

Healthy shielding – info below is available here: <https://bnssgccg.nhs.uk/health-advice-and-support/health-services-during-coronavirus-covid19/healthy-shielding/>

This guidance is for people who are clinically extremely vulnerable to coronavirus and have been asked to shield during the pandemic.

There are over 2 million people in the UK who have been asked to shield, and approximately 30,000 in Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire - you are not alone.

It is important to try and keep as healthy as possible during the time you are shielding. Staying healthy will make shielding easier, prevent long term health conditions worsening, and improve your ability to recover from a coronavirus infection if you catch it.

[Official Government advice on shielding \(available in multiple languages\)](#)

If you have not already registered to get coronavirus support from the government, you can [register online](#) or call [0800 028 8327](tel:0800 028 8327). You can register yourself, or on behalf of someone else.

Here you will find practical information and advice to support you to keep healthy whilst shielding, including:

- [Food and groceries](#)
- [Exercise](#)
- [Mental wellbeing](#)
- [Finances and benefits](#)
- [Stopping smoking](#)
- [Alcohol, drugs and gambling](#)
- [Sleep](#)
- [Getting help from local councils and local communities](#)
- [Your GP practice](#)
- [Social prescribing](#)
- [Resources for specific groups](#)

Food and groceries

If you need support with food or shopping, contact your local authority:

- Bristol City Council: Call [0800 694 0184](tel:0800 694 0184) or complete a [contact form](#)
- North Somerset County Council: Call [01934 427 437](tel:01934 427 437) or complete an [I need help form](#)
- South Gloucestershire County Council: Call [01454 864040](tel:01454 864040) or email Community.shielding@southglos.gov.uk

The NHS website contains information on [how to eat well](#), including tips for a healthy, balanced diet. NHS One You provide information on [easy ways to eat better](#), including healthy recipes.

The Association of UK Dietitians provide information on [food and the immune system](#), [food and mood](#), and [basic store cupboard ideas](#) for older adults.

If you feel you might benefit from losing weight, consider starting the [NHS weight loss plan](#), which has been downloaded more than 7 million times and is designed to help you lose weight safely – and keep it off.

Exercise

Exercise is great for physical and mental health. Do exercise unless you are unwell with the virus. Aim to do some form of exercise each day - every minute counts.

- If you have reduced mobility, these exercises are good for [strength](#), [balance](#) and [flexibility](#), or try some [exercise whilst sitting](#)
- If you use a wheelchair, these [chair exercises](#) are great
- [Moderate exercises](#) can be found here
- For fitter people, try the [aerobic workout videos](#) in the NHS Fitness Studio
- The British Lung Foundation has put together some specific [exercises for people with lung conditions](#).

Mental wellbeing

Taking care of your mind as well as your body is really important whilst shielding. Sleep well, allow yourself and other people space, exercise, don't do or say the first thing that comes into your head. Breathe.

Online support

- [Advice on mental wellbeing while staying at home](#)
- Access [urgent support](#) if you are having thoughts about self-harm or suicide. You may also find the [distrACT app](#) helpful
- You can [refer yourself](#) to access psychological therapies for conditions such as depression and anxiety
- To de-stress, have a look at the NHS advice regards [Mindfulness](#), try [breathing exercises](#) or consider an [online Mindfulness course](#)
- [The Help Hub](#) has been set up to support individuals who find themselves struggling emotionally at this time and offers free access to a group of over 800 professional therapists and counsellors
- Creative activity can be great for reducing stress; some organisations are offering access to arts including [Art by Post](#), [Get Creative](#) and the [National Theatre](#)

For advice regards talking to a child about coronavirus, [YoungMinds](#) have a great resource.

Telephone support

- For urgent support if you are having thoughts of self-harm or suicide
- Call the [Samaritans](#) 24 hour helpline on [116 123](#)
- [Shout](#) is a 24/7 UK crisis text service available for times when people feel they need immediate support. Text "SHOUT" to 85258
- Call [Anxiety UK](#) on [03444 775 774](#) (Mon-Fri 9.30am-10pm; Sat-Sun 10am-8pm)
- [No Panic](#) offers advice, support, recovery programs and help for people living with phobias, OCD and any other anxiety-based disorders. Call 0844 967 4848 (daily 10am-10pm)
- [OCD Action](#) provides support and information to anybody affected by OCD. Call [0845 390 6232](#) (Mon-Fri 9.30am-5pm)
- [Papyrus](#) is a young suicide prevention charity. Call 0800 068 4141 (Mon-Fri 10am-10pm; Sat-Sun 2pm-10pm)
- [Cruse Bereavement Care](#) offer support, advice and information to children, young people and adults when someone dies. Call [0808 808 1677](#) (Mon-Fri 9am-5pm)

- For existing service users, and their families and carers, [Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership \(AWP\)](#) has a 24/7 mental health response line. Call [0300 303 1320](#)

Finances and benefits

This is a worrying time for many people financially. There is help and support available if you have less money because of coronavirus. You might be able to claim benefits or get more money if you're already getting benefits.

