

Frequently asked questions for vulnerable residents

Are you in need of additional support? You can contact us via:

- **Our website - www.calderdale.gov.uk/v2/coronavirus-covid-19/support-extremely-vulnerable**
- **If you don't have internet access you can call 01422 392890.**

These frequently asked questions (FAQs) have been put together to help people understand what help is available during these difficult times. It is aimed at those who may be more vulnerable to the disease itself or the disruption it causes.

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General FAQs

Who might be vulnerable to COVID-19?

People can be vulnerable to the effects of COVID-19 for a number of reasons. Some people are vulnerable to the disease itself. These are people who have serious medical conditions which make them more likely to get unwell if they catch COVID-19.

Others are vulnerable due to the disruption caused by the disease. People who rely on carers, people with limited support from family or friends, or people who can't access internet services may be affected more by the changes in everyday life caused by COVID-19. Some people may be vulnerable to both the disease itself and to the disruption caused by the disease.

Many people feel vulnerable to the effects of COVID-19 not just the elderly and those with medical conditions. If you, or someone you know, are in need of support during this time see below for details of how the council and partners can help.

What does 'Shielding' mean?

The Government has identified 2 groups of people who are likely to become more unwell if they get COVID-19.

At highest risk are those identified as 'clinically extremely vulnerable' who have been added to the shielding list. These are people with specific

medical conditions who have been (or will shortly be) contacted by the NHS. These people should receive a letter giving them further instructions on what to do and will also receive a phone call from the council to see if any help is required. **It is important that people who receive this letter follow the shielding guidance which means staying at home, avoiding any gatherings and strictly avoiding contact with anyone displaying symptoms of COVID-19.** The criteria for shielding are decided nationally so it is not possible to influence these locally. If you think you should be on the shielding list but haven't received a letter please contact your GP who should be able to offer some advice.

If you have any of the following conditions you should follow the shielding guidance:

1. Solid organ transplant recipients.
2. People with specific cancers:
 - people with cancer who are undergoing active chemotherapy
 - people with lung cancer who are undergoing radical radiotherapy
 - people with cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma who are at any stage of treatment
 - people having immunotherapy or other continuing antibody treatments for cancer
 - people having other targeted cancer treatments which can affect the immune system, such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors
 - people who have had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months, or who are still taking immunosuppression drugs
3. People with severe respiratory conditions including all cystic fibrosis, severe asthma and severe chronic obstructive pulmonary (COPD).
4. People with rare diseases and inborn errors of metabolism that significantly increase the risk of infections (such as Severe combined immunodeficiency (SCID), homozygous sickle cell).
5. People on immunosuppression therapies sufficient to significantly increase risk of infection.
6. Women who are pregnant with significant heart disease, congenital or acquired.

There is a second group of people who are more at risk who don't meet the criteria for shielding. This group includes anyone over the age of 70 and those under the age of 70 who would usually be invited to have the annual flu jab. This includes people with a range of medical conditions including heart disease, diabetes and certain lung conditions.

Some people who aren't identified as being on the shielding list have chosen to

Whether you are on the shielding list or not you can request support from the council by contacting us at:

- www.calderdale.gov.uk/v2/coronavirus-covid-19/support-extremely-vulnerable
- 01422 392890

Who is vulnerable due to the disruption caused by the disease?

Everyone will be affected in some way by the disruption caused by COVID-19. These changes might mean it is difficult to carry out our usual activities. Some people may have family and friends who can help but others may not have anyone to ask for assistance. People may be affected for many reasons including the following:

- Any households with a new continuous cough or a high temperature should stay at home entirely for up to 14 days (also known as household isolation).
- People who have been identified as extremely vulnerable should follow shielding guidance and should not leave their home (see above).
- We should all be staying at home to minimise contact with others unless we are leaving the house for work, to shop, to get medical care, or to exercise (also known as social distancing).

For some people, these changes will have a much bigger impact. Many people with disabilities will find it hard to reduce contact with others due to ongoing care needs. Activities such as visiting the supermarket or pharmacy might be more difficult and being asked to stay at home might lead to social isolation and loneliness. For families, having to isolate might make it difficult to provide food for children or to continue to provide care for vulnerable relatives.

What help is available and how can I access this?

It can be difficult to know how to get help during this time. Many people who have never needed help before may need help due to the disruption brought about by COVID-19. If you need help or advice, you can contact the council. A system has been set up to provide access to a wide range of services so regardless of what you need the council should be able to help. If you have access to the internet you can complete the form here and someone will be in touch. If you don't have access to the internet you can call 01422 392890.

Requests for help will be dealt with according to need. Those with a higher level of need will be dealt with by our social care team. Those with a lower level of need will be passed to the volunteer hub where volunteers from across Calderdale will be able to help.

Examples of help available include shopping, collection of medications, a friendly phone call, dog walking, posting of mail and more.

We are working closely with the voluntary sector to ensure that offers of support from voluntary and charity organisations are accessible to those who need them. Details of local support are available at:

www.calderdale.gov.uk/v2/sites/default/files/Directory-of-Local-Support-Groups.pdf. If you do not have internet access, the volunteer hub can link you in to groups in your area. Call 01422 392890 to register for help.

What other help is available?

