

# CHINWAG!

Where Workplace Learning Meets Law

IN THIS EDITION

Apprenticeship Degrees Reframed  
Neurodivergence & the Workplace  
From Appraisal to CV

Edition No. 2 (2026) – February / March 2026



# CHINWAG!

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## Welcome to the February / March 2026 edition of *Chinwag!*

As the year gathers pace, this edition focuses on progression — how careers develop, how workplace understanding deepens, and how informed choices shape long-term outcomes.

This month we examine apprenticeship degrees through a fresh lens, explore neurodivergence in the modern workplace, and consider how everyday appraisal conversations can translate into future career positioning.

Alongside our continuing employment law insight, *Chinwag!* remains grounded in the principle of learning before escalation — equipping readers with clarity that supports better decisions before issues escalate into disputes.

As ever, our aim is to inform rather than instruct — encouraging thoughtful reflection, practical awareness, and steady confidence in complex workplace environments.

Enjoy your read — we welcome your feedback.

Regards

*Team Serious About Solutions*

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# Learning and Development



**Learning that builds confidence, clarity,  
and better conversations at work**



## Fact Sheet: From Appraisals to CV

*Turning Performance into Career Capital — and Leverage*

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Appraisals are often treated as internal rituals. A meeting. A form. A rating. A discussion about targets.

But handled carefully, they are something else entirely.

They are structured evidence of your professional value.

The difference between someone who feels “stuck” in a role and someone who moves strategically is rarely talent alone. It is often documentation. Translation. Timing.

This fact sheet builds directly on *Preparing for Appraisals — Without the Last-Minute Rush*. If you have gathered your evidence steadily, the next step is simple: convert it.

## 1. Shift from Responsibilities to Outcomes

Appraisals often describe what you were responsible for.

CVs describe what changed because you were responsible.

Instead of:

- Managed team inbox and workflow

Translate to:

- Streamlined team workflow, reducing response times and improving client satisfaction.

Ask yourself:

- What improved?
- What became more efficient?
- What risks were reduced?
- What problems were solved?

Outcomes create mobility. Tasks do not.

## 2. Extract and Translate Employer Language

Your appraisal may contain phrases such as:

“Consistently reliable under pressure”

“Demonstrates leadership potential”

“Strong stakeholder engagement”

“Trusted advisor to senior colleagues”

Do not let those phrases remain buried in HR documentation.

- Instead, translate them into market-facing language:
- Delivered consistent performance in high-volume, time-sensitive environments.
- Recognised for leadership capability and cross-team coordination.
- Built trusted relationships across multiple stakeholder groups.

Your employer’s internal assessment is external proof — if you choose to use it.

### **3. Quantify Where Possible**

Specificity strengthens credibility.

Where you can, anchor your work in scale:

- Size of caseload
- Budget responsibility
- Percentage improvements
- Project timelines
- Team size
- Volume managed

Even approximate figures add weight.

- Supported a caseload of approximately 120 matters annually.
- Reduced processing time by 20% through revised tracking system.

Numbers transform narrative into evidence.

### **4. Recognise Stretch and Invisible Work**

Some of the most valuable career capital never appears in formal objectives.

Did you:

- Cover for a manager?
- Mentor a colleague?
- Lead a short-term initiative?
- Manage a difficult conflict?
- Hold things together during organisational uncertainty?

Stretch work counts.

Crisis competence counts.

Acting-up experience counts.

These are often the experiences that demonstrate readiness for progression.

## 5. Separate Development from Obligation

Appraisals assess whether you met expectations.

Career leverage asks whether the role strengthened your position.

Reflect honestly:

Which parts of your work do you want more of?

Which parts do you want less of?

What skills are emerging?

What gaps remain?

This is not disloyalty. It is career literacy.

If you needed to update your CV tomorrow, what would you want it to show?

## 6. Update While Confidence Is Fresh

Most people update their CV in a moment of urgency — after a redundancy announcement, a conflict, or an opportunity they were not expecting.

By then:

Details have faded.

Metrics are harder to retrieve.

Confidence may be shaken.

Updating immediately after an appraisal anchors your value while evidence and clarity are strongest.

Preparation reduces pressure — it does not increase it.

### Why this matters

Appraisals are internal recognition.

CVs are external currency.

