

be required to demonstrate good practice. The minimum that must legally be set out in a written grievance procedure is:

- the person to whom the grievance should be submitted
- the manner of submitting the grievance
- further steps that will then be taken.

Consideration of the ACAS Code is an important factor for both the disciplinary and the grievance procedures in particular – because an unreasonable failure by the employer to follow the recommendations of the ACAS Code may, in some cases, result in additional compensation being awarded to an employee in an unfair dismissal claim or certain other types of tribunal claim.

### Pensions information

Generally this will now follow the auto-enrolment provisions. Regardless of this, full details of the pension scheme should be given to employees whether or not the practice operates standard auto-enrolment pensions or additional pension schemes. In addition to this, practice owners may need to deal with what happens to pension payments in other situations, such as maternity/paternity leave or whilst employees are absent owing to sickness.

### Health and safety

Where an employer has five or more employees, it is a requirement of the Health and Safety at Work Act to have a written statement of the company's health and safety policy. Such a statement is often incorporated within the



practice handbook. The policy should reflect the nature of the workplace and the outcome of the employer's risk assessment. Owing to the significant regulation around veterinary practices, this forms a key part of the handbook.

A written policy ensures that both the employer and its workforce are clear about their respective responsibilities and will assist with the practice ensuring it is compliant with health and safety laws. Ultimately, making these responsibilities clear will create a safer working environment, which can only be conducive to productivity.

### Absence and sickness

A sickness absence policy can fulfil a number of purposes. It sets out sick pay arrangements and the requirements for notifying and providing evidence of incapacity. It is a legal requirement that terms and conditions relating to incapacity owing to sickness or injury are given to the employee in writing. The policy should also provide a procedure for managing longer-term incapacity – including obtaining medical evidence, considering alternatives for rehabilitating the employee into work and, ultimately, providing a fair procedure for dismissal where this is the appropriate course of action.

### Recommended policies

Whilst not required by law, these additional policies will serve to either assist in showing compliance with more general laws affecting the business, or ensure that staff members are clear on

what is expected of them whilst they are working.

Matters such as equal opportunities and anti-bullying statements will go some way to demonstrating what is – and is not – acceptable behaviour within the working environment. Should formal action be taken against you, this will act as an indicator of compliant behaviour in taking a proactive approach to such matters. This should, however, not be considered an alternative to thorough and adequate training on issues such as discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

Of particular concern in the current climate will be setting out rules surrounding the use of electronic devices and, in a wider sense, the use of social media by employees. Clearly, staff need the ability to utilise a variety of IT resources, but with this comes significant business risk.

**“Where an employer has five or more employees, it is a requirement of the Health and Safety at Work Act to have a written statement of the company's health and safety policy”**