

Acas seeks views on updates to its trade union time off code

20 January 2026

Workplace expert, Acas, has today launched a consultation on updates to its Code of Practice on time off for trade union duties and activities.

The government introduced a new Employment Rights Bill in October 2024 as part of its Make Work Pay plan to reform UK employment law. The Bill became the Employment Rights Act on 18 December 2025.

The Employment Rights Act 2025 introduces new statutory rights to time off for union equality representatives that mirror the existing rights for union learning representatives and require employers to provide 'accommodation and other facilities' to union representatives for their time off duties.

Niall Mackenzie, Acas Chief Executive, said:

"Effective relationships between trade union representatives and employers can help build trust, prevent disputes and contribute to healthy productive organisations.

"Our new draft Code of Practice has been updated to reflect new legal rights in the Employment Rights Act 2025 that cover time off for carrying out trade union duties.

"The Code provides good practice advice to help understand these new rights and we are keen to get views to ensure it is clear, practical and promotes good employment relations between employers and trade unions."

The Code of Practice on time off for trade union duties and activities was last updated in 2010.

The purpose of the new draft Code is to set out guidance on good practice that will aid and improve the effectiveness of relationships between employers and trade unions. This guidance will be taken into account by employment tribunals in relevant cases.

Employment Rights Minister, Kate Dearden, said:

"Strong workplace relationships help to raise living standards and productivity as well as being vital to lasting business success.

"I encourage all employers, workers, and trade union representatives to take the opportunity to shape this guidance. An updated Code of Practice will provide clarity to make these new rights work in practice and support productive workplaces across the country."

Trade union representatives are currently entitled to paid time off for union duties and relevant training provided it is reasonable. Equality representatives do not currently have a statutory right to time off or training.

The Employment Rights Act 2025 introduces a new statutory right to time off for union equality representatives that mirrors the existing rights for union learning representatives.

There is currently no statutory requirement for employers to provide trade union representatives with facilities to carry out their duties except for certain circumstances such as collective redundancies.

The Act also introduces a new right that requires employers to provide 'accommodation and other facilities' to union representatives for their time off duties if it is requested and is reasonable.

TUC General Secretary, Paul Nowak, said:

"These new rights are a welcome step forward to modernising industrial relations in the UK. Equality reps, with paid facility time, will play a vital role in tackling workplace discrimination and making workplaces more inclusive and productive.

"Facility time saves employers money by helping to nip issues in the bud before they spiral into costly disputes.

"And it improves communication, supports wider staff wellbeing and helps resolve problems early and constructively. That's good for workers, employers and the wider economy."

The draft Code aims to help employers and unions ensure that they have agreed working arrangements that cover how the practicalities of reasonable time off for union activities and the provision of accommodation and other facilities will work.

The consultation on the draft Code closes on 17 March 2026.

[Find out more and respond to the consultation](#)

Media enquiries

[Contact the Acas press office](#)

Background notes

1. The Acas consultation on the draft Code of Practice on time off for trade union duties and activities will run for 8 weeks from 10am on 20 January 2026 and the closing date for responses is 5pm on 17 March 2026. The [consultation document and questions](#) are available on the Acas website along with a response form.
2. The existing [Acas Code of Practice on time off for trade union duties and activities](#) including guidance on time off for union learning representatives was published on 1 January 2010. This edition of the Code was developed in response to a request from the then government to update the Acas Code. No revisions to the Code have since been made.
3. Alongside the existing Code, Acas currently provides non-statutory guidance on the roles and responsibilities of worker representatives. This is currently provided in two [Acas guides on trade union and employee representation](#). These guides set out additional guidelines on the law and good practice.

This guidance will also be reviewed and updated in line with the new legal rights and obligations, and the revised Acas Code.

The Employment Rights Act 2025 also introduces other rights concerning trade unions. This includes:

- updated rules on the statutory trade union recognition scheme
- a new right for trade unions to access workplaces

Acas considers that guidance on these new rights are not within the scope of this Code or consultation. Acas will provide non-statutory guidance on these new rights in due course.

4. Acas is the leading authority on workplace relations and dispute resolution in Great Britain. We provide free, impartial advice to employers and workers on workplace rights, rules and best practice. The [Acas helpline](#) (0300 123 1100) offers confidential workplace advice to anyone. We also provide training and tailored support for businesses that can help them succeed. Acas is a non-departmental public body that is governed by an independent Council made up of employers, employee representatives and independent members.