



HR & EMPLOYMENT LAW INSIDER: YOUR MONTHLY UPDATE

September 2025

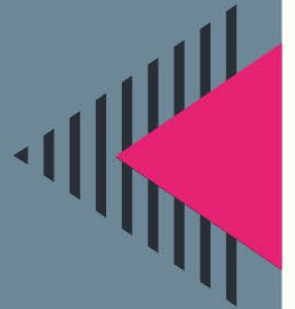
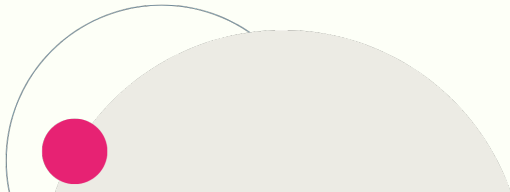
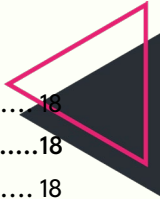


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RECENT AND FUTURE CHANGES

RECENT CHANGES

EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS BILL UPDATE!

Status of Bill:

Parliament returned from its summer recess at the start of September, and on 4th September following the Bill's third reading, it completed its journey in the House of Lords and returned to the House of Commons for final consideration of all amendments. This is the last step in the process before the Bill is passed for being given Royal Assent, i.e. becoming law and the first session was held on Monday 15 September. It is expected that there could be several sessions.

Our research is still indicating a possible late Autumn for the passing of the Bill, and in part, would be because of the party conference season starting in September for several weeks. However, also be aware that since returning, several key individuals in Government have left post and whilst this will not affect the passing of the Bill, it may have some impact on the scheduling of the reforms.

As a reminder, according to the Government's roadmap published 1 July 2025, the following reforms are planned to come into force in April 2026. It is therefore important that businesses start preparing for these now. An important tool for doing so is our template Impact Assessment, which you can access on the Knowledge Base. Our current templates include one for changes to SSP, harassment, tribunal time limits, flexible working, fire and rehire practices and tips and gratuities.

- Doubling the maximum period of the protective award for collective redundancy from 90 days to 180 days.
- Making paternity Leave and parental leave a day one right
- Broadening Whistleblowing protections to include sexual harassment
- The establishment of the Fair Work Agency, a new body which will have enforcement powers to ensure implementation of employment rights (this will be a gradual introduction)
- Statutory sick pay applying from the 1st day of absence and broadening the scope to include all workers by the removal of the need to meet the lower earnings limit to qualify. A new rate of 80% of average weekly earnings will be in place.
- Measures to simplify the trade union recognition process
- Electronic and workplace balloting
- Gender pay gap and menopause action plans will be introduced initially as voluntary with the expectation that these will become mandatory in 2027.

Please note, there will be some changes that would come into effect upon the Bill becoming law (or soon after most likely in the first two months), these generally relate to revoking laws in industrial relations, and small procedural changes.

In terms of next steps, the consideration of the amendments in the House of Commons is scheduled for Monday 15 September. It is expected however that this process could take several sessions.


NEW LEGISLATION - THE ECONOMIC CRIME AND CORPORATE TRANSPARENCY ACT 2023

This month saw the introduction of new measures aimed at tackling fraud. The economic crime and corporate transparency Act 2023 which came into force on 1 September 2025 makes it a criminal offence where an employer (with a turnover is greater than £36 million and employs more than 250 employees) has employees committing fraud intending to benefit the organisation.

The scope of this liability is broad because it extends to fraud committed not just by employees, but also by workers, contractor, agency or other 'associated person'.

Examples of fraud include:

- Dishonest sales practices
- Hiding important information from consumers or investors
- Dishonest practices in financial markets



If there is a prosecution, the organisation will have to demonstrate that it had reasonable fraud prevention measures at the time the fraud was committed (such as reasonable policies and procedures designed to prevent fraud and which are effectively communicated and trained on throughout the organisation).

Back in November 2024, the Government created guidance for large organisations about this new law. You can access the [guidance here](#) and our article '[disciplinary action – theft and fraud](#)'. You can also access our template [Fraud Prevention Policy](#).

UPDATE ON THE DATA (USE AND ACCESS) ACT 2025 (DUAA)

In [July](#), we reported that the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 (DUAA) had been introduced with the expectation that most of the changes impacting UK GDPR would not come into force until approximately 12 months. Although changes relating to data subject access request (DSAR) came in force 19 June 2025, although they were considered to have been treated as having come into force on 1 January 2024.

This new Act has made changes to DSAR as follows:

1. There is a new 'stop the clock' provision meaning an employer can pause their response time without the risk of missing the one-month response deadline – but only where they need the data subject to clarify or refine their request or to provide more information.
2. The legislation now explicitly requires an employer's search for requested data to be "reasonable and proportionate" (this was previously in force but only through case law and not set out within the legislation).

Since last month's newsletter, we have seen further developments. So aside from changes to DSAR rules, the DUAA now gives greater powers to the Information Commissioner Office (ICO) by giving new powerful investigative rights that include compelling staff interviews and requesting internal documentation. With this in mind, we would recommend:

3. Update DSAR processes to include proportionality rules and the new 'stop the clock' mechanism
4. Roll out training to all those who process or manage personal data (HR, Finance, Marketing, Legal etc)
5. Review your data privacy policies to ensure privacy notices, contracts and retention policies reflect new lawful processing bases
6. Prepare the business for regulatory scrutiny by ensuring record keeping and compliance evidence is clear and readily available should the business be audited.

You can read more about the Government's plan to phase in the DUAA [here](#).

LIDL SIGN LEGAL AGREEMENT WITH THE EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION TO STRENGTHEN ITS SEXUAL HARASSMENT PROTECTION IN WORKPLACE

After a 2023 employment tribunal ruled that Lidl failed to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment, the company signed a legal agreement with the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) last month.

The agreement is a direct result of the ruling and requires Lidl to implement measures to better protect its employees by committing the business to the following:

- Gather employee feedback through carrying out a comprehensive staff survey to assess if additional preventative measures are necessary
- Establish a system to monitor and analyse informal complaints of sexual harassment to help the business to identify any ongoing risks and whether further preventative steps are needed.
- Carry out a review of the formal complaint process and to start monitoring how effectively new formal complaints of sexual harassment are handled ensuring a fair and timely resolution.
- Analyse a sample of sexual harassment complaints from 2023 and 2024 to identify any recurring trends or risks.
- Meet with existing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion groups to discuss sexual harassment risks and gather their input on potential preventative actions.
- Continuously monitor and review the company's sexual harassment risk assessment to adapt to any changes.
- Review and update internal harassment policies and training materials, including guidance on professional relationships in the workplace.

