

Employment Rights Act 2025

Equality Factsheet



Overview

The Employment Rights Act 2025 is designed to make workplaces fairer, safer and more inclusive. It became law on 18th December 2025.

It strengthens protections against discrimination and harassment, improves support for families and wellbeing, and ensures workers are treated with dignity and respect throughout their employment.

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

Implementation Timeline

From Royal Assent (early implementation)

- Initial changes begin with some protections and frameworks introduced.

April 2026 (First Key Changes)

- Day-one rights for **paternity leave** and **unpaid parental leave** (from 6th April)
- Improvements to Statutory Sick Pay - removal of waiting period and earnings limit (from 6th April).
- Launch of the **Fair Work Agency** (will be established on 7th April) to support the enforcement of worker protections.

Late 2026 - 2027 (Phased Equality Measures)

Introduced in stages to allow organisations time to prepare:

- Stronger duty on employers to prevent **sexual harassment**.
- New protection from **third-party harassment** (e.g. customers/clients).
- NDAs are no longer able to prevent workers from speaking **about harassment or discrimination**.
- Requirement for large employers to:
 - Publish **gender pay gap action plans**
 - Support employees experiencing menopause.

These changes will happen from October 2026.

- Introduction of **bereavement leave** including pregnancy loss
- Enhanced protections from dismissal for:
 - Pregnant employees
 - Employees on maternity leave
 - Up to 6 months after returning
- Strengthened **flexible working rights** with clearer, fairer processes.

Ongoing Rollout Approach

- Changes are introduced gradually over a **two-year period**.
- Most measures begin on standard implementation dates:
 - 6th April
 - 1st October
- This phased approach allows employers to plan and implement changes effectively.

Key Equality and Fairness Measures

Stronger Protection from Harassment

- Employers must take “**all reasonable steps**” to prevent sexual harassment.
- Workers are also protected from **harassment by third parties** (e.g. customers or clients).
- Clear rules will define what employers must do to prevent harassment.

Safer Workplace Culture

- Workers who report sexual harassment are protected under **whistleblowing laws**.
- This means they cannot be treated unfairly or dismissed for speaking up.

Ending Silence Around Discrimination

- Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) cannot stop workers from talking about harassment or discrimination.
- This helps ensure issues are not hidden and can be properly addressed.

Gender Equality Improvements

- Large employers must create **action plans to reduce the gender pay gap**.
- Employers must also show how they support employees through **menopause**.

These will be voluntary from 6th April 2026. They will become mandatory sometime in 2027.

Better Support for Families and Life Events

- **Paternity leave and unpaid parental leave** are available from day one of employment.
- New right to **bereavement leave**, including for pregnancy loss before 24 weeks.
- Stronger protection from dismissal for:
 - Pregnant employees
 - Those on maternity leave
 - Up to 6 months after returning to work

Fairer Flexible Working

- Employees have a day-one right to request flexible working.
- Employers must:
 - Consider requests fairly
 - Provide clear reasons if refusing
 - Ensure refusals are reasonable

Improve Worker Wellbeing

- Changes aim to create more **secure, predictable jobs**, reducing stress and insecurity.
- Better sick pay access supports workers during illness.

Fairer Access to Justice

- Workers have **more time (6 months)** to bring claims to an unemployment tribunal.
- A new **Fair Work Agency** will help enforce rights and tackle unfair treatment.

What This Means in Practice

- Safer workplaces with **zero tolerance for harassment**.
- More openness about discrimination issues.
- Better support for **parents, carers and those experiencing loss**.
- Greater focus on **gender equality and wellbeing**.
- Stronger ability for workers to **challenge unfair treatment**.

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