

## **Annex C: Stakeholder Q&A**

This is an internally facing document to assist you in communicating and explaining the changes announced to the shielding guidance for the clinically extremely vulnerable in England.

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## **Shielding guidance**

### **What guidance should I be following from 6 July?**

- Those who have received a shielding patient letter remain in the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable category and should continue to follow the updated guidance for the [clinically extremely vulnerable](#). If incidence does not rise this guidance will be updated on 1 August.

### **Why have you changed the advice for those classed as clinically extremely vulnerable? What is the evidence base for this decision?**

- Each step towards relaxing the shielding guidance should be taken carefully. People in this group are still at risk of severe illness if they catch coronavirus and should continue to take precautions, but as the risk of catching coronavirus is now sufficiently low, the Government believes that the time is now right to further relax the advice.
- The latest epidemiological data from the ONS COVID-19 Infection Survey shows that the chance of encountering coronavirus in the community has continued to decline. Four weeks ago, on average only one person in 500 had the virus. Last week it was even lower at less than one in 1700. In addition, a test and trace system is now in place, including within schools, and there are robust measures in place to manage potential areas of high risk.

### **Will these changes be reassessed before 1 August?**

- The latest scientific evidence shows that the chance of encountering coronavirus in the community has continued to decline. If this trend continues as expected, the risk levels to those shielding will be low enough for the guidance to be further relaxed from 1 August. The government regularly monitors this position and if the rates of infection in the community rise, then it may be necessary to advise that more restrictive measures should be taken for people at highest risk from COVID-19 to keep themselves safe.

### **I'm worried about catching coronavirus – am I still at significant risk?**

- Clinically extremely vulnerable people are still at risk of severe illness if they catch coronavirus and should continue to take precautions, even as the levels of coronavirus in the community continue to decline according to the latest epidemiological data from the ONS COVID-19 Infection Survey. Four weeks ago, on average only one person in 500 had the virus. Last week it was even lower at less than one in 1,700.
- People should continue to socially distance as much as possible and always robustly practise good, frequent hand washing.

### **Are you planning on telling us to 'shield' again in the future?**

- The latest scientific evidence shows that the chance of encountering coronavirus in the community has continued to decline. The government regularly monitors this position and if the rates of infection in the community rise, then it may be necessary to advise that more restrictive measures should be taken.
- The guidance for the clinically extremely vulnerable is advisory.

### **How will people know that they should start shielding again?**

- Those who have received a shielding patient letter remain in the clinically extremely vulnerable category and should continue to follow the guidance on 'shielding and protecting people who are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable'. This guidance note will continue to be updated to reflect the most recent advice from the government. If there is a significant change to the advice, the Government will write to all patients who are clinically extremely vulnerable setting out any changes to advice before they are made.

### **Is it possible that some regions may have to return to shielding in the future?**

- The NHS currently manages a national Shielded Patient List in England. The variation in R across the country has been quite limited to date, so a national approach continues to be appropriate. The government regularly monitors this position and will continue to be led by the scientific evidence.

### **Why is the advice for England different to the advice for other parts of the UK?**

- As far as possible the conditions that means someone is advised to shield have been consistent between the four UK nations. Each country has slightly different health systems and ways of recording health data, so small differences may arise in implementation.
- Each devolved administration has been working to a slightly different timeline on updating their shielding guidance based on when measures were first introduced.
- Chief Medical Officers will be monitoring any changes in cases or R rates in each nation and could change their advice depending on how the risk levels change in each nation.

### **Is my name being kept on a shielding list? Why?**

- The NHS will continue to maintain the Shielded Patient List allowing us to maintain targeted advice and support to those who are most vulnerable and to change advice and support if incidence was to rise significantly.

### **Does my whole household have to shield with me until 1 August?**

- In line with the current public health advice, those living with clinically extremely vulnerable people are not advised to shield themselves. They should support those shielding and carefully follow the guidance on staying alert and safe (social distancing).
- The Government has also published guidance to help them understand how to protect the person who is shielding. The guidance for the clinically extremely vulnerable continues to be advisory.

