is particularly important for people who have been shielding this year due to COVID-19, or who are living in care homes, because they are most likely to have been indoors over the spring and summer and so may not have been able to obtain enough vitamin D from sunlight.

34. How can I get vitamin D tablets?

- The Government is offering a free 4-month supply of daily supplements of vitamin D for all adults who are clinically extremely vulnerable to support general health and in particular for bone and muscle health.
- If you would like to opt-in to receive your free supply of vitamin D, you will need register your details between 30 November 2020 and 4 January 2021 at the following link: www.nhs.uk/get-vitamin-d
- You do not need to opt-in to receive the vitamin D supplements if:
  - You are already taking, or are prescribed, a vitamin D supplement by your GP or healthcare professional.
  - You are currently living in a nursing or residential care home as we will provide these direct to the home where you live.
  - You have a medical condition or treatment that means you may not be able to safely take as much vitamin D as the general population.
- We expect to start distributing the vitamin D supplements from January 2021. Further guidance on how to safely take vitamin D supplements will be provided during the opt in process.

35. How can I get support for my mental health and wellbeing?

- Every Mind Matters website is available to everyone with advice and practical steps that you can take to support your wellbeing and manage your mental health during this pandemic.
- Anyone concerned about their mental health should speak to their GP or existing care team, or can access further advice via NHS.UK. Online self-referral options are commonly available for some services including children and young people's mental health services, and psychological therapies services for adults with common mental health problems such as anxiety and depression.
- All mental health providers, including providers of psychological therapies, have been issued with guidance to encourage them to deliver care remotely so that vulnerable groups can receive care safely.
- You may also find helpful resources, including information on how to access counselling and psychotherapy, on the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy's website.
- Mental health trusts in England have been instructed to put in place 24/7 crisis lines for all ages so people can get urgent help whenever they need it. A national service finder for local urgent mental health telephone lines is now available on the NHS.UK website.
- If you or someone you care for are experiencing a mental health crisis, we urge you to make contact with a local health professional immediately.

Work and education

36. Can I take public transport if my area is in Tier One: Medium, Tier Two: High or Tier Three: Very high?

- There are no restrictions on travel in Tier One: Medium, although we advise clinically extremely vulnerable people to limit journeys on public transport where possible.
- In Tier Two: High, everyone is advised to minimise travel where possible, except for essentials (e.g. going to work, school, food shopping). In addition, we advise clinically extremely vulnerable people to avoid travel where possible except for going to work, school, or for essential shopping.
- 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. Travelling by car is likely to mean fewer social contacts than travelling by public transport. You should avoid sharing a car, especially with people outside of your immediate household or support bubble.
- In Tier Three: Very high everyone should aim to reduce the number of journeys they make and should avoid travel into or out of a Tier Three: Very high area.
- In general, we advise clinically extremely vulnerable people to stay at home as much as possible. You should avoid travel in or out of the area, but you can still travel to go to work or school. As above, try not to share a car outside of your household or bubble. Walking, cycling, or travelling in a private car are safer than public transport because there is more fresh air and you are likely to come into contact with fewer people.
- If your area has been advised to shield you are advised to stay at home as much as possible and not to travel unless essential.

37. Can a clinically extremely vulnerable child or young person go to school if their area is in Tier One: Medium, Tier Two: High or Tier Three: Very high?

- Yes. All pupils and students should continue to attend educational settings at all tiers unless they are one of the very small number of children and young people under

paediatric care or other NHS care and have been given explicit individual clinical advice by their GP or clinician not to attend an educational setting.

- If you think this may be relevant to you as a young person or your child, please discuss this directly with you GP or hospital specialist.

38. Can I go to work if my area is in Tier One: Medium, Tier Two: High or Tier Three: Very High?

- Everyone is currently advised to work from home where possible.
- If you cannot work from home, you can still attend your workplace if your area is in Tier1: Medium, Tier Two: High or Tier Three: Very high as your workplace should be Covid-secure.
- Further advice about going to work for clinically extremely vulnerable people can be found here:
- https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19
- Your employer may be able to furlough you under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), which has been extended until the end of March 2021. You should have a conversation with your employer about whether this is possible.

