



**The Professional Trades Union for Prison,  
Correctional & Secure Psychiatric Workers**

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## POA Circular 114/2020

16<sup>th</sup> July 2020

Dear Colleagues

### **STAFF WHO ARE SHIELDING AT HOME**

The National Executive Committee have been made aware of further guidance that affects staff who are Extremely Vulnerable and remain at home shielding. Members should be made aware of the following correspondence that has been forwarded to all Governors and PGDs.

**We have received feedback that Governors are contacting Extremely Vulnerable staff with a view to return to work on 1<sup>st</sup> August, I would like to clarify that these staff should not return to the workplace at this time until we have developed additional guidance.**

**HMPPS Risk Assessment guidance for clinically vulnerable, extremely clinically vulnerable and those who are living with the extremely vulnerable who are required to shield, has not changed. Where staff are currently working from home or on paid special leave they should continue this.**

**There is currently no date set for this to be changed, although we are working on developing the additional guidance and we will provide an update with timelines as soon as possible.**

Enclosed for your information is a copy of the latest guidance that covers this area.

For and on behalf of the NEC.

**MARK FAIRHURST**  
National Chair

**ENCLOSURE**

## **Update on the government announcement on changes in shielding and what this means for staff (09/07/20)**

On 22 June 2020 the UK government announced a relaxation to community shielding rules in England based on falling transmission rates. The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care confirmed the following changes:

From Monday **6 July** those shielding (the clinically extremely vulnerable group) will be able to spend time outdoors in a group of up to 6 people including those outside of their household, while maintaining social distancing. Those who are shielding and live alone or are single parents with children will also be able to create a 'support bubble' with one other household of any size, following the same rules already in place for the wider population.

From Saturday **1 August**, these rules will then be relaxed further. Clinically extremely vulnerable people will no longer be advised to shield, but support will remain available from NHS volunteers and local councils. HM Government has advised that this group should continue to follow strict social distancing measures and will be able to participate in more activities such as visiting shops and places of worship. Those who need to work and cannot do so from home will be able to return to work as long as their workplace is [COVID-secure](#), adhering to the guidance available.

There are no changes affecting Wales where shielding continues. Limited outdoor activity will be permitted provided social distancing is maintained until a further announcement is made detailing what the approach will be after 16 August.

### What does the announcement mean for staff?

In the first instance, nothing has yet changed for these employees, whatever arrangements are currently in place should remain and if the employee can work from home, they should continue to do so, or they should remain on paid special leave.

It should be noted though that we are working hard to allow employees to start to return to work from 1<sup>st</sup> August onwards providing that the workplace is COVID-secure. Whilst we welcome the opportunity for staff to return to the workplace, and we are conscious that some staff members themselves will be keen to return, we are trying to fully understand what it means to make the HMPPS workplace COVID-secure through ongoing cross-Government discussions. What we do know is that as a minimum it means we need to be able to comply with social distancing in the workplace, that we have had an opportunity to issue further guidance on supporting the clinically extremely vulnerable back to work, and providing that they have had individual risk assessments as per the published risk assessment guidance (which is being updated, see below).

Social distancing in the workplace - On 23 June 2020 HM Government announced changes to social distancing requirements in the community. The announcement included a reduction in the social distancing guidelines from 2 metres to 1 metre under certain circumstances.

For clarity - it has been decided that **there will be no change to social distancing guidance within prisons, Approved Premises and other HMPPS offices** for the foreseeable future. All staff, prisoners and Service Users should continue to keep 2m distance between one another wherever possible. Where it is not possible to maintain 2m distance, appropriate PPE should be worn. What this means for individual staff members who are extremely vulnerable must be covered in their individual risk assessment.

Individual risk assessments – these must be completed to help identify what adjustments can be made to support staff with this, we do have published risk assessment guidance although that needs to be updated to reflect this change for those shielding. The approach for supporting staff with a risk assessment is similar to the approach we currently use with those who are clinically vulnerable, although we will maintain the distinction between those who are extremely clinically vulnerable and those who are clinically vulnerable as this will help should the requirement to shield be reinstated at any point (for example during outbreaks).

Further guidance - following this announcement, the government will be writing to all individuals on the Shielded Patient List with updated information on shielding advice and we will include this into developing HR guidance for supporting these staff back into work. The further guidance will be developed in consultation with HMPPS Trade Unions and with cross-Government HR teams, and we will update on expected timescales with this as soon as possible. In the meantime, please continue to support staff with their current arrangements of working at home or paid special leave.