### **Can I see my family and friends?**

- From 6 July, guidance for extremely clinically vulnerable people will change to advise that those shielding may wish to spend time outdoors in a group of up to 6 people, including people they do not live with, if they choose to do so. If you do go out, you should take extra care to minimise contact with others by maintaining social distancing. This can be in a public outdoor space, or in a private garden, uncovered yard or terrace.
- Additionally, those who are shielding will be able to create a 'support bubble' with one other household, as long as one of the households in the 'bubble' is a single adult household (either an adult living alone or with dependent children under 18). All those in a 'support bubble' can spend time together inside each other's homes, including overnight, without needing to maintain social distancing.

### **Can I exercise outside? If so, how often and for how long?**

- Yes, from 1 June the shielding guidance was updated to advise that those classed as clinically extremely vulnerable may wish to spend time outdoors, including for exercise. From 6 July, this can be in a group of up to 6 people (including people they don't live with).
- There is no advised limit to how often and how long to spend outside, that is up to you, but you should follow social distancing guidelines and always robustly practise good, frequent hand washing.

### **Can I drive to exercise?**

- From 6 July the advice for those classed as clinically extremely vulnerable remains that you no longer need to maintain social distancing with people in your household or support bubble (where applicable). Therefore, you can drive to an outdoor location alone or with members of your household or support bubble.

### **Can I let people into my house now?**

- If you are not in a 'support bubble' with another household, you must not meet other people indoors, including in their home or your home, except for specific circumstances set out here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/meeting-people-from-outside-your-household>

- Any essential carers or visitors who support you with your everyday needs can continue to visit unless they have any of the symptoms of COVID-19 (a new continuous cough, a high temperature, or a loss of, or change in, their normal sense of taste or smell). Essential carers coming to your home should follow advice on good hygiene: wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds on arrival to your house and often while they are there (or use hand sanitiser), avoid touching their face, catch any coughs or sneezes in a tissue (or their sleeve), and put used tissues immediately in the bin and wash their hands afterwards. They should maintain social distancing where close or personal contact is not required and where this is possible.

### **From 6 July, who can I ‘bubble’ with?**

- From 6 July, those who are shielding will be able to create a ‘support bubble’ with one other household, as long as one of the households in the bubble is a single adult household (either an adult living alone or with depending children under 18). Support bubbles must be exclusive – you should only form a bubble with one household and they should only be in a bubble with you.

### **What can you do in a ‘support bubble’?**

- Forming a support bubble with another household means you can meet – indoors or out – without needing to maintain social distancing. You can also stay overnight as if you lived with that household. This means you can have closer contact with those in your support bubble, which should help provide additional support to those who need it. You should continue to adhere to social distancing guidelines in full with other households.
- The risk of infection rises with the number of people in a bubble and the number of interactions you have with people you do not live with, so it’s important to take measures to try and protect against this. This means that support bubbles must be exclusive – you should only form a bubble with one household, and they should only be in a bubble with you.
- You must not gather indoors or stay overnight with anyone outside of this bubble and should not change your bubble. If you are in a single adult household, you may also want to consider the size of the household you choose to make a bubble with, and where possible, choose a small household. Everyone in a support bubble should isolate when one member of the bubble becomes symptomatic or tests positive for coronavirus.

### **Can I ‘bubble’ with another shielding household?**

- Yes, all single adult households can bubble with one other household, including households containing other people who are shielding. Similarly, shielding people living in a household can bubble with any single adult household.