This legal agreement is known as a 'section 23 agreement' and is just one way in which the EHRC operates its enforcement powers to ensure organisation's do not breach equality laws. Whilst in this case involving Lidl, this came because of the judgement, however, the EHRC doesn't need a judicial finding of unlawful discrimination to enter a 'section 23 agreement'.

This Lidl ruling is one of the cases of interest explored in this month's case law update.

CONNECT TO WORK PROGRAMME

Back in the Spring 2024, the Government announced a new programme aimed at getting thousands of people into good, secure job employment. The '[Connect to work](#)' programme now has budgets assigned to regions, and when in place, the funds will provide tailored support across 15 areas in England and Wales. The £338 million investment will be given for the purpose of helping those with disabilities or face complex barriers to work.

According to the announcement, there are 2.8 million people out of work due to ill health – one of the highest in the group of G7 countries. The investment into the programme will help deliver support such as coaching from employment specialists, job matching services and ongoing support for individuals and employers to ensure sustainable employment outcomes.

This scheme is about those already out of employment; for employers, a priority should be to keep people in work, especially with the changes to SSP coming in from April 2026. When sickness happens, as it will inevitably do, then it is about ensuring the appropriate policies and procedures are in place to keep absences to the absolute minimum.

UK BANK HOLIDAYS

Last month, the Government published dates for UK Bank Holidays from now through to the end of 2027. You can [access their list here](#).

FUTURE CHANGES (CURRENT BILLS PROGRESSING THROUGH PARLIAMENT)

EMPLOYMENT BILL – CURRENTLY GOING THROUGH PARLIAMENT

The Employment Rights Bill

This Bill, when passed, will introduce the biggest changes in employment law in decades. Impacting the entire employment lifecycle, it will change how we recruit and retain our employees, and in managing the ending of the employment relationship.

The Bill is now in the House of Commons, where the House will consider the amendments that were agreed in the House of Lords. After which, it will be passed for Royal Assent, which we expect could be given Royal Assent around October/November 2025.

The Domestic Abuse (Safe Leave) Bill

This **Bill** proposes to provide employees who are victims of domestic abuse with up to 10 days paid leave each year to support in dealing with the many challenges experienced when trying to leave the relationship. This is currently at the 2nd reading stage in the House of Commons and is scheduled to take place 31 October 2025.

Bullying and Respect at Work Bill

This **private members Bill** if passed, would introduce a statutory definition of bullying at work. In addition, it would make a provision relating to bullying at work that includes enabling claims relating to workplace bullying to be considered by an employment tribunal. It would also introduce a Respect at Work Code that would set minimum standards for positive and respectful work environments and give powers to the Equality and Human Rights Commission to investigate workplaces and organisations where there is evidence of a culture of, or multiple incidents of, bullying and to take enforcement action. The Bill had its first reading in the House of Commons on 21 October 2024, and the second reading took place 11 July 2025, and we're waiting for information regarding the next stage.

Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill

This **Bill** is about the safeguarding and welfare of children, support for children in care, the regulation of care workers, establishments and agencies and independent educational institutions and inspections of schools and colleges, as well as dealing with teach misconduct. This Bill is currently at the Committee Stage in the House of Lords, after which a report will be published before it is then passed for its third and final reading.

Company Directors (Duties) Bill

If passed, this **Private Members' Bill**, would amend section 172 of the Companies Act 2006 to require company directors to balance their duty to promote the success of the company with duties in respect of the environment and the company's employees. It is early on in the process currently waiting the conclusion of its 2nd reading in the House of Commons which is scheduled for 12 September.

Equality (Race and Disability) Bill

We know through the Employment Rights Bill, that the Government are seeking to reform areas of equality relating to race and disability. A standalone Bill has been drafted which has recently been the subject of a public consultation. The Government are currently analysing the feedback from this process. In terms of the Bill, it is proposing the following:

- Introducing mandatory ethnicity and disability pay gap reporting, modelled on the existing gender pay gap framework.
- Extending equal pay rights to ethnic minority and disabled workers, allowing claims on contractual equal pay grounds.
- Potential establishment of a specialist enforcement or regulatory body to oversee compliance and coordinate action plans.

It is unclear when this Bill could come into force, but our research indicates it may not be until 2027.

FUTURE CHANGES (LEGISLATION BY IMPLEMENTATION DATE)

OCTOBER 2025

1 October 2025 - The Victims and Prisoners Act 2024 (Commencement No.6) Regulations 2025

These Regulations make any provision in a settlement agreement void, when it purports to preclude the making of a protected disclosure by a victim of crime, or a person who reasonably believe to be a victim of crime to specified bodies void.

Estimated October/November: Employment Rights Act 2025

It is estimated that the **Employment Rights Bill** could be passed as an Act of law around October/November 2025.

Estimated October-January: First set of reforms expected to come into force:

There are several reforms that will come into force not long after the Bill is passed, either immediately on its passing, or certainly within two or three months thereafter. These include:

- Repealing the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023
- Repeal the majority of the Trade Union Act 2016 to prevent the need for strikes
- Removing the 10-year ballot requirement for trade union political funds
- Simplifying industrial action notices and industrial action ballot notices
- Protections against dismissal for taking industrial action

2026 AND BEYOND

Employment Rights Act Reforms: April 2026:

- Doubling the maximum period of the protective award for collective redundancy
- 'Day 1' Paternity Leave and unpaid parental leave
- Whistleblowing protections broadened
- Fair Work Agency body established which will have enforcement powers to ensure fairness
- Statutory sick pay – the removal of the lower earnings limit and waiting period
- Simplifying trade union recognition process
- Electronic and workplace balloting
- Gender pay gap and menopause action plans (initially voluntary in 2026, but mandatory in 2027)

APRIL 2026

Finance Bill 2025-26 to amend part 2 of the Income Tax (Earnings and Pensions) Act 2003

This Act will make recruitment agencies accountable for Pay As You Earn (PAYE) on payments made on or after 6 April 2026 to workers supplied through umbrella companies (or the end client, where there is no agency).

It will make the agency and umbrella company jointly and severally liable and allowing HMRC to pursue either or both.

If there is more than one agency in the supply chain, the rules will apply to the agency that has the direct contract with the end client to supply the worker. Where there is no agency, or whether the agency holds a material interest in the umbrella company, the liability will fall directly on the end client.

JUNE / JULY 2026

The Data Use and Access Act 2025

The Data Use and Access Act 2025 is expected to come into force within twelve months from becoming an act of law. This would therefore be around Summer 2026.

The date is yet to be confirmed, but it is anticipated to be approximately 12 months from when the Bill was given Royal Assent (19 June 2025). The Act will amend certain sections of the General Data Protection Act in areas such as automated decision making, data subject access requests and a new requirement in regard to complaints.