The professionals who move well between roles are not necessarily the most gifted. They are often the most deliberate in documenting and translating their contribution.

Career capital accumulates quietly.

Leverage comes from knowing how to use it.

***Good CVs are built over time — and tweaked for each vacancy — not assembled at the deadline***

# Personal and Professional Development



Discovering pathways to new horizons

# Personal and Professional Development



**Not Just for School Leavers:**

**Degree Apprenticeships for the Experienced Workforce**

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Degree apprentices graduate with the same university award — and the same ceremony

# Personal and Professional Development

## Degree Apprenticeships for the Experienced Workforce

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When many people hear the word *apprenticeship*, they picture a teenager in their first job.

High-visibility jackets. Toolkits. Entry-level roles.

That image no longer reflects reality.

Degree apprenticeships — including Level 6 (Bachelor's equivalent) and Level 7 (Master's equivalent) routes — now span sectors such as digital, law, HR, leadership, engineering, health, finance and project management.

And they are not restricted by age.

For mid-career professionals facing redundancy, seeking progression, or considering a pivot, this route is often overlooked — yet it may be one of the most structured and financially accessible pathways available.

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### What Is a Degree Apprenticeship?

A degree apprenticeship allows an individual to:

- Remain in paid employment
- Study towards a university-level qualification
- Have tuition fees funded via the employer (usually through the Apprenticeship Levy)
- Combine academic learning with applied workplace practice

The apprentice works and studies simultaneously. Typically, around 20% of working time is allocated to “off-the-job” training — either through a study day or structured block learning.

Unlike the traditional university route, the learner does not take out a tuition fee loan.

In simple terms: **earn, learn, qualify.**

# Personal and Professional Development

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## Why This Matters for Mature Workers

For professionals in their 30s, 40s and 50s, retraining can feel financially risky.

Common concerns include:

- Existing student loan repayments
- Mortgage commitments
- Family responsibilities

A degree apprenticeship can offer:

- Structured retraining without new tuition debt
- Continued income while studying
- A formal qualification aligned to workplace practice
- Recognition of existing professional experience
- A defined progression pathway

It is not a return to full-time campus life. It is a structured development route integrated into employment.

## Is There an Upper Age Limit?

No.

There is no statutory upper age cap on degree apprenticeships. Eligibility begins at 16. It does not end at 25, 30 or 40.

If you meet the entry requirements and your employer is willing to sponsor the programme, age alone does not prevent participation.

Why, then, does it sometimes feel as though apprenticeships are “for the young”?

Primarily because many are marketed through schools and college pathways. The imagery often skews younger.

That is a perception issue — not a funding rule.

For mature applicants, the key considerations are:

- Does the qualification strengthen your role?
- Does it meet organisational need?
- Can you balance study alongside work?

Age is not the deciding factor. Alignment is.

# Personal and Professional Development

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## What If You Already Have a Degree?

In many cases, you may still be eligible — provided the apprenticeship develops new knowledge and skills in a materially different area.

For example:

- A humanities graduate retraining in digital operations
- A technical specialist progressing into management
- An experienced practitioner formalising leadership credentials

The rule is about new learning, not repeating the same qualification.

## Do Degree Apprentices Graduate in the Same Way?

In most cases, yes.

Degree apprenticeships are awarded by universities. That means the qualification is the same academic award (for example, BA, BSc or MSc), and graduates are typically invited to attend the university's formal graduation ceremony.

Cap. Gown. Stage. Photograph.

For some learners, that moment carries particular significance.

Not everyone had the opportunity to attend university earlier in life. Some prioritised income. Others took vocational routes. Some simply did not have the option at the time.

For mid-career professionals, graduation can be more than a professional milestone. It can be a personal one — the formal marking of achievement at a stage of life where confidence is often hard won.

That said, progression requires structure.

# Personal and Professional Development

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## What Is the Commitment?

Degree apprenticeships require discipline.

Expect:

- Structured study alongside work
- Coursework and assessments
- A programme length of between 18 months and 4 years, depending on level

Before enrolling, a clear discussion with your employer about workload, expectations and support is essential.

This is not a light undertaking — but it is a supported one.

## A Practical First Step

If you are curious whether this route could work for you:

- Review apprenticeship standards relevant to your sector.
- Check whether your employer already uses levy funding.
- Consider how the qualification supports business objectives.
- Prepare a short proposal demonstrating mutual benefit.

