

Increase in National Minimum Wage

The National Minimum Wage for all workers is now £5.52 an hour for those aged 22 and over, £4.60 for 18-21 year olds and £3.40 for 16-17 year olds. Tougher new penalties are planned to deal with businesses that refuse to pay workers the minimum wage and agencies which try to abuse workers and undercut legitimate businesses.

All workers in the UK are entitled to be paid at least the national minimum wage.

Increase in Minimum Statutory Holiday Entitlement

All workers are now entitled to 24 days paid holiday (pro-rata for part-timers). A further increase to 28 days will come into force on 1 April 2009.

New research by the DTI has shown that six million workers would benefit from an extra eight days holiday each year under the plans. Those standing to benefit most from the changes include women, part-time workers, low-paid workers and workers from minority ethnic communities.

Family Friendly Provisions

New mums and dads can now benefit from extra leave and pay measures, designed to give working parents more choice in their caring responsibilities. Mothers and adopters are now entitled to nine months Statutory Maternity or Adoption Pay. The aim is to increase this to a year's paid leave before the end of this parliament and to bring in additional paid statutory paternity rights. This would enable Dads to take time out if the baby's mother returns to work before the end of her maternity leave period.

Parents are also entitled to up to 13 weeks leave to look after young and disabled children and have the right to a reasonable amount of unpaid time off work to deal with any emergency involving a dependant.

'Keeping in Touch'; days have been introduced, meaning that a woman on maternity leave is able to go to work for a few days now and again, without losing her right to maternity leave or a week's statutory pay.

As of April 2007, 2.6 million carers across the UK now have the right to request flexible working under the Work and Families Act, helping them better manage their work and caring responsibilities. Further measures to help working parents achieve a better work life balance are also the basis of an independent review, which will determine how the right to request flexible working (which applies to parents of children under 6) can be extended.

Agency Workers

From April 2008, all agency workers will have the right to withdraw from services provided by their agency, such as accommodation or transport without suffering any loss in pay or benefits, provided they give a period of notice.

Model Agencies

The Government has also strengthened protection for aspiring models and actors. From April 2008, workers will have a seven day cooling off period when they sign up to contracts for including their details in modelling books or web directories. Agencies will be banned from taking any fee during the cooling off period. This applies whether the individual signs up at a casting session or approaches the agency themselves. This allows workers to consider their decision away from a potentially pressurised environment.

Please contact Associate Victoria Edwards if you require any further employment law information on vedwards@hawkinshatton.co.uk or 01384 216840