



Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP
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Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP
Chair of the Education Select Committee
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Thank you for your question concerning the safety of extremely clinically vulnerable and clinically vulnerable staff at the Education Select Committee yesterday.

I want to begin by re-iterating that schools will only be asked to welcome back more children if the government's five tests are met. The final decision will be taken as part of the formal review into lockdown measures which the law requires us to undertake by Thursday 28 May. We will continue to consider all the evidence, as we said we would do, and work with the sector.

The safety of children and staff is our utmost priority. We have set out in our ['implementing protective measures'](#) guidance the position for people who are, or live with someone who is, clinically vulnerable or clinically extremely vulnerable, to support school leaders and their staff in discussions and decisions about staffing.

Clinically Extremely Vulnerable

This guidance outlines that clinically extremely vulnerable individuals are advised not to work outside the home. We are strongly advising people, including education staff, who are clinically extremely vulnerable (those with serious underlying health conditions which put them at very high risk of severe illness from coronavirus and have been advised by their clinician or through a letter) to rigorously follow shielding measures in order to keep themselves safe. Staff in this position are advised not to attend work.

Clinically Vulnerable

Clinically vulnerable individuals who are at higher risk of severe illness have been advised to take extra care in observing social distancing and should work from home where possible. Education and childcare settings should endeavour to support this, for example by asking staff to support remote education, carry out lesson planning or other roles which can be done from home. If clinically vulnerable (but not clinically extremely vulnerable) individuals cannot work from home, they should be offered the safest available on-site roles, staying 2 metres away from others wherever possible, although the individual may choose to take on a role that does not allow for this distance if they prefer to do so. If they have to spend time within 2 metres of other people, settings must carefully assess and discuss with them whether this involves an acceptable level of risk.

Wider guidance

Within this guidance, developed with Public Health England (PHE), we have set out a hierarchy of controls which settings should work through to substantially reduce risk. We acknowledge that, unlike older children and adults, early years and primary age children cannot be expected to remain 2 metres apart from each other and staff. In deciding to bring more children back to early years and schools, we have taken this into account. Schools should therefore work through the hierarchy of controls that, when implemented, creates an inherently safer system, where the risk of transmission of infection is minimised. This hierarchy includes minimising contact with individuals who are unwell, good hygiene behaviours, enhanced cleaning measures and keeping children and staff in small consistent groups to minimise contact.

This last element of the hierarchy recognises that it is still important to reduce contact between people as much as possible, and we can achieve that and reduce transmission risk by ensuring children, young people and staff where possible, only mix in a small, consistent group and that small group stays away from other people and groups.

Our published guidance can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings>.

With best wishes.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yan Mistry' followed by a stylized surname.