

## Weekly Poll - COVID-19: Shielding

Each week Disability Equality Scotland send out a poll question to our members on a topical issue. For the week beginning 10 June 2020, we asked a question about shielding.

### Results

If you are shielding or at high risk from COVID-19, do you think there is enough information and support available to you?

- YES –22% (24 respondents)
- NO – 78% (87 respondents)

### Comments

The following is a summary of the main themes and key concerns of our members regarding shielding. We provide verbatim comments where appropriate to illustrate strength of feeling or personal experience.

#### Shielding Category

There were mixed opinions from respondents on the information and support available for people in the shielding category. Some respondents believed there was adequate information to begin with, but less clarity as the shielding period was due to end.

“There is enough information available, it is clear and easy to understand but it is coming thick and fast just now and seems ever changing in what can only be described as a great rush to get back to ‘normal’.”

“At the start of the Coronavirus situation it was a case of 12 weeks which was fine, something that everyone understood even if it was difficult to do.

However, the nearer we got to the end of the 12 weeks there was a lack of information on what was happening.”

### **Not in the Shielding Category**

There was consensus from respondents that there is a lack of information and support available for people who are not in the official shielding category, but still at high risk from COVID-19.

“Shielding information seems clear, but for those at high risk less so. There seems little clarity for this group, almost left up to individuals to decide what to follow.”

“Unless you're officially in the shielding group you get nothing! A phone number to ask for help and that is it.”

“As there are so many variations of disease and to what degree someone might suffer, there is not enough information for those who feel they are at greater risk and how they go about getting support to be classed as needing to shield.”

### **Eligibility for Shielding**

Some respondents felt there was a lack of consistency and clarity regarding the criteria to be recognised in the shielding category.

“I did not receive a letter to shield, though having looked at the guidelines thought I should be. I contacted my GP and, on his advice, I was advised to shield. All very confusing.”

“My daughter has cerebral palsy and a wheelchair user she has not had a shielding letter although her social worker said one was being sent out, we have never received it.”

## Carers

Many people are taking on more caring responsibilities for their relatives and friends who are disabled, ill or older and who need support. Several respondents believed there is a lack of financial assistance in place for carers.

“Unpaid Carers have been totally forgotten about with no support. How do the government expect us to survive on £67 per week? Bring on universal basic income as a bit of a help.”

“Unpaid carers are undervalued in terms of what they do and how much they save the government. The least the government could do is raise carers allowance to give carers enough money to live on. Dignity and respect.”

“I am an unpaid carer and have been shielding with my husband. I welcome some of the easing of restrictions from next week but more needs to be done to give unpaid carers more financial support.”

“People shielding and the carers and family have been forgotten about and unpaid carers have had no financial assistance even though we have had to give up work to step into full time unpaid care rolls as care support has been withdrawn.”

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the majority of respondents had faced challenges accessing adequate information and support regarding the shielding category. This was found to be even more challenging for people who are not officially shielding, but still at high risk of COVID-19. There were calls from respondents to provide extra financial support to unpaid carers.

Disability Equality Scotland, June 2020

## About Disability Equality Scotland

Disability Equality Scotland is a national charity working to achieve full access and inclusion for disabled people in Scotland.

We promote access in its widest sense. This includes access to the built and natural environment and access to the same opportunities as are enjoyed by others in our communities thus promoting a life of dignity, respect and independence. This extends beyond physical access to include access to information, access to inclusive communication and inclusion in decision-making, whether with planners over inclusive design or transport providers about accessible travel.

Our aim is for every disabled person to have the opportunity to participate in a fulfilling life and for their voice(s) to be heard. We represent the views of individuals with any type of impairment, as well as disability organisations and groups who share our values.

We are a membership organisation and as such listen to the views of disabled people and champion on their behalf. We work to influence the policies of the Scottish Government, which affect how disabled people live, and work to encourage others to be inclusive and informed in their attitudes towards disabled people.

We are also the umbrella organisation for all disability Access Panels in Scotland and the principal provider of support and guidance to the Access Panels presently representing disabled persons at a local level throughout Scotland. Access Panels are committed to improving access and equality in its widest form, which means access to the physical environment, Education, Housing, Health, Transport, Leisure & Recreation and Social Justice amongst other areas.