

Supporting Vulnerable Workers

Some vulnerable workers (including pregnant mothers and those who are clinically extremely vulnerable) are worried about being on campus, in offices, in classrooms, and in lecture theatres, particularly if this is the first time for many months. In the region, there are different approaches and practices being implemented.

Our advice to members is to speak to your line manager at the earliest opportunity if:

- a) You are (or believe that you are/should be) in one of the groups who would be considered as being vulnerable;
- b) You live with someone who could be classified as being in a vulnerable group;

Ask your line manager for:

1. The section of the institution's generic risk assessment that addresses vulnerable workers and what approach/advice is being taken;
2. A referral to occupational health;
3. An individual risk assessment;

When appropriate, ask for 2. and 3. to be completed as soon as possible. If you have information from a medical practitioner that might be of assistance, make sure that you share this (in confidence) with your line manager. Ask for reviews – "How is it going?" – to be built into any agreed way forward.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) have a section on their website giving various useful guidance, such as [protecting vulnerable workers during the coronavirus pandemic](#). This includes the fact that an employer has "a legal duty to protect workers from harm" and reminds employers to "make sure you consider the risk to workers who are particularly vulnerable to coronavirus (COVID-19) and put controls in place to reduce that risk".

The HSE also has guidance for employers on [supporting vulnerable workers](#)

"People who have been shielding and people who live with those who have been shielding can be very anxious about the idea of returning to work. You can help these workers by explaining how you'll support them. This could include: working from home where possible; giving them different tasks to do".

Where you have raised your concerns and circumstances with your line manager and you remain anxious about what you are being asked to do, [make sure that you contact your local UCU representative](#) for advice and support.

Whilst you might be told that: "The government has lifted most coronavirus regulations and you can come back onto the campus and work 'normally'", this does not absolve them of their responsibility, as an employer, to look after the health and safety of the workforce. And, in particular, of their obligation to address the concerns and needs of vulnerable workers.

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