

Get ready for legal changes in April

As usual, April brings a raft of employment law changes. Here, we look at the key developments for employers.

- The National Living Wage (age 23+) will increase from £8.91 to £9.50, the 21-22 year old rate will increase from £8.36 to £9.18, the 18 – 20 year old rate will increase from £6.56 to £6.83 and the 16-17 year old rate will increase from £4.62 to £4.81.
- The apprentice rate will increase from £4.30 to £4.81.
- From 3 April, family friendly payments will increase to £156.66 per week from £151.97, including maternity, adoption, paternity, shared parental and parental bereavement pay.
- Statutory Sick Pay will also increase on 6 April from £96.35 to £99.35 per week.
- The Lower Earnings Limit will increase for the first time in two years, rising from £120 to £123 also from 6 April.
- Another change is the increase to National Insurance by 1.25% from April. While there is no legal requirement to amend payslips on this point until 2023, HMRC have asked employers to include a specific message on payslips between 6 April 2022 and 5 April 2023 to explain what the increase is for.
- Large businesses (250+ employees) must report on their gender pay gap by 4 April (private sector) and 30 March (public sector).
- From 6 April, biometric residence cards and permits and frontier worker permits can only be checked online in a change to right to work checking procedures.

Removal of health and social care vaccine mandate

The regulations revoking the legal requirement making Covid vaccination a condition of deployment in all health and social care settings in England, including care homes, come into force on Tuesday 15 March 2022. All staff can continue in their roles from this date, regardless of Covid vaccination status. Care home employers will need to consider how to handle requests from former employees to return to their previous roles.

Did you know?

There is no legal right for employees who were dismissed because of vaccine laws in place at the time to have their job back. But where they do get their job back, they will be treated like a fresh employee.

Businesses recruiting Ukrainian refugees

A number of businesses have set up initiatives to make it easier for employers to recruit Ukrainian refugees who have fled the country due to the Russian invasion. Companies including M&S, Asos and Lush are offering refugees employment. A specific jobs board, JobsForUkraine.net, has also been launched where employers can post available positions on the website.

Did you know?

Special visa arrangements are being made for Ukrainian nationals, relaxing normal rules on the right to work in the UK. Ukrainian nationals would normally need to obtain a visa under the complicated points based immigration system.

Employee wins indirect religious discrimination case

A company policy which required staff to cancel their annual leave if they had already been off for 2 consecutive weeks amounted to indirect discrimination. In the case of *Bialick v NNE Law*, an employee had booked holidays to strictly observe Passover, as his Jewish faith did not permit him to work during this time. His employer cancelled his leave since he had been off for the previous 2 weeks with Covid.

Did you know?

The employee was subsequently dismissed when he didn't come into work during Passover. He won over £26,000 in his claim for indirect discrimination on religious grounds.

The new statutory rates increases mean that employers will need to amend their payroll accordingly and communicate any changes to affected employees. 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.