

Going back to work as lockdown relaxes: the challenges for cancer survivors and working carers

Employers need to safeguard the health and minimise the risk of infection for **all** their employees but this is particularly important for those with cancer and their carers, who will be deeply concerned about infecting their vulnerable loved ones.

Those with cancer and their carers will typically be nervous about:

- Travelling on public transport and the hygiene of all public spaces
- Hygiene in the office – for example the cleanliness of work surfaces - and social distancing in e.g. the lifts, on escalators, in staff restaurants or anywhere where staff would normally gather. How are you intending to keep these spaces clean after the first day back?

Given the above, you should allow them to work at home if at all possible and ensure their managers and colleagues stay in close contact to ensure they don't feel isolated and forgotten.

For all other employees, we are aware that before the lockdown some companies implemented rotas allowing half their staff to come in one week and the other half to come into the office in the second week. Post lockdown, implementing a similar or more radical rota system particularly given the need for social distancing and the impact on desk space, lift usage etc would be worth considering.

Please note that many cancer survivors (and those being shielded – see below) will have had their treatment delayed or interrupted which will cause additional personal and work-related challenges and stress. Previously agreed treatment and work plans will have changed or be uncertain and new plans will need to be understood and accommodated.

Shielding

The Government is currently advising people to shield until the end of June and is regularly monitoring this position. Whatever the circumstances with regard to relaxing the lockdown you should:

- Allow them to continue to work from home
- If this is not possible, look at other options to retain them such as a further furlough period.

Their situation will feel more precarious so please make sure you keep in regular contact – **and if you are an employee, if you hear nothing don't wait to be contacted; please take the initiative to keep in touch with HR, your boss and your colleagues.**

Finally, if you are an employer, please remember to abide by the Equality Act 2010 in why, how and when you select employees for furlough or redundancy.