### **Is bubbling safe?**

- There are key principles for how you can form a support bubble safely. These are critical to keeping you – and your friends and family – safe and saving lives:

- support bubbles must be exclusive – you should not change who is in your bubble or have close contact with anyone else you do not live with. This is critical to keeping you, and your family and friends, safe
- if you or someone in your support bubble is showing coronavirus symptoms, or otherwise self-isolating, everyone in your support bubble should stay home. If you or a member of your support bubble is contacted as part of the [test and trace programme](#), the individual contacted should stay at home. If the individual becomes symptomatic, everyone in the support bubble should then isolate

### **Does this mean I can go shopping/to the pharmacy?**

- The current advice to those who are clinically extremely vulnerable is to not spend time in any other buildings or covered areas apart from your own home (apart from if you are in a 'support bubble' from 6 July).
- This will change from 1 August, when guidance for this group will be brought in line with that for the clinically vulnerable group. In practice, that means that you should stay home as much as possible, but you can go outside, including to the shops, providing you take particular care to maintain social distancing.
- Anybody who is shielding, or self-isolating can seek support from the NHS Volunteer Responders for help with shopping or medication. Simply call NHS Volunteer Responders on 0808 196 3646 (8am to 8pm) to arrange this.

## **NHS – Access to Services / Treatment**

### **Can I visit my GP surgery or hospital clinic for treatment?**

- You should contact your GP/hospital clinician in the first instance if you have any concerns/queries about your ongoing care and treatment but please carry on with whatever care/treatment arrangements are currently in place until your GP/hospital specialist tells you anything different.

### **How can I safely access NHS services outside of my home?**

- The NHS has already significantly changed the way it operates in order to safely treat and care for those who are at highest risk of severe illness were they to contract COVID-19.
- If your GP/hospital specialist asks you to attend an appointment at the GP surgery/clinical/hospital, you can contact them to ask them about the specific infection control arrangements in place locally and to discuss any concerns you might have.
- NHS England wrote to your GP or hospital clinician, asking them to review ongoing care arrangements for all patients who were shielding. As a result of this review, many of you will have received regular care or treatment at home, or had hospital appointments cancelled or postponed, if clinically appropriate to do so. These care arrangements may change when the shielding advice is further relaxed from 1 August.
- Wherever care at home is not possible, the NHS has been asked to provide safe care in infection-controlled settings, in line with latest infection prevention and control guidance.

- NHS Volunteers can also help with transport to a medical appointment, please ask your healthcare professional to organise this.

### **Can carers visit to provide medical support?**

- Yes, any essential carers or visitors who support you with your everyday needs can continue to visit unless they have any of the symptoms of coronavirus.
- Essential carers coming to your home should follow advice on good hygiene: wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds on arrival to your house and often while they are there (or use hand sanitiser), avoid touching their face, catch any coughs or sneezes in a tissue (or their sleeve), and put used tissues immediately in the bin and wash their hands afterwards. They should observe social distancing guidelines where close or personal contact is not required and where this is possible.
- Further information and guidance on home care can be found at: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-providing-home-care](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-providing-home-care)

### **Are carers and/or NHS staff who are looking after me at home being tested for Covid-19 before they visit?**

- All domiciliary care staff, volunteers and unpaid carers are able to access testing if they have COVID-19 symptoms.
- Further information and guidance on home care can be found at: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-providing-home-care](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-providing-home-care)

### **Will my GP/clinician have been informed about this change/given any guidance?**

- Yes, the Government has written to the NHS with further information about the changes.
- The Government will continue to engage extensively with partners and the healthcare system throughout this process to help ensure they are meeting the needs of those who are clinically extremely vulnerable.

### **Will my medicines continue to be delivered?**

- Those supported by the Medicines Delivery Service who continue to need help will receive this support until the end of July.
- After this date, if it is not possible for someone to maintain social distancing whilst attending their pharmacy, and friends and family are not able to collect medicine for them, then the NHS Volunteer Responders will continue to offer medicines deliveries. If someone is vulnerable or at risk and needs help with shopping, medication or other essential supplies, they should call 0808 196 3646 (8 am to 8pm).

### **Will NHS Volunteer Responders continue to support me?**

- Yes, NHS Volunteer Responders will continue to offer support to those who need it.
- In addition, from 16 June, the NHS Volunteer Responders Scheme has been expanded to offer a new 'Check in and Chat Plus' role. This new role has been designed to provide peer support and companionship to people who are shielding as they transition to the new guidance.
- If you are vulnerable or at risk and need help with shopping, medication or other essential supplies, please call 0808 196 3646 (8am to 8pm).