However, a limited number of provisions have already come into force upon Royal Assent, which includes section 78 that relates to reasonable and proportionate searches for data subject access requests and the introduction of the 'stop the clock' mechanism.

1 July 2026 – The Drivers' Hours, Tachographs, International Road Haulage and Licensing of Operators (Amendment) Regulations 2022

The purpose of the Regulations is to implement fully some of the international road transport provisions in the Trade and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union

and the United Kingdom. This includes prospective provisions related to drivers' hours rules and tachograph equipment in goods vehicles (such as bringing into scope some light goods vehicles and the introduction of new tachograph equipment). It also applies to some specialised international provisions and removes some access rights for EU operators to reflect the market access in the TCA.

Employment Rights Act Reforms: October 2026:

- Dismissals connected to an employer seeking to vary an employee's contract but the employee does not agree will be automatically unfair
- Establish the Fair Pay Agreement Adult Social Care Negotiating Body in England
- Tightening tipping law by requiring employers to consult with workers to ensure fair tip allocation
- Requiring employers to take "all reasonable steps" to prevent sexual harassment of their employees
- New obligation on employers not to permit the harassment of their employees by third parties
- Introducing a new duty to inform workers of their right to join a trade union
- Strengthen trade unions' right of access
- New rights and protections for trade union reps
- Extending protections against detriments for taking industrial action
- Employment tribunal time limits extended from 3 months to 6 months

New regulatory framework to bar NHS managers for misconduct (sometime 2026)

Legislation to introduce a new regulatory framework for NHS managers is expected in 2026. The framework will establish a statutory barring system for board-level directors who commit serious misconduct, with new powers granted to the Health and Care Professions Council to disbar senior leaders. The regulations aim to prevent managers found guilty of misconduct from taking other NHS roles and include specific protections for whistleblowers.

2027

Employment Rights Act Reforms: 2027:

- Gender pay gap and menopause action plans to become mandatory
- Enhanced dismissal protections for pregnant workers, and those on and returning from family leave
- Introducing a power to enable regulations to specify steps that are to be regarded as "reasonable", to determine whether an employer has taken all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment
- Develop a modern industrial relations framework
- Updated rules relating to protections from blacklisting due to trade union membership or activity
- Changes to the threshold for when collective redundancy consultation applies

- An employer's reason for refusing a flexible working request must be reasonable
- A new statutory entitlement to bereavement leave
- The regulation of umbrella companies
- Ending exploitative zero-hour contracts and applying zero-hour contract measures to agency workers
- 'Day 1' right protection from unfair dismissal.

The Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025 (Martyn's Law) (date to be confirmed)

This Act received royal ascent on 3rd April 2025 however the regulator (Security Industry Authority - SIA) have said that there will be at least 24 months required in preparing for the law to come into force.

In the meantime, premises and events seeking advice on preparing for Martyn's Law should continue to look for Home Office updates. They can also access free technical guidance and operational advice on protective security on the government partner websites of the National Protective Security Authority and ProtectUK.

April 2027 - Mandatory Payrolling Benefits

The Government announced previously that it would be delaying the roll out of legislation that would [mandate Payrolling Benefits in Kind \(BIK\)](#) until April 2027. Mandating payrolling of BIK is the inclusion of the estimated value of non-cash employee benefits directly in the regular payroll instead of reporting separately on an annual P11D form. Until such time, it continues to be voluntary, and we expect draft legislation and guidance to be provided from around Autumn 2025.

2028

6 April 2028 – Pension age increase

The new normal minimum pension age will become 57 years from 2028, following the amendment to Part 4 of the Finance Act 2004 (pension schemes etc).

FUTURE CHANGES (LEGISLATION DATE UNKNOWN)

PENSIONS (EXTENSION OF AUTOMATIC ENROLMENT) ACT 2023 (DATE TO BE CONFIRMED)

This legislation removes the current age requirements for eligible workers to be automatically enrolled into a workplace pension. The current minimum age is 22 years, but this will be reduced to 18 years. No date has been set for when this [legislation](#) comes into force.

Paternity Leave (Bereavement) Act 2024

New [legislation](#) is to come into force that will provide new statutory rights for those taking paternity leave in cases where a mother, or a primary adopter, passes away. In this tragic situation, it will provide the other parent or partner who would have taken paternity leave with an automatic day-one right to take immediate paternity leave.

This legislation received Royal Assent back in 2024 under the previous Government, but we are waiting a date for when it is to come into force. However, given the Employment Rights Bill and the reforms within that, particularly around family leave, it may be this statutory right comes into force around the same time.

Sunday trading – Protection for shop workers

The right of shop workers to opt out of working Sundays on religious or family grounds is to be extended to any 'additional' hours above their normal hours which they may normally be obliged to work if requested. The duty of employers to advise workers of these rights is also to be extended.

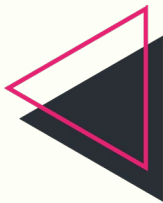
The Enterprise Act 2016 contains provisions to strengthen certain aspects of the protections given under the Employment Rights Act 1996 specific to shop and betting workers. This Act received Royal Assent, i.e. became law on 4 May 2016, but the provisions making the Sunday working amendments have not yet been brought into force.

In addition, the amendments to ERA 1996 envisaged the making of regulations as secondary legislation to fill in the detail of how the revised legislation would work, and that secondary legislation has not yet been published, although the power to make it is in force. With a change in Government since this came into force, the current government have not given any indication that it intends to enact this legislation and so we have no precise indication as to when these changes will take effect, or if they will ever come into force.

Children and Social Work Act 2017 Whistleblowing – Protection for children's social care applicants

Section 32 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 when it commences will allow the Employment Rights Act of 1996, s 49C to enable the introduction of regulations that prohibit relevant employers from discriminating against an applicant for a children's social care position because it appears that they have made a protected disclosure. At this time, draft regulations are yet to be published.

CONSULTATION AND GUIDANCE



CONSULTATIONS RELATING TO THE EMPLOYMENT REFORMS

TIMETABLE FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS ANNOUNCED

Many of the reforms set out in the Employment Rights Bill will require either further legislation or the development of new/existing Codes of Practice. As such, a key stage in the implementation process is to consult on the detail of policy and implementation for the changes proposed. In the Government's recently published [roadmap to change](#), they confirmed the following consultations:

Summer/Autumn 2025 consultations:

- Reinstating the School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB)
- Fair Pay Agreement for the Adult Social Care sector
- Giving employees protection from unfair dismissal from 'day 1' including on the dismissal process in the statutory probation period

Autumn 2025:

- Trade Union measures:
 - Electronic and workplace balloting
 - simplifying the trade union recognition process
 - duty to inform workers of their right to join a trade union and right of access
 - New rights and protections for trade union representatives will be covered by an Acas Code of Practice consultation
- Fire and rehire
- Regulation of umbrella companies
- Bereavement leave
- Rights for pregnant workers
- Ending exploitative zero-hour contracts

Winter/early 2026:

- Trade union measures:
 - Protection against determinants for taking industrial action
 - Strengthening the rules on blacklisting
- Tightening tipping law
- Collective redundancy threshold changes
- New obligation when refusing flexible working requests.

