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E: Sash.rheumatologysecretary@nhs.netWeb site <http://www.surreyandsussex.nhs.uk>**New guidelines for clinically, extremely vulnerable group of patients**

This is for patients identified as being extremely, clinically- vulnerable using the criteria produced by the British Society of Rheumatology 5/11/20. They have been advised the following (<https://www.gov.uk>) during the period of the second lock down 5/11/20 to 2/12/20:

“We are advising clinically, extremely vulnerable people to stay at home, as much as possible, except to go outdoors for exercise or to attend essential health appointments. You may wish to meet up with one other person from outside your household or support bubble, for example, to exercise in an outdoor public place, but we suggest that you always try to do so as safely as possible.

Try to keep all contact with others to a minimum and avoid busy areas. Whenever you go out, continue to maintain strict social distancing, wash your hands regularly and avoid touching your face.

You should also try to stay 2 metres away from other people within your household, especially if they display symptoms of the virus or have been advised to self-isolate.”

Work

You are strongly advised to work from home. If you cannot work from home, you should not attend work for this period of restrictions.

If you cannot attend work for this reason, you may be eligible for Statutory Sick Pay (SSP), Employment Support Allowance (ESA) or Universal Credit. Other eligibility criteria will apply. The formal shielding notification you receive may act as evidence for your employer or the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) that you are advised to follow shielding guidance and should not work outside of your home for the period stated in the letter.

If you were on payroll before 30 October, 2020, you may also be eligible for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (on furlough), which is being extended until 2 December, 2020. Speak to your employer if you think you are eligible.

Other people you live with who are not clinically extremely vulnerable themselves can still attend work if they cannot work from home, in line with the wider rules set out in the new national restrictions from 5 November.

Education settings

More evidence has emerged that shows there is a very low risk of children becoming very unwell from COVID-19, even for children with existing health conditions. Most children originally identified as clinically extremely vulnerable no longer need to follow this advice. Speak to your GP or specialist clinician, if you have not already done so, to understand whether your child should still be classed as clinically extremely vulnerable.

Those children whose doctors have confirmed they are still clinically extremely vulnerable are advised not to attend school while this advice is in place. Your school will make appropriate arrangements for you to be able to continue your education at home. **Children who live with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable, but who are not clinically extremely vulnerable themselves, should still attend school.**

Travel

You should avoid all non-essential travel by private or public transport. This includes not travelling to work, school or the shops. **You should still travel to hospital and GP appointments unless told otherwise by your doctor.** If you need help to travel to an appointment, speak to your healthcare professional to arrange transport support with NHS Volunteer Responders.

Others living in a household with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable are not advised to follow this guidance. They should instead continue to attend work and school in accordance with the general advice and regulations set out in the national restrictions guidance from 5 November.

There is further information available from these websites:

<https://www.gov.uk>

<https://www.versusarthritis.org>

Thank you.

Rheumatology team SASH

Please note this letter is principally a communication between medical professionals. If the patient has a query about the contents or terminology, then they should speak to their General Practitioner in the first instance. Copies of investigations are not sent to patients.

We would be very grateful if you could consider any patients on long-term corticosteroid treatment or immunosuppressant treatment (Sulfasalazine, Methotrexate, Gold, Azathioprine, Leflunomide, Etanercept or Humira) for a one-off Pneumovax vaccination plus annual flu vaccine.