



ActifHR

Where people matter..

March 2026 Update

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

In this Edition we report on:

- Making the most out of Probationary Periods
 - New Deal for Young People
 - ACAS Early Conciliation Period extended
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Making the most out of Probationary Periods

With changes to Unfair Dismissal rights from 1st January 2027, anyone employed from the 1st July 2026, will have 6 months service on the 1st January 2027, and be able to claim unfair dismissal.

This makes the recruitment, onboarding and probationary review process even more vital to have good structures in place. Although employees will have fewer rights during the probationary period, fair and reasonable processes still matter.

Make sure you put in place regular probationary review meetings as well as training and work goals to monitor this period. Acting consistently, documenting conversations and communicating clearly protects your business and demonstrates professionalism.

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Any extensions to the probationary period should be handled transparently, with clear objectives set and review dates agreed. Make sure you address issues early, documenting discussions and goals set.

Ensure you:

- Write clear, realistic job descriptions
- Set expectations clearly before employment begins
- Map out an effective onboarding plan
- Put in place regular probationary review meetings
- Document training, support and goals
- Raise issues in good time and be clear about any extensions needed
- Sign off probationary periods in a timely manner

Employers: spending extra time at interview to get the right person into the right role, with the right training and support, is the most effective ways to reduce probation issues.

Contact us: we can assist with interview support, onboarding and probationary reviews.

New Deal for Young People

Announced in a speech by Work and Pensions Secretary, Pat McFadden, a 'New Deal' for young people is available from the 16th March 2026.

Through the Youth Jobs Grant, businesses will receive £3,000 for every young person they hire aged 18-24 who has been on Universal Credit and looking for work for six months. It is expected to support 60,000 young people over the next three years.

The Jobs Guarantee will be expanded to a wider age range, from 18-21 to 18-24, to create more than 35,000 extra subsidised jobs. It is hoped this will bring the total to be supported through the scheme to over 90,000 in the next three years.

An Apprenticeship Incentive of £2,000 for each new employee aged 16-24 taken on by an SME will be available to hopefully create 50,000 more apprenticeships.

Employers: it is hoped that this will take away the cost to businesses of recruiting and onboarding young people.

Contact us: we can assist with employment contracts and offer letters.

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ACAS Early Conciliation Period extended

From 1 December 2025, the period that ACAS can conduct early conciliation (EC) for employment disputes is doubled from 6 weeks to 12 weeks.

It is hoped the extension will reduce tribunal backlogs and allow more time for ACAS to assist with settlement. This will be reviewed in October 2026.

This means the "clock stops" on the time limit for bringing a claim in the Employment Tribunal for a longer period, giving employees more time to prepare a claim and employers a longer period of potential exposure.

Employers: mark-up 6 months at least from a dismissal in case ACAS get involved.

Contact us: we can assist with negotiations with ACAS.



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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