

Employment law for event employers

The dates that matter to January 2027, and what to do at each level. Full report

Operational	Tactical	Strategic
Correct as of	20 October 2026	
Applies to	Event employers and crew in England, Scotland and Wales. Northern Ireland only where stated	
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Read this first. This report is general information for event professionals. It is not legal advice. Dates can change, and how the law applies to a person depends on the facts. Check the official GOV.UK, Acas and legislation.gov.uk pages and take advice before acting on an individual case.



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About this report. It expands OTAS Brief WF-002 with the full calendar of Employment Rights Act 2025 dates to January 2027 and beyond, the unfair dismissal change in detail, actions for each level, a service planner and a supervisor briefing. Section 12 lists what we could not confirm. To ask for this report in another format, use the contact details on the OTAS Insights page.



1 Summary

The biggest change to unfair dismissal law in decades arrives on 1 January 2027. From that date, employees in England, Scotland and Wales can claim ordinary unfair dismissal after 6 months' continuous employment, not 2 years, and the limit on the compensatory award is removed [3][4][5]. The change applies wherever employment ends on or after 1 January 2027, even if notice was given earlier [4].

It is the latest step in a rolling programme under the Employment Rights Act 2025. Since April 2026, Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) has been paid from the first day of sickness with no earnings threshold, employers have had to keep holiday records for 6 years, and the Fair Work Agency has started work [1][2][7]. Since 1 October 2026, most employment tribunal claims have a 6 month time limit [9][10]. More changes are due on 30 October 2026, by the end of 2026, in January 2027 and through 2027 [1][2].

Event operations rely on seasonal, short term and repeat engagements. That makes length of service, sick pay and record keeping more important than in many sectors. This report sets out the dates, what each change means for event employers and what to do at each level: Operational, Tactical and Strategic. It is general information, correct as of 20 October 2026, and not legal advice.

At a glance. 1 January 2027: unfair dismissal after 6 months' service, and no cap on the compensatory award [3][4].

- The new rule applies where the effective date of termination is on or after 1 January 2027 [4].
- SSP from day one, with no lower earnings limit, since 6 April 2026 [2][7].
- Holiday and holiday pay records kept for at least 6 years, since 6 April 2026 [2][12].
- 6 month time limit for most tribunal claims since 1 October 2026. Breach of contract claims in Scotland from 9 November 2026 [9].
- Check now who will pass 6 months' service in 2027, and review probation and dismissal procedures.

2 Where this applies

Employment law is largely the same in England, Wales and Scotland. Parts 1, 2 and 4 of the 2025 Act, which contain the employment rights in this report, extend to England and Wales and Scotland [6]. The unfair dismissal provisions it amends, in the Employment Rights Act 1996, also apply in England, Wales and Scotland [5].

There are two points of difference to flag:

- **Scotland:** the increase in the tribunal time limit for breach of contract claims takes effect in Scotland on 9 November 2026, not 1 October 2026 [1][9]. Everything else in this report applies in Scotland on the same dates as in England and Wales.
- **Northern Ireland:** Northern Ireland has its own employment law, and most of this report does not apply there. The exception is SSP: the 2025 Act removed the waiting period and the lower earnings limit in Northern Ireland too, through sections 12 and 13, from 6 April 2026 [4][6][14].
- **Enforcement and time limits:** the part of the 2025 Act on enforcement of labour market legislation, which includes the Fair Work Agency, extends to the whole UK. Some of the time limit changes also extend to Northern Ireland [6]. This report does not cover how either works in Northern Ireland.

If your crew work across the UK, check which rules apply to each engagement.

