



HR advice

How can you do right by your staff during the Covid-19 pandemic?

“We all have different sets of circumstances and reactions, so employers have to be flexible in their approach”

Michele Piertney, Senior Advisor, ACAS

Times are challenging at the moment: you need to protect the future of your business and support your team as best you can. We ask industry experts the most-asked questions about HR issues.

How can I keep staff engaged when they're on reduced hours?

“Regular communication is key,” says Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) Senior Advisor Michele Piertney. “Talking with employees and maintaining a dialogue is vital to ensure that both you and your employees know what’s going on and what may happen in the future. We all have different sets

of circumstances and reactions, so employers have to be flexible in their approach – some employees will be ok but others will be worried. I think the most important thing, whether you’re an employer or an employee, is to not make assumptions.”

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme has meant changes to many employees’ hours. Michele continues: “Some employees may be assuming they will return to working their normal hours but that might not be the case. Talking honestly with each other regularly will go a long way to prevent future problems.”





Help out your staff

Recommend CareerScope to any team members you have to let go. It's a support network for people in hospitality who have lost their jobs. It offers CV advice, training courses, financial and wellbeing support, and lots more. And it's all free. careerscope.uk.net



How should I deal with staff who won't come into work because they have vulnerable people at home and don't want to risk their health, or if they are vulnerable themselves?

For the vast majority of roles in hospitality it's not possible to work from home which presents a difficult situation. Michele explains the best plan: "If your employees are concerned, then have an informal chat with them in the first instance. Explain what measures have been put in place and what – if any – additional things can be done to reassure them, and keep them and their families safe. A friendly discussion can

agree a plan for returning to work and any adjustments that may be needed before they return."

A member of my team has asked to take time off work to look after their child who has suspected Covid-19. How do I deal with this?

Michele says: "All employees have the right to take time off to care for dependants. However, this right is to take a reasonable amount of time off for emergencies – typically one or two days to put alternative arrangements in place. It does not have to be paid time off – although this is something you may wish

to discuss. Unpaid leave or using annual leave entitlement instead is another option, alongside Parental Leave which can allow employees to take up to four weeks' (usually unpaid) leave a year.

"If a child or dependant becomes unwell then the parent will likely be told to self-isolate as well – at which point employer good practice would be to pay them as if they were on sick leave."

With reduced footfall, I can't afford to keep all my staff on, even with the government job scheme. Any advice on the redundancy process?

Rachel Suff, Senior Employee Relations Advisor at CIPD, the HR industry body, says: "Regular, honest and two-way communication is essential so employees don't rely on the grapevine to hear what's happening. Take time to explain the reasons for the redundancy and why it's a hard business decision, and the actions that were taken to avoid it. Make sure everyone knows their contribution to the business was valued and that redundancy selection is in no way a reflection on them personally."



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