

To whom it may concern,

This letter is to provide information for employers about people with Crohn's Disease or Ulcerative Colitis - a long-term, incurable condition. People with Crohn's or Colitis may be at a high risk of severe illness should they contract coronavirus (COVID-19) due to the medication they take and/or currently being in a poor state of health.

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 instructed by the government to ['shield' themselves](#), **staying at home and avoiding any face-to-face contact.**

The government has announced [end dates](#) to the shielding period, depending on where in the UK you live. However, people who are currently shielding will remain at high risk of serious complications if they were to contract COVID-19. The UK government has stated that when the shielding programme ends, high risk people should follow the guidelines for those who are clinically vulnerable. This involves only leaving the home when necessary, and following strict social distancing when out. Therefore a return to the workplace will not yet be possible for those who work in environments where strict social distancing cannot be maintained.

We strongly encourage you to support your employee with Crohn's or Colitis to work from home, or, if this is not practical, to consider the government's job retention scheme (furlough). Leaving the home will increase your employee's chance of developing serious illness, and will negatively impact their physical and mental health during this difficult time.

We have worked with expert doctors at the British Society of Gastroenterology to identify those people with Crohn's or Colitis who are at increased risk of serious illness from COVID-19. 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.

Yours faithfully

Sarah Sleet

Chief Executive
Crohn's & Colitis UK