



SOLVE IT

HR MATTERS

A photograph showing a person's hands typing on a laptop keyboard. The person is wearing a striped shirt. On the desk, there is a notebook with two pens, a smartphone, and a coffee cup with a latte art design.

An easier way to review and manage holiday requests

It's summer and there's going to be a surge of holiday requests coming your way...

HR software won't stop your team from wanting the same two weeks in August.

But it will stop the admin chaos that follows...

When leave is managed through a proper system, employees can see their own balances, submit requests online and get a decision without chasing anyone.

Managers can see at a glance who's in, who's off and whether approving a request creates a problem.

And you can set rules around overlapping leave so conflicts are flagged before they become awkward conversations.

The businesses we work with that have made the switch tend to say the same thing: they wish they'd done it sooner.

If you're still managing holiday through a spreadsheet or a shared calendar, this summer is a good time to think about whether that's still good enough.

Most small business HR software is straightforward to set up and far less expensive than people assume.

If you'd like a recommendation on tools that work well for small businesses, just get in touch.

LATEST NEWS

Employers face fines of up to £500,000 for blocking union access

From October 2026, trade unions will have a statutory right to request access to any workplace with 21 or more employees, including physically and digitally.

Employers who repeatedly refuse could face fines starting at £75,000, rising to £500,000, for further breaches.

Employers will have 15 days to respond to a request and 25 days to negotiate terms. If no agreement is reached, the Central Arbitration Committee can decide the arrangements.

Even businesses with no existing union presence will need to engage with requests in good faith. Strong internal engagement alone won't be enough to justify a refusal.



Hiring anyone after 1 July? You need to read this...

From 1 July 2026, any employee you hire will be able to bring an unfair dismissal claim after just six months of service.

The two-year qualifying period is gone for anyone who joins from that date.

This changes how you manage new starters from this point forward.

In practice, what this means is that probationary periods need to do more work than they have done before.

A lot of businesses run probationary periods that are six months on paper but loose in practice. That approach was relatively low risk when you had two years of protection behind you. Now, it's a lot riskier.

From July, if you dismiss someone in month seven and you don't have a clear record of how you managed them, communicated concerns and gave them a fair opportunity to improve, you're exposed.

The businesses that will be in the strongest position are the ones that treat probation as a proper process.

That means setting clear expectations at the start, having documented conversations when concerns arise and making a genuine assessment before the probation period ends.

If you're hiring now or planning to hire soon, it's worth reviewing how you currently manage probation and whether it would hold up if a dismissal was challenged. In many cases, the process is fine but the documentation isn't.

We can help you to put a simple, workable probation framework in place before the rules change.

Get in touch if you'd like to talk it through.

LATEST NEWS

Engineer wins £66k after raising concerns about his manager's competence

An employment tribunal has awarded £66,295 to a chief engineer who was dismissed after repeatedly telling his manager that he lacked the qualifications and experience for his role.

The tribunal found that his concerns were protected disclosures under whistleblowing law and that the subsequent dismissal for 'some other substantial reason' was automatically unfair.

The lesson for employers is a practical one.

Raising concerns about a manager's competence can amount to a protected disclosure. SOSR is not a reliable catch-all for difficult exits.

If a third party requests the removal of one of your employees, you're expected to push back and satisfy yourself that the request is reasonable before taking action.

The Fair Work Agency is now live

The Fair Work Agency launched on 7 April 2026, bringing together existing enforcement bodies into a single agency with real teeth.

It can inspect workplaces, review employment records going back six years, interview workers and bring tribunal proceedings on a worker's behalf.

Penalties for underpayment can reach 200% of the unpaid amount, capped at £20,000 per employee, with public naming of non-compliant businesses also on the table.

Critically, most investigations are expected to come from technical errors, things like miscalculated holiday pay or inaccurate working time records, rather than deliberate wrongdoing.

Employers who consider themselves low risk may be the ones caught out.

From 6 April, keeping adequate holiday pay and annual leave records became a legal requirement. That's the immediate priority.

Your top HR questions

Can an employee raise a grievance during their probation period?

Yes. There's no legal rule that prevents an employee from raising a grievance during probation. You're still required to take it seriously and follow a fair process.

Ignoring or dismissing a grievance because someone is on probation creates risk, particularly if the employee later claims the outcome of their probation was influenced by the fact that they raised one.

Do I have to let staff work flexibly during school holidays?

You don't have an automatic obligation to accommodate flexible working requests around school holidays, but employees have a day one right to make a formal flexible working request.

You can refuse a request, but only for one or more of the eight statutory business reasons.

Handling requests fairly, consulting with the employee, and documenting your reasoning matters, especially with day one flexible working rights now in force.

What should I do if I suspect an employee has an alcohol problem?

Don't ignore it or hope it resolves itself.

Have a private, supportive conversation early, focusing on the impact on work rather than making assumptions.

Check whether your business has an employee assistance programme or referral support.

If performance or conduct is being affected that may need to be addressed formally but, where dependency is involved, dismissal without proper support and process carries significant legal risk.

Need a confidential chat?

If you have a problem brewing in your business, you're worried about something or you simply need some expert HR support then please get in touch with us for a confidential chat.

A quick conversation could save you from a very costly mistake and we could give you the clarity you need to decide your next steps with confidence.

Contact us here for a [Free Discovery Call](#)



YOUR HR EXPERT