



HR Business Consultants

NEWSLETTER

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The Workplace Edition



Welcome from Jane



The workplace plays a central role in people's lives and shapes how supported they feel, how effectively they work and whether they choose to stay with an organisation long-term. Done well, this isn't just about compliance; it's about trust, engagement, and creating a positive working environment.

In this edition, we focus on what good workplace practice really looks like, bringing together practical guidance on some of the key people issues employers face.

- Suspensions
- Tribunals
- Workplace injuries
- Workplace investigations
- Working time regulations
- Inclusive workplaces

Whether you're reviewing existing practices or looking to strengthen your approach, these articles offer practical insights to help you build a workplace where people can thrive.



What every employer needs to know about suspension

When you have an issue with an employee, suspending them might feel like the right action.

However, you need to be 100% sure that this is legally compliant or you could leave yourself wide open to an expensive tribunal claim.

Here are some of the real questions we're asked about suspension:

- "Is suspension the same as disciplinary action?"
- "Does suspending someone mean I think they're guilty?"
- "Do I have to suspend people automatically if it's serious?"
- "Is suspension always the safest option?"
- "Do I need to keep them on full pay while they're off?"
- "Am I supposed to leave them alone during the suspension?"
- "What am I allowed to tell the rest of the team?"

ACAS guidance is clear on how suspension should work in practice:

- It is a neutral step while you gather information
- It doesn't imply guilt or wrongdoing
- It's only appropriate when there's a real risk to the investigation, the business or the people involved
- Alternatives, like changing duties or shifts, should always be considered first
- Full pay must continue throughout the suspension
- You need to stay in touch and support the employee's wellbeing
- Suspensions should be as short as possible and reviewed regularly
- Any updates to colleagues should be minimal and confidential

Handled properly, suspension protects everyone involved and gives you the space to carry out a fair investigation in a calm, neutral way.

If you'd like more information, get in touch for our latest educational guide which explains when suspension may be appropriate, the steps ACAS expects and how to handle the process safely and fairly.

LATEST NEWS

A simple lesson from a recent tribunal case

Two racial harassment complaints against Peterborough City Council were upheld after an employee challenged how she was treated at work.

One incident involved a senior leader assuming she was friends with another black colleague. Another involved a photo shared in a WhatsApp group that made her feel uncomfortable as the only black member.

Problems like this often come from everyday interactions, not deliberate discrimination. A quick policy refresh, clear rules on how work channels are used and short discrimination training for managers make a real difference.

When people understand how their behaviour might be received, issues are far less likely to turn into formal complaints.



What are my responsibilities after a workplace injury?

When an employee gets injured at work, your first responsibility is their health, wellbeing and safety.

But it's not always obvious what else you're meant to do. In this article, we talk you through the steps you should take to stay compliant and protect your business from any negligence claims.

1. Make the situation safe

Before anything else, make sure:

- The injured person gets first aid or medical help
- The area is safe for the rest of your team
- Anyone nearby knows what to avoid

If the injury is serious, call emergency services immediately.

2. Record what happened

You should make a written record of:

- The date, time and place
- What happened (in plain English)
- Who was involved
- Any witnesses
- Photos or evidence, if useful

Accurate records help with investigations, insurance and preventing repeat incidents.

3. Check if it needs reporting under RIDDOR

RIDDOR is the law that says you must report certain serious workplace injuries or incidents to the Health and Safety Executive.

Some injuries must be reported. This includes:

- Serious injuries like fractures (not fingers or toes)
- Loss of consciousness
- Injuries from dangerous occurrences
- Injuries leading to more than seven days' absence from work

If you're unsure, check the official RIDDOR guidance or speak to us.

4. Investigate what caused it

Your goal is simple: understand what happened and why.

Look at:

- The task they were doing
- Any equipment involved
- Training records
- Work environment
- Whether processes were followed

Keep this factual and fair. You're looking for the root cause, not someone to blame.

5. Support the injured employee

Good support reduces stress and helps them to return to work safely.

This might include:

- Keeping in touch while they're off
- Agreeing to a phased return
- Adjusting duties temporarily
- Reviewing risk assessments if anything needs changing

Small businesses often skip this step, but it makes a big difference to morale and recovery.

6. Learn from it and prevent future incidents

Once you know what caused the injury, take action.

You might need to:

- Update risk assessments
- Improve training
- Repair or replace equipment
- Change how a task is done
- Remind your team of safe working practices

Make sure that any changes are communicated clearly and consistently.

7. Keep your documentation up to date

You may need to update:

- The accident book
- Health and safety policy
- Training records
- Risk assessments
- Maintenance logs

Good documentation is part of your legal responsibilities and protects you if questions come up later.