## Food and support with other essentials

### How does this announcement affect the support that I can access?

- For some people shielding, adapting to a more normal way of life will take some time, which is why the shielding advice will be relaxed in two stages: first from 6 July, and then again from 1 August. From 1 August people will no longer be advised to shield and the Government's core support offer will end.
- The core offer, which will continue to be available to the end of July, covers the following three areas of assistance:
  - **Essential supplies** – a free, standardised weekly parcel of food and household essentials;
  - **Medicines** – arrangements to have medicines delivered to people's homes by local community pharmacies or their dispensing doctor;
  - **Social contact and basic needs** – for example, emotional or social support such as people to talk to on the phone or via a computer.

### When is my last chance to register for support to help me over the next few weeks?

- Final registrations for food support will close on the 17 July, to allow for support to reach individuals ahead of the scheme end date of 31 July.

### When will my food delivery stop?

- Those in receipt of centrally provided food boxes, who continue to need help, will receive this support while they are advised to shield, until the end of July.
- Final registrations for food support will close on the 17 July, to allow for support to reach individuals ahead of this end date of 31 July.

### Can I still get access to priority delivery slots?

- Priority supermarket delivery slots will continue beyond July for those clinically extremely vulnerable who have already signed up for support.
- Final registrations for food support will close on the 17 July.

### Where can individuals go for help once the shielding support offer finishes?

- There are alternative food delivery options available.
- Priority supermarket delivery slots will continue beyond July for those clinically extremely vulnerable who have already signed up for support.
- Supermarkets and other retailers also offer telephone ordering and food boxes to make it easier for vulnerable people to shop for themselves.

- The NHS Volunteer Responders Programme will continue providing support with food, prescriptions and essential items to those who are self-isolating for any reason. This also includes anyone that is clinically extremely vulnerable, or anyone that is vulnerable for another reason.
- If you or a family member meet the criteria, you can call 0808 196 3646 and ask for help. More information is available here: <https://volunteering.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk/nhs-volunteer-responders-portal/isolating>
- Government is committed to supporting councils and voluntary sector organisations to respond to those who have specific support needs and requirements during the COVID-19 pandemic. Details of the support and advice available can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/find-coronavirus-support>
- If you need urgent help and have no other means of support, contact your local authority to find out what support services are available in your area. You can use this search tool: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-local-help>

### **Will the Shielded Patients List still be maintained after the end of July?**

- The NHS will continue to maintain the Shielded Patient List allowing us to maintain targeted advice and support to those who are clinically extremely vulnerable and to change advice and support if incidence was to rise significantly.

## **Income and Employment Support**

### **Can I go back to work?**

- **Before 1 August:** If you have been able to work at home, you should continue to do so. At this time, the Government does not advise CEV individuals to attend their place of work (workplace/'onsite') if this requires them to leave their home. This guidance remains advisory.
- **After 1 August:** From 1 August the Government will further relax advice to those shielding, bringing it in line with the advice to those who are clinically vulnerable. In broad terms, this means that although the advice is still to stay at home as much as possible, those shielding may wish to go out to more places and see more people, as long as they take particular care to minimise contact with others outside their household and follow hygiene measures. This means that if they are unable to work from home but can work on site, they should do so, provided the business is COVID-safe.

### **What about workers who live with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable and previously advised to shield. Can they go back to work now?**

- People living with those who are clinically extremely vulnerable should continue to take extra care to follow the social distancing rules, including at work to the extent possible. The Government position is that they should also work from home if they possibly can.

### **What if I can't work from home and my workplace can't offer social distancing?**



- All employers have been asked to work with the government to ease the transition back to a more normal way of life for their clinically extremely vulnerable employees.
- It is important that this group continue to take careful precautions, and employers should do all they can to enable them to work from home where this is possible, including moving them to another role if required. Employers and employees should start having these conversations as early as possible before the guidance is changed on 1 August.
- Where this is not possible, those who have been shielding should be provided with the safest onsite roles that enable them to maintain social distancing from others. If employers cannot provide a safe working environment, they will still be able to access a range of government support: this includes the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme for employees who have previously been furloughed for a full three-week period prior to 30 June and the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme.

