

## How to Manage Workplace Romances

**In last week's In the Know we briefly focussed on the news surrounding McDonald's decision to dismiss their CEO for breaching the company's rules on personal relationships at work. With this in mind, we will now look at how to manage workplace romances in more depth:**

- Employers are free to set their own rules on staff romances and should outline this approach in a workplace policy.
- It is possible to ban all romantic relationships at work due to concerns over how this will impact performance.
- However, totally banning romantic relationships could just lead to them being carried out in secret.
- Instead, employers could ask staff to disclose romantic relationships to HR in order to assess the impact.
- This would allow employers to consider re-deploying couples working in the same team to reduce the risk of disruption.
- Relationships between managers and subordinates can be problematic and separating these individuals will prevent decisions on appraisals and pay rises being called into question.
- Problems can also occur when employees break-up and mediation may be required for the good of the business.
- Staff should be reminded to behave professionally at work and employers should remain vigilant to harmful gossip or potential sexual harassment that can occur following a break-up.

### Labour pledge 12 months' maternity pay

The Labour Party has pledged to extend statutory maternity pay from 39 to 52 weeks if they are successful in December's general election. New parents will also be able to make use of this extra 3 months of pay if they opt to utilise their right to shared parental leave.

#### Did you know?

Currently new mothers are entitled to 39 weeks' statutory maternity pay. Employees are entitled to 90% of their normal weekly earnings for the first 6 weeks and £148.68 per week for the remaining 33. However, businesses can reclaim a large percentage of maternity pay, which can be as much as 103% for smaller organisations.

### Voluntary living wage rates to increase

The Living Wage Foundation has announced that the Real Living Wage, which is a voluntary rate of pay that is above the statutory minimum Living Wage, will increase to £10.75. per hour in London and £9.30 per hour across the rest of the UK.

#### Did you know?

Around 6,000 organisations have pledged to pay staff the Real Living Wage, meaning an estimated 200,000 workers could benefit from a pay rise. Whilst there are no penalties for not complying, being known as a Real Living Wage employer can be beneficial when it comes to recruiting and retaining talent.

### Royal Mail ask court to block strike action

The High Court will hear claims from Royal Mail that a planned strike should not be allowed to go ahead due to alleged 'irregularities' with the ballot. If upheld, this could successfully prevent staff from striking in response to disputes over job security and employment terms.

#### Did you know?

Conducting a ballot is an important part of arranging industrial action and failing to do this correctly could make a strike unlawful. Employers may be able to challenge industrial action if they have not been given the correct notice of a ballot taking place or if the sample voting paper has not been provided.

Whilst employers will be keen for their staff to have positive working relationships, separate issues can occur when romantic relationships blossom in the workplace. Therefore, if you are concerned about the impact of a workplace romance on your business give our 24-hour Advisory Team a call for expert guidance in managing this situation.

Please contact the 24 Hour Advice Service for advice on your specific situation before acting on the information in this publication.