

## Employment Rights Act 2025

The Employment Rights Bill is now the Employment Rights Act 2025. It became law on 18 December 2025.

The Act will introduce additions and amendments to existing legislation, including the Employment Rights Act 1996.

The employment law changes included in the Act will happen in 2026 and 2027.

Most changes have not happened yet. The advice on the rest of this website reflects the current situation.

### Preparing for the changes

Employers should consider the impact of these changes on their organisation.

To help with this:

- [watch our Employment Rights Act webinar](#)
- [sign up to the Acas newsletter](#) – for updates on employment law changes, news and events
- [book on an Acas employment law masterclass](#) – Tuesday 9 June 2026
- [book Acas training about paternity and parental leave changes](#) – Monday 30 March 2026

If you're a worker, some of these changes will affect you. You can also tell your employer about this page.

We'll update this website when anything changes.

### Take part in consultations

The government is consulting on parts of the Act, as part of the Make Work Pay initiative. They're seeking views from employers, workers and trade unions.

[Find the latest government consultations on GOV.UK](#)

### What's already changed

One change took place as soon as the Bill became law.

#### Minimum service level rules for strikes – now removed

Rules around 'minimum service levels' for strikes were removed on 18 December 2025. These rules were about keeping services running when there's a strike.

#### Increased dismissal protection for industrial action

From 18 February 2026, dismissal for taking part in industrial action became 'automatically unfair'. This removed the 12-week limit for claiming unfair dismissal.

## Trade union activity

From 18 February 2026:

- the time needed to give notice of industrial action reduced to 10 days, instead of 14 days
- picket supervisors are no longer required
- industrial action mandates last for 12 months, instead of 6 months
- industrial action and ballot notices were simplified
- political fund rules changed

## Trade union ballots

From 18 February 2026:

- the support threshold rule has been removed – this rule required at least 40% of the total eligible votes to support action. It applied to important public services. Public and private sector ballots now follow the same requirement – they only need more votes in favour of industrial action than against
- the turnout threshold rules for industrial action ballots will remain until at least August 2026 – they require at least a 50% turnout for industrial action ballots

## Paternity leave and ordinary parental leave

Paternity leave and ordinary parental leave (or unpaid parental leave) will become a 'day one right' for employees from 6 April 2026. From 18 February 2026, newly eligible employees can give notice that they intend to take leave.

The notice period for paternity leave has been temporarily reduced from 15 weeks to 28 days.

## April 2026 changes

More employment law changes will happen in April 2026.

## Paternity leave and ordinary parental leave

These things will change on 6 April 2026:

- paternity leave will become a 'day one right', allowing someone to give notice of leave from the first day of employment – currently someone must have worked for their employer for 26 weeks
- ordinary parental leave, or unpaid parental leave, will also become a day one right – currently someone must have worked for their employer for 1 year to be eligible
- the restriction on taking paternity leave after shared parental leave will be removed
- eligible fathers and partners will be able to take up to 52 weeks of unpaid bereaved partner's paternity leave if the mother or primary adopter dies – they must take this leave within 52 weeks of the child's birth (including surrogacy), adoption placement, or entry to Great Britain for overseas adoptions

Note: bereaved partner's paternity leave is separate legislation.

[Book Acas training about paternity and parental leave changes](#)

## Sick pay

These changes will happen on 6 April 2026:

- statutory sick pay (SSP) will be paid from the first day of illness, instead of the fourth day
- the lower earnings limit will be removed – currently, workers must earn a minimum amount to be eligible for statutory sick pay

## Collective redundancy protective award

The maximum 'protective award' for failure to consult in collective redundancy will double from 90 days' pay to 180 days' pay. This will change on 6 April 2026.

## Whistleblowing protections for sexual harassment

Sexual harassment will become a 'qualifying disclosure' under whistleblowing law. This will mean protection from detriment and unfair dismissal for whistleblowers making a sexual harassment disclosure. This will change on 6 April 2026.

## Gender pay gap and menopause action plans

Employers will need to create action plans around menopause and gender pay gaps. These will be voluntary from 6 April 2026. They will become mandatory sometime in 2027.

## Trade union recognition

How a trade union can be recognised in a workplace will be simplified. This will change on 6 April 2026.

An updated Code of Practice on trade union recognition supporting this is expected to come into force in October 2026.

## Fair Work Agency

The Fair Work Agency will be established on 7 April 2026, to:

- bring together existing enforcement bodies
- take on enforcement of other employment rights, such as holiday pay and statutory sick pay

## August 2026 changes

### Trade union ballots

These changes will happen in August 2026:

- trade union members will be able to vote electronically or in-person in ballots for industrial action, union elections and other statutory ballots – if the employer and trade union agree
- after that, the removal of the requirement for a 50% turnout for industrial action ballots can begin – this had originally been expected in April 2026

## October 2026 changes

Important: In most cases, how these changes will be implemented is subject to government consultations.

