

Advice note 26th February 2021



Update for Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV), Clinically Vulnerable (CV) and Pregnant employees

Dear Colleague,

The health, safety and well-being of our staff and pupils continues to be our highest priority.

Supporting CEV employees

Following the extension to shielding until 31st March, clinically extremely vulnerable staff are advised

- not to attend the workplace. Clinically extremely vulnerable individuals are those identified through a letter from the NHS or a specialist doctor as in the group deemed clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV or shielding list).
- Staff who are identified as clinically extremely vulnerable should follow the published guidance.
- Staff should talk to their employers about how they will be supported, including to work from home.
- **Schools should continue to pay clinically extremely vulnerable staff on their usual terms.**
- Those living with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable can still attend work where homeworking is not possible, but an individual risk assessment should be completed.

Supporting individuals who are CV

Clinically vulnerable staff can continue to attend school where it is not possible to work from home. While in school they should follow the sector-specific measures in this document to minimise the risks of transmission.

This includes taking particular care to observe good hand and respiratory hygiene, minimising contact and maintaining social distancing in line with the provisions set out in the 'prevention' section of this guidance. This provides that ideally, adults should maintain 2 metre distance from others, and where this is not possible avoid close face to face contact and minimise time spent within 1 metre of others. While the risk of transmission between young children and adults is likely to be low, adults should continue to take care to socially distance from other adults including older children and adolescents.

People who live with those who are clinically vulnerable or clinically extremely vulnerable can attend the workplace but should ensure they maintain good prevention practice in the workplace and home settings.

Supporting individuals who are pregnant

As per national restrictions, staff should work at home where possible. If home working is not possible, pregnant staff and their employers should follow the advice in the Coronavirus (COVID-19): advice for pregnant employees.

Pregnant women are in the 'clinically vulnerable' category and are generally advised to follow the above advice, which applies to all staff in schools. All pregnant women should take particular care to practise frequent thorough hand washing, and cleaning of frequently touched areas in their home or workspace, and follow the measures set out in the system of controls section of this guidance to minimise the risks of transmission.

Pregnant women are not advised to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

An employer's workplace risk assessment should already consider any risks to female employees of childbearing age and, in particular, risks to new and expectant mothers (for example, from working conditions, or the use of physical, chemical or biological agents).

Any risks identified must be included and managed as part of the general workplace risk assessment. As part of their risk assessment, employers should consider whether adapting duties and/or facilitating home working may be appropriate to mitigate risks. If a school is notified that an employee is pregnant, breastfeeding, or has given birth within the last 6 months, the employer should check the workplace risk assessment to see if any new risks have arisen. If risks are identified during the pregnancy, in the first 6 months after birth, or while the employee is still breastfeeding, the employer must take appropriate sensible action to reduce, remove or control them.

While it is a legal obligation for employers to regularly review general workplace risks, there is not necessarily a requirement to conduct a specific, separate risk assessment for new and expectant mothers. However, an individual risk assessment may help identify any additional action that needs to be taken to mitigate risks.

Employers should be aware that pregnant women from 28 weeks' gestation, or with underlying health conditions at any gestation, may be at greater risk of severe illness from coronavirus (COVID-19). This is because, although pregnant women of any gestation are at no more risk of contracting the virus than any other non-pregnant person who is in similar health, for those women who are 28 weeks pregnant and beyond there is an increased risk of becoming severely ill, and of pre-term birth, should they contract coronavirus (COVID-19).

This is also the case for pregnant women with underlying health conditions that place them at greater risk of severe illness from coronavirus (COVID-19).

We recommend that schools follow the same principles for pregnant pupils, in line with their wider health and safety obligations.

