Life vs Livelihood

When shielding ended for vulnerable people, many leukaemia patients still didn't feel safe to return to work. This campaign shares their stories and shows how we can protect people's health without putting their income at risk.

Why we launched this campaign

During the pandemic, people with leukaemia were told to shield. When that advice stopped, many still felt at risk. The government's support ended, but the danger from COVID-19 remained – especially for those with weakened immune systems. Leukaemia Care heard from patients who felt abandoned and unsure what to do. That's why we started the Life vs Livelihood campaign: to highlight the tough choices patients faced and call for better protection at work.

Who is clinically extremely vulnerable?

Clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) people are at the highest risk from COVID-19. This includes anyone with blood cancer, like leukaemia. Even after having the vaccine, some people with leukaemia don't get full protection. This means they may still get very ill if they catch the virus. That's why many chose to keep shielding, even when others returned to normal life.

What we found

In our surveys, people told us:

- 1 in 2 had not left their house in the past week
- Most still didn't feel safe going back to work
- Over half said shielding had affected their mental health
- Many were confused about their rights and support

These findings showed the real-life struggles of leukaemia patients after shielding ended.

> I do not want to be at work as I do not feel safe... this is really getting me down.
>
> — *Leukaemia patient*

What Leukaemia Care asked for

We called for:

- Clear guidance for employers on how to protect vulnerable staff
- A safe and fair return to work for leukaemia patients
- Support for those who couldn't go back yet – like furlough or unpaid leave
- No discrimination against people who needed to shield
- COVID-19 risk assessments for all vulnerable workers

We wanted to make sure no one had to choose between their health and their job.

Support for you

If you are affected by these issues, our Advocacy Team is here to help.

Email: advocacy@leukaemiacare.org.uk

Call our free helpline: 08088 010 444