



**ActifHR**

Where people matter...

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## June 2022 Update

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

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In this Edition we report on:

- Employers can't afford to get remote onboarding wrong
- How should you handle employees stranded abroad?
- Is it time for a contract spring clean?

### Employers can't afford to get remote onboarding wrong

Businesses entering a long-term but virtual relationship with a new employee must work even harder to get induction and onboarding right.

The time between job acceptance and the start date is critical for creating the right employee experience. Many organisations tend to focus only on the standard background checking processes and documentation, while this serves a good purpose it does not create engagement in employees properly at the start.

Here are some suggested tips for onboarding generally:

- Build anticipation: there may be no such thing as over communicating in remote onboarding, and the new employee needs to know that their impending arrival is

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prepared for and being looked forward to. Provide details on what the induction phase will look like, including links to key meetings, a clear agenda and timetable.

- **Connect people:** setting new employees up on the communications platforms their teammates use before they join is important so everyone can introduce themselves and start building relationships. Assigning them a buddy who will help them and ensuring first contact happens before the start date is helpful too.
- **Clarify the setup process:** explain what equipment will be sent and when to expect it – and what to do with it. Explain what logins are being created and any action needed on the part of the employee (such as downloading software and password creation).
- **Set expectations around remote working:** explain what the culture is, and expectations are around using things like headsets, ethernet vs Wi-Fi connections, blurred virtual backgrounds, cameras in meetings, and other people in their location (such as children). Their experiences of working remotely elsewhere may be quite different.
- **Frequently asked questions:** think about when you first started your job and the things you wish you'd found out beforehand - add it into a document to send beforehand.

**Employers:** 1 in 5 employees leave their job before the end of probation - a good onboarding process helps retention

**Contact us:** We can assist with onboarding and induction.

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### **How should you handle employees stranded abroad?**

With ongoing flight cancellations due to staff shortages, we look at the most pertinent questions when employees are unable to return to work.

Not turning up to work as expected means an employee is absent without leave and have no entitlement to pay, even if the circumstances are beyond their control.

In most cases employees will need to take the additional time as holiday, as long as both employer and employee agree, and the employee has not exhausted their holiday entitlement for the year.

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It maybe the employee is able to work productively remotely, but often an employee is not equipped to do so or the employer does not trust the employee will be effective. Do not simply deduct pay without discussing with the employee all the possible options.

Make sure that the notification of absence rules are clear, so that employees let their manager know in good time with an indication of their likely return date. The employee also needs to make sure they call or send notes of the activities which are coming up which they can no longer participate in.

Alongside the options of paid and unpaid leave, some firms may have measures in place to allow employees to make the time up over a few weeks or months. Disciplinary action would most likely be relevant if it could be found that an employee had gone against advice with respect to foreign travel.

**Employers:** Should communicate clearly what employees should do if facing delays on their return

**Contact us:** We can assist with advice on managing absence.

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## Is it time for a contract spring clean?

In recent years there have been many changes to employment law particularly with Brexit and the pandemic. That's why we recommend you review your employment contracts every few years. In many cases businesses have grown and developed and the contracts may not reflect the needs.

Don't forget that employment contracts and staff handbooks, are an incredibly useful tools for employers to understand the basis of employment relationships and can come into their own when uncertainly or faced with a grievance or tribunal.

We've all started jobs where the contract didn't appear for a few weeks, or sometimes months. However, since the 6 April 2020 all employees are entitled to a written statement of terms from day one of their employment.

It should include the following as a minimum:

- Employer's name
- Employee's or worker's name, job title or a description of work and start date

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- How much and how often an employee or worker will get paid
- Hours and days of work and if and how they may vary (also if employees or workers will have to work Sundays, nights or overtime)
- Holiday entitlement (and if that includes public holidays)
- Where an employee or worker will be working and whether they might have to relocate
- If an employee or worker works in different places, where these will be and what the employer's address is
- How long a job is expected to last (and what the end date is if it's a fixed-term contract)
- How long any probation period is and what its conditions are
- Any other benefits
- Obligatory training and whether it's paid for by the employer or not

On the first day of employment the employer must also provide the employee or worker with information about:

- Sick pay and procedures
- Other paid leave (for example, maternity leave and paternity leave)
- Notice periods

Failure to provide an appropriate written statement of terms on day 1 can mean that an employee, if successful, can claim compensation, which could be up to four weeks' basic pay.

**Employers:** Contracts need to also refer to disciplinary and grievance procedures which must be available.

**Contact us:** We can assist drafting and reviewing contracts

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Caroline has a wealth of experience supporting business clients with practical hands on HR and Employment Law advice. Caroline's pragmatic approach helps businesses of all sizes deal with complex HR situations. She qualified as a Solicitor in 1999 and now acts as a specialist Human Resource / employment Law Consultant to business.

**Caroline Robertson, Director**

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