3 The calendar

Date	Change	Where	Source
18 Dec 2025	Employment Rights Act 2025 became law. Minimum service levels for strikes removed	England, Scotland and Wales	[2]
18 Feb 2026	Dismissal for taking part in industrial action became automatically unfair. Newly eligible employees could give notice of day one paternity and unpaid parental leave	England, Scotland and Wales	[1][2]
6 Apr 2026	SSP from day one, no lower earnings limit. Day one paternity and unpaid parental leave. Sexual harassment disclosures protected as whistleblowing. Protective award up to 180 days' pay. Holiday records kept for 6 years	SSP: whole UK. Rest: England, Scotland and Wales	[1][2][12]
7 Apr 2026	Fair Work Agency established	Whole UK (enforcement part of the Act)	[1][2][11]
25 Aug 2026	Electronic and workplace balloting for statutory trade union ballots	England, Scotland and Wales	[1][2]
1 Oct 2026	6 month time limit for most employment tribunal claims (3 months before)	England, Scotland and Wales	[1][9][10]
30 Oct 2026	'All reasonable steps' to prevent sexual harassment, and liability for harassment by third parties. Trade union access and representative changes	England, Scotland and Wales	[1][2]
9 Nov 2026	6 month time limit for breach of contract claims in Scotland	Scotland	[1][9]
End of 2026	Tipping law strengthened: consultation on tipping policies and reviews at least every 3 years	England, Scotland and Wales	[1][2]
1 Jan 2027	Unfair dismissal qualifying period 6 months, compensatory award uncapped (SI 2026/559)	England, Scotland and Wales	[3][4]
Jan 2027	Duty to inform workers of the right to join a trade union, and fire and rehire protections (expected. No commencement regulations found on 20 October 2026)	England, Scotland and Wales	[1][2][13]
2027	Guaranteed hours, shift notice and short notice payments. Umbrella company regulation. Bereavement leave. Flexible working. Collective redundancy threshold. Mandatory equality action plans for employers with 250 or more workers. Pregnancy and maternity dismissal protection. NDA restrictions	England, Scotland and Wales	[1][2]

Table 1. Employment Rights Act 2025 and related dates, as published by GOV.UK and Acas on 20 October 2026. The Where column follows the extent section of the 2025 Act [6]. The government says all future dates remain subject to parliamentary processes and may change [1].

4 Unfair dismissal from 1 January 2027

4.1 What changes

In England, Scotland and Wales, under section 108 of the Employment Rights Act 1996, the right not to be unfairly dismissed does not apply unless the employee has been continuously employed for at least 2 years ending with the effective date of termination [5]. Section 25 of the 2025 Act replaces "two years" with "six months" and omits section 124, which limits the compensatory award [3]. These parts of section 25 come into force on 1 January 2027 under SI 2026/559 [4].

Acas notes that the government had first planned for unfair dismissal protection from the first day of employment, and changed this to a 6 month qualifying period [2].

4.2 The transitional rule

Regulation 4 of SI 2026/559 says the new rules have effect where an employee is dismissed before 1 January 2027 but the effective date of termination falls on or after that date. They do not apply where the effective date of termination falls before 1 January 2027 [4]. The effective date of termination has the meaning given in the Employment Rights Act 1996 [4]. Acas explains that, for unfair dismissal, the time limit usually runs from the last day of the notice period, or from the date of dismissal if no notice was given [9].

In practice, a decision taken in December 2026 with notice running into January 2027 will be judged under the new rule. The day you tell someone is not the deciding date. The day their employment ends is.

4.3 Dismissals that already need no qualifying period

Some reasons for dismissal already need no qualifying period at all. They include dismissal for making a protected disclosure (whistleblowing) and for raising certain health and safety concerns [5]. Since 18 February 2026, dismissal for taking part in industrial action has been automatically unfair [2]. These rights are not new, but they matter more as crews take on welfare and safety reporting roles.

4.4 Seasonal and repeat crew

The 6 months must be continuous employment with the same employer [5]. Every week during which the employee's relations with the employer are governed by a contract of employment counts. Some weeks with no contract can also count, for example during a temporary cessation of work, or where by arrangement or custom the person is regarded as continuing in employment [15].

For event employers this is the hard part. A crew member who works every event in a season on a series of contracts may, or may not, build up continuous employment, depending on the facts. We do not give a view on individual patterns. If someone works for you regularly, take advice before you decide not to rebook or to dismiss them.

4.5 Compensation

From 1 January 2027 the statutory limit on the compensatory award for unfair dismissal is removed [3][4]. Acas confirms the limit will go from that date [2]. This report does not cover how compensation is calculated.

5 Sick pay, holiday records and family leave

5.1 Statutory Sick Pay from day one

Since 6 April 2026, employees receive SSP from their first day of sickness absence, not the fourth, and there is no lower earnings limit [2][7]. GOV.UK gives the rate as £123.25 a week or 80% of average weekly earnings, whichever is lower, for up to 28 weeks [8]. The government said the change would put around £400 million a year more into sick pay [7].

For event employers, crews paid by the day or shift now qualify sooner. A crew member who is off sick for one day may be due SSP for that day. Check how your payroll handles short engagements, and how crew report sickness on site.

5.2 Holiday records

Since 6 April 2026, employers must keep records of annual leave and holiday pay, and keep them for at least 6 years [2][12]. Acas says the Fair Work Agency takes on enforcement of rights such as holiday pay [2]. If holiday pay for short engagements is calculated by a spreadsheet or a payroll provider, make sure you can produce the records.

