

Shielded Patient Lists and School Attendance

Update: 5th November, 2020

General advice and information:

School attendance has been mandatory again from September 2020 and the usual rules on school attendance apply. This also sees parents resume their duty to secure their children's regular attendance at their school/educational setting. In addition schools will have a responsibility to record attendance and follow up any absence as before and also the ability to request the Local Authority issue any sanctions, for parents/carers failing to send children to school.

We appreciate that this will be a struggle for some parents, children, families but it is important you contact your school to discuss your current concerns. If there are any medical professionals involved with your family who have advised or offered further support and guidance regarding your situation it is important you discuss this with the school. There are some circumstances where pupils cannot attend school due to circumstances related to coronavirus and these are very specific and as the Secretary of State outlines 'no parent will be penalised for following official public health advice'. Therefore, it is important that you talk to the school about your concerns and the best re-engagement plan for your children in line with any health conditions. The Southampton Education Welfare Service works closely with schools on improving school attendance and is here to help, support and work together to reassure, ascertain the appropriate support and best way forward to re-engage children and young people with their education and their future opportunities.

My child has medical/health condition, do they need to attend school during lockdown?

Yes, the Government is clear in its current guidance. All pupils and students should continue to attend education settings at all local COVID alert levels unless they are one of the very small number of pupils or students under paediatric or other specialist care and have been advised by their GP or clinician not to attend an education setting. These are the children and young people included either on the Shielded Patient List or considered Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV).

How do I know if that applies to my child? Is my child on the list?

The Government are frequently updating the shielding and clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) list. If your child is on the list, you will receive a new written notification. You must keep this notification safe and provide it to your child's school as they will keep a copy to support their attendance information. Your child's specialist or GP should be able to confirm for you if you are in any doubt.

What if my child is clinically extremely vulnerable and I haven't received a letter?

More evidence has emerged that shows there is a very low risk of children becoming very unwell from COVID-19, even for children with existing health conditions. Most children originally identified as clinically extremely vulnerable no longer need to follow this advice. Speak to your GP or specialist clinician, if you have not already done so, to understand whether your child should still be classed as clinically extremely vulnerable.



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My child was on the shielded list, are they still on or not?

Over the summer, all children on the Shielded Patient Lists should have been reviewed by their clinicians, to discuss whether they are still considered to be CEV before their return to school after the summer break. If this has not happened or you are still unsure, contact your GP or specialist team as soon as possible.

I don't think my child should be on the list anymore. What should I do?

Patients can only be removed from the shielding patient list by their GP or specialist, following discussion/consultation with the child and their family, and other clinicians where appropriate. If a child is no longer clinically extremely vulnerable, clinicians should discuss with children and their families/carers their removal from the shielding list.

Where can I find out whether my child's condition means they are vulnerable or CEV?

The up to date information can be accessed online 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>

I have the notification letter for my child, what happens now?

Those children whose doctors have confirmed they are still (or now) clinically extremely vulnerable are advised not to attend school while this advice is in place. The expectation upon schools is that they will make appropriate arrangements for you to be able to continue your child's education at home. This may be in the form of learning packs sent home, online or virtual learning, or a combination of activities.

I have a child who is shielding/CEV, does their sibling need to attend school during lockdown?

Yes and again, the current government guidance is clear. Children who live with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable, but are not clinically extremely vulnerable themselves, should still attend school.

Be sure to clarify any concerns you may have with your GP or specialist clinician as soon as possible.

I am shielding, do I need to send my child to school?

Yes and again, the current government guidance is clear. Children who live with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable, but are not clinically extremely vulnerable themselves, should still attend school.

Be sure to clarify any concerns you may have with your GP or specialist clinician as soon as possible.

I don't have a letter and I'm not going to send my child to school, what will the school do?

If you are waiting on notification or evidence from Doctors or clinicians you must talk to your child's school. Contact the school and discuss your child's case as soon as possible.

If your child is not eligible for a notification letter from the NHS, you must send your child to school. The current government guidance is clear, they must attend their school.

Will I be fined or prosecuted for my child's non-attendance?

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 **places a duty upon parents of a child of compulsory school age to cause that child to receive efficient full-time education.** Given the Prime Minister's announcement, regarding schools, colleges and universities and protecting people more at risk from coronavirus, there is a continued expectation that children and young people should still attend school.

If you have a notification letter that instructs your child to shield, you don't need to do anything further. School will mark the register accordingly and they should have plans in place for your child to engage in their education from home.

If you don't have any formal notification to shield and if there is no public health reason to authorise the absence, the school will contact you in the first instance to follow up any reasons for absence. Depending on the outcome, the school may request a penalty notice for issue from the local authority. This is at the Head Teacher's discretion. Alternatively, a referral to the Education Welfare Service may be made to investigate the reasons for absence further. These will be dealt with on a case by case basis by the service in partnership with parents/carers, schools and the local authority.

Is there a local (Southampton) NHS response regarding the Government's advice?

"Any child who returned to school before the summer holidays (i.e. before shielding officially ended) is definitely OK to continue attending school now.

The RCPCH have regularly updated their guidance, and there are now very few children who would still be considered clinically extremely vulnerable in our schools. The RCPCH Guidance can be found here: <https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/sites/default/files/generated-pdf/document/COVID-19---%2527shielding%2527-guidance-for-children-and-young-people.pdf> . Some may consider themselves to be in Group B of these guidelines and they should discuss with their own GP or specialist team, but my understanding that is even if they ARE in group B, we would still be recommending they attend school, with all the current measures in place."

Dr Nick Le Prevost, Consultant Paediatrician: Community Child Health, Clinical Lead for CPMS (Solent West), Lead for Children with Complex Health Needs.