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Employment Rights Act - New rights for workers come into force in April

The Employment Rights Act passed through the House of Commons and House of Lords in December 2025. The Act repeals some of the trade union legislation introduced by the last Government and introduces new rights for workers.

The new rights include:

Changes to employment tribunal deadlines to give workers more time to claim after an incident at work

Increased rights to request flexible working

Increased protection against dismissal for pregnant workers

Statutory right to unpaid bereavement leave

Increased protection against harassment

Changes to sick pay provision

Guaranteed hours for zero hours and agency workers and reasonable notice of shifts

The Act will also re-establish the School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB) to set national standards on pay, employment terms and conditions, training and career development in England.

Not all of the changes will come in at once and the details of how some of the changes will be worked out through consultation and changes to other legislation.

For example Statutory Sick Pay will become a day one right for all workers from April instead of after the first 3 days. After April all employees will be eligible for SSP, set at either 80% of their average weekly earnings or the current SSP amount (whichever is lower).

Whereas the changes to protection from unfair dismissal which reduce the qualifying period for unfair dismissal down to 6 months (it's currently 2 years) don't come into force until 1 January 2027. The change to the unfair dismissal qualifying period will apply retrospectively, meaning any employee who has already been employed for 6 months by 1 January 2027 will benefit from the right to claim unfair dismissal immediately.

There is more information here:

<https://msg.unison.org.uk/c/1n15u3CmgPPjY3d2iwAKQj2DdMo>

UNISON general secretary calls for end to US/Israeli war on Iran

The US/Israeli war on Iran is a catastrophic escalation in an already devastated region, and Britain must not be involved. It is causing appalling death and destruction in Iran and risks plunging the area into wider war. Already it is causing economic convulsions around the world.

Its aims seem to change daily, but it is clearly an illegal and unprovoked war, one which started in the midst of negotiations. Its organisers have learnt nothing from the carnage and chaos caused by previous wars on Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya.

Unsurprisingly, the war is deeply unpopular here and around the world.

We call on our government to end all participation, to stop allowing the US to use British bases to pursue it and to join others in calling for an immediate end to the attacks.

Jeremy Corbyn MP

Andrea Egan general secretary Unison

Maryam Eslamdoust general secretary TSSA

Lindsey German convener Stop the War Coalition

Zarah Sultana MP

Jon Trickett MP

For a full list of signatories follow this link or go to the Stop the War website: <https://www.stopwar.org.uk/article/britain-must-end-all-participation-in-the-us-israel-war-on-iran/>

Workers Memorial Day 28th April

UNISON members in Rochdale will be gathering in the Memorial Gardens opposite the Town Hall on Tuesday 28th April at 12.30 to mark Workers Memorial Day. Workers Memorial Day is an international event where we remember those who have been killed or injured through their work.

The official UK figures from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) show an annual average of around 135 deaths in work-related accidents. But this pales in comparison to human beings dying from work-related health conditions. Official figures from HSE put deaths around 13,000 in the UK each year from conditions related to lung disease and cancer caused by past exposure at work to chemicals and dust.

However, unions and safety and health campaigners estimate that the true figure for all work-related deaths is closer to 50,000 each year. Not only are true figures underestimated, but there are also large gaps in identifying many diseases caused in work. For example, deaths from cardiovascular disease caused by workplace stress.

Please join us as we lay a wreath to remember those who have died and commit ourselves to fighting for better health and safety now and in the future.

Is your UNISON data up to date?

Please take a few moments to check that the information UNISON holds about you is correct. This is important so that you get information from the union about consultations and industrial action ballots. It only takes a few minutes to check we have your correct address, email and mobile number.

<https://msg.unison.org.uk/c/1nrgB372FGzp51mY8vF3J6WFzfp>

Legal advice for UNISON members and their families

At our recent AGM Rochdale branch had a presentation from Thompson's Solicitors.

We thought our members should be aware of some of the benefits.

There is more information on their website: <https://www.thompsonstradeunion.law/trade-unions/unison#legalcomprehensivepackage>

As a member of UNISON, whether working or retired, you have access to expert legal advice from Thompsons. They can provide advice if you need help with personal injury claims, employment issues (available through your union representative), or other legal matters.

For personal injury claims Unison members keep 100% of their personal injury compensation (high street lawyers make deductions from people's compensation).

Special terms apply for medical negligence which ensure that trade union members or their families making a clinical negligence compensation claim receive free advice and are left with more compensation than they would get if they used a non-union law firm.

A personal injury can be physical or psychological, and be caused by a variety of things, including a road collision, a work accident, medical negligence, and exposure to dangerous materials. Other causes include assaults, slips and trips in public areas, or faulty goods.

Members wishing to make a personal injury claim need to do so within three years of the date of the accident or injury occurring, though there are a few exceptions.

In medical negligence claims, the cut-off point for starting a claim is three years from the date when you could have reasonably judged that your treatment, or perhaps lack of it, caused you injury.

In asbestos disease claims, the cut-off point for starting a claim is three years from the date of diagnosis, crucially not three years from the date of exposure to the toxic substance.

Members' relatives are also entitled to free legal advice and representation if they suffer a personal injury that wasn't their fault, and which was unrelated to their employment i.e. not a workplace accident.

The legal package also includes:

Employment law advice (accessed via your UNISON rep).

Work-related criminal law advice (call the 24-hour criminal law helpline on 0800 587 7530).

[Online wills service](#) which is also available to UNISON members families.

Special terms for conveyancing, probate and powers of attorney.

Please check that your UNISON colleagues have received this newsletter electronically—if not please ask them to contact the branch on 01706 925952 or email_unison@rochdale.gov.uk so we can update their membership record