

Coronavirus

Advice to Quaker employers



04 August 2020

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This advice is issued to Quaker meetings in Britain. It is to give advice and guidance to employers on how to support employees as best as possible during the global coronavirus [Covid-19] outbreak in 2020.

Check on the BYM website, www.quaker.org.uk/coronavirus, as information is changing regularly

Trustee responsibilities

9 June 2020

Area meeting trustees will be required to take decisions that may affect their employees. It is important that you make these decisions in a timely way without rushing them and that people who the decisions affect are involved or consulted. Each area meeting's response will be slightly different and will depend upon the resources available the meeting. Local meetings will need to liaise carefully with AM trustees to be sure that what is offered across each area meeting is consistent and fair to all employees and volunteers.

Volunteers

You do not have legal responsibility to volunteers in the same way as to employees. Do remember though that decisions you take may have a significant effect on some volunteers if they have accommodation tied to their role. Be mindful of how you can support people during this time.

Coronavirus job retention scheme (updated) 04 August 2020

Flexible furlough

- From 1 July, a new flexible Job Retention Scheme was introduced. This means, for example, employees could work for two days and be paid by their employer as normal and then furloughed for the remaining three days and have a proportion of their income covered by the scheme.
- From August, the Government will continue to pay 80% of wages, with employers paying National Insurance and pension contributions ('on-costs').
- In September, employers will be asked to pay 10% of wages plus on-costs, with the Government paying 70%.
- In October, employers will be asked to pay 20% of wages plus on-costs, with the Government paying 60%.
- The Job Retention Scheme will close after October.

Coronavirus job retention scheme bonus

A job retention scheme bonus of £1000 has been introduced for employers retaining any staff who have been furloughed (for any length of time) until 31 January 2021. Read the [information about the coronavirus job retention bonus scheme](#) for details and full eligibility.

What is the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme?

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme aims to support employers during the coronavirus outbreak. The scheme has been running since March and supports employers by paying a proportion of their wages up to a maximum of £2500 per month. **The scheme is now closed to new applicants** (unless you are making a new claim for an employee who is a military reservist or is returning from statutory parental leave). Any employee who has been put on furlough for a minimum of 3 weeks before 30 June (and a claim for this was submitted before 31 July) can now remain on furlough full or part time until 31 October 2020. Read [further information about the scheme and how to claim](#). Please note that you will need to review the scheme guidance carefully to understand what you must do to make a claim, and how to calculate the salary costs.

When might Quakers use the scheme?

There are several reasons why it may be appropriate for a Quaker employer to put employee(s) on furlough:

- an employee who administers lettings may currently have no work
- they cannot operate because they do not have the ability to work from home, or do not have the technology to do so, or they do not have a safe working environment
- they cannot operate because the organisation has to make savings due to losses in income (eg from lettings):
 - a. now
 - b. in the medium to long term to preserve the long term viability of the organisation's work or to protect jobs in the long term.

Should Quakers use it?

This is a Government grant available to all employers and so Quakers should use it for the reasons listed earlier during the coronavirus emergency.

The decision to put employees on furlough is for the area meeting trustees, who will need to decide in consultation with local meetings or whichever body oversees employment locally. Employers may wish to make swift decisions to be able to benefit from the furlough scheme in good time.

Trustees should think about the stewardship of our financial resources at this time. It may be that area meetings have enough reserves to cover wages for a significant period but this may not be the best use of those funds. Furlough is a national offer made by Government to secure businesses and charities during the Covid-19 pandemic. A period of furlough may be the best option based upon:

- The Government prioritising its spending to preserve jobs and organisations and stability.
- This being a fiscal stimulus for the economy to keep spending power in households so that the economy does not go into a deep recession or depression.

General questions

Can an employee be part-furloughed?

Yes, since 1 July, employees who have already been furloughed can return to work part-time.

Employers need to agree with employees the number of hours they work each week or over a month. These hours can be worked at any time across the month. For example an employee whose furlough means they are required to work 0.4fte (full time equivalent) (2 days per week, or approximately 8 days per month) could work all of their hours in the first two weeks of the month and not work at all in the last two weeks of the month.

Can an employee be furloughed, then work, then furloughed again?

Technically this is still possible although it may be easier from an HR perspective to look at part time furlough, see previous paragraph.

What if my AM has more than one employee?

If your area meeting has more than one employee it may be possible for one person to carry out necessary work for more than one of the area meeting buildings. You can now have all employees part furloughed allowing work and furlough to be shared more equally across the workforce (in accordance with the scheme requirements).