As these consultations begin, we will provide updates and how you can participate, should you wish.

OPEN CONSULTATIONS

DATA PROTECTION CONSULTATIONS

In our June newsletter we notified you that the new Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 (DUAA) would be coming into force sometime in 2026 (except for the two changes that relate to subject access rules). Consequently, the Information Commissioner Office (ICO) have opened two public consultations as explained below:

1. Draft guidance on recognised legitimate interest

A new area of data protection law is the introduction of a new lawful basis for processing data known as 'recognised legitimate interest'. This means that there will be a new lawful basis for processing data when the DUAA comes into force.

The ICO's public consultation is seeking views on their draft guidance, so if you would like to participate in this consultation, you can do so via their [consultation page](#) by 30 October 2025.

2. Draft guidance on handling data protection complaints

The second public consultation is in regard to handling data protection complaints. Following the introduction of the DUAA, a new section will be added to the Data Protection Act 2018 that will require organisations:

- give people a way of making data protection complaints to your organisation
- acknowledge receipt of complaints within 30 days of receiving them
- without undue delay, take appropriate steps to respond to complaints, including making appropriate enquiries, and keeping people informed
- without undue delay, tell people the outcome of their complaints.

The guidance will inform organisations of their new obligations, which will include items they must do, should do, and could do, to ensure compliance with the new obligations.

The ICO's public consultation is seeking views on their draft guidance, so if you would like to participate in this consultation, you can do so via their [consultation page](#) by 19 October 2025.

MAKING WORK PAY: CALL FOR EVIDENCE ON UNPAID INTERNSHIPS

As part of the Government's plan to 'make work pay' which is aimed at helping more people stay in work, improve job security and boost living standards, they are committed to banning unpaid internships (except those that are offered as part of an education or training course).

The Government believe this action to be just one important aspect of tackling low pay, poor working conditions and poor job security and are concerned that too many people may be expected to work for free.

This consultation ends on 9 October 2025 and if you wish to participate you can do so [here](#).

CLOSED CONSULTATIONS

RESPONSES BEING ANALYSED AND WAITING FORMAL RESPONSE:

The following consultations are closed and the responses are currently being analysed.

The following consultations are closed and the responses are currently being analysed.

- Updated EHRC guidance on the Equality Act 2010 meaning of 'sex'
- The annual Low Pay Commission consultation
- Equality (Race and Disability) Bill: Mandatory ethnicity and disability pay gap reporting
- Tribunal Procedure Committee
- Inquiry into gendered Islamophobia
- Costs protection in discrimination claims
- Proposals to regulate NHS Managers
- Northern Ireland Gender Pay Gap Information Regulations
- Prudential Regulation Authority and the Financial Conduct Authority – Remuneration reforms
- European Data Protection Board – Guidelines on Pseudonymisation
- Welsh Government Consultation: Disabled people's rights plan 2025-2035
- Call for evidence: 2026-2030 Gender Equality Strategy
- Consultation: Local Government Pension Scheme in England and Wales
- Financial Conduct Authority – consultation in tackling non financial misconduct in financial services
- Draft Equality (Race and Disability) Bill

PARENTAL LEAVE AND PAY REVIEW: CALL FOR EVIDENCE

Back in July the Government announced a formal review into parental leave and pay to understand how it could better support working families. They opened a public consultation to seek evidence that can help them to consider the UK's current system in the following way:

- How can parental leave measures support the physical and mental health, recovery, and overall well-being of women during pregnancy and postpartum, and how can we ensure they have adequate time off work with appropriate pay.

- How can our parental leave system work more effectively to boost economic growth by helping more parents remain in the workforce and advance careers after starting a family. In particular, consider how to improve women's labour market outcomes, narrowing the gender pay gap, reducing the "motherhood penalty," and providing benefits for employers.
- Ensuring that new and expectant parents have sufficient resources and time away from work to support their well-being and facilitate the best start in life for babies and young children, promoting positive health and development outcomes.
- Helping to empower parents to make balanced childcare choices that suit their family situation, including enabling co-parenting, whilst also aiming for flexibility that reflects the realities of modern work and childcare needs.

We await the response in due course.

REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR APPRENTICESHIP ASSESSMENT

Earlier this year, the Department for Education published a set of principles ([Apprenticeship Assessment Principles](#)) that when implemented, would change the current end point assessment approach (EPA) currently in use for assessing apprentices.

These new principles aim to make the design and delivery of all types and levels of apprenticeships more flexible by:

- making the assessment more proportionate to the competency being tested and to remove duplication
- assessment can happen on programme
- training providers can deliver and mark elements of the assessment, with appropriate oversight

Existing assessment plans that all EPAs are based upon will be streamlined on a phased basis, and employers were invited to share their views earlier this year in a [public consultation](#) to comment on the proposed new way of regulating apprenticeship assessments.

GUIDANCE

DRAFT CODE OF PRACTICE FOR SERVICES, PUBLIC FUNCTIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS WAITING APPROVAL

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) have submitted its revised Code of Practice for Services, Public Functions and Associations. Over the last few months, we have been keeping you informed of developments in respect of the definition of 'sex' for the purpose of the Equality Act 2010. Now, on 5 September, the EHRC formally shared its updated code of practice with Parliament for approval. To read the progress in this area, our previous newsletters can be [found here](#).

THE EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION PUBLISH NEW GUIDANCE ON MENOPAUSE IN THE WORKPLACE

At the end of last month, the EHRC published updated guidance for employers on how to support and deal with the menopause in the workplace. The guidance can be [read here](#), and is aimed at helping employers in understanding the legal context of managing the menopause in the workplace.

If you are noticing an increase in menopausal symptoms at work, developing a policy is a great place to start in terms of developing a culture where people feel comfortable in asking for help, in what traditionally has been a taboo topic. You can [download our policy template](#).

Remember, that menopause action plans will become mandatory from 2027 under the Employment Rights Bill for those organisation's that employ 250+ employees.

CASE RULINGS



WHY YOUR WORKPLACE CULTURE AND HOW YOU TREAT PEOPLE MATTERS LEGALLY

Trigger warning: this article reports on a tribunal case that relates to the conduct of sexual harassment.

This case, [Miss Hunter v Lidl Great Britain](#), highlights that employers face significant legal risks if they fail to address a culture of inappropriate behaviour, ignore employee complaints, or fall short on fair pay and working conditions. Understanding these responsibilities is crucial for creating a healthy workplace and protecting your company.

WHAT HAPPENED

Miss M Hunter was employed by Lidl Great Britain Limited, starting as a Customer Assistant in February 2019 and promoted to Shift Manager in August 2020. Her employment ended on July 7, 2021.

During this time, Miss Hunter was subjected to several incidents of unwanted sexual conduct, primarily by a Deputy Store Manager but also involving another colleague.

The conduct included inappropriate comments about the perpetrators own sex life, making sexually suggestive remarks and making comments about Miss Hunter's own appearance making her feel very uncomfortable. Other managers also made comments about her uniform which had sexual overtones and there was also found to be a "ranking system" of females based on perceived attractiveness among male staff. She also experienced unwanted physical contact such as, often daily, touching her on the bum, thighs, and waist, and putting his arm around her, and attempted to hug her, despite her making it clear this was unwanted and asking him to stop.

Miss Hunter took several attempts to complain, initially verbally on several occasions to various line managers and made one written complaint. Her complaints however were largely ignored or dismissed. She was in fact told to "take it as a compliment".

During her employment, she also discovered that she was paid less than male colleagues carrying out the same role, and even when raising her concerns about the significant pay discrepancies (nearly £3000 over 6 months), these were not addressed by the business.

In June 2021 she was informed that she would need to attend a performance discussion about her lateness. Despite explaining the various issues, including harassment, she decided to resign and subsequently claimed constructive unfair dismissal.

THE TRIBUNAL FINDINGS

Managers showed a "lack of awareness and training on harassment" and "paid no attention to her complaints and closed their eyes and ears to the culture of harassment".

The Employment Tribunal heard the case and made the following unanimous judgments:

The Tribunal found that the unwanted conduct that was of a sexual nature or related to her sex did occur and her case of harassment related to sex succeeded. Crucially, the Tribunal concluded that this behaviour constituted sexual harassment, even if the perpetrators did not intend to cause offence or realise their behaviour was inappropriate. Their actions were seen as reflecting a "*culture in the store where such behaviour was allowed to go unchecked*".

Lidl was found vicariously liable for their employees conduct with the Tribunal explicitly finding that the employer did not take "all reasonable steps to prevent harassment," citing a lack of relevant training for staff and managers, there had been no risk assessments, and there being a failure for the company to comply with their own Anti-Harassment policy and the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) code.

Furthermore, the Tribunal accepted that the harassment was a "continuing course of conduct," meaning earlier incidents were considered relevant, and therefore the claim was brought within the time limit.

Incidentally, aside from the harassment and sexual harassment claims, Miss Hunter was also successful in her claims for equal pay and unfair dismissal. Lidl's admission that the pay difference was an "administrative error" was not accepted as a valid "material factor" defence to justify the pay difference due to sex. The Tribunal also found that Miss Hunter was constructively unfairly dismissed, meaning she was entitled to resign in response to a fundamental breach of her contract by the employer. Her reasons for resigning included the harassment, her belief she was not being paid properly, the failure to resolve her pay queries and complaints, being required to work excessive hours, and being required to work while clocked out.

The "final straw" was the Store Manager telling her he would "write her up" for lateness, without acknowledging the other significant problems she faced. This conduct amounted to a breach of the implied term of mutual trust and confidence.

EQUALITY HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION ENFORCEMENT POWERS

Not only was Lidl found liable and was unsuccessful in defending claims of sex discrimination and sexual harassment, but it was also required to enter into a legal agreement with the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), which they did do so last month. This agreement was as a direct result of the ruling and requires the company to:

- Run a staff survey relating to sexual harassment within the workplace and assess if additional preventative steps are necessary
- Develop a system to monitor and analyse informal complaints of sexual harassment to identify ongoing risks and whether additional preventative steps are required
- Monitor the effectiveness of complaint handling for new formal complaints of sexual harassment
- Review a sample of sexual harassment complaints from 2023 and 2024 to assess any trends and risks
- Arrange meetings with its existing DE&I groups to discuss risks of sexual harassment, and any additional preventative steps which could be taken
- Continue to monitor and review its sexual harassment risk assessment
- Further review internal harassment policies and training content, including its relationships at work guidance.

Key learnings for Employers

If we focus specifically on harassment and sexual harassment claims, this case offers crucial insights:

1. "Banter" is not a defence for harassment. What one person considers "banter" can be deeply offensive and harassing to another. The Tribunal found that the perpetrator did not intend to cause offence, but that does not excuse the employer's liability. It is important to focus on the impact of the behaviour, not just the intent.
2. Culture is key and as we have seen in this Lidl case, the culture in the store where the behaviour was allowed to go unchecked was a significant factor in the harassment finding. Line managers have a responsibility to actively foster an inclusive and respectful environment and challenge inappropriate comments or actions, even if they seem minor.
3. The fact that Miss Hunter's numerous verbal complaints and written complaint were ignored and dismissed as "compliments", without investigating was a serious failing. Line managers need to be trained to recognise and act on all forms of complaints, even if informally raised or not explicitly labelled as "harassment".
4. Lidl had an Anti-Harassment policy, but the Tribunal found there had been a "lack of training and awareness about harassment" among line managers and area managers. Robust policies and training are therefore essential and must be applied and for everyone to understand how to implement them effectively, investigate complaints, and provide support. Simply having a policy isn't enough; it must be a living document that guides behaviour and response.
5. This case found Lidl vicarious liability, meaning they were responsible for the perpetrator's actions because it was acts of harassment carried out "in the course of their employment," - even without Lidl's knowledge or approval. The only defence that can be taken is by proving "all reasonable steps to prevent" the harassment had been taken. For Lidl, the lack of training, risk assessments, and policy adherence meant this defence failed.
6. A pattern of unaddressed issues and ignored complaints can fundamentally break the relationship of trust and confidence between employer and employee. Even a seemingly small "last straw" incident (like a performance discussion about lateness without acknowledging contributing factors as was in this case) can trigger a valid constructive unfair dismissal claim.

This case provides a powerful reminder that proactive management, clear communication, consistent application of policies, and a genuine commitment to a respectful and fair workplace are not just good practice – they are legal necessities. Managers must be vigilant, empathetic, and knowledgeable to prevent similar situations and protect their employees and their organisation.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT – WHEN ARE EMPLOYERS RESPONSIBLE BEYOND THE WORKPLACE?

Trigger warning: this article reports on a tribunal case that relates to the conduct of sexual harassment.

Dare we say it – the festive season is fast approaching? For many employers, they will be starting to plan festive social events and so this month's case report comes at a good time to remind employers of their responsibility for preventing and addressing sexual harassment.

It is case [AB v Grafters Group Ltd \(t/a CSI Catering Services International\)](#) and highlights a crucial point for all employers: that your responsibility for preventing and addressing sexual harassment can extend further than you might think, even outside of the physical workplace and official working hours.

The ruling given in this case, provides employers with a good understanding of the concept of "in the course of employment" which is key for helping to protect staff and the business.

THE CASE

This [case](#) involved an individual referred to as AB (the claimant) and a colleague, both of whom worked for Grafters Group Ltd, a hospitality recruitment agency.

In November 2021, AB genuinely believed she was scheduled to work at Hereford Racecourse and arranged to take company transport from the Cardiff office. However, her shift had been cancelled by the company two days earlier, although she had not been informed.

After missing the official transport, she was offered a lift to Hereford by her work colleague. Prior to this, in the early hours of the same day, her colleague had been working another shift for the company at Amazon, where he had been sending AB sexually suggestive WhatsApp messages. He also repeatedly called her that morning, showing significant interest in her movements.

AB accepted his offer of a lift and during the trip, her colleague relayed to her that her shift had been cancelled and asked to be dropped off at a bus stop. However, her colleague refused and on driving to a nearby location, then subjected her to sexual harassment.

Although he was later arrested, he was later released without charge. The initial Employment Tribunal noted that the employer seemed to have taken no action to investigate him or offer support to AB despite the serious allegations.

THE TRIBUNAL FINDINGS

The initial Employment Tribunal concluded that she had been sexually harassed, however found Grafters Group Ltd, was not liable for his actions as he had not been acting "in the course of his employment" for several reasons:

- He was not due to work at Hereford that day
- He wasn't required by the company to have driven AB as they had already arranged formal transport for employees.
- The ET did not believe the company expected or required informal lifts between colleagues, citing examples of formal transport arrangements.
- The employee's offer of a lift was not arranged or approved by the company, and they had no knowledge of it.
- AB's belief that she was working or that he was acting in his employment was considered irrelevant to the question of whether he was in the course of his employment.

The Employment Tribunal dismissed AB's claim against their employer and appealed to the Employment Appeal Tribunal (EAT).

The EAT reviewed the case and overturned the initial Employment Tribunal's decision, finding that the ET had made errors in how it applied the law concerning "in the course of employment". It concluded there had been three key errors made:

1. The initial tribunal should have considered whether the circumstances of the incident were an "extension of their employment," rather than focusing solely on whether CD was literally "at work" doing his duties at that moment
2. They had failed to properly consider important details, such as:
 - Her colleague sending sexually harassing texts in the hours leading up to the incident, which did occur whilst he was working another shift for the company and believed AB was also due to work.
 - Whether his actions in the car should have been seen as a continuation or "course of conduct" from his earlier texting, which clearly took place while he was at work.
 - The close connection between his job and why AB was in his car, including the fact that he had previously driven AB to work assignments.

3. The ET improperly focused on irrelevant factors including:

- His motive for offering the lift. The EAT clarified that a harasser's personal motivation does not mean their actions are outside the "course of employment," as anti-discrimination laws should be interpreted broadly.
- Whether Grafters Group Ltd had knowledge of or sanctioned the employee in giving AB a lift. While an employer doesn't need to know about or approve of the specific harassment, their general knowledge or approval of attendance at a work-related event can be relevant to whether an employee is acting in the course of employment.

The EAT concluded that the initial tribunal had stated the law correctly but then "overlooked or misapplied" it in their decision.

They sent the case back to the original Employment Tribunal for reconsideration, instructing them to apply the correct legal tests and take all relevant factors into account.

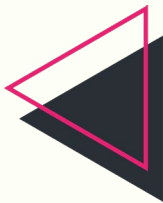
LEARNINGS FOR EMPLOYERS

With the festive season fast approaching, this recent case provides several critical lessons for line managers and employers regarding sexual harassment and workplace responsibilities.

What this case demonstrates to us is not to assume that an incident that happens outside of normal work hours or premises automatically removes an employer's responsibility.

Taking a holistic view, considering all connections to the employment relationship, is crucial. Proactive measures and a broad understanding of your obligations are the best defence against such claims.

PAYROLL



2025 BUDGET

It has been confirmed that this year's budget will be taking place Wednesday 26 November 2025, which is slightly later than usual. As a result of this scheduling, we have decided to swap our last two webinars of the year around. Our updated schedule is now as follows:

- New deal for working people: planning for change
- Budget implications on human resource management

Incidentally, our October webinar remains as scheduled. This is our webinar in which we explore how businesses can be protected from tribunal claims.

For all these events, please register via our [Webinars Page](#). We look forward to welcoming you on our live webinar.

ELECTRIC CAR ADVISORY FUEL RATES

Since our last newsletter, the HMRC have announced a change to fuel rates for petrol, diesel and electric cars, which are to be used from 1 September 2025. To transition to the new rates, employers can use the previous rates for up to one month after the new rates apply.

HMRC ADVISORY FUEL RATES FOR PETROL, LPG & HYBRID

- 1400cc or less:
 - Petrol - 12p per mile
 - LPG - 11p per mile
- 1401cc to 2000cc
 - Petrol - 14p per mile
 - LPG - 13p per mile
- Over 2000cc
 - Petrol - 22p per mile
 - LPG - 21p per mile

HMRC ADVISORY FUEL RATES FOR DIESEL CARS

- 1600cc or less- 12p per mile
- 1601cc to 2000cc 13p per mile
- Over 2000cc 18p per mile

HMRC ADVISORY FUEL RATES FOR ELECTRIC CARS

- Home charger
 - 8p electric per mile
- Public charger
 - 14p electric per mile

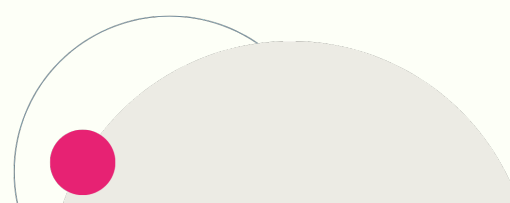
These figures will be reviewed quarterly.

These rates do raise several questions, such as what rate is available for a hybrid car? How do you manage the correct mileage and rate for electric vehicles when it needs to be dependent upon location?

The Chartered Institute of Payroll Professionals (CIPP) sought clarity from HMRC, who responded to the enquiry with the following position:

“As these rates are an admin easement they aren't accompanied by detailed guidance. For fully electric cars where journeys are mixed (public charging and home charging), as with other easements, we'd expect employers to use a reasonable method of apportionment.”

The CIPP are seeking further guidance around what is involved in a 'reasonable method'.



CHANGES AHEAD FOR WORKERS SUPPLIED VIA UMBRELLA COMPANIES

If your business engage workers supplied by umbrella companies, be sure you are prepared for changes that are expected April 2026.

Draft legislation, accompanied by explanatory notes was published recently in which the Finance Bill 2025-26 amends part 2 of the [Income Tax \(Earnings and Pensions\) Act 2003](#) (known as ITEPA).

According to HMRC the legislation will:

“introduce a new chapter 11 into part 2 to make employment agencies or end clients joint and severally liable for any amount required to be accounted for under the PAYE provisions where an umbrella company forms part of a labour supply chain.

Further legislation will be introduced to amend section 4A of Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 to provide HM Treasury with the power to make regulations imposing an equivalent joint and several liability for NIC purposes.

Joint and several liability will allow HMRC to pursue an agency in the first instance for any payroll taxes that a non-compliant umbrella company fails to remit to HMRC on their behalf. The end client will be liable if contracting directly with an umbrella company.”

The legislation will not apply to those operating via limited companies that are inside IRS35, as well as those workers on an agency payroll (they already pay tax like an employee).

What it does mean, that if a business pays a worker providing a personal service through an umbrella company, and that company employs that worker, but the income tax and NI is not paid, then all parties in the chain would be held responsible.

NOTE FOR DIARY - APRIL 2027: MANDATORY PAYROLLING BENEFITS

A note for your diary – is the mandating of [Payrolling Benefits in Kind \(BIK\)](#), which has been delayed until April 2027. Mandating payrolling of BIK is the inclusion of the estimated value of non-cash employee benefits directly in the regular payroll instead of reporting separately on an annual P11D form. Until such time, it continues to be voluntary, and we expect draft legislation and guidance to be provided from around Autumn 2025.

HEALTH & SAFETY

SEASONAL CHANGES

September marks the end of the summer holidays, and the transition into Autumn. With the nights sadly drawing in and temperatures dropping, here are some helpful health and safety reminders:

HEATING:

- Test your heating systems now to ensure they are effectively working when you need them
- Ensure HVAC systems/ Gas appliances have been serviced by a competent engineer in the last 12 months.
- As you begin to utilise your gas appliances more, ensure that your carbon monoxide alarms are suitably located and in working order.
- Where there is no alternative but to use portable heaters, oil filled radiator types are preferred, as there is a reduced risk of accidental ignition.

SLIPS:

- Check grit bins and ensure you have a plentiful supply, as well as a strategy for gritting.
- Check entrances have non-slip mats in place and that they're in good condition.

LIGHTING:

- Inspect and test outdoor lighting to ensure that it is in working order, this should also include any external emergency lighting.

WORKWEAR:

- Stock up on weather appropriate work wear, including waterproofs, hats, gloves, footwear and high visibility clothing.
- Ensure that staff know how to care for and store workwear appropriately.

PROTECTING WORKERS' HEARING – IS YOUR PPE DOING ITS JOB?

Recent HSE inspections have revealed widespread failings in how workplaces manage hearing protection. In noisy environments, one in four businesses require mandatory protection, yet three-quarters of workers lack basic knowledge about maintaining or correctly using their earplugs and earmuffs. Worryingly, most had never received training on proper fitting techniques or checks to ensure warning alarms could still be heard while wearing protection.

Hearing protection is the last line of defence against permanent damage and only works if it's in good condition, properly fitted, and consistently worn. Damaged earmuffs reused disposable plugs, or poorly fitted equipment give a dangerous illusion of safety.

To help employers, HSE recommends the CUFF approach:

- Condition – check equipment regularly, ensure staff know how to request replacements;
- Use – ensure protection is accessible and worn throughout the entire duration of exposure;
- Fit the ear – train staff on correct fitting, consider the fit of hearing protection is compatible with other PPE, glasses and hearing aids;
- Fit for purpose – match protection to actual noise levels without compromising safety signals, a workplace noise assessment by a competent person will help determine what hearing protection is suitable for your environment.

Next time you walk around your workplace, think CUFF when observing hearing protection use.

SPOTLIGHT ON LONE WORKING

The term 'lone working' refers to workers who work by themselves or without close or direct supervision, which could also be working outside of normal business hours and locking up and securing premises, for example:

- Home workers
- Security staff
- Cleaners
- Drivers
- Engineers
- Consultants
- Health workers
- Estate agents
- Petrol station attendants

Lone workers are at greater risk as they work without direct supervision and help if things go wrong.

Lone working can also be attributed to work related stress and mental health issues from physical and psychological work demands and pressures. The issues can stem from the lone worker feeling isolated due to lack of contact or support from other colleagues and management.

DUTY TO MANAGE RISKS FROM LONE WORKING

Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 places a duty on all employers to identify and mitigate risks to lone workers.

Best practice for employers:

- Consider the suitability of vulnerable persons for lone working, through risk assessment. Those especially vulnerable to lone working may include young persons, new and expectant mothers and those with high-risk medical conditions.
- For those working alone in a premises, consider how security systems, CCTV and passive measures can be used to protect employees.
- Maintain regular contact with lone workers throughout the day, ensuring they return to their base safely at the end of every working day.
- For lone workers who travel and visit clients, ensure diaries and schedules are visible to others and kept up to date with dates, times, locations and contacts of who they will be visiting.
- Provide lone workers with additional training to ensure they are competent to undertake their role without direct supervision. Other additional training may be required such as first aid, or training to deal with violence and aggression, if dealing with members of the public.
- Undertake spot checks on lone workers periodically to ensure they continue to work in accordance with risk assessments and method statements, and don't fall into bad habits when working alone.
- Utilise tech - a lone worker device is a piece of tech that allows a lone worker to discreetly request assistance, either from their managers or colleagues or, in an emergency, the police, ambulance or the fire brigade. This is done via an alarm receiving centre. These devices are often sophisticated enough to detect inactivity, in the event a worker has a medical event, and can automatically summon emergency services.
- Restrict activities undertaken by lone workers. Be clear about what can be done alone, and what can't. For example, lone workers should refrain from operating high risk machinery, working at height or undertaking hazardous manual handling activities.
- Brief employees on the dangers of lone working and provide information, instruction and training on steps they can take to protect themselves.
- Develop and communicate an escalation procedure for when contact cannot be established with lone workers, so you are prepared to act.
- Keep lone worker risk assessments and procedures under regular review and revisit following incidents.
- Be aware of signs of work-related stress and mental health issues, which can be exasperated by lone working and lack of direct supervision.