Get support if you need it

Workplace injuries are stressful and every situation is different.

If you want to make sure you're handling an incident correctly, or you'd like help with tightening up your health and safety processes, get in touch.

We can walk you through what to do step by step and help you to protect both your people and your business.

A simple guide to workplace investigations

Do you have any of these issues with employees at the moment?

- 👉 Someone has raised a concern about how they've been treated
- 👉 A disagreement between colleagues has escalated
- 👉 There's been an incident on site or in the workplace
- 👉 You're worried about possible misconduct
- 👉 Someone isn't following instructions or standards
- 👉 A pattern of unhelpful behaviour keeps cropping up
- 👉 A client or customer has complained about someone's behaviour

If you have, running an investigation might be the most appropriate next step. In HR, an investigation is simply your fact-finding stage and is incredibly important. It helps you to understand what actually happened, hear both sides and make a fair decision. It also protects you, protects your team and stops small issues from turning into bigger problems.

Below you'll find a simple checklist to help you to run a fair investigation.



1. Gather what you already know

Notes, messages, timelines, any relevant information.



2. Speak to everyone involved

Keep it calm, fair and consistent.



3. Review the evidence

Look for facts, not assumptions.



4. Decide the outcome

Is there a case to answer?



5. Share the result

Record it clearly and follow up with the team.



WORK



What counts as a breach of working time regulations?

Working time rules can feel complicated, especially when you are managing rotas, covering sickness and trying to keep the business running smoothly.

The Working Time Regulations are there to protect your business as much as your team. When they are breached, the risks fall on you: claims, fines, rising costs, rota disruption and difficulties defending yourself if a dispute arises.

Here is what actually counts as a breach and how you can stay protected.

Working too many hours

Most workers cannot work more than 48 hours a week on average over 17 weeks unless they have signed an opt out.

A breach happens when:

- Someone works over the limit without an opt out
- Overtime pushes them over the average and it goes unmonitored
- Hours are not recorded accurately

These gaps can make it harder to defend yourself later if someone raises a complaint or something goes wrong.

Not giving proper rest breaks

There are three rest rules to follow. Breaks are small details but breaching them creates clear compliance risks for the business.

Rest breaks during the day – If someone works more than 6 hours, they must have at least one uninterrupted 20-minute break.

Daily rest – Workers must have 11 consecutive hours between shifts.

Weekly rest – Workers must have 24 hours off each week or 48 hours every two weeks.

Not giving the correct holiday entitlement or pay

Everyone is entitled to 5.6 weeks paid holiday.

Breaches include:

- Giving less than the legal minimum
- Not paying holiday correctly for irregular hours, overtime or commission
- Making it too difficult for staff to take time off

Holiday pay errors are one of the most common causes of claims. If calculations are wrong, back payments can build up quickly and become costly.

Night work limits

Night workers must not work more than 8 hours in a 24-hour period on average and must be offered a free health assessment.

For businesses in logistics, manufacturing and security, this is a key compliance area. Poor records make it harder to defend yourself if something happens during a night shift.

Most breaches happen unintentionally, but the consequences still fall on the employer.

What to do next

You do not need a complete overhaul. Focus on a few essentials that protect your business:

1. Make sure working hours and breaks are recorded accurately
2. Check whether you have opt-outs for anyone working long hours
3. Review holiday pay, especially for irregular hours
4. Look at rest patterns on your rotas and adjust where needed
5. Review night work arrangements and health assessment offers

Specific sectors may have different rules, so it's always worth checking your arrangements with an HR consultant.

Why an inclusive workplace gets better results

Inclusion, put simply, is the term HR consultants use to describe how people feel and are respected in the workplace. If someone feels pushed out, talked over or treated differently to others, it shows up quickly, especially in small businesses. Here's why an inclusive workplace gets better results.

1. Your team speaks up

When people feel heard, they raise issues early — before they cost time or money. You get clearer communication and fewer nasty surprises.

4. Stronger customer service

Supported staff stay calmer under pressure and deliver more consistent service — which strengthens your reputation and keeps customers returning.

2. Work flows smoothly

Included teams make confident decisions, ask when unsure, and follow things through — meaning less back-and-forth, fewer delays, and easier handovers.

5. A more reliable team

When everyone feels valued, more people step up. Ownership grows, skills develop faster, and performance becomes more consistent.

3. Fewer mistakes happen

People who feel safe check instead of guess. Questions get asked, gaps get spotted early, and quality stays high.

What does inclusion look like in your business?

Inclusion is not a nice to have. It's a practical way to improve output, reduce mistakes and build a team you can rely on.

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.

Whether you're a new or existing client, we offer a free 30 min chat (without any obligation to buy from us in the future).

Get in touch to arrange.

