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|  | Date: **Thursday 14** **January**  Our Ref: **Covid-19 Support**  Enquiries to: **Covid-19 Support**  **Team**  Tel: **01454 864040**  E-mail: [covid.support@southglos.gov.uk](mailto:covid.support@southglos.gov.uk) |
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Dear

As you are aware, the Government has announced a national lockdown to help reduce the spread of Covid-19 and they have also advised those identified as Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) to ‘shield’, which means to stay at home. This means that you are not required to go to work if you are not able to work from home. The Government is in the process of sending letters or emails to all CEV outlining the guidance and the support available nationally and the protections for those in work. If you need to know more about your employment and benefits rights, you can contact Citizens Advice South Gloucestershire online at [www.southgloscab.org.uk](http://www.southgloscab.org.uk) or by calling 01454 334961.

We wanted to get in touch to repeat that there is still also local support available to help you during the ongoing difficult times.

While roll-out of vaccination is extremely welcome and provides a route out of the pandemic and the restrictions in place to keep the community protected, we recognise that this will take time. Until this process is complete, we must all continue to take steps to keep ourselves and those around us safe.

As someone who has been identified as particularly at risk from the impact of Covid-19 infection, you will be among the priority groups to receive the vaccine. Your GP will contact you in due course to invite you to receive the vaccine. They are working very hard to get the vaccine to those in most need and we ask that you wait to be contacted by your GP rather than contacting them. Increasing numbers of vaccine clinics are being put on locally and they will be in touch as soon as they can offer you an appointment.

In the meantime, you may well continue to need support. As the pandemic has now been ongoing for such a long time, we know that the impact of the restrictions and your anxieties about the risks will build-up for different people at different times. It is therefore most important that when you need help you know how to access it. Below is some information that you may have received from us before, which is still available should you need it.

The most important thing you can do is to keep yourself and those around you safe; not just by protecting yourselves from the risk of Covid infection, but also by looking after your mental health and wellbeing.

The Council, community groups and many other organisations remain ready to help if you need us, and to provide you with the latest guidance on how to keep safe and well.

**Financial Help**

We know that a source of anxiety for many people is the financial strain being caused by Covid-19. However, there are a range of grants and payments you may be eligible for if you need to self-isolate or if the impacts of coronavirus have reduced your income.

There is support available if you are finding it difficult to afford food, pay rent or utility bills, for example. You can find out more online (<https://beta.southglos.gov.uk/financial-support-for-residents>) or you can call our benefits team on 01454 868002. Or, if you prefer, you can also contact **South Gloucestershire Citizens Advice** online ([www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)) or by calling 03444 111 444.

**Food and Essential Supplies**

The national food parcel service is not being activated by Government during this lockdown, however local community groups and others may be able to help if you need assistance to get food and essential supplies from shops if you are not able to go out. You can find out about groups in your area here: [Get help and support | BETA - South Gloucestershire Council (southglos.gov.uk)](https://beta.southglos.gov.uk/get-help-and-support-in-your-area/). If you are struggling to afford food and essential supplies, there is also help available. You can find out more here: [Financial support for residents | BETA - South Gloucestershire Council (southglos.gov.uk)](https://beta.southglos.gov.uk/financial-support-for-residents/) or you can contact the council on 01454 864040 and our staff will be able to explain the help that’s available and help you to apply. In **very** limited circumstances we may be able to provide some emergency food supplies while a longer-term solution is arranged.

**Southern Brooks,** our community partners, can also provide you with help to get emergency food. Contact them on (freephone) 0333 5774666 or visit their website: [www.southernbrooks.org.uk](http://www.southernbrooks.org.uk).

**Mental Health and Wellbeing**

Mental health and wellbeing, including feelings of loneliness and isolation, can be particularly difficult during the winter months. Many local community groups can connect you with someone for a safe and friendly chat. Again, details are on our website at <https://beta.southglos.gov.uk/get-help-and-support-in-your-area>.

**One You South Gloucestershire** offers a range of activities and support to help your mental health and wellbeing, including support if you are feeling lonely or isolated. Visit [www.oneyou.southglos.gov.uk](http://www.oneyou.southglos.gov.uk) for more information, or call the team on 01454 865337. You can also contact Southern Brooks (0333 5774666) who can provide support and connect you to local help.

There is also an emotional and practical support helpline, staffed 24/7 by experienced counsellors. They are there if you just need someone to talk to, but they can also offer emotional support and can connect you to organisations who may be able to provide more assistance. This is a freephone number: 0800 0126549. Textphone users dial 18001 followed by 0800 0126549.

**NHS Services**

The NHS is open and providing healthcare services. You should continue to follow existing treatments and attend appointments unless your clinician advises you not to.

As someone who is on the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable list, you are eligible for a free seasonal flu vaccination and so is anyone you live with. Talk to your GP about booking an appointment as it will provide you with protection and peace of mind over the winter.

**Get the latest updates**

As you know, circumstances and therefore guidance can change quickly. We know this can cause concern, but the advice to those at most risk from Covid-19 remains to reduce the chances of getting it as much as you can, by reducing the amount you go out and have contact with others.

As the Government updates its guidance specifically for you, they will publish it online here: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19).

If you do not have internet access and would like to know more about the current guidance and anything else in this letter, please get in touch with our dedicated Covid Support team, who will be pleased to help. Just call 01454 864040.

Stay safe, yours sincerely,

**South Gloucestershire Council Covid Support Team**

This letter contains information about help for people who are shielding due to Covid-19. If you would like this information in any other format, for example, in large print or a language other than English, please contact us: Tel 01454 868009





