## Harassment

These changes will happen in October 2026:

- employers will be liable for harassment from third parties, for example customers or clients, unless they have taken all reasonable steps to prevent it happening – this will apply to all types of harassment
- employers will need to take 'all reasonable steps' to prevent sexual harassment – current law says 'reasonable steps'

A change to the law around non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) is also expected. This will void clauses that would prevent workers from alleging or disclosing work-related harassment or discrimination. The date of this change is not known yet.

## Tipping

Tipping law will change in October 2026. Employers will need to:

- consult with workers or their representatives before creating a tipping policy
- update their tipping policy every 3 years

## Employment tribunal time limits

Time limits for making a claim to an employment tribunal will increase to 6 months for all claims. The current time limit for most claims is 3 months. This will change in October 2026.

## More changes to trade union rules

These trade union changes will happen in October 2026:

- a new duty for employers to inform workers of their right to join a trade union
- updated rules on a trade union's right of access to the workplace
- a new right to reasonable accommodation and facilities for trade union representatives carrying out their duties
- a new right to time off for union equality representatives to carry out their duties
- an updated Code of Practice on trade union recognition

## Increased protection against detriment for industrial action

Workers taking part in industrial action will be protected against detriment, in addition to unfair dismissal. 'Detriment' is when someone is treated less favourably by their employer. This will change in October 2026.

## Public sector outsourcing 'two-tier code'

There will be new measures for public sector outsourcing. This is to avoid having different terms and conditions for ex-public sector employees and private sector employees. This will change in October 2026.

## New Adult Social Care Negotiating Body

There will be a new negotiating body for adult social care. This will start in October 2026.

## December 2026 change

One change will happen in December 2026. It's specific to the seafarer industry.

### Mandatory Seafarer's Charter

There will be a new mandatory charter for seafarers, with higher standards around health and safety, pay, job security and rest breaks. This will happen in December 2026.

## January 2027 changes

Important: In most cases, how these changes will be implemented depends on government consultations.

### Unfair dismissal

These changes will happen on 1 January 2027:

- protection from unfair dismissal will become a right after 6 months of being in a job – currently, someone must have worked for their employer for 2 years before claiming unfair dismissal
- the limit on the compensatory award for unfair dismissal will be removed

Protection from unfair dismissal was expected to become a right from the first day of employment. The government changed this before the Bill became law.

### Dismissal and rehire

Dismissing someone then rehiring them on worse terms and conditions will become an automatically unfair dismissal in most cases. This is sometimes known as 'fire and rehire'.

This will change on 1 January 2027. This had originally been expected in October 2026.

An updated code of practice to support these changes will be provided in 2027.

## Other 2027 changes

The government has not announced when in 2027 most of these changes will happen.

Important: In most cases, how these changes will be implemented is subject to government consultations.

### Increased pregnancy and maternity rights

The Act will strengthen protections against dismissal for pregnant workers and those returning from maternity leave. This will happen in 2027.

### Bereavement leave

There will be a new right to statutory bereavement leave. The leave will be unpaid. This will happen in 2027.

### **Zero-hours and low-hours contracts**

Workers on zero-hours and low-hours contracts will get the right to guaranteed working hours, if they want them. This will happen in 2027.

### **Compensation for cancelled shifts**

Workers will have the right to be paid if a shift is cancelled, moved to another date, or cut short by an employer. This will happen in 2027.

### **Reasonable notice of shifts**

Employers must provide reasonable notice of shifts and changes to shifts. This will happen in 2027.

### **Flexible working**

There will be an amendment to flexible working law in 2027. If an employer rejects a flexible working request because of a genuine business reason, they will have to:

- state the reasons from a list of 8 acceptable reasons
- explain why they believe their refusal is reasonable

Doing this is already good practice. But it will become a legal requirement. When handling a request, everyone should follow the [Acas Code of Practice on flexible working](#). Acas will review its Code after the law changes.

### **Further harassment change**

The law will specify what 'reasonable steps' means when preventing sexual harassment, following earlier changes in October 2026. This change will happen in 2027.

### **Mandatory gender pay gap and menopause action plans**

Action plans around menopause and gender pay gaps will become mandatory, following their voluntary introduction on 6 April 2026. This change will happen in 2027.

### **Collective redundancy**

These collective redundancy changes will happen in 2027:

- employers will need to consider the total number of redundancies across their whole organisation, not just individual workplaces – currently, collective redundancy rules only apply to individual workplaces
- increased collective redundancy protection for workers on ships that regularly operate from British ports but are registered outside Great Britain

### **2027 trade union changes**

These trade union changes will happen in 2027:

- extending laws that protect trade union members from discrimination and being 'blacklisted'

- a new industrial relations framework, to help employers and trade unions work together
- workers will be able to vote electronically in ballots for trade union recognition and derecognition

## Regulation of umbrella companies

The definition of agencies will be expanded to include 'umbrella companies'. This will allow enforcement by the relevant bodies. This change will happen in 2027.