Can employees work when furloughed?

No. The Government has made it clear that it expects that no-one on furlough should do any work or volunteer for the organisation that they are employed by. If they do, a

claim under the scheme may not be successful. We expect Quaker employers to be compliant with this.

Is the scheme only for employees who would otherwise be made redundant?

No. The scheme is an opportunity to retain employees that might otherwise have to stop working for any of the reasons outlined earlier in this document. It is not a replacement for redundancy; an employee could be made redundant while furloughed, or after the period of furlough has ended.

What can be done by furloughed employees?

- **Training:** employees can do training related to their role.
- **Other work:** individuals can earn from other work while furloughed but on a basis that allows them to return to the work they have been furloughed from at short notice.
- **Volunteering:** employees can volunteer but not for the organisation that has furloughed them.

Links to information about furlough

- **Government employees guide to Furlough:** www.gov.uk/guidance/check-if-you-could-be-covered-by-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme
- **Treasury direction on Furlough:** https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/879484/200414_CJRS_DIRECTION_-_33_FINAL_Signed.pdf
- **Government employers guide to Furlough:** www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-for-wage-costs-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme
- **The Acas guide to Coronavirus and Furlough:** www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus/if-the-employer-needs-to-close-the-workplace
- **Charities' Commissions coronavirus guidance:** www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-the-charity-sector

Contact

For a conversation about furlough:

- supportmeetings@quaker.org.uk
- 020 7663 1007

Taking care of your employees

23 March 2020

Communicating

It is important that during this time you communicate well with colleagues and volunteers that work for your meeting. For an employee the uncertainty about ongoing employment or the status of their role may be more unsettling than the personal effect of the virus.

Be aware that you may need to issue advice more regularly than you would usually expect to. Area meeting trustees may need to be more readily available to deal with requests and issues that employees have at this time.

There may not be a one-size-fits-all solution for all employees so be sure to treat people fairly, and in comparable roles equally.

Mental health

Many people will be experiencing raised levels of anxiety at this time. As an employer you try to be sympathetic towards employees and requests that they make of you. Try to accommodate people where possible and most of all treat people fairly and with love and tenderness.

Pastoral care

You may find it helpful to put in place a support group that can be available by phone or video for employees to seek pastoral support. Consider other ways that you can support employees, volunteers and role-holders.

Isolation

Being isolated can be damaging to people's wellbeing. Be aware of role where people may now find themselves isolated. If you are closing your meeting house and you have a residential warden think about how you can keep in touch with them and avoid them becoming separated from the community.

Supporting furloughed employees

9 June 2020

With the timescales for furloughing employees extended it is necessary to pay attention their health and wellbeing. The suggestion in the previous paragraph are just as important for employees who are furloughed as for those who are still working. Each person will be dealing with their own unique situation and furlough should not be being considered as an extended period of leave.

Employers have a duty of care towards all employees, whether working or on furlough. You won't necessarily be in contact in the same way as with employees who are working, be sure to check in regularly. Many people will be carrying anxiety about work and what they might return to once their furlough period is over. Being in touch can allay some of the fears. Sharing some of the emerging thinking, without sharing details that you may need to go back upon, can help everyone to feel as though they are being kept in touch with changes as they unfold.

If you can provide training and development opportunities for employees while they are on furlough this could help them feel they are still contributing to their work. Woodbrooke has a range of online courses listed on its website, www.woodbrooke.org.uk/course-category/online/.

Redundancy guidance (new)

04 August 2020

We have updated the [Quaker guidance on handling redundancy situations](#). The update includes some specific advice on the coronavirus pandemic and questions around furlough and redundancy. We hope that this will not be guidance that will be widely used but understand some meetings may need support and advice.

Quaker Life does not offer legal advice. This guidance is a starting point to aid the conversation and process within Quaker area and local meetings.

Useful contacts and links

23 March 2020

In person

- supportmeetings@quaker.org.uk or wardenship@quaker.org.uk
- 020 7663 1007

Online information

- www.quaker.org.uk/coronavirus
- www.quaker.org.uk/employers

Social media

- Facebook: www.facebook.com/BritishQuakers/
- Twitter: <https://twitter.com/BritishQuakers>
- Instagram: www.instagram.com/britishquakers/

Online non-Quaker information

- The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS): www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus
- National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO): www.ncvo.org.uk/practical-support/information/coronavirus