

# Recovery: Return of shielding and vulnerable employees to the workplace

Covid-19 Shielding - Guidance for  
Managers



# Vulnerable Groups

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Clinically extremely  
vulnerable employees  
(shielding)

Clinically vulnerable  
employees including BAME  
and other groups

Employees living with  
people who are extremely  
vulnerable

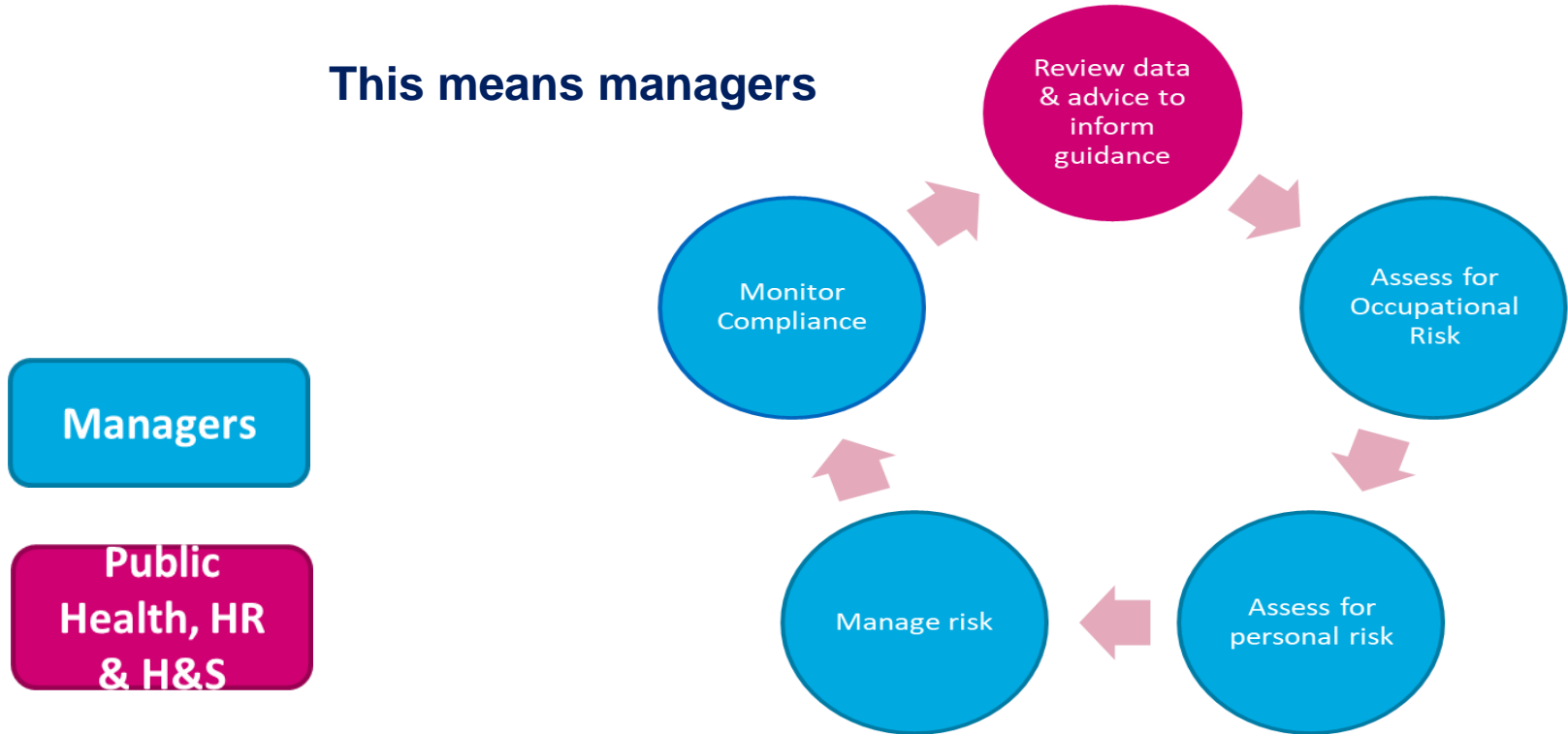
# What do I need to know?

To support staff who are: clinically extremely vulnerable, clinically vulnerable, living with someone extremely vulnerable

- From 1 August 2020 shielding arrangements will be paused. Strict social distancing will apply but not full shielding measures.
- Southwark Council supports if you can continue to work from home do so as per government guidance.
- However, now shielding has been lifted staff can if able, return to the workplace. Advice is to stay alert, if they go out follow strict social distancing.
- Managers are reviewing their service renewal plans, safe operating procedures and workplace risk assessments for the whole service ensuring the workplace is COVID secure.
- An employee may still be advised by their doctor to continue to shield or to shield for a specific period of time. If this is the case seek advice from your HR Business Partner.