The Suzy Lamplugh Trust offers a wealth of resources on personal safety and lone working. The disappearance of Suzy an estate agent and lone worker made the headlines in 1986, the charitable trust was set up in her honour and to provide advice and training to employers.

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION



UPDATE ON THE DRAFT CODE OF PRACTICE FOR SERVICES, PUBLIC FUNCTIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) have submitted its revised Code of Practice for Services, Public Functions and Associations. Over the last few months, we have been keeping you informed of developments in respect of the definition of 'sex' for the purpose of the Equality Act 2010. Now, on 5 September, the EHRC formally shared its updated code of practice with Parliament for approval. To read the progress in this area, our previous news articles can be [found here](#).

SUPPORTING NEURODIVERSITY

A recent study carried out by the Association of Project Management (APM) identified that individuals who are neurodivergent face barriers to employment, that can include difficulty with traditional interviews and sensory overload in a busy working environment. The study found several [key findings](#) highlighting the key role HR can play in supporting neurodiversity in the workplace:

- **Diagnosis and disclosure:** Getting diagnosed is often found to be a turning point by providing a sense of validation and self understanding. However the stigma
- **Organisational culture:** Need for a cultural shift in viewing neurodivergence as a valuable asset rather than a challenge
- **Training and development:** Without specific neurodiversity training in recruitment and career development significant barriers are created
- **Strengths and challenges:** Recognising that someone who is neurodivergent brings valuable skills, but can experience challenges such as sensory overload or unstructured interactions if not addressed
- **Workplace environment:** A flexible and controlled environment that can accommodate sensory and cognitive needs helps individuals to thrive
- **Support systems and coping strategies:** Organisational support and formal processes are necessary to improve effectiveness and reduce stress
- **Communication and meetings:** clear communication and structured meetings are vital, along with predictable and accessible meetings for reducing anxiety and increasing engagement.

The report, '[Promoting Neurodiversity](#)' provides 7 recommendations for how employers can proactively support individuals who have a neurodivergent condition, which includes:

1. Promoting neurodiversity awareness and training
2. Enhancing disclosure processes
3. Implementing reasonable adjustments and flexible policies
4. Reassessing recruitment and training practices
5. Fostering supportive networks
6. Redesigning workspaces and meeting environments
7. Focussing on strength-based task assignment.

SUPPORTING THE MENOPAUSE IN THE WORKPLACE

This year's World Menopause Day is Saturday 18 October. This provides employers with a great opportunity to dedicate time in educating everyone on this significant health condition.

We know through [research and a report by the Equality and Human Rights Commission](#), that 67% of working women between the ages of 40 and 60 have experienced menopausal symptoms that have mostly had a negative impact on them at work. Negative impact includes:

- 79% said they were less able to concentrate
- 68% said they experienced more stress
- 49% said they felt less patient with others
- 46% felt less physically able to carry out usual work tasks.

Research also by the [Fawcett Society](#) shows that 10% of women left their employment due to their menopausal symptoms.

Talking about the menopause shouldn't be taboo. It is an extremely important part of employee health and wellbeing. Why not run a campaign in your business in the lead up to, or on the day of, World Menopause Day.

INTERESTING HR STATISTICS



SICKNESS ABSENCE ON THE RISE

Recently published statistics by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), in conjunction with Simplyhealth found that annual sickness absence levels had reached an average, 9.4 days per employee: an additional 1.6 days since the last survey in 2023 and an additional 3.6 days from pre pandemic levels.

The [2025 Health and Wellbeing at Work report](#) which involved a survey of 1,100 HR professionals in April 2025 also identified:

- 78% of respondents said that minor illnesses such as cold, flu, stomach upsets and headaches, was one of the top three most common cause of short-term absence i.e. absences of up to four weeks in duration
- 41% of respondents said that mental ill health such as depression and anxiety was one of the top three most common cause of long-term absence, i.e. four weeks or more
- Mental ill health is the second most common cause in short term absence scoring 29%
- 64% of respondents said that they were taking steps to identify and/or reduce stress in the workplace
- In 2025, there are more organisations taking a holistic approach to wellbeing. The areas of priority reported
 - 89% mental health
 - 75% physical health
 - 68% financial wellbeing
 - 66% good lifestyle choices
- 36% of organisations operating working from home report that sickness absence rates have decreased because of it
- In fact, 35% of respondents reported that absenteeism (where employees work when unwell) has increased because of working from home.
- 69% reported that they offered occupational health services (89% in larger organisations employing 250+ employees)

You can find the full summary of the CIPD's [key findings here](#).

With absences soaring over the past year reaching record high absenteeism with a 62% increase on pre pandemic levels, and the changes ahead to SSP as part of the Employment Rights Bill, there are many steps your business can take now to prepare. Use our [template Impact Assessments](#) to help identify how the reforms to SSP may impact your business.

RECORD NUMBER UK VISA SPONSOR LICENCES REVOKED FOR BREAKING FOREIGN WORKER RULES

Earlier this month, the Home Office reported 1,948 businesses had their ability to hire non-UK nationals taken away in the period July 2024 to June 2025. This is double the amount compared to the previous year, which was 937.

Also in their analysis, the Home Office found that the sectors that were among those with the highest level of breaches included hospitality, retail and construction.

For information, guidance support for employers sponsoring non UK nationals can be [found here](#), last updated July 2025.

2 IN 5 WORKERS REPORT A RISE IN WORKPLACE CONFLICT

At the end of August, Acas announced a new five-year strategy aimed at modernising how workplace disputes are handled. They report that conflict costs the UK economy an estimated £28.5 billion. Acas will therefore build a strategy focussing on increased prevention, improving management and earlier resolution of disputes.

Through a YouGov poll of over 1,000 employees, research found:

- 44% of workers reported an increase over the last 3 years
- Pay, working patterns and capability and performance are the top causes of workplace conflict.
- Acas dealt with 117,000 individual disputes in 2024-25, the highest since the pandemic.

The new five-year strategy is set to:

1. Prevent more disputes before they arise – this will be through targeting industries where conflict is more likely
2. Support employers in managing conflict – through providing clear guidance and tools
3. Equip both employees and employers with the skills to resolve conflict – through equipping businesses with the ability to manage conflict well.

Have you noticed an increase in workplace conflict in your business? Do you have the right tools and support in place to deal with it, when it arises? Workplace conflict can be incredibly damaging for an employer, causing significant financial, operational, and cultural harm, that can include lost productivity, absenteeism, erosion of morale and trust as well as creating a poor culture.

Got any questions?

If you need any further guidance or have any HR-related queries, feel free to get in touch with us. You can also browse through our previous newsletters for more insights and [updates here](#).