### **I don't feel safe enough to go back to work, could I face disciplinary action? What are my rights?**

- You should look to come to an agreement with your employer and understand their specific policies around health and safety and workplace attendance, especially in relation to COVID-19.
- If you have concerns about your health and safety at work, you can raise them with any union safety representatives, or ultimately with the organisation responsible for enforcement in your workplace, either the Health and Safety Executive or your local authority.
- You can get advice on your specific situation and employment rights by visiting the Acas website <https://www.acas.org.uk/contact> or calling the Acas helpline, 0300 123 1100.

### **I'm furloughed – what does this mean for me?**

- From 1 August the Government will further relax advice to those shielding, bringing it in line with the advice to the clinically vulnerable. This means that if these individuals are unable to work from home but can work on site, they should do so, provided the business is COVID-safe. This includes employees who were previously, but no longer, furloughed.
- Employers have been asked to work with the government to ease the transition back to a more normal way of life for their clinically extremely vulnerable employees. It is important that this group continue to take careful precautions, and employers should do all they can to enable them to work from home where this is possible, including moving them to another role if required.
- Where this is not possible, those who have been shielding should be provided with the safest onsite roles that enable them to maintain social distancing from others. If employers cannot provide a safe working environment, they can continue to use the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme for employees who have previously been furloughed for a full three-week period prior to 30 June.

### **People cannot be newly furloughed after 10 June, but what if we are advised to shield again after this point?**

- The Government is aware of a small number of people who will have been newly advised to shield after 10 June and is looking at the right way of ensuring they are supported whilst shielding guidance applies to them.

- Employees who are unable to work because they are shielding in line with public health guidance (or need to stay home with someone who is shielding) can be furloughed. However, such an employee can only continue to be furloughed from 1 July if they have previously been furloughed for at least 3 consecutive weeks taking place any time between 1 March 2020 and 30 June.
- Those who are clinically extremely vulnerable are able to access additional support where eligible, including Statutory Sick Pay and the Self Employed Income Support package.

**What if I am told to shield again in the future, will I lose my job? Will the Government support me to protect my job/income?**

- Where possible, your employer should help you to work from home.
- If home working is not possible, employers will be able to access the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme for clinically extremely vulnerable employees who have previously been furloughed for a full three-week period prior to 30 June.
- For those who have not been furloughed, clinically extremely vulnerable employees who are notified (by the NHS, their GP or Government letter) to shield again will again be entitled to Statutory Sick Pay for the period they are advised to shield themselves, if all other SSP eligibility rules are met.
- The existing employment rights framework provides protections against discrimination, unfair dismissal and detriment. These protections ensure fair treatment of those who public health guidance recommends to take additional steps to reduce the risk of becoming ill with COVID-19.
- You can get advice on your specific situation and your employment rights by visiting the Acas website <https://www.acas.org.uk/contact> or calling the Acas helpline, 0300 123 1100.
- Guidance around shielding will be continually reviewed and informed by the latest scientific evidence and advice. Support measures will remain under review by the government and will consider what changes may need to be made as the advice to the clinically extremely vulnerable evolves.

**What protection from redundancy do I have? Are there existing protections because of medical conditions? If I've been made redundant, what rights do I have?**

- Redundancy is a form of dismissal from your job. It happens when employers need to reduce their workforce. <https://www.gov.uk/redundancy-your-rights>
- If you're being made redundant, you might be eligible for certain things, including:
  - redundancy pay
  - a notice period
  - a consultation with your employer
  - the option to move into a different job
  - time off to find a new job
- You must be selected for redundancy in a fair way, for example because of your level of experience or capability to do the job.
- Employees have protections against unfair dismissal. <https://www.gov.uk/dismiss-staff/unfair-dismissals>.
- It is breaking the law to discriminate, directly or indirectly, against anyone because of a protected characteristic such as age, sex or disability.

- Employers also have particular responsibilities towards disabled workers and those who are new or expectant mothers.
  - If you are disabled, your employer should make adjustments as reasonable to avoid you being put at a disadvantage.
  - If you are a new or expectant mother, your employer should assess the health and safety risks for you.

