

# Employees who live with others who may be clinically vulnerable to COVID-19: A Guide for Managers

Over these last months, the Government has issued guidance on those who may be clinically vulnerable to Corona Virus infection (COVID-19), and also for those who have conditions that medical opinion would consider makes them clinically extremely vulnerable.

Those considered clinically extremely vulnerable were advised in March 2020 that they should “shield”, and not come out of their homes for at least 12 weeks. Although many of these people will remain clinically extremely vulnerable, reduced rates of COVID-19 infection within the UK population have enabled these protective measures to be reduced. Now those who remain clinically extremely clinically vulnerable can return to the workplace if they cannot work from home.

Although in the Government’s guidance there has not been a requirement for those employees who live with an individual to shield themselves, in view of the anxiety over infection transmission to those they live with, our experience has been that many employers have permitted their employees in this situation to remain at home also. We ourselves as employers have done so for our employees who live with another person who is clinically extremely vulnerable. In these cases, home working over several months has been feasible.

Since 1st August 2020, those who have been “shielding” are now no longer advised to do so by the Government. However, after some four months it is natural for those who are clinically extremely vulnerable, or those they live with, to feel some anxiety about exposure to public areas, including returning to the workplace.

Essentially, this is a welfare issue for Management to consider. However, we suggest an open dialogue over any anxieties that your employees may have. Whereas home working may be feasible long term for those employees living with people who are clinically extremely vulnerable, it is for the employer to determine what is operationally feasible.

We would advise an open dialogue with any employee in this situation to identify their specific concerns, and what arrangements may be made to accommodate this welfare issue if these are feasible. However, given reduced rates of infection in the UK as compared to Spring 2020, employees that cannot work entirely from home should now be able to return to the workplace

## Government guidance that may assist is as follows:

- ❖ It is no longer advised that those who are considered clinically extremely vulnerable need to observe social distancing with other members of their household as long as they are well.
- ❖ Everyone in their household should regularly follow the advice on hand washing and hygiene, including regularly washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, avoiding touching their face and cleaning thoroughly frequently touched surfaces.

Where employees remain reluctant to return to the workplace, ACAS provide useful guidance as to how this might be managed. Arrangements might include moving to part time working or taking unpaid leave.

If having discussed this issue, or for any other reason you do have ongoing concerns regarding your employees’ own health and work, we should of course be very happy to assess the individual following

management referral to us in the usual way.

## References

Government guidance on living with a person who is shielding may be found at: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19#living-with-other-people](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19#living-with-other-people)

ACAS guidance: <https://www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus>