

## Employment law and Hr issues: looking ahead to 2024

“There is no doubt that 2024 looks set to be a year of change and uncertainty in relation to HR and employment law.

Employers will need to grapple with a substantial quantity of new legislation that is expected to come into force throughout the year. A combination of new rights for employees and additional duties for employees include:

- changes to the way in which employees can make flexible working requests;
- additional protections from redundancy for pregnant employees and those on maternity and other family leave;
- a new right for carers to take one week’s unpaid care leave each year;
- the statutory right for those on zero-hour contracts to request a more predictable working pattern;
- a new duty on employers to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment;
- the introduction of 12 weeks’ paid leave for the parents of babies in neonatal care;
- changes to the rules around the calculation and payment of holiday pay;
- provisions allowing direct consultation with employees under the TUPE regulations; and
- increases to the rates of the national minimum wage.

The government has also indicated its wish to limit the length of post-termination non-competition clauses in employment contracts to three months.

Further legislative change is likely as a General Election looms in May. If the Labour party win, they have pledged to introduce an Employment Rights Bill within their first 100 days of office, which is likely to unveil far reaching changes. Labour’s proposals are expected to include banning zero hours contracts, amending legislation relating to Trade Unions and removing the requirement for 2 years’ service to claim unfair dismissal.



I predict that the economy will also have a significant impact within the workplace. The effects of inflation and high interest rates mean that times will continue to be tough for both businesses and their staff. That is likely to have two main effects – first, employees may either request pay rises or look for better paid positions. Second employers who are facing economic headwinds are likely to consider restructuring or making redundancies; according to Acas, 30% of employers may make redundancies in the next year so it's a good idea to get your employee handbooks up to date so that both employers and employees know where they stand on all HR matters.

As we move into 2024 many employers will still be grappling with the 'pull-me-push-you' issue of hybrid and remote working, trying to balance the desire amongst employees for greater flexibility against the challenges of managing remote teams, fostering collaboration and ensuring employee engagement.

I also predict the growing influence of AI within businesses. This is likely to include the streamlining of certain administrative tasks, for example in connection with recruitment. However, the influence of AI is likely to be even more profound if as predicated by Goldman Sachs as much as 63% workforces could have some aspects of their role automated.

It will be an interesting year ahead”.

Bond Legal 2023

