

Shielding advice for the clinically extremely vulnerable to stop from April

- Advice to the clinically extremely vulnerable to shield ceases from Thursday 1 April, as virus infection rates continue to fall
- People on shielded patient list will receive letters from today with updated guidance on steps people can take to reduce their risk
- More than 9 in 10 clinically extremely vulnerable people have been vaccinated with a first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine

In line with the government's [COVID-19 Response – Spring 2021](#) roadmap published last month, those on the shielded patient list can begin to follow the national restrictions alongside the rest of the population, but are still advised to take extra precautions to keep themselves safe from COVID-19.

Letters to patients with updated guidance will be arriving from today and over the next 2 weeks. These set out practical steps people can follow to reduce their risk of catching the virus, including continuing to maintain strict social distancing and to keep their overall social contacts at low levels, such as working from home where possible.

The move follows the steady decrease in the number of COVID-19 cases and hospitalisations across the country for the last couple of weeks.

Senior clinicians, including the Deputy Chief Medical Officer for England, Dr Jenny Harries, have recommended that shielding advice is paused nationally from 1 April onwards, as supported by the latest scientific evidence and advice.

With the success of the UK's COVID-19 vaccination programme, more than 9 in 10 clinically extremely vulnerable people are now vaccinated with their first dose, but it's still important people continue to follow the national rules and take the additional precautions set out in the guidance to keep themselves as protected as possible.

Local councils and supermarkets will continue to provide support for those shielding until 31 March. If people have already registered for priority access to supermarket delivery slots, they will continue to be able to access these until 21 June 2021.

Deputy Chief Medical Officer for England, Dr Jenny Harries, said:

Shielding has always been an advisory measure to safeguard those who are the most clinically vulnerable in our communities. We recognise how difficult this period has been for so many and the impact it has had on people's wellbeing.

With the prevalence of the virus in the community continuing to decrease now is the right time for people to start thinking about easing up on these more rigid guidelines.

If you have been shielding, we strongly urge you to take extra precautions following 1 April to keep yourself as safe as possible, such as continuing to observe social distancing and working from home.

We will continue to monitor all of the evidence and adjust this advice should there be any changes in infection rates.

People are still advised to continue working from home where possible, but if people are unable to do so, employers are required by law to take steps to make workplaces COVID-19 secure and should discuss this with their employees.

In February 2021, the government announced a new predictive risk model that helps clinicians identify additional people who may be at higher cumulative risk from COVID-19 due to the combination of their underlying risk factors.

Up to 1.7 million vulnerable individuals were identified by the tool, taking the total number of people in the shielded patient list up to 3.79 million people, as of 6 March 2021. As a result, over 800,000 more adults have been prioritised to receive a vaccine that weren't already in the top four priority groups for phase one of vaccinations.

Updated guidance will be published on GOV.UK.

[Read more about the COVID-19 Response – Spring 2021.](#)

[Figures on those on the shielded patient list are published by NHS Digital.](#)

If you are aged 16 or older and have been advised you are clinically extremely vulnerable, you should already have been offered your first dose of the vaccine. If you have not yet received your first dose, please contact your GP.

If you have received your first dose, you should still ensure you take up your second dose of the vaccine when it is offered to you. Having 2 doses should further increase your level of protection.

No vaccine is 100% effective and therefore even if you have had both doses, there is still no absolute guarantee that you will not become ill from COVID-19. Therefore, you should continue to take the extra precautions set out in this guidance to help protect yourself.

See the [latest vaccination statistics](#).

Directors disqualified over illegal construction cartel

Press release

The CMA has secured the disqualification of 2 former directors of Northern Ireland-based firm FP McCann Ltd for their parts in an illegal construction cartel.



The move follows the Competition and Market Authority's (CMA) 2019 decision that FP McCann Ltd (FPM), along with 2 other suppliers of pre-cast concrete drainage products – Stanton Bonna Concrete Ltd and CPM Group Ltd – infringed competition law.

The CMA found that, from July 2006 to March 2013, the suppliers agreed among themselves to fix or coordinate their prices, shared out the market by allocating customers and exchanged with each other competitively sensitive information. FPM appealed against this decision, but in December 2020 the CMA's determination was upheld by the Competition Appeal Tribunal.

Reflecting the serious nature of the infringement and the directors' involvement, the CMA has now secured the disqualification of Mr Eoin McCann and Mr Francis McCann, both of whom were directors during the entire period in which the infringing conduct took place and attended regular cartel meetings on behalf of FPM. Mr Eoin McCann will be disqualified for 12 years and Mr Francis McCann for 11 years, the longest period for director disqualification secured by the CMA to date. The disqualifications will commence on 31 March.

Michael Grenfell, Executive Director of Enforcement at the CMA, said:

The length of these disqualification periods reflects the seriousness of this case.

The CMA will continue to take strong action, where necessary, to protect the public from illegal anticompetitive practices. The message to directors is clear – you are personally responsible for ensuring that your company complies with competition law, and if it doesn't you risk disqualification.

These disqualifications follow the disqualification of Mr Philip Stacey and Mr Robert Smillie, who were previously directors of CPM, in April 2019.

They bring the total number of disqualifications, as a result of CMA investigations, to 25.

The CMA has issued a range of guidance to help businesses and directors understand more about how to comply with competition law, including [compliance advice for company directors](#) on how to avoid director disqualification and the [competition law risk guide](#).