5.3 Paternity and parental leave

Paternity leave and unpaid parental leave became day one rights on 6 April 2026 [1][2]. The government said 32,000 new fathers and partners gained the right to paternity leave from the first day in a job [7]. Bereaved Partners' Paternity Leave also started on 6 April 2026 [1].

5.4 Whistleblowing on sexual harassment

Since 6 April 2026, a disclosure about sexual harassment is a qualifying disclosure under whistleblowing law. Whistleblowers making that disclosure are protected from detriment and unfair dismissal [2]. This sits alongside the harassment duties that start on 30 October 2026.

6 Claims and enforcement

6.1 The 6 month time limit

In England, Scotland and Wales, for problems that happened on or after 1 October 2026, most employment tribunal claims must be brought within 6 months less one day. For earlier problems, the old limit of 3 months less one day usually applies [9][10]. Before making a claim, the employee must tell Acas, and early conciliation pauses the time limit [9][10].

For employers, this means a claim can now arrive later than before. Keep records of decisions, meetings and pay for long enough to answer one.

6.2 Scotland: breach of contract claims

In Scotland, the time limit for breach of contract claims will not change until 9 November 2026. If the breach is before 9 November, the limit is 3 months less one day. If it is on or after 9 November, it is 6 months less one day [9].



6.3 The Fair Work Agency

The Fair Work Agency was established on 7 April 2026. Acas says it brings together existing enforcement bodies and takes on enforcement of other employment rights, such as holiday pay and SSP [2]. It is an executive agency. Its legal basis, the enforcement part of the 2025 Act, extends to the whole UK [6]. GOV.UK offers routes to complain about pay and work rights and to report serious abuse or exploitation [11].

7 What comes next

These are changes to the law in England, Scotland and Wales [6].

7.1 30 October 2026: harassment

Employers must take "all reasonable steps" to prevent sexual harassment of their employees, and must not permit third parties such as customers or clients to harass them [1][2]. For event teams working face to face with the public, this is the most immediate change. Our earlier Insight on the harassment duty covers it in full.

7.2 By the end of 2026: tipping

Employers will need to consult workers, or their union or representatives, before creating or reviewing a tipping policy. They will also need to share an anonymised summary of the feedback and review the policy at least every 3 years [2]. This matters for event bars and hospitality.

7.3 January 2027: more than unfair dismissal

The government lists three measures for January 2027: the 6 month qualifying period with uncapped compensatory awards, the duty to inform workers of their right to join a trade union, and fire and rehire protections [1]. Acas says fire and rehire will become an automatically unfair dismissal in most cases, and is expected sometime in January 2027 [2]. When we checked legislation.gov.uk on 20 October 2026, section 28 of the 2025 Act, which deals with fire and rehire, was in force only for limited purposes, and we found no regulations bringing the rest into force [13]. Check before relying on a date.

7.4 Through 2027

The government lists these for 2027, with timings to be confirmed after consultation [1][2]:

- the right to guaranteed hours for zero hours and low hours workers, with reasonable notice of shifts and payment when shifts are cancelled, shortened or moved;
- regulation of umbrella companies, by bringing them within the definition of employment agencies;
- unpaid bereavement leave, including for pregnancy loss;
- changes to flexible working, where an employer who refuses a request must give a business reason from a list and explain why the refusal is reasonable;
- a new collective redundancy threshold that counts redundancies across the whole organisation;
- stronger protection from dismissal for pregnant women and new mothers;
- mandatory gender pay gap and menopause action plans for employers with 250 or more workers;
- restrictions on non-disclosure agreements in harassment and discrimination cases.

The guaranteed hours and shift rules could change how event employers schedule casual crew. We will cover them when the detail is published.

8 What it means for event operations

Three points stand out.

- **Length of service is now a planning issue.** A seasonal crew member who returns year after year, or works a long tour, may reach 6 months' continuous employment. Know who is close, and manage probation and performance properly before that point.
- **Small pay rules add up.** Day one SSP and 6 year holiday records affect every short engagement. Payroll and crewing systems need to handle them, not just head office.
- **Disputes can surface later.** A 6 month time limit and an enforcement agency mean records matter more. Shift records, briefing notes and pay records are your evidence.

None of these changes requires a different approach for freelancers who are genuinely self-employed. But if your freelancers work like employees, the new rules may reach them. Status depends on the facts, not the label.

9 What to do

Operational

- Report sickness the way your employer asks, from the first day. You may be entitled to SSP from day one [2][7].
- Keep your own note of dates worked, holiday taken and pay received.
- If you have a problem at work, contact Acas early. The time limit for most claims is now 6 months less one day [9].
- Supervisors: record sickness reports and shift changes accurately. They may become evidence.

