

## Things to consider before the furlough scheme ends

**The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (furlough scheme) will end on 30 September 2021, but what should employers begin to think about before then? We explore what employers should know below:**

- The furlough scheme has been a saving grace for many UK employers as coronavirus restrictions caused disruptions to business operations across the country.
- As the scheme continues to wind down and with it coming to an end on 30 September 2021, employers should prioritise supporting their employees and protecting their business interests.
- As mental health awareness carries on making headlines, employees may be struggling during this period and as they're brought back to work. Training and support (both professionally and emotionally) can be useful in helping them to adjust.
- Employers will also need to consider how they can protect their business interests too. This could take the form of bringing staff back into work or allowing them to work from home if possible and if work is available.
- Alternatively, employers may need to reduce staff hours, consider lay offs or short time working, redeployment, or redundancy.
- A proper procedure should be followed for whichever option an employer chooses.
- Furloughed employees may have accrued annual leave during this period. It may be necessary to allow staff to take some leave on full pay before they return from furlough.

### TUC calls for immediate ban of umbrella companies

Umbrella companies should be banned, according to a new TUC report on their increasingly widespread use in the UK labour market. The TUC claims that workers face misleading and unfair deductions from pay, adding that breaches of holiday leave and pay entitlement are widespread - with umbrella companies preventing workers from taking their holiday entitlements.

#### Did you know?

The Government has recently indicated plans to 'curb or kill' umbrella companies, meaning this call may push the topic to the forefront of government agenda. Affected employers could be forced to rethink how they hire agency workers.

### Initiative to help disabled people know their rights

Acas has launched a new advice hub to help disabled people understand their rights at work. The initiative explains how the law protects them from discrimination at work and sets out the basic rights to which they are entitled. It emphasises that disabled people have at least the same rights to fairness and opportunity as others and that they are protected from unlawful discrimination by the Equality Act 2010.

#### Did you know?

Employers are advised to seek advice on their obligations towards disabled staff and update or implement policies that outline the company's obligations. Employers could also consider making reasonable adjustments where necessary.

### ET case dismissed to discourage hyper-sensitivity

The Employment Tribunal (ET) has dismissed a series of claims concerning discrimination, unfair and wrongful dismissal, harassment, and more, in order to avoid encouraging 'a culture of hypersensitivity'. The case concerned a lawyer who argued that the remarks her employer had made were discriminatory on the grounds of sex and age. The ET found that the comments had been 'clumsy' and 'unfortunate', but not discriminatory.

#### Did you know?

Direct discrimination occurs when one employee is treated less favourably than another by an employer on the grounds of a protected characteristic.

Dealing with accrued annual leave whilst a worker is on furlough can be tricky for employers, but they should remember that if leave is taken whilst a worker is on furlough, their wages must be paid in full by the employer. 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.