

10th July 2020

Central Government Shielding Support will stop at the end of July

Dear resident,

I am writing to you as someone who central government has told us has recently been shielding because I want to tell you about some of the changes being made and what this means for you. Please be assured that the Council does not have access to your medical records – the purpose of central government sharing your contact details with us is to ensure residents unable to leave home during the pandemic have been able to get food and medicines and other help during this difficult time.

You should by now have received a letter advising you that the current support provided to shielding residents by Central Government will be ending on **31st July 2020**. This means that if you have been receiving the free weekly box of food organised by DEFRA (and delivered by Brakes), or the central government support with collecting medicines, this service will end.

As you may already know, the government eased its guidance from 6 July so that those shielding would be able to gather in groups of up to 6 people outdoors and form a 'support bubble' with another household. From **1 August** the guidance will be relaxed further and you will no longer be advised to shield. You will again be able to visit shops and places of worship, for instance, though the guidance around social distancing and other precautions such as frequent hand washing remains and everyone will continue to be encouraged to follow this advice.

We are writing to you to ensure that you are aware of how to access continuing support, should you be unable to leave your home to access food and other essentials from 1st August. Please visit our Covid-19 page, where you will find the Shielding Advice link and also up-to-date service information - **www.bromley.gov.uk/covid-19**

If you have not received the government letter, we would be happy to let you know its contents – simply call our assistance line on **020 8313 4484**.

Once the government ceases food parcel and medication collection from 1 August, you will need to take action if you are unable to leave your home and need continued support.

Online Food Shopping

If you have been relying on the free weekly government box of essential food, are able to access the internet and have the means to pay for shopping, please ensure you have registered with the government for an online shopping slot by visiting <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-extremely-vulnerable> **no later than 16th July** and complete the shielding registration form, clicking 'no' to the question 'Do you have a way of getting essential supplies delivered at the moment?'. You will then be granted access to online shopping slots. In order to use this service, you must have a credit or debit card to be able to pay for your food orders online. You can also register for this service by calling the government free on **0800 028 8327**.

Support from a Volunteer

Bromley Council, in partnership with Community Links Bromley, launched a volunteer programme on 17th March to ensure that all of our residents can get support, if needed.

If you are able to access the internet and would like support from a volunteer, please click the 'Request Assistance button' and complete the form on the Covid-19 page of our website at **www.bromley.gov.uk/covid19** or call our assistance line on **020 8313 4484** and we will match you with a local volunteer within two days.

We would strongly suggest that you get in touch with us **as soon as possible** to request a volunteer if you think you will need one, so that we can put this support in place for you before the DEFRA food boxes stop at the end of July. If you do not need support with food but would like a volunteer for any other reason, please do get in touch. Volunteer support is available for anyone feeling vulnerable or lonely.

Requests for volunteer support will be managed by Bromley Council until **31st August 2020** which is when the Council programme will end. If support is required after this time please see below a list of useful links for organisations providing ongoing support:

Bromley Well Services: <https://www.bromleywell.org.uk/> Bromley Well provides help for you to stay emotionally and physically well and to remain independent. Contact them **9am-5pm 7 days a week** on **0300 330 9039** or email spa@bromleywell.org.uk.

Community Links Bromley: <https://www.communitylinksbromley.org.uk/> Community Links Bromley (CLB) is the integrated Council for Voluntary Service and Volunteer Centre covering the London Borough of Bromley.

Service Directory:

https://www.bromley.gov.uk/info/200050/help_for_adults/1226/your_guide_to_independent_living This is a useful resource to support you with independent living.

Please note that there may still be variations in how services are provided by these organisations as we move out of lockdown so please check with services regarding how to access support.

Accessing free food support from a food bank

If you are having difficulty paying for food once the DEFRA food box ceases, one of the **food banks located in the borough** will be able to help you. **Food Banks** are currently running a delivery service for those in financial crisis and can deliver food to your home if you are unable to go out. Some food banks operate on a self-referral basis, others require a referral from a GP or the Council. We can help you with this if you register for assistance with the Council using our **request assistance** form or by calling us on the assistance line **020 8313 4484**.

You should have received through the door a handy Covid-19 special edition update leaflet containing useful advice and support with helpful links and phone numbers to help you find a wide range of advice on topics such as mental and physical health, financial issues, domestic violence, council tax, housing and more. You can find a link to our information leaflet on the **Covid-19 page** on our website.

I hope you will enjoy getting out and about more from the beginning of August, but please do remember the precautions that are still in place such as social distancing and frequent handwashing as well as staying at home if you feel unwell. You can request a Covid-19 test from NHS Test and Trace if you develop symptoms – details on how to do this are on our website or you can call 119 or 111 for general health advice.

Be assured that if you still require advice or support, help is at hand so please visit the Shielding link from our Covid-19 page at **www.bromley.gov.uk/covid-19**

Yours faithfully,

Kim Carey,



Director, Adult Social Care