In addition to the help offered by the council, a range of other organisations are able to offer support. The council can put you in touch with many local and national voluntary organisations that provide a range of help and advice. There are lots of national organisations you can contact directly for advice regarding specific medical conditions.

Examples include Macmillan for those with cancer, the British Heart Foundation for those with heart conditions, and Mencap for those with a learning disability. Local organisations you can contact include:

- Citizens Advice Bureau offer a range of advice on financial and benefits advice - see www.calderdalecab.org.uk/ or call 0300 330 9048 for details.
- Disability Partnership Calderdale represent disabled people across the borough and have collated a wide range of useful information on their website (www.disabilitypartnershipcalderdale.org/).
- Healthy Minds Calderdale is a local mental health charity which can help support those in emotional distress – see www.healthymindscalderdale.co.uk or call 01422 345154.
- Halifax Society for the Blind provide support to those with sight loss and can be contacted Mon-Fri 9-5pm on 01422 354575 or by email at info@halifaxblindsociety.org.uk.
- The Calderdale Council of Mosques represents Muslims across Calderdale and can be contacted at info@calderdalecouncilofmosques.com.
- St Augustine's supports refugees, asylum seekers and migrants regardless of faith, ethnicity or background. Contact 07743045625 or 07756262024 10am – 3pm on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays or visit www.staugustinescentrehalifax.org.uk/.

I'm worried about shopping for food – can I get help?

If you're not able to leave the house to shop, not able to access online shopping and don't have friends or family to help with shopping, help is

available through the council. For those identified by the NHS as extremely vulnerable and advised to follow the shielding guidance, a food delivery system has been developed by the Government. This provides weekly food parcels of essential items for those who are shielding and unable to shop. Those on the shielding list are also able to access priority supermarket delivery slots. Food deliveries and priority delivery slots are part of the national shielding programme and the council has no control over these. See your shielding letter for more information.

For those who aren't on the shielding list or those who need more help, there is a range of support available through the council. Across Calderdale there are a number of food banks providing food to those in need. A list of these is available at www.calderdale.gov.uk/v2/residents/community-and-living/tackling-poverty-calderdale/food-banks or if you don't have internet access the council can put you in touch if you call 01422 392890. The council is currently looking at how to meet dietary requirements (for example vegetarian, lactose free). Cash handling advice is available on the council website and a directory of local shops, many of whom can deliver, is also available at www.calderdale.gov.uk/v2/coronavirus/community-support.

If you need help please contact the council here or call 01422 392890.

I'm worried about access to medications – can I get help?

If you are unable to visit the pharmacy to collect regular medications there are a number of ways you can access help. Contact your pharmacy to see if they can deliver to your home. The council volunteers can also help with delivery of medications to you. Contact the council here or call 01422 392890.

I have other health needs – what should I do?

It is important to remember that although COVID-19 is a big concern, other health problems should not be ignored. This includes physical health problems such as diabetes and angina, and also mental health problems such as depression and anxiety. If you need to see your GP, phone to make an appointment. You should not go to your GP without an appointment (this is particularly important if you are shielding). If you are unable to contact your GP the NHS 111 service is available online or via the phone. In an emergency, call 999 for help. Please don't ignore medical problems which you think are important or urgent.

I'm worried about going into hospital – what should I do?

It is important to get medical help if it is needed. Hospitals are working hard to protect patients who don't have COVID-19 who need to go to hospital. You may wish to think about what you would want to happen to you in hospital. Hospital passports are a useful way of giving the doctors and nurses all the information they need to care for you, especially if you have particular needs or preferences (www.includemetoo.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/COVID-19-Hospital-Communication-Passport.pdf).

I've heard that some people have been scammed – how can I avoid this?

Unfortunately we are aware that some people are trying to take advantage of the vulnerable people. If you receive a call from someone claiming to be from your bank, mortgage lender or utility company you should not give out any personal details. Those on the shielding list might receive a phone call from the council or a company called Capita on

behalf of the Government. It is OK to question why people are calling and you can refuse to provide any information if you are unsure.

If anyone you weren't expecting arrives at your door you should ask to see their identification. Council volunteers will be provided with a letter confirming they are working with the council. You can contact the council on 01422 392890 if you want to confirm a volunteer's identity.

FAQs for those receiving care

I receive help from a home care agency – will this be affected?

People who need the support of carers will continue to receive this support. The council has been working with home care providers to give them up to date information based on the latest national guidance.

Planning has been carried out to keep care services going throughout the COVID-19 response. If your regular home care worker is not available an alternative care worker will be provided.

I live in a care home – will this be affected?

The council has been working with care homes to provide up to date information based on the latest national guidance. Planning has been carried out which includes advice and support on infection control and provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

I am a recipient of Direct Payments – will this be affected?

This has been a particularly concerning time for those who receive direct payments. Many people employ their own personal assistants leading to concerns not only about the virus itself but responsibilities as an employer. Planning has been carried out to ensure those who receive direct payments are supported throughout the COVID-19 response.

Personal Assistants can be provided with ID to show they are keyworkers and are also able to access Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). If a Personal Assistant is not available to provide care because they are unwell, are having to isolate due to household illness or have been advised to shield, they should still be paid. The council will fund the cost of a replacement Personal Assistant. Further information will be provided directly to recipients of direct payments. Please contact the Direct Payments Team on 01422 – 393370 for further advice.