



Hands-On HR

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Employment Update

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Coming soon:

1st April 2007 – increase in rates for statutory benefits such as statutory maternity pay, statutory paternity pay and statutory sick pay

1st April 2007 – Work and Families Act 2006 with changes to maternity entitlements and pay.

1st July 2007 – Ban on smoking in the workplace

Smoking – Company Cars

Vehicles used for work will be covered by the forthcoming legislation. Where a vehicle is solely used by one person it may be excluded. However, during working hours, a personal vehicle used for business purposes becomes a workplace and if staff are caught smoking by the Health and Safety Executive the company would be prosecuted and liable for a fine of up to £2500 – not the employees.

If you provide company cars, work vehicles or even car allowances then you need to consider your policy for the treatment of smoking.

Offences and penalties

Regulations in the Health Act 2006 create three new offences in England and Wales:

- failure to display minimum statutory no-smoking signs – fine of up to £1000 or fixed penalty notice of £200
- smoking in a smoke-free place – fine of up to £200 or penalty notice of £50
- failure to prevent smoking in a smoke-free place – fine of up to £2500

Maternity update

Whilst most of the changes to maternity law coming into force in April are straightforward, some of their possible consequences are less simple than they seem. The key points to know are:

- all contractual terms, except remuneration, remain in force during ordinary maternity leave, while few contractual terms continue during additional maternity leave
- any woman on paid maternity leave (SMP or otherwise) is entitled to certain employment-related benefits. When SMP increases to 39 weeks in April employers will be obliged to continue to pay employment-related benefits, such as pension contributions, into the additional leave for as long as the woman is receiving pay

Things to think about

Middle managers cost UK £220bn - According to research by Hay Group, more than one third of UK executives believe their organisations are being “paralysed” by ineffective middle management, cutting productivity by at least £220bn per year, and 4 in 10 executives said their organisation’s middle management was the single greatest barrier to achieving their firm’s strategic objectives. Given the right training and development, middle management could be up to 29% more productive.

Lateness – a typical 35-year old is late about once a month, rising to between three and four times a month if their employer has a lax policy on lateness, according to the University of Manchester.

So, things to do

- *Review your smoking policy and associated communication strategy*
- *Invest in middle-management training*