

New Acas survey on the Employment Rights Act reveals that sick pay changes will have biggest impact at work

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Workplace expert, Acas, commissioned YouGov to ask which changes in the Employment Rights Act 2025 will have the biggest impact on bosses and workers.

New rights on sick pay topped the polls for both, followed by new protections on unfair dismissals. Employers ranked new paternity leave rights as their third biggest while workers opted for the new changes on flexible working.

The valuable insights gained from the results will help Acas target its support for workers and bosses where they need it the most.

Niall Mackenzie, Acas Chief Executive, said:

"It is clear from our polls that new worker rights on sick pay and protections from being unfairly dismissed from work are at the forefront in the minds of employers and workers.

"Acas will play a crucial role working with employers, workers and their representatives on the implementation of the Employment Rights Act and updating its advice and training.

"These reforms represent the biggest shake-up to employment law in a generation. Acas remain best placed as independent experts helping everyone at work throughout this period of change."

The survey results revealed that:

- 43% of employers said that workers getting sick pay for the first day of illness, rather than the fourth day, would have the biggest impact on them. 36% of workers also listed it as their biggest impact too.
- Workers being protected from unfair dismissal after 6 months in a job, instead of 2 years, was the second most-commonly chosen reform with 31% of employers and 30% of employees selecting this.
- For employers, rights for paternity leave from the first day of employment was their third-most important reform (28%), while workers said making it easier to get flexible working arrangements at work (28%) was theirs.

New rules, brought in by the Employment Rights Act, regarding paternity leave and sick pay will come into force on 6 April 2026.

From 6 April 2026, employees will be eligible for paternity leave from the first day of employment. Currently, employees must have worked for their employer for 26 weeks before they are eligible.

From 1 January 2027, employees will be protected from unfair dismissal if they have worked for their employer for at least 6 months. Currently, an employee must have 2 years continuous service to be able to claim unfair dismissal.

A dismissal may be considered unfair by law if:

- there was no fair reason for the dismissal

- the reason was not enough to justify dismissing them
- the employer did not follow a fair procedure

In 2027 new measures will come into force intended to improve access to flexible working.

Flexible working can involve a change to when, where or how someone works. Employers and employees should follow the [Acas Code of Practice on flexible working](#) when handling a request.

Acas has an online roadmap of when all the new expected law changes in the Employment Rights Act are likely to come into effect, which includes webinars and training. [Read the Employment Rights Act roadmap.](#)

Media enquiries

[Contact the Acas press office](#)

Background notes

1. Acas is running [training on paternity and parental leave](#) to help people understand the law and proposed changes, and on [managing absence](#).
2. Currently, a worker is eligible for sick pay if they:
 - have been off sick for at least 4 days in a row - this includes non-working days
 - earn on average at least £125 a week, before tax
 - have told their employer they're sick within any deadline the employer has set or within 7 days
 - are classed as employed for tax purposes

[Find out more information about statutory sick pay](#)

3. Acas has advice to help understand what unfair dismissal is by law. The dismissal should follow the [Acas Code of Practice on disciplinary and grievance procedures](#). [Find out more information about unfair dismissal.](#)
4. Acas has advice on flexible working and a Code of Practice for statutory flexible working requests. [Find out more about flexible working.](#)
5. Acas is the leading authority on workplace relations and dispute resolution in Great Britain. We provide free, impartial advice to employers and employees on workplace rights, rules and best practice. We also provide training and tailored support for businesses that can help them succeed. Acas is a non-departmental public body that is governed by an independent Council

made up of employers, employee representatives and independent members.

6. Acas commissioned YouGov to poll employers and employees in a representative sample of British businesses. The surveys were carried out online and the total sample size was 1,011 senior decision makers and 1,000 employees in Great Britain. Fieldwork was undertaken from 2 February to 9 February 2026 for employers, and 5 to 11 February 2026 for employees. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc and have been weighted and are representative of British business size and region.

Respondents were asked: Which three, if any, of the following new law changes outlined in the Employment Rights Act 2025 do you think will have the biggest impact in your workplace? (Please read the list carefully and select up to three options)

The results for employers:

- workers being able to take paternity leave from their first day of employment – 28%
- workers getting statutory sick pay from their first day off instead of waiting until the fourth day of illness – 43%
- requiring employers to do more to prevent sexual harassment at work – 10%
- Stronger protections against unfair dismissal for pregnant workers and those returning from maternity leave – 11%
- making it easier for trade unions to have the right to negotiate with employers over pay and conditions and to take industrial action – 16%
- limiting dismiss and re-employ practices (known as 'fire and rehire') that force workers to accept worse terms and conditions – 11%
- workers being protected from unfair dismissal after 6 months in a job instead of 2 years – 31%
- giving workers on zero-hour contracts the option of having guaranteed working hours to reflect their usual working hours – 12%
- making it easier for workers to get flexible working arrangements – 25%
- stronger financial penalties against employers that fail to consult their workers in large redundancies – 5%
- none of these – 15%
- don't know – 7%

The results for employees:

- workers being able to take paternity leave from their first day of employment – 20%
- workers getting statutory sick pay from their first day off instead of waiting until the fourth day of illness – 36%
- requiring employers to do more to prevent sexual harassment at work – 7%
- stronger protections against unfair dismissal for pregnant workers and those returning from maternity leave – 10%
- making it easier for trade unions to have the right to negotiate with employers over pay and conditions and to take industrial action – 11%
- limiting dismiss and re-employ practices (known as 'fire and rehire') that force workers to accept worse terms and conditions – 14%
- workers being protected from unfair dismissal after 6 months in a job instead of 2 years – 30%
- giving workers on zero-hour contracts the option of having guaranteed working hours to reflect their usual working hours – 19%
- making it easier for workers to get flexible working arrangements – 28%
- stronger financial penalties against employers that fail to consult their workers in large redundancies – 9%
- none of these – 10%
- don't know – 15%