Read more guidance and advice on coronavirus (COVID-19) and pregnancy from the Royal College of Gynaecologists. <https://www.rcog.org.uk/>

Attached below is some of the latest government guidance

If you have any questions about this email or ongoing COVID arrangements process please speak to your HR provider in the first instance and then contact Kerry Anderson, HR Business Partner – Education & Skills if you have any further queries Kerry.anderson@cumbria.gov.uk

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/964351/Schools_coronavirus_operational_guidance.pdf

School workforce

School leaders are best placed to determine the workforce that is required in school, taking into account the updated advice set out in this section of the guidance for those staff who are CEV. The expectation is that those staff not attending school who are still able to work should do so from home where possible.

Some roles, such as some administrative roles, may be conducive to home working, and you should consider what is feasible and appropriate.

All staff must follow the system of controls to minimise the risks of transmission.

Following the system of controls will reduce the risks to all staff significantly.

You must explain to staff the measures you are putting in place to reduce risks and should discuss any concerns individuals may have.

Staff who are clinically extremely vulnerable

CEV staff are advised not to attend the workplace. Staff who are CEV will previously have received a letter from the NHS or their GP telling them this (no new letter is required), and there is guidance for everyone in this group. It provides advice on what additional measures individuals in this group can take.

Employers should talk to their staff about how they will be supported, including to work from home.

You should continue to pay CEV staff on their usual terms.

Those living with someone who is CEV can still attend work where home-working is not possible and should ensure they maintain good prevention practice in the workplace and home settings.

The shielding guidance is reviewed regularly. CEV individuals will be advised in advance of any extension or end date to inform them of changes or continuation of the guidance. CEV individuals (over 18) have been prioritised for vaccination in phase 1 before the general population and in line with the priority ordering set by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation.

Current DHSC guidance, informed by PHE, currently advises that CEV individuals should continue to shield even after they have been vaccinated. This may change as we get further data on the effects of vaccination.

Staff who are clinically vulnerable

CV staff can continue to attend school. While in school they must follow the system of controls to minimise the risks of transmission.

Staff who live with those who are CV can attend the workplace but should ensure they maintain good prevention practice in the workplace and at home.

Pregnancy

You will need to follow the specific guidance for pregnant employees because pregnant women are considered CV. In some cases pregnant women may also have other health conditions that mean they are considered CEV, where the advice for clinically extremely vulnerable staff will apply. COVID-19 vaccination: a guide for women of childbearing age, pregnant or breastfeeding contains vaccination advice.

Your workplace risk assessment should already consider any risks to female employees of childbearing age and, in particular, risks to new and expectant mothers. If you are notified that an employee is pregnant, breastfeeding, or has given birth within the last 6 months, you should check the workplace risk assessment to see if any new risks have arisen. An assessment may help identify any additional action that needs to be taken to mitigate risks.

Any risks identified at that point, or later during the pregnancy, in the first 6 months after birth, or while the employee is still breastfeeding, must be included and managed as part of the general workplace risk assessment. You must take appropriate sensible action to reduce, remove or control the risks.

As part of your risk assessment, you should consider whether adapting duties and/or facilitating home working may be appropriate to mitigate risks.

You should be aware that pregnant women from 28 weeks' gestation, or with underlying health conditions at any point of gestation, may be at greater risk of severe illness if they catch coronavirus (COVID-19). This is also the case for pregnant women with underlying health conditions that place them at greater risk of severe illness if they catch coronavirus (COVID-19).

We recommend that schools follow the same principles for pregnant pupils, in line with their wider health and safety obligations.

Read more guidance and advice on coronavirus (COVID-19) and pregnancy from the Royal College of Gynaecologists.

Staff who may otherwise be at increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19)

Current evidence shows that a range of factors mean that some people may be at comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19). Those at particularly high risk from a range of underlying health conditions should now have been included in the CEV group and will be receiving a letter to confirm this.

For others who feel they may be at increased risk, where it is not possible to work from home, these staff can attend school as long as the system of controls set out in this guidance are in place. You should continue with an equitable approach to risk management for your workforce, recognising that staff may have a variety of baseline risks. Work continues to build our understanding of what these baseline factors are and the increased risks they pose.

There is further information available on who is at higher risk from coronavirus.

Staff who live with those who may have comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19) can attend the workplace where it is not possible to work from home.