



Ein cyf/Our ref VG/08847/20

Janet Finch-Saunders MS
Chair
Petitions Committee

26 November 2020

Dear Janet,

Thank you for your letter of 6 November regarding the following petition:

Petition P-05-1070 Advise all people who are extremely vulnerable or previously shielding in Wales to stay home, not work, during periods of high Covid-19 community infection

The Chief Medical Officer for Wales recently wrote to everyone who is on the Shielding Patient List in Wales, to let them know that he would not be reintroducing strict shielding measures at this time. The letter also contained advice on how to minimise personal risk by strictly following the basic rules, but also emphasising that we are seeing most transmission where people feel most relaxed – in their own homes. The emphasis was placed on minimising contact as far as possible with others.

When we initially advised people who are extremely vulnerable to take shielding measures at the start of the pandemic, the position was very different – there were no measures in any sector of society to reduce the spread of the virus and no rules or regulations in place. Now, with consistent measures in place, asking people to shield at home again is not the best option as it could cause more harm to people's mental and physical health.

The Chief Medical Officer does keep his advice under constant review and will write to everyone on the Shielding Patient List again if there is any change to his advice.

Employers must take all reasonable measures to minimise exposure to coronavirus by ensuring a two-metre distance is maintained between workers in the workplace (if you can't work from home) and the Welsh Government has already issued guidance to employers on taking measures to make the workplace safe: <https://gov.wales/your-responsibilities-employer-coronavirus>.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

I can completely appreciate that people will have concerns for their health and safety at work, but in those circumstances the first conversation that people should have is with their employer. We have published a range of risk assessment tools for people to use to help facilitate that conversation www.gov.wales/covid-19-workforce-risk-assessment-tool

If people remain concerned, concerns can be raised with union safety representatives, or ultimately with the organisation responsible for enforcement in the workplace, either the Health and Safety Executive or local authority.

We have published guidance and a list of frequently asked questions to help support those who are clinically extremely vulnerable to find the answers to questions they may have. This guidance is kept regularly updated with the latest information and can be found here - <https://gov.wales/guidance-protecting-people-defined-medical-grounds-extremely-vulnerable-coronavirus-covid-19>

Our Frequently Asked Questions document is here - <https://gov.wales/protecting-people-defined-medical-grounds-extremely-vulnerable-coronavirus-covid-19-previouslly>

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vaughan Gething". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Vaughan Gething AS/MS

Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services