- [Check what help you can get if you can't pay your bills](#)
- Find out what to do [if you can't pay your rent or have problems with your rented home](#)
- Check [what benefits you can get](#)
- If you're already getting benefits [check if the government has made any changes](#)
- Find out more about being [referred to a food bank](#)

Stopping smoking

Lots of people are managing to quit smoking during lockdown – join them! This will improve your health now and in the future. The craving only lasts 3 minutes.

[Quit smoking](#)

Alcohol, drugs and gambling

Have alcohol-free days. Alternate alcohol with a soft drink. Try to break the spell.

- If you live in Bristol and would like support with alcohol or drug use [Bristol ROADS](#) or the [Bristol Drugs Project](#) can offer advice and support
- If you live in North Somerset, the [We Are With You](#) service can give advice and support
- If you live in South Gloucestershire, the [Drug and Alcohol Service](#) is here to help.
- [Alcoholics Anonymous](#) are available on [0800 917 7650](#) (24-hour helpline).
- [Narcotics Anonymous](#) can be contacted on [0300 999 1212](#) (daily 10am-midnight).
- If you need advice or support about your gambling or someone else's you can call the National Gambling Helpline on 0808 8020 133 (daily 8am to midnight), or visit [Be Gamble Aware](#).

Help with sleep

It is not uncommon to struggle with sleep in challenging times. Try a simple and regular bedtime routine, wind down and avoid using a smart phone or screen for at least an hour before bed.

- The NHS has useful advice on [how to get to sleep](#) and [tips to beat insomnia](#).
- For more help to calm your mind and sleep better take a look at the [Pzizz](#) app.
- If you are really struggling, speak to your GP who can refer you to [Sleepstation](#).

Getting help from local councils and local communities

There are many options to access support through local councils and community schemes. These vary from help with food and shopping to dog walking and phone chats. These organisations can support with boredom associated with shielding:

Bristol

- [WeAreBristol](#) are providing general advice and support, call them on [0800 694 0184](tel:08006940184)
- [Well Aware](#) provide information on community services in Bristol, you can call them on [0808 808 5252](tel:08088085252)
- Bristol has a Support Hub for people aged >55 which offers practical support, social and emotional support, and virtual activities. Call them on [0117 929 7537](tel:01179297537)
- [Library services](#) are still available online

Further health and wellbeing resources in the Bristol area are available on the [Bristol City Council website](#).

North Somerset

- [North Somerset Together](#) can be contacted on [01934 427 437](tel:01934427437) for general enquiries
- [Find a community support group](#) in North Somerset via the North Somerset Council website.
- [Libraries](#) are available online

Further advice on looking after your wellbeing during the coronavirus outbreak is available on [North Somerset Council website](#).

South Gloucestershire

- [Southern Brookes](#) can be contacted on [0333 577 4666](tel:03335774666), or email communitysupport@southernbrooks.org.uk
- [Find a community support group](#) via the South Gloucestershire Council website
- [Well Aware](#) provide information on community services in South Gloucestershire, you can call them on [0808 808 5252](tel:08088085252)
- [South Gloucestershire's OneYou](#) service offers free one-to-one support with a practitioner. Call the service on [01454 865 337](tel:01454865337)
- Some [library services](#) are still available

Further support for vulnerable people, including details of local resources is available on the [South Gloucestershire Council website](#).

Your GP practice

Your GP practice is still open, but is seeing people in a different way due to coronavirus. It is really important that if you feel unwell enough to need a doctor, contact your GP.

Your GP practice knows that you are shielding and will have measures in place to safely provide care to you. If you need regular blood tests or prescriptions for your health conditions, these can be sorted out through your GP practice.

Social prescribing

Social Prescribing enables GPs and other frontline healthcare professionals to refer patients to a link worker for help with social, emotional or practical problems, often using services provided by the voluntary and community sector.

If this interests you, contact your GP practice for more information.

Resources for specific groups

- [The Race Equality Foundation](#) has lots of information and resources on coronavirus.
- [Stonewall](#) has useful information about how coronavirus is affecting LGBTQ+ communities.
- For video guidance about coronavirus in multiple languages, visit [AskDoc](#) on Youtube.
- [SafeLives](#) has information about domestic abuse and coronavirus. If you are not in immediate danger, you can phone the National Domestic Abuse Helpline on [0808 200 247](#). In an emergency, call [999](#).
- Asthma advice is available through [Asthma UK](#)
- If you have a severe respiratory condition you can find lots of advice on the [British Lung Foundation](#) website.
- If you have an organ transplant visit [Kidney Care UK](#) or the [British Liver Trust](#) for information and advice.
- If you have cancer, [Macmillan](#) has lots of guidance on their website.

[Health services during coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

Community health services in Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire have made changes to the way they work to support hospital services and provide a safe working environment for staff and patients.