

To: Employing Churches and Circuits in Southampton Methodist District

Covid-19 update no. 3

25th March 2020

Further to the previous guidance, posted on 23rd March, please see below current employment-related guidance. I will aim to keep you as updated as possible in this ever-changing environment.

Current advice and guidance can be found on the following links:

<https://www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/guidance-for-employers-and-businesses-on-coronavirus-covid-19>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/covid-19-support-for-businesses>

This includes information on the **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (more details below)**.

As I understand it from current published information, Govt advice is that employees should be encouraged to work from home wherever possible, particularly if their normal place of work is temporarily closing.

In a nutshell, employers have three choices:

1. Employees continue to work their contracted hours, either from a controlled environment on church premises or from home, where possible;
2. Employees agree to work reduced contracted hours in order to maintain productivity and avoid short term lay off or redundancy; or

3. Employees agree to become 'furloughed' in accordance with the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, meaning that they will remain employed whilst carrying out no work, and the Govt will reimburse 80% of their contracted pay.

Please note that employers can ask employees to take unpaid leave or annual leave where less than contracted hours are performed, or to continue to pay full pay regardless.

I would suggest that it may be unwise to seek any 'furlough'-related agreement from employees until further details and emergency legislation has been published, but it is important to let employees know of the possibilities ahead.

There are clearly a number of factors affecting these decisions and its implementation, including work environment, health of employees, budgetary restrictions, urgency/necessity for work being carried out.

Some areas of detail are still unclear, such as how the scheme interlinks with sick pay, and how to manage potential unfairness of employees in different categories.

However, the main advice in this situation is to act fairly and reasonably and to keep employees informed of what is happening, even if you don't know what is happening or if nothing is happening – keep them in the loop!

Please have a read through these pages for general information, advice and guidance. If you can't find a solution to your particular situation, as this information is generic, do contact me by phone or email. I will do my best to help, but it may take a while for all the statutory processes to fall into place, as this is a new climate for everyone!

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