Tactical

- List everyone on a contract of employment, with start dates and any breaks, and mark who will pass 6 months' service during 2027 [3][4][15].
- Hold probation reviews well before 6 months. Record the outcome and give feedback in writing.
- Check payroll pays SSP from the first day of sickness, with no earnings threshold [2][8].
- Keep annual leave and holiday pay records for at least 6 years, in a form you can produce [2][12].
- Diary the time limits: 6 months for most claims, and 9 November 2026 for breach of contract claims in Scotland [9].
- Brief supervisors on how to record sickness, lateness and performance concerns.

Strategic

- Treat any dismissal whose notice will end on or after 1 January 2027 as within the new rule, and take advice first [4].
- Review contracts, probation clauses, disciplinary and grievance procedures before your 2027 season.
- Budget for day one SSP across your crewing model.
- Decide who owns employment law changes in your organisation, and review this calendar each quarter.
- Track the 2027 consultations on guaranteed hours, shift notice and umbrella companies [1][2].

10 Tools

10.1 Service planner for 2027

Step	What to check	Evidence to keep
List employees	Everyone on a contract of employment, with start date	Crew list with start dates
Mark breaks	Gaps between contracts and why they happened	Booking history
Flag 6 months	Who reaches 6 months' service in 2027	Dated list
Probation	Review dates set before 6 months	Review notes
Notice dates	Any notice that would end on or after 1 January 2027	Dismissal file
Advice	Cases where continuity is unclear	Adviser's note

Table 2. Planning prompts, not legal tests. Continuity depends on the facts [5][15].

10.2 Before any dismissal from now on

- ☐ Work out when the notice period ends. On or after 1 January 2027, the new rule applies [4].
- ☐ Check the reason. Some reasons need no qualifying period at all [5].
- ☐ Check the employee's continuous service, including breaks [15].
- ☐ Follow your procedure, record each step and keep the records.
- ☐ Take advice where the case is unclear.

10.3 Supervisor briefing (about 1 minute)

"Quick update on how we work. If you are ill, tell me or event control as soon as you can, from the first day. Sick pay can now start from day one. We record sickness, holiday and shift changes properly, so make sure your times are right on the sheet. If you have a concern about how you are being treated, raise it with _____. Any questions?"

11 Frequently asked questions

When does the 6 month unfair dismissal rule start?

In England, Scotland and Wales, it applies where the effective date of termination is on or after 1 January 2027, even if notice was given before then [4]. Until then, the qualifying period is 2 years [5].

Is there still a cap on unfair dismissal compensation?

In England, Scotland and Wales, the 2025 Act removes the limit on the compensatory award from 1 January 2027 [3][4].

Do the changes apply in Scotland?

Yes. The employment rights in the 2025 Act apply in England, Scotland and Wales [6]. One date differs: the 6 month time limit for breach of contract claims starts in Scotland on 9 November 2026 [9].

Is Statutory Sick Pay now paid from day one?

Yes, across the UK. Since 6 April 2026, SSP is paid from the first day of sickness and there is no lower earnings limit [2][7]. The government gives the rate as £123.25 a week or 80% of average weekly earnings, whichever is lower [7][8].

What is the Fair Work Agency?

A government agency established on 7 April 2026. Acas says it brings existing enforcement bodies together and will enforce rights such as holiday pay and SSP [2][11].

How long do I have to bring an employment tribunal claim?

In England, Scotland and Wales, usually 6 months less one day for problems on or after 1 October 2026, and 3 months less one day for earlier problems. In Scotland, breach of contract claims move to 6 months from 9 November 2026. Contact Acas first [9][10].

12 What we don't know yet

- **Exact 2027 dates.** Most 2027 measures have no fixed date yet. The government says timings depend on consultation [1].
- **Fire and rehire and the trade union information duty.** Listed for January 2027, but we found no commencement regulations on legislation.gov.uk on 20 October 2026 [13].
- **Seasonal crew and continuity.** How tribunals will apply the 6 month rule to crews with gaps between contracts depends on the facts of each case [15].
- **Guaranteed hours.** How the rules will apply to event crews depends on consultation and regulations not yet made [1][2].
- **Sector data.** We found no official figures on how many event workers will gain unfair dismissal protection.

13 Sources

All web sources were opened and checked on 20 October 2026. Legislation and GOV.UK content: contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.

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14 About this report

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Interest: OTAS Live Ltd, which publishes EPGN, sells event operations services and engages event crew.

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