39. Surely, it's not safe for clinically extremely vulnerable people to go to work if an area is in Tier Three: Very high?

- Everyone is currently advised to work from home where possible.
- If the area you live in is in Tier Three: Very high, where at all possible you are advised to work from home, because the rate of transmission of the virus in your area is high.
- If you cannot work from home, and are concerned about going into work, you may want to speak to your employer about taking on an alternative role or change your working patterns temporarily (for example, to avoid travelling in rush hour).
- If there is no alternative, you can still go to work. Your employer is required to take steps to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace. Your employer should be able to explain to you the measures they have put in place to keep you safe at work.
- Further advice about going to work for clinically extremely vulnerable people can be found here:
- https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19
- Your employer may be able to furlough you under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), which has been extended until the end of March 2021. You should have a conversation with your employer about whether this is possible.

40. What if my workplace isn't Covid-secure? Can I still go into work?

- Where some employers are not adequately managing the risk of coronavirus transmission, the Health and Safety Executive and Local Authorities will take action - which can range from the provision of specific advice, issuing enforcement notices, or stopping certain work practices until they are made safe and, where businesses fail to comply with enforcement notices, this could lead to prosecution.

- If you have concerns about your health and safety at work you can raise them with your workplace union, the Health and Safety Executive or your local authority.

41. **If my workplace isn't Covid-secure and therefore I don't go into work, am I eligible for SSP and/or ESA?**
    - Where clinically extremely vulnerable individuals are no longer required to shield, and they are unable to work from home but can work on site, they should do so, provided the business is Covid-secure.
    - The government expects employers to do the right thing to support their employees to make alternative arrangements to allow working from home, or to enable them to follow strict social distancing in the workplace where they cannot work from home.
    - If you cannot make alternative arrangements, your employer may be able to furlough you under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), which has been extended until the end of March 2021. You should have a conversation with your employer about whether this is possible.
    - If individuals have concerns about their health and safety at work, they can raise them with any union safety representatives, or ultimately with the organisation responsibility for enforcement in their workplace, either the Health and Safety Executive or their local authority.
    - Individuals can get advice on their specific situation and their employment rights by visiting the Acas website https://www.acas.org.uk/contact or calling the Acas helpline on 0300 123 1100.
    - Employees will be remain eligible for SSP if they are unable to work and are sick, required to self-isolate, or they are advised to shield, provided they meet all eligibility conditions.

42. **What are my employment protections if I don't feel able to go into work, and am concerned about the safety?**
    - Your employer is required to take steps to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace. Your employer should be able to explain to you the measures they have put in place to keep you safe at work.
    - Where some employers are not managing the risk of coronavirus, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and Local Authorities will take action which can range from the provision of specific advice, issuing enforcement notices, stopping certain work practices until they are made safe and, where businesses fail to comply with enforcement notices, this could lead to prosecution.
    - If you have concerns about your health and safety at work you can raise them with your workplace union, the Health and Safety Executive or your local authority
    - If you have concerns, you can get advice on your specific situation and your employment rights by visiting the Acas website or calling the Acas helpline on 0300 123 1100.
    - The existing employment rights framework also provides protections against discrimination, unfair dismissal and detriment.

43. **What if I live in an area that is shielding and work in an area that is in Tier One: Medium, Tier Two: High or Tier Three: Very high?**
    - If you live in an area that is shielding you are strongly advised to work from home if at all possible because the risk of exposure to the virus in your area is extremely high. If you cannot work from home, then you should not attend work.

- The Government has extended the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (furlough) until the end of March 2021 which you may be eligible for if you were on payroll before 30 October 2020. Please speak to your employer if you think you are eligible.
- If you cannot work, you may be eligible for Statutory Sick Pay (SSP), Universal Credit (UC) or Employment Support Allowance (ESA). Eligibility criteria apply.
- The letter you will receive will act as evidence for your employer or the Department of Work and Pensions that you are advised to shield and may be eligible for SSP or ESA.
- SSP is payable for up to 28 weeks per sickness absence. If an individual has used up their SSP entitlement, they may be able to claim UC and/or ESA when their SSP ends, depending on individual circumstances.
- SSP is intended as a safety net for individuals who are clinically extremely vulnerable, in cases where their employer chooses not to furlough them under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and does not have other suitable policies in place (e.g. the ability to work from home, or the provision of special leave.

