

Distance Aware

Social distancing campaign

Briefing newsletter

February 2021

In the fight against coronavirus, maintaining social distancing is everyone's responsibility. While the general public has made a conscious effort to abide by the social distancing guidance, as with anything fatigue sets in. And with the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccination programme well underway there are fresh concerns around complacency.

These concerns coupled with the increased anxiety of many, especially those in vulnerable groups, around contracting the virus is where the ability to offer a polite prompt to maintain distance has been welcomed*.

The Distance Aware campaign aims to address this through use of a consistent and instantly recognisable symbol, the Distance Aware Shield. The visual icon can be displayed on a poster or worn as a badge.

The Distance Aware campaign is fully operational in Wales, endorsed by the Welsh Government and the National Health Service (NHS). It was recently adapted for use in Northern Ireland and launched by the Health Minister. The initiative is supported by the Department of Health (DoH), the Public Health Agency (PHA), and the Patient and Client Council (PCC).

The campaign is being promoted through community pharmacies, general practices (GPs), Health and Social Care Trusts, and in the voluntary and community sector through the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA). Northern Ireland sporting bodies and Supermarket retailer Asda are also backing the campaign. Distance Aware badges are available from information points in all Asda stores.

*Based on research conducted in Northern Ireland with the Patient and Client Council's membership and the general public.

Campaign audience

The campaign is applicable to everyone. The badge can be worn by anyone to signify that they wish to maintain social distancing.

There is a particular focus on distributing the campaign badge to those who are clinically extremely vulnerable and those who work with vulnerable people, including carers, and health and social care workers.

It is, however, not meant to be an identifier of someone who has been shielding or may have any specific health condition/s.

Posters featuring the Distance Aware Shield can be displayed by organisations and businesses to signal that they are a stockist of the badge or to simply show that they support the initiative.



Campaign objectives

- Show support for social distancing.
- Remind the general public to maintain distance.
- Promote the Distance Aware message via distribution of the campaign badge and/or by displaying campaign posters.
- Help reduce anxiety in the public around contracting the virus.

Distance Aware campaign messages

The Distance Aware Shield, whether worn or displayed, is an indicator to others that the wearer/organisation would like others to maintain a respectful distance where possible.

When promoting the use of the Shield or explaining what it means, whether in printed material, on your website, on social media, or in person, you should reference the name of the initiative, Distance Aware, wherever possible.

Suggested language/statements you could use include:

- Are you distance aware?
- Thank you for being distance aware.
- Please be distance aware.
- I am distance aware.
- We are distance aware.
- Our employees are distance aware.
- Be distance aware. Keep people safe.
- Keep others safe by being distance aware.

To help people to understand the purpose of the symbol and the request to be distance aware, you could use these simple explanatory messages, tailoring them to your audience:

- Please give other people space.
- Please keep your distance.
- Keep safe. Keep other people safe.
- Feel safe. Help other people feel safe.

- Respect other people's space.
- Have other people respect your space.

Resources

Help us promote the Distance Aware social distancing campaign by displaying the posters, distributing the Distance Aware Shield flyer, and by using the social media assets, which are available to download and share from

www.nidirect.gov.uk/covid-19-distance-aware



Please follow our social media accounts:

Twitter: @publichealthni @ healthdpt @PatientClient

Facebook: @publichealthagency

Instagram: @publichealthni