**What if I live in Scotland or Wales, but work in England and my employer expects me to return to work?**

- Public health is a devolved matter. The safer workplaces guidance is limited to England only and advises employers who operate in the other nations of the UK to consider the guidance and legislation produced by Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive.
- The advice for employers in England is that they should do all they can to enable you to work from home where this is possible. Where this is not possible, those who have been shielding should be provided with the safest onsite roles that enable them to maintain social distancing.
- You should therefore look to come to an agreement with your employer and understand their specific policies around health and safety and workplace attendance, especially in relation to COVID-19.
- If you have concerns about your health and safety and returning to work, you can raise them with any union safety representatives, or ultimately with the organisation responsible for enforcement in your workplace, either the Health and Safety Executive or your local authority.
- You can get advice on your employment rights by visiting the Acas website <https://www.acas.org.uk/contact> or calling the Acas helpline, 0300 123 1100.

**Can I still get statutory sick pay following the initial relaxation of shielding guidance (between 6 and 31 July)?**

- You will be eligible for Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) on the basis of your shielding status until 31 July. SSP eligibility criteria apply.

**Will I still be able to get Statutory Sick Pay from 1 August, with the shielding guidance for being brought in line with that for the Clinically Vulnerable?**

- From 1 August, the government will no longer advise people to shield because they are clinically extremely vulnerable. This means that from 1 August individuals who are currently shielding will be able to return to work. Therefore, you will no longer be eligible for SSP on the basis of being clinically extremely vulnerable.
- Employers to help their employees to transition back to work safely and support them to follow strict social distancing in the workplace where they cannot work from home.
- Employees will remain eligible for SSP if they are required to self-isolate because they, or someone in their household, has symptoms of COVID-19, and are unable to work as a result. SSP is available to those who are self-isolating because they have been notified by the NHS or public health authorities that they have come into contact with someone who has coronavirus, and are unable to work as a result. SSP also remains available to those who are off sick for reasons other than coronavirus.
- SSP eligibility conditions apply.

- People who are not entitled to Statutory Sick Pay may be entitled to Universal Credit, New Style Job Seekers Allowance or New Style Employment and Support Allowance.

## **Welfare Support**

### **Will I be able to get Employment and Support Allowance until the end of July?**

- People awarded ESA because they have been shielding may continue to be eligible because they either:
  - have a health condition or disability that affects their ability to work or
  - they are infected with COVID-19 or are required to self-isolate in accordance with government guidelines

### **What will happen to a person's Employment and Support Allowance claim if they are claiming ESA as a shielded person and the guidelines have now changed?**

- The Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) will review cases to ensure the information held is updated in accordance with changes to the shielding guidance.
- Where the entitlement conditions for ESA are met, the DWP will progress the claim accordingly. This will include a referral for a Work Capability Assessment in most cases.
- Where a person no longer meets the entitlement conditions for ESA, the claim will end and the person will be advised about other support available, including Universal Credit.

### **Will those who are clinically extremely vulnerable claiming Universal Credit be expected to attend the job centre for a Face to Face appointment?**

- When conditionality is reinstated, the majority of contact with claimants will be over the phone or via the Universal Credit online journal. Any work-related requirements that are agreed will be in line with social distancing guidelines.

### **Will Universal Credit conditionality requirements be tailored for those who are clinically extremely vulnerable?**

- DWP Work Coaches have the discretion to tailor conditionality requirements, in light of the impact of the claimant's health condition to ensure they are realistic and achievable. All requirements are agreed in discussion with claimants. Claimants with the most severe health conditions are already exempt from any form of conditionality, including face to face appointments.
- Where it is reasonable for a claimant to engage in work focused interviews, there can be conducted over the phone. Any work-related activities that are agreed will be consistent with current government advice/guidance.

### **Could I be sanctioned if I left my job because I didn't feel safe going back?**

- Each case is considered on its own merits and claimants will not be sanctioned unless they leave their job voluntarily without good reason.
- A Decision Maker will take into account all the claimant's individual circumstances including any health conditions or caring responsibilities, any evidence of good reason they have provided and current public health advice, before deciding whether a sanction is warranted.