The conversation should not be framed as a favour to you.

It should be framed as workforce development.

# Personal and Professional Development

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## **Final Thought**

For many professionals, the barrier to retraining is not ability.

It is cost.

It is perception.

It is the assumption that structured opportunities taper with age.

Degree apprenticeships do not remove every challenge. They do require commitment.

But they offer something significant:

A funded, structured route to progression — without new tuition debt.

And importantly, they remain open well beyond school-leaving age.

Sometimes the options are there.

We simply need to look again.

# News and Views



Current issues, workplace realities and what they mean in practice



## Dual Nationality and the Quiet Border Shift

### What British Citizens Working Abroad Need to Know

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From **25 February 2026**, a significant change has come into force affecting British citizens who also hold another nationality.

The adjustment has not been accompanied by widespread public messaging. Yet for dual nationals living and working overseas — particularly those who may not be returning to the UK for some time — the implications are immediate and practical.

This is not a change to citizenship status. It is a change to how that status must now be evidenced at the UK border.

#### **The Core Rule Change**

Under new arrangements introduced by the Home Office, British citizens who also hold another nationality must now enter the UK using a **valid British passport**, or a **Certificate of Entitlement to the Right of Abode** affixed to their non-British passport.

In practical terms, dual nationals can no longer rely solely on their non-UK passport to enter the country — even if they have done so for years without issue.

Importantly:

- An **Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA)** cannot be used as a substitute.
- Airlines and carriers are required to check documentation prior to departure.
- Individuals without the required documentation may be refused boarding before reaching UK soil.
- The rule applies regardless of how long the individual has been resident abroad.

*Continued...*

# What British Citizens Working Abroad Need to Know

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*...Continued*

## **Why This Matters for Those Working Overseas**

Many British dual nationals live internationally for extended periods: academic appointments, corporate secondments, diplomatic roles, humanitarian work, or long-term family relocation.

Historically, some travelled to the UK using whichever passport was administratively convenient. That flexibility has now ended.

For those who:

- allowed their British passport to lapse,
- never applied for one despite holding British citizenship by descent, or
- have children born abroad who are British but undocumented,

advance planning is now essential.

## **The Certificate of Entitlement — A Costly Alternative**

Where a British passport is not held, individuals may apply for a Certificate of Entitlement confirming the Right of Abode.

However:

- The fee is substantial (currently several hundred pounds).
- Processing times can extend over weeks.
- It must be obtained prior to travel.
- For families abroad, the cumulative cost can be significant.

## **Government Rationale**

The UK Government has framed the change as part of broader border modernisation and digitisation efforts. The objective, officials suggest, is clarity of nationality verification and alignment with contemporary travel authorisation systems.

In technical terms, the rule reinforces a longstanding legal principle: British citizens have the Right of Abode — but they must now evidence it through prescribed documentation at the point of entry.

## **What This Is — and What It Is Not**

This is not:

- A removal of citizenship.
- A revocation of dual nationality.
- A change to substantive immigration rights.

*Continued...*

# What British Citizens Working Abroad Need to Know

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*...Continued*

It is, however:

- A procedural tightening.
- A documentation enforcement shift.
- A practical risk for those unaware of the change.

## Practical Steps for Dual Nationals Abroad

If you are a British dual national currently living overseas:

- **Check whether your British passport is valid.**
- If not, assess processing times in your country of residence.
- If you do not hold one, consider whether to apply now rather than waiting until travel becomes urgent.
- If travelling with children, confirm their documentation status.

Waiting until an emergency return — illness, bereavement, employment relocation — may introduce avoidable delay and expense.

## A Broader Observation

This development sits within a wider pattern of incremental administrative tightening in border governance.

Procedural shifts rarely dominate headlines. Yet for those directly affected, they alter assumptions that have operated quietly for decades.

Dual nationality has long functioned with a degree of informal flexibility. That flexibility has now been formalised into a stricter evidential requirement.

For globally mobile British citizens, the message is simple.

Citizenship remains secure.  
Documentation now carries greater weight.

