

ACAS publishes new advice on handling coronavirus at work

ACAS has issued guidance for employers in order to deal with sick pay, quarantined staff and staff who are reluctant to come into work due to fears of catching coronavirus.

28 February 2020

Please note: the information contained in this legal update is correct as of the original date of publication

ACAS has issued guidance for employers in order to deal with sick pay, quarantined staff and staff who are reluctant to come into work due to fears of catching coronavirus. Within the guidance is further advice for employers to deal appropriately if the virus spreads widely in the UK or if a business needs to shut down temporarily. ACAS have confirmed that if an employee is absent due to coronavirus, a workplace's normal sick pay applies.

If coronavirus spreads more widely in the UK, ACAS advise that employers should:

- Ensure staff contact numbers and emergency contact details are up to date;
- Ensure managers are aware of the symptoms of coronavirus and are confident in the processes which would need to be carried out such as sickness reporting and sick pay.
- Implement NHS advice on hygiene such as encouraging everyone to wash their hands regularly and ensuring there are clean places to wash hands with soap and water;
- Give out hand sanitisers and tissues to staff and encourage their use and quick disposal.

Acas Chief Executive, Susan Clews, said: *"The increase in coronavirus cases is headline news around the world and there are genuine concerns around how to deal with its impact on UK workplaces. Employers and workers have started to get in touch with us to ask what their rights are at work when dealing with potential coronavirus cases."*

Employers should have a strategic plan in place, in case the workplace is forced to shut down on a temporary basis. This includes ensuring staff have a way to communicate with their employer and work colleagues. Staff who have work laptops or mobile phones could be asked to work from home, including using video conferencing in lieu of face to face meetings.

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