## What employment support can I get if I am still working?

- You can get Access to Work (ATW) which is a demand-led, discretionary grant that contributes to the disability related extra costs of working faced by disabled people that are beyond standard reasonable adjustment.
- ATW provides tailored support which can include:
  - workplace assessments,
  - travel to/in work,
  - support workers,
  - specialist aids and equipment
  - mental health support for people who are absent from work or experiencing difficulties with their wellbeing
  - disability awareness training for work colleagues
  - communication support at interview,
  - the cost of moving equipment following a change in location or job.

## What help is available if I am unemployed or have recently been made redundant?

- For those that require more intensive employment support they still have access to both the Work and Health Programme and Intensive Personalised Employment Support. Providers are making use of digital channels to provide one to one support including regular health and wellbeing conversations with our most vulnerable claimants.

## Employers

### Should employers be encouraging clinically extremely vulnerable and clinically vulnerable employees to come to work?

- Employers should support employees identified either as clinically vulnerable or clinically extremely vulnerable, to work from home in the first instance. This may involve moving them into another role or providing them with remote working equipment to facilitate this.
- Where a clinically vulnerable or clinically extremely vulnerable employee cannot work from home, they should be offered the safest on-site roles that enable them to maintain social distancing from others, once the advice to shield is lifted **post 1 August**.
- If clinically vulnerable or clinically extremely vulnerable employees are required to spend time within close contact of others, employers should carefully assess whether it involves an acceptable level of risk, whether the activity is essential for the work required, and what actions they can take to mitigate risks. This may involve using barriers or screens, limiting the time of certain activities, using back to back or side by side working, and introducing frequent handwashing procedures.
- If employers cannot provide a safe working environment for clinically vulnerable or clinically extremely vulnerable employees, and no other options are suitable, they may consider continuing to use the Job Retention Scheme for those employees who have previously been furloughed for a full three-week period prior to 30 June.

### **What should employers do if they cannot make reasonable adjustments for clinically extremely vulnerable employees, and they cannot work from home?**

- Employers have a legal duty to provide reasonable adjustments for employees with disabilities. Employers also have a legal duty to make sure the workplace is safe for their employees; this includes employees with disabilities and those who are clinically vulnerable or clinically extremely vulnerable.
- The safer workplaces guidance provides some suggestions to help employers make their workplaces COVID-safe for their employees, visitors and customers.
- If employers cannot provide a safe working environment for clinically vulnerable or clinically extremely vulnerable employees or those with disabilities, and no other options are suitable, they may consider continuing to use the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme for those employees who have previously been furloughed for a full three-week period prior to 30 June.

### **Can staff refuse to come into work if they don't think it's safe? Could they face disciplinary action for refusing to come into work / refusing to work in the new conditions?**

- Employers should consult with unions and employees when carrying out their risk assessment to make sure their concerns can be taken into account. If you continue to have concerns, you can raise them with any union safety representatives, or ultimately with the organisation responsible for enforcement in your workplace, either the Health and Safety Executive or your local authority.
- Where the HSE identifies employers who are not taking action to comply with the relevant legislation and guidance to control public health risks, they will consider taking a range of enforcement actions.
- Some workers, whether through specific vulnerability, family caring responsibilities or an abundance of caution may be reluctant to re-enter a workplace even though the employer feels it is safe to do so. Employers are encouraged to engage constructively with such workers and their representatives and try to find solutions that are agreeable to all.

## **Housing**

### **I was receiving support as someone that was homeless or rough sleeping and had been asked to shield. Will this support be taken away now?**

- If you were homeless or rough sleeping and have been supported during the crisis, the Government expects local authorities and partners to continue to work with you to offer support and accommodation where possible and to particularly prioritise vulnerable people.

