



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

17th July 2020

Dear Constance,

RE: SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE 'SHIELDING' DURING COVID-19.

Thank you for your recent correspondence in support of vulnerable people who have been 'shielding' during the Coronavirus pandemic, specifically those suffering from blood cancer; your comments upon which I have read with compassion and interest.

It is crucial that those at most risk in our society were protected in order to safeguard their own health and prevent the NHS from becoming overwhelmed. However, I am also greatly saddened to hear of financial difficulties at this time. No one following Government instructions should be penalised for doing so.

I am aware that the advice indicates that employees, unable to work because they are 'shielding' in line with public health guidance, could be placed on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, such that their employer could claim a grant that covers 80 percent of their usual monthly wage, up to £2,500 a month. I urge anyone on furlough to contact their employer to alert them to the fact that they are 'shielding' in line with public health and Government guidance and therefore continue to be eligible for the scheme.

I welcome clear Government guidance that indicates that, from the 4th July, clinically vulnerable people can now meet people both outdoors and indoors, while remaining vigilant about hygiene. Those classed as clinically extremely vulnerable, who have been advised to shield, are now able to form support bubbles, and spend time outdoors in a group of up to 6 people; from the 1st August, advice for clinically extremely vulnerable people will move in line with advice to those who are clinically vulnerable. While these steps are being taken as long as the incidence rate in the community remains low, they will be most welcome for individuals who have been 'shielding' since March.

I, of course, do not wish to see anyone put at any risk as the 'lockdown' is eased. I have been reassured by colleagues in Government that they are following the best medical advice for getting people back to work. I strongly encourage employers who employ people with blood cancers to utilise the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) for as long as possible until the safety of such employees can be guaranteed. As I am sure you are aware, the CJRS has been extended until October and it should be used where necessary. I would also like to take this opportunity to remind employers that they have a legal responsibility to ensure their employees and other people on their premises are protected.



I was delighted when, on the 27th April, my colleague, the Secretary of State for Health & Social Care, announced the restoration of NHS services, starting with the most urgent, like cancer care and mental health support. The NHS is open for business, and anyone who needs care and treatment should continue to access it as and when they need it, especially when delays could impose both an immediate and a long-term risk to health.

There is still much to be considered at this time for the safety of people who are 'shielding' and it is right that the Government treats people with blood cancers with the utmost sensitivity and care.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

*With best wishes,
Tom*

**TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**