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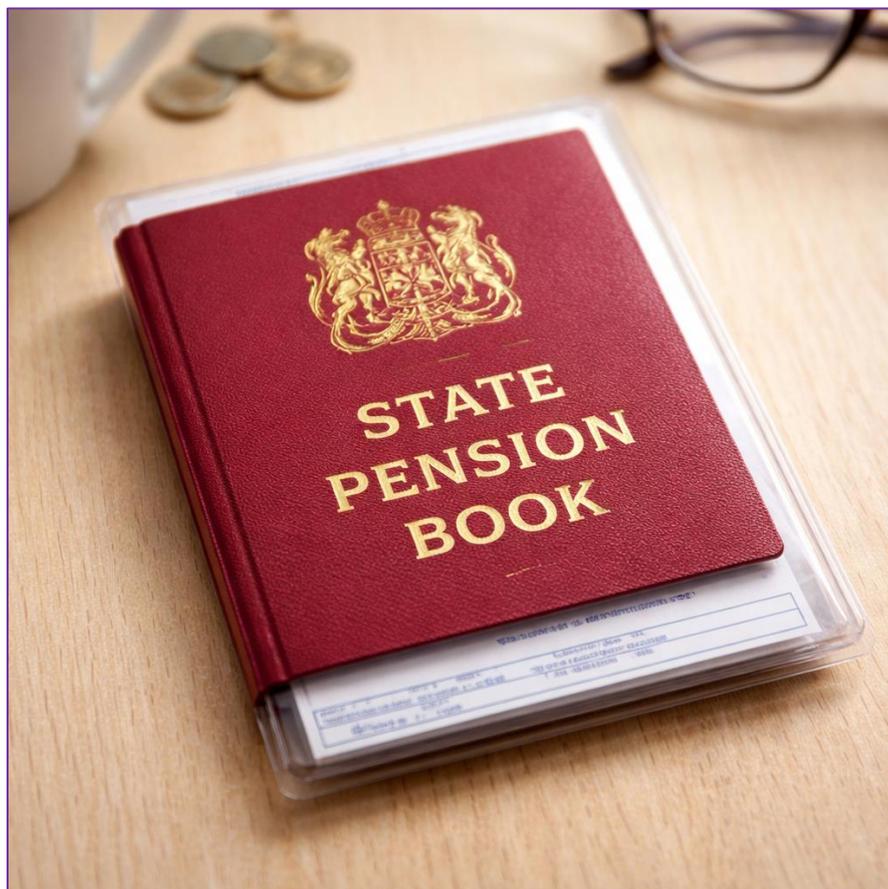
*Chinwag! will continue to monitor policy shifts affecting internationally mobile professionals and diaspora communities.*



## STATE PENSION AGE (SPA) UPDATE

Briefing Note – February 2026

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### 1. What Has Been Announced

The Government has confirmed progression of the legislated timetable to increase the UK **State Pension Age (SPA)** and has reaffirmed that further increases beyond 67 remain under active review.

The State Pension age:

- Is currently **66**.
- Is scheduled to rise to **67 between April 2026 and April 2028**.
- Is legislated to rise to **68 in the mid-2040s**, subject to statutory review.

The latest announcement signals continued movement toward a higher SPA for younger generations in line with life expectancy projections and fiscal planning.

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## 2. Current State Pension Age Timetable

Exact entitlement depends on individual date of birth.

Date of Birth	State Pension Age
Born before 6 April 1960	66
6 April 1960 – 5 March 1961	Between 66–67 (phased increase)
Born 6 March 1961 onwards	67
Younger generations (post-1977 approx.)	Likely 68 or higher (subject to future legislation)

## 3. Ready Reckoner – What This Means for You

### If you are:

**60+:** Your SPA is likely 66 or approaching 67.

**50–59:** Expect SPA of 67.

**Under 50:** Plan on SPA of 68 or potentially higher in future reviews.

### Key implications:

You cannot claim State Pension before your official SPA.

Private or workplace pensions may be accessible earlier (usually 55–57), but State Pension will not commence until SPA.

Later SPA may create an income gap if retiring early.

Long-term financial planning should account for delayed State Pension receipt.

## 4. Important Clarifications

- The State Pension remains subject to the “triple lock” uprating mechanism.
- You must actively claim your State Pension; it is not paid automatically.
- SPA is subject to periodic statutory review by the Department for Work and Pensions.
- Life expectancy trends may influence further increases.
- State Pension age is separate from workplace or private pension access ages.

