

To whom it may concern,

This letter is to provide information for employers about people with Rheumatoid Arthritis (**RA**) or a parent of a child with Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis (**JIA**) or an adult with JIA. Both RA and JIA are, auto-immune, systemic, long-term, incurable conditions.

People with RA or JIA may be at a high risk of severe illness should they contract coronavirus (COVID-19) due to the medication(s) they take and/or possibly being currently in a poor state of health. To manage their condition, many people with RA or JIA take medicines that dampen down their immune system response. Taking these medicines or being in a state of active disease can leave them vulnerable to serious complications if they develop an infection.

The latest advice from the UK government states that 'people on immunosuppression therapies sufficient to significantly increase risk of infection' are required to 'shield' themselves. This means that they should stay at home at all times and avoid any face-to-face contact for at least 12 weeks from Monday 23 March. This is to protect them from coming into contact with COVID-19.

For more details please see the government webpage: [gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19). We also have lots of helpful information for employees and employers at [www.nras.org.uk/employment-and-benefits-faqs](https://www.nras.org.uk/employment-and-benefits-faqs)

Expert doctors at the British Society for Rheumatology have worked to identify those people with RA or JIA who are at increased risk of serious illness from COVID-19. These guidelines can be found at [www.nras.org.uk/data/files/COVID19\\_risk\\_scoring\\_guide.pdf](https://www.nras.org.uk/data/files/COVID19_risk_scoring_guide.pdf).

However, even if your employee or the person they care for is not in the 'extremely' vulnerable category the fact they have RA or JIA will mean they should be practising enhanced social distancing i.e. not coming within 2 metres of another person. If this is NOT possible in their place of work then they should be, if possible, working from home or given a 'clean space' to work in and if neither is possible then there may be further information to help via [gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19)

We would like to thank you for supporting the wellbeing and reducing the health risk of your employee at this very difficult time.

Yours faithfully



Clare Jacklin

CEO