44. What if a child or young person lives in an area that is in Tier One: Medium, Tier Two: High or Tier Three: Very high and attends school in an area that is shielding?

- You should follow the guidance for either the area you live in, or the area you are travelling to in order to attend your educational setting; whichever has the higher risk level. For example, if you live in an area in Tier One: Medium but go to an educational setting in a Tier Two: High area, follow the High guidance for going to the educational setting. If you live in a Tier Two: High area and attend an educational setting in a Tier One: Medium area, follow the Tier Two: High guidance for going to the educational setting.

45. If I am clinically extremely vulnerable and live in a shielding area, can a child or young person I live with still attend school?

- People who are living with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable do not need to follow shielding guidance themselves but do need to follow guidance on social distancing which can be found here:https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing
- This means pupils and student who are living with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable should continue to attend school.

46. If I am clinically extremely vulnerable and live in a shielding area, can those I live with still attend work?

- Everyone is currently advised to work from home where possible. If it is not possible for someone in your household to work from home their employer is already required to take steps to reduce the risk of exposure to Covid-19 in the workplace. Their workplace should therefore be Covid-secure.
- If someone in your household is not able to work from home, they do not need to start shielding themselves, but do need to follow guidance on social distancing which can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-

covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing

- This means someone who is living with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable should attend work as normal if they are unable to work from home.

47. Should I still go to my hospital / GP appointment?

- Yes. If you have a routine appointment, make sure you keep it, unless recommended otherwise by your doctor. If you are told to go to hospital for a routine appointment, then the NHS has measures in place to make sure that it safe for you to do so.
- If you have a symptom that could be cancer (such as unexplained blood that doesn't come from an obvious injury, an unexplained lump, weight loss which feels significant to you or an unexplained pain that doesn't go away) or a maternity concern, you should seek medical help. The NHS is here to help you and can see you safely.
- No staff who have COVID-19 symptoms or come into contact with someone with symptoms are allowed to work in the hospital meaning the NHS can see you in a safe environment.
- If you are pregnant, it is crucial that you still attend your antenatal appointments and continue to seek advice from your midwife or maternity team to ensure you have a safe and healthy pregnancy. Maternity services have been asked to take extra precautions to keep women at greatest risk safe and everyone should seek advice without delay if they are concerned about their or their baby's health.

Christmas

48. Can I form a Christmas bubble with friends and family between the 23rd and 27th of December?

- You can choose to be part of a Christmas bubble if you are clinically extremely vulnerable, but it does involve greater risks for you as you will be increasing the number of people you have contact with.
- Existing support bubbles count as one household towards the three household limit. This means that if you are in a support bubble, you can collectively form a Christmas bubble with two other households. This applies only to support bubbles as set out in law. You should, however, consider the risks of doing so and keep your Christmas bubble as small as possible."

49. If I choose to be part of a Christmas bubble what steps can I take to reduce my risk?

- You will continue to minimise your risk of infection if you limit social contact with people that you do not live with, even at Christmas. It is important that you and the other people in your Christmas bubble consider these risks carefully before agreeing to form a bubble. Forming a Christmas bubble is a personal choice and should be balanced against the increased risk of infection.
- If you do decide to form a Christmas bubble it is advised that you maintain social distance from those you don't normally live with at all times, avoiding physical contact. Everyone should wash their hands regularly and it is important to ensure the space where you spend time with those you don't normally live with has fresh air, by opening a window and to clean touch points regularly, such as door handles and surfaces. You may want to think

about who you sit next to, including during meals, and also consider wearing a face covering indoors where social distancing may be difficult as well as encouraging others to do the same.

ENDS