Notes to Editors

1. More information on this case can be found on the [pre-cast concrete drainage cartel inquiry case page](#).
2. Under the Company Directors Disqualification Act and the Company Directors Disqualification (Northern Ireland) Order 2002, the CMA has the power to apply to the court to disqualify a director from holding company directorships or performing certain roles in relation to a company, for a specified period, if a company of which he or she is a director has breached competition law. The Act and the Order also allow the CMA to accept a disqualification undertaking from a director as an alternative to bringing proceedings and obtaining an order in Court; such an undertaking has the same legal effect as a disqualification order. These disqualifications were secured by such undertakings.
3. The register of disqualified directors is published on the Companies House website.
4. Media queries should be directed to: press@cma.gov.uk or 020 3738 6460.

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Former defence worker jailed for longer after breaching Officials Secrets Act

A former defence worker who disclosed highly sensitive information about a UK missile system has had his sentence increased following intervention by the then Solicitor General, Rt Hon Michael Ellis QC MP, who presented the case at the Court of Appeal.

Simon Finch, 50, was formerly employed by two major defence companies who provide contracted services to the Ministry of Defence.

Finch's personal circumstances began to deteriorate after he was arrested for carrying a hammer and a large kitchen knife in public. He was sentenced to 16 weeks' imprisonment, suspended for 12 months in 2016. He did not tell his employer of the conviction.

Finch subsequently made a series of complaints about the way he was treated by the police. In February 2018 he left his job and began to plan the unlawful disclosure, recording from memory highly sensitive details of a UK missile system. In October 2018, he deliberately sent the information to several recipients.

He was arrested at his home address in Swansea in March 2019. During the investigation, he refused to disclose the passwords to his personal computers.

On 10 November 2020, Finch was sentenced to 4 years and 6 months' imprisonment at the Old Bailey. He was also made the subject of a five-year serious crime and prevention order.

Following a referral to the Court of Appeal under the Unduly Lenient Sentence (ULS) scheme, on 2 March the sentence was found to be unduly lenient and has been increased to a sentence of 8 years' imprisonment.

After the hearing at the Court of Appeal, the now Attorney General, Rt Hon Michael Ellis QC MP, said:

Finch deliberately disclosed highly sensitive information which could have put our national security at risk. His actions could have caused significant harm to British citizens and I welcome the Court of Appeal increasing his sentence today.

Groundbreaking partnership delivers first modular homes at Northstowe

A joint venture between the Government's housing agency, Homes England, one of the world's biggest housebuilders, Sekisui House, and award-winning property developer Urban Splash has delivered the first modular homes at the new town of Northstowe.

Each Town House home has been created by House by Urban Splash, a company backed by a £90m deal between the government's housing agency, Urban Splash, and Japan based Sekisui House.

The Town House homes are the first of 406 MMC homes which will form the new community of Inholm on Homes England land at Northstowe.

The arrival of the homes marks a significant milestone for the agency's 2019 joint venture with Sekisui House and House by Urban Splash, and further cements its commitment to MMC housing.

Housing Minister Rt Hon Christopher Pincher MP said: "Building the homes the country needs is a priority for the government and this development, using modern methods of construction, will not only accelerate this work but deliver better quality and more energy efficient homes too.

"These homes showcase the most promising housebuilding innovations around today and will provide a blueprint for the years to come."

Chris Shaw, delivery director for House by Urban Splash explained: "We really are pleased to bring our first homes to Inholm. Each of these Town House homes has been created to the highest quality standards in our factory; we then carefully transport each floor – known as a module – to site via road, before craning it into place.

"We've been pioneering this concept for a few years now, delivering homes in this way to customers in Manchester, Birmingham, North Shields and Salford.

"It's great to extend that offering and bring the first modular homes to this new neighbourhood. We cannot wait to see customers move in here and for this new community to flourish as a great place to live, work and play."

Homes England is committed to supporting smaller housebuilders and developers to adopt MMC to increase the pace of construction, improve quality and energy efficiency and create a more diverse housing sector.

Gordon More, Chief Investment Officer for Homes England, said:

"Seeing our groundbreaking joint venture with Sekisui House and Urban Splash deliver the first MMC homes on our land at Northstowe is a proud moment for everyone at Homes England.

“This ambitious partnership and the creation of a new community of more than 400 MMC homes at the new town is a real statement of our intent to support MMC, encourage new entrants into the market and support the creation of sustainable neighbourhoods where they’re needed most.”

Inholm is one of a number of sites that will form part of Homes England’s 1,500 home research study into modern methods of construction (MMC) to drive innovation in the construction industry.

The study will test the performance of different types of MMC to provide long-term, in-depth and verifiable data so that informed decisions about emerging construction technologies can be made.

Manufactured at the House by Urban Splash factory in Alfreton in the East Midlands, the Town House homes at Inholm use approximately 67% less energy to build compared to an equivalent traditional built project and contain energy-saving features including high-quality insulation, super energy-efficient windows and LED lighting, a hot water cylinder with an integrated airforce heat pump and clean, emission-free.electric heating.

[DBS hosts virtual tours with police forces](#)

News story

The tours focused on role of the police in our barring decision-making processes.



The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) recently hosted two virtual tours with Sussex and Essex police forces. The tours, which were facilitated by barring staff at DBS, focused on the role that the police have in providing information to DBS as part of the barring decision-making process.

In the past, police forces been provided with a tour of all barring

departments at our barring office, but due to the coronavirus pandemic, recent tours have been virtual.

As an organisation, DBS has no investigatory powers, so we often liaise with police forces as part of the decision-making process when a barring referral is made.

The tours allowed the police to understand how any information they provide is used and gave them an insight into the decision-making process itself, alongside the initial risk-assessment that is carried out by DBS when we receive a referral.

Feedback from Sussex Police and Essex Police has been extremely positive, and highlighted the importance of communication between DBS and the police forces we work alongside.

There will be further tours held in the future.

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