ActifHR

Where people matter...

## November 2026 Update

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

In this Edition we report on:

- Christmas parties
- Duty to inform employees of the Trade union right of access
- How to maintain trust after an unexpected management departure

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## Christmas parties

As Christmas parties and end-of-year celebrations approach, interactions with venue staff, suppliers, customers and other third parties can bring harassment risks into sharper focus.

Latest research found that more than 8 in 10 organisations believe third-party harassment concerns can be more difficult to investigate than those involving employees.

Under UK law, the Employment Rights Act (effective 30 October 2026) requires employers to take **all reasonable steps** to prevent sexual harassment and makes them liable for harassment of staff by third parties—such as clients, venue staff, suppliers, or guests—unless they take all reasonable steps to prevent it. Because organised Christmas parties count as work-related events, employers must proactively manage third-party risks before, during, and after the event.

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**Employers:** communicate clear standards to employees and contractors that are attending as well as letting staff know they can report any concerns.

**Contact us**: we can help with supporting your business.

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## Duty to inform employees of the Trade union right of access

The duty to inform workers of their right to join a trade union, which was originally due to come into effect on 30th October, has been pushed back to January 2027.

With the new duty taking effect from 1 January 2027, employers should now consider how they will comply in practice, including finalising their statement and deciding how it will be provided to their workers. However, the new duty is more than a one-off requirement to issue a statement. Employers will also need appropriate processes in place to ensure that the statement remains up to date and the ongoing annual notification requirements are met. The potential for compensation of up to four weeks' pay for non-compliance reinforces the importance of putting these arrangements in place in good time before 1 January 2027

**Employers:** there is now a standardised statement to download for this. We can provide this for employers.

**Contact us:** we can advise on these new changes and point to the new statement.

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## How to maintain trust after an unexpected management departure

Following recent high-profile senior leader changes, how can employers can reassure staff and restore stability?

When a senior leader leaves unexpectedly, organisations face the task of managing the departure while deciding how and when to communicate the change to employees.

The circumstances surrounding a departure can raise questions that go beyond the loss of a senior leader. Where it is unexpected, it can also raise concerns about leadership integrity and whether the values expected of employees are being demonstrated at the very top.

With any change, people are likely to feel unsettled or uneasy, which is why businesses need to concentrate on transparency, empathy and clear signposting for what the future looks like.

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The longer-term damage to employee confidence may depend less on the circumstances surrounding the departure than on what happens afterwards.

Poor communication, a lack of leadership visibility or perceived double standards can often do more damage than the departure itself. Clear communication is needed to explain how the leadership change will affect staff.

It should also be made clear to employees how the change will directly impact them, if at all, including in terms of reporting lines or responsibilities in the short, medium and long term.

Speed is essential, as in today's world news travels fast, with or without a strategy and scripted narrative. Explain who will make decisions in the manager's absence, whether existing priorities will change and what plans are in place to fill the vacancy. Listening to staff could uncover new rich insights about what is working, and not working within the organisation, helping to inform future leadership appointments.

**Employers:** ensure you communicate management's strategic and cultural direction alongside a fair and transparent plan for recruitment or backfilling any vacant leadership roles.

**Contact us:** we can advise on restructuring and change.

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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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