## 5. Where to Obtain Official Information

### Government Sources

- GOV.UK – Check your State Pension age (Search: “Check your State Pension age”)
  - Future Pension Centre – Obtain a personal State Pension forecast.
  - Department for Work and Pensions – Policy updates and statutory reviews.
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### Independent Guidance

- Age UK – Plain-English guidance on pension age changes.
  - Which? – Pension age calculators and retirement planning tools.
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## 6. Recommended Actions

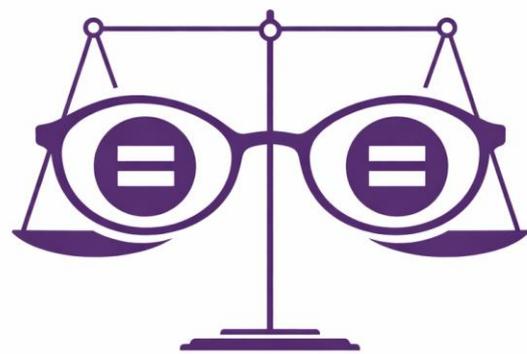
- Check your personal State Pension age online.
  - Request a pension forecast.
  - Review retirement plans and contribution levels.
  - Consider financial advice if bridging an early retirement gap.
  - Monitor future government reviews, particularly if under 50.
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### Strategic Note

State Pension age reform is part of a longer-term demographic and fiscal adjustment. For individuals, the most significant impact is the timing of income rather than entitlement itself.

Forward planning — not reaction — is the appropriate response.

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**WITH EQUAL EYES**

**An analysis of the protected characteristics  
under the Equality Act 2010**

**NEW FEATURE!**

# With Equal Eyes



**A new News & Views series examining equality in practice across the Equality Act 2010**

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Over the coming year, *Chinwag!* will be introducing a new recurring series within **News & Views** titled **With Equal Eyes**.

The series will take a structured look at each of the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, examining how equality is understood, administered, and experienced in practice — beyond policy statements and formal compliance.

Each instalment will focus on a single characteristic, applying the same analytical lens throughout, and exploring where well-intentioned frameworks succeed, where they fall short, and where tensions routinely arise in real working lives.

Written for a broad readership — including staff and their representatives, HR professionals, policy-makers, and even the proverbial next-door neighbour — the series is intended to prompt thoughtful conversation about how equality is understood and experienced in practice and the impact it has on the world of work.

The series begins this month with a focus on **Disability**, looking at how support mechanisms operate in practice and why the social model of disability has yet to become the default lens in many workplaces.

***With Equal Eyes:***

*Each instalment in this series applies the same analytical lens to a different protected characteristic, allowing patterns — and tensions — to emerge over time.*



# With Equal Eyes

## 1. The Journey of UK Disability Law

*“They also serve who only stand and wait.”*

Writing in the mid-seventeenth century after losing his sight, John Milton feared that his work — and his worth — might be over. At the time, he was serving as Latin Secretary to the Commonwealth government, a senior public role requiring intense intellectual labour. Blindness did not remove his ability to think or write, but it altered how he could work. That anxiety has not disappeared. Disabled workers still encounter moments where their capability is questioned. Modern equality law does not respond with sympathy; it responds with obligation.

Disability equality law is distinctive. Unlike other protected characteristics, it does not merely prohibit discrimination; it imposes a positive duty to remove disadvantage where reasonable.



*Inclusion into paid work marked social recognition, yet occupational boundaries remained narrow.*

Milton’s private concern about usefulness would, centuries later, become a public policy question.

The Second World War altered the workforce. Injured servicemen returned to civilian life in significant numbers, making disability a visible labour-market reality. The response was pragmatic rather than rights-based. Roles such as lift attendants, telephonists and commissionaires were commonly associated with wounded veterans. These posts provided employment and public visibility yet, remained structured around limited mobility and controlled environments. Inclusion was facilitated, but within defined occupational boundaries.

Early reintegration addressed participation, not structural access. It would take until the late twentieth century for disability to be framed not as rehabilitation, but as legal right.

## 2. Legislative Development

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*The transition from welfare provision to enforceable rights was gradual and politically cautious.*

### **Post-War Welfare Framework**

The expansion of the welfare state after 1945 framed disability primarily as social need. Provision centred on rehabilitation, institutional support and income maintenance. Employment access was not yet conceptualised as a discrimination issue.

