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In the know....

The Queen's Speech 2016



The Queen's Speech on 18th May 2016 announced a number of reforms to various areas, such as prisons, education, internet rights, adoption and care. Here we focus on the announcements which may have an impact on employment law.

British Bill of Rights

The first key announcement was that the Government will create a British Bill of Rights. This was announced in the Queen's Speech last year and again this year however no action has been taken despite promises back in 2014 to have a draft produced "shortly". Initial plans involved scrapping the Human Rights Act in full and creating a British Bill of Rights to completely replace it. However, the Government now intends to amend the Human Rights Act and has previously expressed that the Bill of Rights will 'restore common sense to the way human rights is applied'.

Prisons Bill

The next announcement informed us that the Government intends to create new legislation which will reform prisons and turn them into a new type of 'reform prisons' which will offer education to inmates. Each of these prisons will have to publish statistics on reoffending, violence, and employment rates on release.

Further to that, there are plans to use GPS tracking devices to monitor prisoners' geographical position. The first sets of tracking tags will be implemented in six prisons across the country in September 2016. This will permit prisoners to hold jobs during the week. This means that offenders will be looking to enter the job market whilst still technically in prison.

Education Bills

There are plans for two education bills:

- The Higher Education and Research Bill will require universities to publish detailed information about the class, ethnic and gender background of applicants and students. Legislation will be created to promote establishment on new universities to increase choice and competition between higher education centres.

- The Education for All Bill will press ahead with plans to extend academies. There were previous plans to enforce 'academisation' on all schools in England. These plans were scrapped not long ago, however, they have now re-emerged in the Queen's Speech. The current plans will not aim to turn all schools into academies, but only those in the worst performing local authorities and those which cannot viably remain as schools.

Neighbourhood Planning and Infrastructure Bill

The Queen announced that in order to support the economic recovery, legislation will be introduced to ensure Britain has the infrastructure that businesses need to grow. The legislation aim to improve conditions to create jobs and more apprenticeships. The bill will aim to speed up the planning and building process, increasing job opportunities and demand in the construction sector.

EU Referendum

The EU referendum is set to take place on 23rd June 2016. Although it's not possible to predict the exact effects which may follow a decision to come out of the European Union – this would depend on the nature of any breakaway - it would certainly have a significant impact on employment law. The British Government would no longer have to follow European Directives and therefore would be completely autonomous in its law making.

The content of this briefing is correct at the time of publishing.

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