

England's roadmap: step four delayed

After news reports hinted at a possible delay to England's fourth and final step of its roadmap out of lockdown, Boris Johnson has given confirmation. We explore what employers should know below:

- Boris Johnson confirmed on 14 June 2021 that "Freedom Day" will be delayed for four weeks. This means that rather than 21 June 2021, all restrictions in England will now be lifted on 19 July 2021.
- Johnson did also state that if coronavirus data proves favourable within the next two weeks, stage four may be brought forward to 5 July 2021 – in line with the idea that stage four can occur at any time that is "no earlier" than 21 June 2021.
- However, employers will still need to operate as though all restrictions will be lifted on 19 July 2021.
- The businesses that will be heavily affected will be those who have not yet been allowed to reopen, such as nightclubs, as well as those hoping to do away with social distancing and homeworking measures.
- Affected employers will therefore need to consider whether agreeing a new period of furlough with staff will be feasible for their business and how to maintain social distancing or homeworking for another few weeks.
- It should be noted that the furlough scheme structure will be changing on 1 July 2021.
- Employers will begin to contribute to the scheme as government contributions reduce to 70% at a decreased cap. Staff must still receive 80% of their wages at a cap of £2,500 which means employers must contribute 10% at a cap of £312.50.

Watchdog for workers' rights to be launched

The Government confirmed on 8 June 2021 that it will be creating a watchdog to protect workers' rights. Although it is yet to be confirmed when this watchdog will begin to operate, it will be given powers and responsibilities to tackle modern slavery, enforce minimum wage laws, and ensure that employers are adhering to their legal responsibilities. It will also offer protection to agency workers.

Did you know?

Employers must keep track of their business procedures to ensure that they do not fall foul of employment laws; this may be by tightening policies on matters relating to grievance procedures, modern slavery, minimum wage, and more.

Worker sacked for going to the pub when off sick

An employee who was dismissed by an employer for visiting a pub whilst they were off work sick has been able to successfully make a claim for unfair dismissal at an employment tribunal (ET). The employee won his case after the ET found that going out for a drink while ill was not against the firm's disciplinary rules and the firm had not undertaken a fair disciplinary procedure.

Did you know?

An ET decision does not represent a binding precedent on how employers should deal with similar cases. However, employers should ensure that their disciplinary rules are comprehensive and a fair disciplinary process is always followed.

Transgender views philosophical, EAT holds

An employment appeal tribunal (EAT) has handed down a judgment in favour of a claimant who expressed unpopular views on people changing their biological sex. The EAT held that her views are philosophical and are therefore protected under the Equality Act 2010. The matter will be remitted to a fresh tribunal to determine whether the discrimination she complains of was because of or related to that belief.

Did you know?

Employers must be mindful of the difference between an employee having certain views and using those views to cause offence or to harass others. Similar cases should be thoroughly investigated.

Employers should consider their next steps which may include seeking advice on how to maintain social distancing measures and manage staff safely in the interim. Contact our 24-hour Advisory Service for up-to-date guidance on this and more.

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