The approach was protective rather than transformative; structural workplace design remained largely unexamined.

### **Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970**

This Act imposed duties on local authorities to provide services and assistance. It marked a significant statutory acknowledgement of disability, but did not establish employment discrimination rights.

Recognition advanced, but labour-market equality remained indirect.

### **Disability Discrimination Act 1995**

The DDA introduced employment discrimination protections and a statutory duty to make reasonable adjustments.

However:

- Small employers were initially exempt
- Enforcement relied on individual claims
- Remedies were reactive rather than anticipatory

The Act signalled structural change, yet placed considerable evidential and procedural burden on individuals.

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### **Equality Act 2010**

The Equality Act consolidated discrimination law and refined disability protection. Key provisions include:

- Section 6: statutory definition of disability
- Section 15: discrimination arising from disability
- Sections 20–21: reasonable adjustments duty
- Removal of small employer exemptions

Disability was integrated into a unified equality framework, but retained its distinctive positive duty — recognising that equal treatment alone cannot secure equal access.

### **Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)**

Under Section 149, public authorities must have due regard to:

- Eliminating discrimination
- Advancing equality of opportunity
- Fostering good relations

The PSED shifts the focus from complaint-driven enforcement to anticipatory consideration of disadvantage, though its practical impact depends heavily on institutional culture and scrutiny.

### 3. Definition of Disability (s.6 Equality Act 2010)

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A person is disabled under the Equality Act 2010 if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

**Substantial** = more than minor or trivial

**Long-term** = has lasted, or is likely to last, at least 12 months

The definition includes fluctuating and progressive conditions.

It encompasses mental health conditions and neurodivergent profiles.

The statutory test is functional rather than diagnostic; the focus is impact, not label

#### How the Courts Have Applied It

Judicial interpretation has refined the practical reach of the reasonable adjustment duty and clarified how disability protection operates within workplace systems.

#### Archibald v Fife Council

The House of Lords confirmed that reasonable adjustment may require departure from ordinary recruitment procedures. Transferring a disabled employee to an alternative role without competitive interview may, in appropriate circumstances, constitute a reasonable adjustment.

Substantive equality may justify procedural flexibility.

#### Griffiths v Secretary of State for Work and Pensions

The Court of Appeal recognised that attendance management policies — even when neutrally applied — may place disabled employees at a particular disadvantage. Adjustments to trigger points or warning thresholds may therefore be required.

Equality law interrogates workplace rules, not merely overt differential treatment.

#### Associative Discrimination

Protection extends to individuals who are treated less favourably because of their association with a disabled person. The law recognises that disadvantage may arise not only from personal impairment, but from connected relationships.

However, the duty to make reasonable adjustments applies only where the individual themselves meets the statutory definition of disability; it does not extend on an associative basis.

At its core, disability equality law does not simply prohibit discrimination; it examines whether workplace design accommodates human variation.

## 4. Medical and Social Models of Disability

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*A number of models have been developed to explain disability. The two most dominant — medical and social — continue to shape how workplace policy and practice are designed.*

### Medical Model

- Focuses on impairment or diagnosis
- Locates the “problem” within the individual
- Emphasises treatment, management, or adjustment of the person
- Workplace design remains largely unchanged

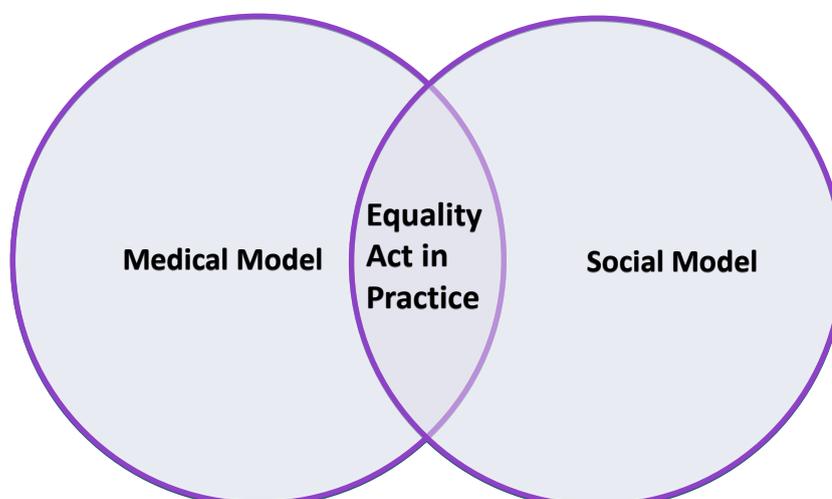
### Social Model

- Focuses on barriers in environment, systems, and attitudes
- Recognises impairment but centres structural obstacles
- Emphasises removal of barriers
- Workplace design becomes the site of adjustment

The Equality Act 2010 reflects elements of the social model through the duty to make reasonable adjustments. However, many workplace practices continue to operate implicitly through medical assumptions.

