

NEWS FROM THE HR TEAM



Four BIG employment law changes coming into effect in April 2024



This April, we see a huge wave of employment law updates coming into effect.

We haven't seen so many updates happening at once for a very long time.

For this reason, it's incredibly important for you to be aware of these changes and take action to ensure you stay compliant and protected.

Here is a list of employment law updates that you need to be aware of:

1. Protection from Redundancy (Pregnancy and Family Leave) Act 2023

Extended protection for pregnant employees and the introduction of one week of unpaid leave for carers. Employers may need to update policies and train staff accordingly.

2. The Carer's Leave Act 2023

This Act ensures carers will qualify for one week of unpaid leave per year, available from day one of employment. Employers should update policies and consider how to handle these requests fairly.

3. Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023

Employees gain the right to request flexible working from day one, with an increased limit of two requests per year. Employers should update policies, train managers and promote a supportive, flexible working culture.






4. The Paternity Leave (Amendment) Regulations 2024

Employees will be able to take statutory paternity leave at any point in the first year (previously it was only allowed during the first 8 weeks) and will be able to split it up into two separate blocks of one week. You will need to update your policies and procedures and communicate through the business accordingly.

Other changes include:

- Calculating holiday pay and leave
- National minimum wage rises
- Changes to statutory maternity pay and sick pay rates
- Changes to the age criteria for being auto-enrolled in a pension scheme

Our latest guide covers everything you need to know about these changes. Get in touch for your FREE copy.

	Four BIG employment law changes coming into effect in April 2024	1
	Your own oxygen mask first?	2
	Flexible work arrangements are here to stay.	2
	5 ways to reduce stress in your business	3
	Q&A	3

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Your own oxygen mask first?

A recent study highlighted that 53% of self-employed workers and freelancers admitted to 'over-serving clients' by providing extra time and services that they did not charge for. And this got us thinking about how business owners are guilty of the same, either by working long hours, taking minimal time off and over-serving their business.

We get it, your business is precious, but overworking can quickly lead to increased stress, burnout and both physical and mental health problems. Remember to put your own oxygen mask on first, before you try to help others. Your health and wellbeing is important. Talk to us about free resources to manage stress and mental health and some of the strategies you can employ to take better care of your wellbeing.

Flexible work arrangements are here to stay.

Around 30% of employers have seen an increase in staff working from home over the past 12 months, Acas has said, and it looks like this number isn't likely to decrease anytime soon.

Flexible working is a broad term used to describe any working arrangement that meets the needs of both the employee and the employer regarding when, where and how an employee works. Examples include, but are not limited to, part-time working, homeworking, hybrid working, flexitime, job sharing and alternative hours.

With new legislation and more protection for employees seeking more flexible working arrangements, flexible working is expected to become more flexible than ever. Talk to us today about how we can help you navigate the legislative changes and explore what 'flexible work arrangements' might look like in your business.

More than half of UK employees believe handing in their notice came as a shock to their managers, according to a recent survey. But really, managers shouldn't be feeling shocked when an employee hands in their notice, as they should be constantly temperature-checking overall sentiment by having regular, open and honest check-ins.

This year, there's a more substantial rise in National Minimum Wage because of the economy.

From 1 April 2024 there will be:

- ➡ A £1.02 (or 9.8%) increase to the National Living Wage for those aged 21 and over. This rises from £10.42 to £11.44ph.



- ➡ A £1.11 (or 14.8%) increase to the National Minimum Wage for those aged 18-20. This rises from £7.49 to £8.60ph.

- ➡ A £1.12 (or 21.2%), increase to the National Minimum Wage for those aged 16-17 and apprentices. This rises from £5.28 to £6.40ph.

If you are paying any of your employees the current National Minimum Wage or National Living Wage, you must review and increase salaries.

We can help with this, as well as updating contracts, and any other documentation. If you need a hand, get in touch.



5 ways to reduce stress in your business

April marks Stress Awareness Month, making it the perfect time for business owners to prioritise employee well-being.

After all, stress reduction is not only beneficial for individuals, but can significantly impact productivity and profits.

By acknowledging and actively addressing stress, businesses can create a healthier and more productive work environment.

Here are some things you should be doing:

1. Promote open communication:
Encourage employees to express concerns and provide a platform for open dialogue. A transparent environment breeds trust and reduces anxiety.

2. Implement flexible working:
Offer flexible working arrangements to accommodate personal needs. This

promotes work-life balance and reduces stress associated with rigid schedules.

3. Provide well-being resources:
Offer stress-management workshops, counselling services or wellness programs to support employees in managing stress effectively.

4. Establish clear expectations:
Clearly communicate roles, responsibilities and expectations. Uncertainty contributes to stress, so providing clarity helps employees feel confident and secure.

5. Encourage breaks and relaxation:
Encourage regular breaks and provide spaces for relaxation. Short breaks can enhance focus and alleviate the build-up of stress throughout the day.

Adopting these simple strategies will reduce stress amongst your team, leading to a healthier, happier and more productive workforce. If we can help you with implementing them, get in touch.

Q&A

Can I suspend someone while investigating a grievance or disciplinary?

Yes, you can suspend an employee while investigating a grievance or disciplinary matter. However, it should only be considered if there is a genuine concern that allowing the employee to remain in the workplace could be detrimental to the process or pose a risk to the company or other employees.

Can I make changes to the contracted days for my part-time staff?

This generally requires their agreement, as it involves a variation of their employment contract. Consult with the affected employees, explaining the reasons for the proposed changes and considering any impact on their work-life balance. If an agreement cannot be reached, you may need to follow a formal consultation process.

Does a promotion need to be advertised within the company?

While there is no legal obligation to advertise a promotion internally, doing so is considered good practice and promotes transparency and fairness. Internal promotion opportunities should be communicated to employees to allow individuals to express interest and apply.

