

CROHN'S & COLITIS UK

To whom it may concern,

This letter is to provide information for employers about people with Crohn's Disease or Ulcerative Colitis – two long-term, incurable conditions sometimes referred to as Inflammatory Bowel Disease.

To manage their condition, many people with Crohn's or Colitis take medicines that weaken their immune system. Taking these medicines, or being in a state of active disease, can leave them vulnerable to serious complications if they develop an infection. These people have been classed by the government as [clinically extremely vulnerable](#), and were previously advised to 'shield' themselves, staying at home and avoiding any face-to-face contact.

As the national shielding programme is paused, there are still certain circumstances in which people may be told to shield, such as if they live or work in an area with a very high number of coronavirus cases, or if their medical team require them to shield in advance of an upcoming medical procedure.

[Clinically extremely vulnerable](#) people remain at high risk of serious complications if they were to contract coronavirus. Even though people are now being vaccinated, we do not know an individual's level of protection – and no vaccine is 100% effective. As an employer, you are required to take steps to reduce the risk of exposure to coronavirus in the workplace. The government has stated that people at increased risk must be offered the safest possible roles in the workplace, which may mean working from home. It is also worth considering the risk your employee would be taking if they need to take public transport into work.

We strongly encourage you to support your employee with Crohn's or Colitis to work from home where possible. Leaving the home will increase their chance of infection, and may negatively impact their physical and mental health during this difficult time. If an employee cannot, or does not wish to, work from home, there should be a risk assessment and consultation on what reasonable arrangements will be made to ensure that the workplace is safe for their specific needs. Consider that some people may have been shielding for as long as a year, and may need extra support to make the transition back to the workplace. The [Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme](#) has also been extended until 30 September 2021, and eligibility includes those who are clinically extremely vulnerable.

We have worked with experts at the British Society of Gastroenterology to identify those people with Crohn's or Colitis who are at increased risk of serious illness from coronavirus. These guidelines can be found at crohnsandcolitis.org.uk/covid19-risk.

We would like to thank you for supporting the wellbeing and reducing the health risk of your employee at this very difficult time. For guidance on how you can support your employee with Crohn's or Colitis beyond the coronavirus pandemic, visit: crohnsandcolitis.org.uk/employers.

Yours faithfully,

Sarah Sleet
Chief Executive
Crohn's & Colitis UK