Assessing which model dominates in practice is central to understanding whether equality mechanisms function as intended. The medical and social models are often presented as opposites, but in reality the law reflects elements of both. Equality law recognises impairment, while also requiring employers to address structural barriers.

### Equality Act in Practice



## 6. Reflection: From Compliance to Design

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The development of disability equality law shows a clear shift: from welfare support to enforceable rights, and from a focus on diagnosis to a focus on barriers. But changing the law does not automatically change workplace culture.

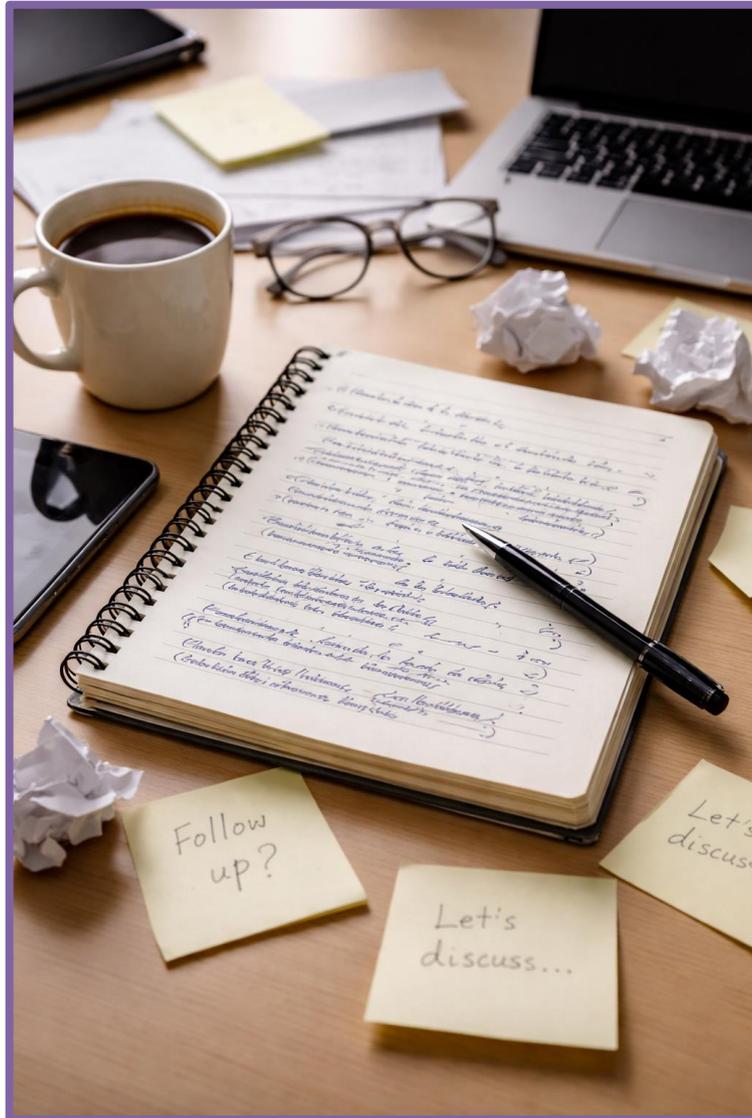
Whether equality measures work in practice depends on how organisations understand their responsibilities — and whether their systems are built with human difference in mind.

Medical and social assumptions rarely appear in policy documents by name. Instead, they show up in everyday decisions: how disclosure is treated, how attendance policies operate, and how flexible working is framed.

In recent years, workplaces have also seen a marked increase in adult diagnoses of neurodivergent conditions and greater openness around mental health. This has prompted renewed focus on what reasonable adjustment looks like in practice — and whether awareness initiatives alone are sufficient to meet legal duties. At the same time, disability continues to feature prominently in Employment Tribunal claims, suggesting that understanding remains uneven across organisations.

