



September 2025 Update

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

In this Edition we report on:

- Connect to work scheme
- Employment Rights Bill update
- Review of Parental Leave and Pay

Connect to work scheme

The Connect to Work programme announced by the Government hopes to help 300,000 sick and disabled people back into work. Currently approximately 2.8 million people in the UK are out of work due to sickness, ill-health and barriers that are faced by disabled people.

It is thought that this trend can be attributed to two main factors:

1. A deterioration in the health of the working-age population, leading to more people having work-limiting health conditions.
2. Insufficient support systems like occupational health services.

Since their election in July 2024, the government have been very vocal about their plan to get Britain working again. They have proposed many new initiatives to deliver an 80% employment rate by moving people from benefit dependency into secure employment.

As a result, £338 million has been allocated to the "Connect to Work" programme to assist sick and disabled individuals in returning to sustainable employment. It is hoped that the initiative will help approximately 85,000 back into work during 2026-2027 and 300,000 over the next five years.

This will be done by providing personalised assistance including one-to-one coaching, job matching and ongoing support for participants and employers, to help people find and sustain good, secure jobs.

Access to the programme is available through self-referral or via healthcare professionals, local authorities, and voluntary sector partners. New funding will be delivered to fifteen areas across England. These are:

- Central London
- Greater Essex
- Hampshire
- Hereford/Shropshire/Telford and Wrekin
- Greater Lincolnshire
- Local London
- Norfolk
- Solent
- South London Partnership
- South Yorkshire
- Staffordshire & Stoke on Trent
- Suffolk
- Surrey
- Warwickshire
- Worcestershire

Locate your local Connect to Work page by searching "Connect to Work" along with your county or local authority's name, then check if you are eligible.

If your organisation is in one of the 15 highlighted areas and you want to get involved in the Connect to Work programme by providing job opportunities then it is worth getting in touch.

Employers: may receive support or financial assistance through the Access to Work grant to help cover the costs of workplace adaptations, equipment and ongoing support for any new employees.

Contact us: for advice on an employers' obligation to provide reasonable adjustments

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Employment Rights Bill update

On 4th September, the Employment Rights Bill passed its 3rd reading in the House of Lords. Next, the Bill goes back to the House of Commons, which will discuss and vote on the various amendments made by the House of Lords.

It can accept them (in which case, they become law), or reject them (in which case, the Bill goes back to the House of Lords, which will almost certainly back down). With a substantial majority, it is pretty much up to the government whether to accept the amendments or not.

The main amendments are:

- **ban on dismissal and re-engagement:** the House of Lords watered down this proposal significantly. Rather than making (almost) all 'fire and rehire' dismissals unlawful, the amended Bill bans 'fire and rehire' dismissals where the proposed contract changes relate to pay, pension, hours of work or holiday entitlement. But where the proposed changes relate to something else, any dismissal for refusing to agree to the changes can still be fair as long as the employer has been extra-reasonable (my words), by following a six point checklist which includes things like extensive consultation and, where appropriate, offering inducements.
- **the obligation to offer guaranteed hours to zero-hour workers:** the House of Lords amended this to an obligation to give guaranteed hours to zero hour works only if they ask for it, rather than irrespective of whether they ask for it.
- **day one unfair dismissal:** an amendment to the Bill means that there may be a six-month period with no unfair dismissal rights (other than for automatic unfair reasons), followed by an 18 month 'initial period of employment' with the light-touch unfair dismissal rules in place.
Comment: this will be rejected and the government will stick with 'day one' unfair dismissal. It is its headline employment reform, and there is no way the government will back down.

Employers: make sure your recruitment and onboarding processes are tightened up to plan for these changes.

Contact us: we can review contracts of employment and onboarding processes.

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Review of Parental Leave and Pay

The Government has launched a full review of parental leave and pay. The review will look at the whole system, including maternity and paternity leave; parental leave; shared parental leave; adoption leave and others.

It is hoped the horrendous shared parental leave rules might finally be reviewed and simplified. There is an initial call for evidence relating to all aspects of parental leave & pay, open for a few weeks. Its aim is to make sure that the full review focuses on the right issues.

The review is expected to report its conclusions and recommendations in 18 months' time, i.e. January 2027.

Employers: there have been many changes to family friendly rules including the new Neonatal Leave and Pay entitlements.

Contact us: for an update to your policies



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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