### **Can I be evicted from my home whilst I'm shielding before 1 August?**

- No. Measures to protect tenants during the COVID-19 outbreak remain in place until 23 August.
- On 5 June the Government announced that the current suspension of evictions in both social and private rented accommodation was extended by two months until 23

August 2020. This means that no action to evict a tenant will proceed before 24 August 2020.

- Through the Coronavirus Act, the Government has also legislated so that landlords must give all tenants three months' notice if they intend to seek possession (i.e. serve notice that they want to end the tenancy) – this means the landlord cannot apply to start the court process until after this period. The provision is currently in place up to 30 September 2020.

### **Can I leave my home if myself or my children are at risk of domestic abuse?**

- You do not have to stay in your home if you need to leave to escape domestic abuse.
- Any individual in danger and who is unable to talk on the phone, should call 999 and then either press 55 on a mobile when prompted or wait on a landline and you will be connected to a police call handler who will be able to assist you without you having to speak.
- Refuges have continued to be open throughout the lockdown period to provide safe accommodation for those fleeing domestic abuse.

### **Am I allowed to let someone into my house for repairs and maintenance work now?**

- Tradespeople can visit people's homes to carry out any work or maintenance provided it is carried out in accordance with the latest guidance on working safely in people's homes.
- If you choose to allow tradespeople into your home, it is good practice to make prior arrangements to maintain social distancing.

## **Education**

### **Can my child now go back to school? Will my child be able to go back to school from September if they are no longer required to shield?**

- At this time, the government is not advising shielding children to return to school/nursery.
- In due course, the government will be publishing guidance on the wider re-opening of education in September.

### **I am a shielding parent, does this mean my child can go back to school/nursery?**

- The advice to parents who are shielding remains that others in their household do not need to shield alongside them, so your child can go back to their school, college or nursery if they are eligible to do so, in line with their peers.

### **What if I don't / my child doesn't feel safe going back to school, do they have to go back?**

- The Government is gradually increasing the numbers of children and young people attending schools and colleges. The decision is based on the latest scientific advice.
- There is guidance for education and childcare settings to welcome back children and young people, focusing on measures that settings can put in place to help limit the risk of the virus spreading.
- Parents should notify their nursery/school/college as normal if their child is unable to attend so that staff can explore the reason with them and address barriers together. Parents will not be fined for non-attendance at this time.

**Will it be compulsory to take up places in Early Years settings for those children who are eligible? What if I don't feel safe sending my child back?**

- At this time, the government is not advising shielding children to return to school/nursery.
- In due course, the government will be publishing guidance on the wider re-opening of education in September.
- Attendance at early years settings will continue to be voluntary and non-statutory, though the Government encourages parents to send in their children to early years settings, as they would normally, as long as they are not self-isolating.

**Will it be compulsory to take up an invitation to attend school, college or other Further Education setting for those children or young people who are eligible?**

- At this time, the government is not advising shielding children to return to school/nursery.
- In due course, the government will be publishing guidance on the wider re-opening of education in September.
- Eligible children and young people – including priority groups (vulnerable children and young people and children of critical workers) - are strongly encouraged to attend their education setting. This does not apply to those who are self-isolating or shielding.
- Parents should notify their nursery/school/college as normal if their child is unable to attend so that staff can explore the reason with them and address barriers together. Parents will not be fined for non-attendance at this time.

**What measures will be put in place by my child's school/nursery to allow them to return?**

- The Government has published guidance on the protective measures that schools, colleges and childcare settings can implement to help minimise risks.
- These approaches and actions should be taken to reduce transmission. These can be seen as a hierarchy of controls that, when implemented, creates an inherently safer system, where the risk of transmission of infection is substantially reduced. These include:
  - avoiding contact with anyone with symptoms



- frequent hand cleaning and good respiratory hygiene practices
  - regular cleaning
  - minimising contact and mixing
- Staff and pupils also have access to testing if they display symptoms.

**My child's education has already been affected by shielding. What are you doing to support them in returning to the classroom?**

- Children who will no longer be advised to shield will be able to return to school in line with their peers, if eligible to attend. Any child may need support in adjusting as they become accustomed to life back in school.
- Schools are best placed to support this transition; they know their children and will offer support to the children that require it.