# We take regular steps to ensure all of our staff are working safely

This means managers



# Staying Covid-19 Secure

- All workplaces must be Covid-19 Secure & staff will only be ready to return to the workplace following the service completing the service renewal plans.
- Managers will have carried out a review of their services Safe Operating Procedures and Risk Assessment to ensure they address risks posed by Covid-19.
- Managers will have review the SOP'd and RA's with the departmental Health and Safety Managers and our trade union colleagues, to ensure the workplace is Covid-19 safe prior to the return to work.

This includes review and assessments to ensure:

- All workplaces will have cleaning, handwashing, and hygiene procedures in place
- Social distancing is implemented and where 2m cannot be put in place, control measures to manage transmission risk have been implemented
- Each type of workplace will have different operating arrangements and covid-19 secure guidance to follow
- Manager can share/discuss these with staff who have been shielding or living with people shielding to explain how they are supporting them to return to work.

# Your role as Line Manager

- Read the managers guidance and attend the training to understand how to undertake a Health and Wellbeing discussion and individual risk assessment
- Arrange a health and wellbeing discussion and individual risk assessment with your staff member, using the guidance provided on the Source
- Reassure and listen to their concerns, be supportive and empathetic,
- Making sure arrangements that are put in place have safety at their heart, all the employees concerns have been addressed and if required reasonable adjustments are accommodated. Keep in touch with your HR Business Partner if you require advice and support.
- It can be sensitive for colleagues to discuss some of these things and discussions need to be planned carefully. This approach has been designed to look for solutions to protect employees and to provide reassurance.
- You must make sure that everything is in place, before the employee returns to work.

# Process

Contact your shielding staff to plan for a Health and wellbeing discussion and individual risk assessment.

Update you MSS/SAP staff record if the employee has to continue to shield or if they are returning to work.

Occupational Health referrals can be made for further advice.

Covid-19 individual risk assessments must be agreed and shielding staff involved, and associated actions must be in place prior to returning to work.

Support is also available for staff via the Wellbeing plan & Wellbeing Toolkit and the Employee Assistance Programme, HELP.

Welcome back packs – make sure PPE and guidance is provided or posted out beforehand so colleagues have time to be well prepared.

Arrangements must continue to be kept under review.

# Reasonable Adjustments

Work is good for people – be flexible and creative to help facilitate a return.

Wellbeing/mental health support is available to staff and managers should promote this as a support tool.

Travel to work – changing start and finish times may assist employees. This can be, if required, outside of normal core hours due to the pandemic.

Work locations can be reviewed and amended, if possible.

Phased returns are advised and suggested to build confidence and resilience back to work.

Redeployment is an option for consideration if the person cannot return to work or work remotely.



# Reasonable Adjustments

Record all agreed actions and interventions, create absolute clarity. Changing duties, locations and discussing redeployment options must be undertaken fairly and you are asked to take advice from HR before doing so.

Demonstrate all necessary actions have been taken to ensure that everything reasonably practicable to minimise risk.

Other examples are on the individual health risk assessments guide and FAQs



# Shielding Return Support for the Individual

1. Telephone discussion with your line manager setting out the plan for your return to the workplace.
2. Discussion to with your line manager to agree an individual risk assessment.
3. An appointment with Occupational Health where required to discuss your health concerns and to support you in your return to work plan and advise on reasonable adjustments.
4. A written plan for return including working arrangements to build up your transition back.
5. If you haven't been involved in the Covid-19 secure risk assessment, there will be a full review of the risk assessment with you, and opportunities to discuss in detail including any walk through of working arrangements.
6. If PPE is set out in your individual health risk assessment it will be provided together with guidance on how to use it.
7. HR Business Partner input if there are any concerns that you can't resolve with your line manager.

# Other Shielding Support for the Individual

Counselling with the Council's Employee Assistance Programme (Help).

Agreement that a flexible approach to using annual leave can be put in place to support your return.

Access to Help's, confidential 24/7 telephone and web-based support programme, providing a listening ear, wellbeing support.

Additional appointments with Occupational Health Advisers to support you once you are back in work.

Access to the Council's team of Mental Health First Aiders.

Access to Work – Able Futures - mental health support service for up to 9 months, this will be in place after you return. This is an external service and your needs may be triaged once you make contact with them.

# Refusal to return to work

We must do everything possible to avoid getting to this stage  
Apply a consistent approach  
Take early advice

We recognise it may take time to rebuild staff confidence to return to work. However, if everything has reasonably been done to address an employee's concerns, and action taken accordingly, but they still refuse to attend work, contact your HR Business Partner.

Your HR Business Partner will review with you what has been done to try to support the member of staff and if there is anything further that can be done. They will also review contractual obligations and consequences with the line manager and the employee and trade union representative if the employee is a member of a recognised TU. We must put in place a consistent approach across the council to fully support staff back to work wherever possible.