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Where people matter...

January 2018 Update – Happy New Year!

Welcome to this month's update - where we discuss the latest guidance and legislation.

In this Edition we report on:

- When Grievances and Disciplinary Collide
 - General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
 - Holiday 2018-19
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When Grievances and Disciplinary Collide

A serious challenge for employers to overcome when grievances and disciplinary collide, is when an employee who's in trouble tries to save their own skin. It's easy to be cynical about it, that doesn't make you a bad employer as it's a very human response. However, your feelings of cynicism must be kept to yourself as you can't assume anything.

As a guideline, there are three vital things that you need to do: 1) keep an open mind. 2) you've got to deal with the grievance. 3) keep up to date records of how seriously you are taking it and be prepared to justify your decisions.

It isn't necessary to postpone the disciplinary process in order to deal with the grievance, but you can if you need to. There's nothing in the law to say that you **must** put the disciplinary on hold. In most cases, it makes sense to deal with them both together, especially if the issues cross over. However, completely ignoring the grievance is simply unacceptable.

Tel: 01327 317537

M: 07947567661

E: caroline.robertson@actifhr.co.uk/info@actifhr.co.uk

ActifHR Ltd, Innovation Centre, Silverstone Park. NN12 8GX

If nothing is done about it at all, you are most likely breaching the ACAS Code and that could mean more compensation for the employee if they were to bring and win an unfair dismissal claim later on.

So what should you do? Essentially, you need to understand the grievance and what the employee is alleging. Does the grievance relate at all to the disciplinary, are there any common features? These are then your different options:

1. **Postpone the discussion.** This could be seen as giving the employee breathing space so a lot of employers see this as a safe option. Also, an employer can be seen to be giving the employee a fair chance. ACAS gives a few examples of when an employer may want to suspend a disciplinary meeting. a) Where the grievance relates to a conflict of interest that the manager holding the meeting is alleged to have. b) Where bias is alleged in the conduct of the meeting. c) Where management have been selective in the evidence they have supplied to the manager holding the meeting. d) Where there is possible discrimination.
2. **Continue with the disciplinary.** If the grievance is not connected to the disciplinary, there's no need to stop it. Push on with the process and deal with the grievance alongside it.
3. **Deal with them both together.** If you are going to deal with the grievance and disciplinary together, give each aspect the time and attention it requires. There are still procedures to follow and while the issues may overlap, don't be complacent about the steps you need to take to deal with them both accordingly. Make sure that the employee knows exactly what is happening and give them time to prepare before any meeting or hearing.

Employers: Don't let things slip but be prepared to push things back if need be. Keep on top of timings, evidence and documentation and make sure that any grievance doesn't hold things up unnecessarily. Beware of any delay 'tactics'.

Contact us: We can assist you with all aspects of the grievance and disciplinary

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General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

A major employment story set to dominate the news in 2018 is the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). These new regulations come into force on the 25th May 2018 and the impact of these regulations could be minimal for smaller companies, or huge for larger organisations.

Larger employers could experience a substantial administrative task to complete when all employees will have to be asked for their agreement to hold any information about them, which is not applicable to the discharge of the employment contract. Larger organisations may contemplate employing a Data Protection Officer (DPO) to make sure they are GDPR compliant, if they employ more than 250 staff.

Nonetheless, the new GDPR isn't only applicable to employees and the data employers can lawfully keep on them. It also has an impact on businesses that a company deals with, and consumers. The new data protection regulation puts the consumer in the driver's seat, and the task of complying with this regulation falls upon businesses and organisations. GDPR is applicable to all businesses and organisations which are founded in the EU. Companies outside of the EU must adhere to GDPR if they offer goods and services to consumers in the EU.

Early preparations for May 2018.

1. Map your company's personal data (staff and consumers) establishing where all personal data comes from, where it is stored, and document it.
2. Identify what personal data you need to keep and don't keep more information than necessary. Carry out a clean-up process.
3. Execute security measures to help protect the data, avoiding any data breaches.
4. Review and audit your company documentation, as individuals must clearly consent to the gaining and processing of their personal data.
5. Implement procedures for handling personal data in these situations:
 - a. How can individuals give permission in a legal manner?
 - b. What is the procedure if an individual wants their data deleted?
 - c. How can you ensure that this data really is deleted across every platform?
 - d. How will you clarify that the person who requested to have their data transferred or deleted, really is the person they say they are?
 - e. What is the company procedure should there be a case of data breach?

GDPR will undoubtedly create challenges but business opportunities can also be discovered. Companies that show great customer care by being transparent about how data is used, retain loyalty customers. So, is your business or organisation GDPR ready?

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Employers: The sooner your business starts to become compliant, the better. Failing to comply with GDPR can result in tough penalties with substantial fines.

Contact us: We can assist you with all aspects of GDPR.

Holiday 2018-19

Is your company or business in England or Wales? Are you operating an April – March holiday year? If your answer is yes to both of those questions, 2018/19 holidays may well require some cooperation from you.

Not every employer knows that all workers are legally entitled to a minimum of 5.6 weeks paid annual leave, which equates to 28 days holiday leave if you are a full-time employee, working a five day week. Contractually, we usually stipulate either 20 days plus bank holidays, or 28 days including bank holidays. If, as an employer, you give additional holiday to employees, for example 25 days plus bank holidays, you are not obliged to do anything.

In 2018 Easter is split between March and April; Good Friday is on 30th March, and Easter Monday is on 2nd April. If your company operates a holiday year commencing from 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2019, this means you will not have a Good Friday bank holiday entitlement because it falls in the 2017/18 holiday year.

So, employers with an annual holiday entitlement of ‘20 days’ plus bank holidays’ will only be CONTRACTUALLY entitled to 27 days’ holiday in 2018/19—essentially, this is of course one day short of the legal minimum. If this is your company - what action should you take? The minimum requirement is that you MUST give 5.6 weeks’ holiday. To avert breaching your employee’s rights, you must raise your staff holiday entitlement for the 2018/2019 holiday year.

Bearing that in mind, what about the 2017/18 holiday year? For literally the same reasons, employees with April-March holiday years may well receive an extra day’s holiday in March 2018, giving 9 bank holidays in total for this holiday year - but it really does depend on the wording within their contracts.

As an employer, here are the numerous options you can consider:

Option 1 - Where your contract states the employee is entitled to ‘20 days’ plus eight bank holidays’ and specifically states the eight bank holidays, there will be no right to take the second Good Friday bank holiday.

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Option 2 - Where your contract states '20 days' plus bank holidays' but doesn't specify or give an amount to the number of bank holidays, your employees will be entitled to 29 days' holiday in the 2017/18 holiday year.

Option 3 - Where your contract has a definitive contractual holiday cap of 28 days holiday, this will be unaffected.

Employers: March/April is fast approaching. It may be advantageous to check holiday entitlements to ensure you are offering the legal minimum requirement of holiday to workers.

Contact us: We can assist you with calculating holiday entitlements and pay.

Caroline Robertson, CEO

Caroline has a wealth of experience supporting business clients with practical hands on HR advice.

Caroline's pragmatic approach helps businesses of all sizes deal with complex HR situations.

She qualified as a Solicitor in 1999 and is able to assist Businesses on all aspects of employment law and HR.





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