The key issue is not simply whether discrimination is unlawful. It is whether workplace design treats difference as normal, rather than as an exception.

# Curious Cases



**To pause on ordinary workplace moments — and consider how meaning, judgement and consequence are created**



# When Sameness Isn't Fairness

## *Neurodivergence and the Structure of Workplace Decisions*

Edition 2 | 2026

### THE UNIFORM TEST

A candidate applying for a legal role disclosed that she had Asperger's syndrome. She explained that multiple-choice situational judgment tests were particularly difficult for her, and asked whether she could provide short written answers instead.

The recruitment process required all candidates to complete the same online assessment. The employer declined to alter the format, explaining that uniformity ensured fairness.

The candidate did not progress.

The dispute that followed - **Government Legal Service v Brookes (2017)** – reached the Employment Appeal Tribunal, which upheld the tribunal's finding that insisting on the same test format placed the autistic candidate at a substantial disadvantage. The issue was not hostility. It was structure.

The assessment tool appeared neutral.

It applied to everyone.

But equality law does not stop at uniform treatment.

Under the Equality Act 2010, employers must take reasonable steps to avoid substantial disadvantage where they know — or ought reasonably to know — that disability is in play.

The rigidity of the process became the problem.

### KNOWLEDGE AND INTERPRETATION

Neurodivergence cases often arise at moments where behaviour or performance is already under scrutiny. Disclosure may come late. Assessment may still be pending. Managers may rely on standardised tools or established metrics.

This creates tension.

Employers are not required to abandon objective criteria. Nor are they obliged to redesign processes on the basis of every informal assertion. But once credible information is provided, the legal analysis shifts.

As the courts have confirmed in cases such as *Gallop v Newport City Council*, an employer cannot simply defer responsibility by pointing elsewhere. Knowledge is not purely formal. It is contextual.

The question becomes:

Did the structure of the process create a disadvantage – and if so, whether reasonable adjustment was genuinely considered.

In *Brookes*, fairness was defended as sameness. The tribunal's answer was clear: sometimes identical treatment entrenches inequality.

The law does not ask whether the system was designed with good intentions.

It asks whether the system produced avoidable disadvantage.

### **What This Case Reveals**

Neurodivergence rarely presents as obvious incapacity. It often manifests as difference in processing, communication or response to structured tasks.

Three themes recur:

- Uniform procedures may conceal disproportionate impact
- Disclosure timing affects credibility, but not legal threshold
- Diagnosis assists, but substantial disadvantage is the decisive test
- Structure, not motive, often determines outcome

Curious Cases does not ask whether employers should abandon consistency. It asks whether consistency sometimes requires adjustment.

Before defending a process as neutral, it is worth asking:

Is this structure fair in form — or fair in effect?

# The Lighter Side



Every edition needs a moment to breathe.  
In this edition of **The Lighter Side** we look at:

*It's All in the Jeans —  
When Appearance Becomes the Issue*



IT'S FUNNY BUT IT'S TRUE

# It's All in the Jeans:

## When Appearance Becomes the Issue



There was a time when “professional standards” became the issue of the week in one office.

The proposal was simple:

All male staff were to wear suits.

No exceptions.

No reference to role.

No consideration of whether anyone outside the building ever saw them.

Back-office staff? Suits.

IT support? Suits.

Those whose only audience was a filing cabinet? Suits.

One colleague — whose role involved no face-to-face contact and barely any telephone interaction — quietly declined.

He wore jeans.

Or cargo trousers.

Every day.

As is often the case, the matter found its way to the trade union representative.

The Officer-in-Charge was firm.

“I’ve worked with men who wore a suit and tie come rain, snow or shine,” he would say, as though recalling a lost golden era of tailoring.

He was so invested in the campaign that he overlooked something obvious: there was already someone in the office who did exactly that — suit, tie, immaculate presentation — every single day. No fuss. No theatre. No announcement.

It simply did not fit the narrative.

At one point — perhaps unwisely — the trade union representative observed that some individuals could be placed in an Armani suit and still look as though they had been dragged backwards through a hedge and were in need of a vigorous soak in a bath of bleach and disinfectant.

The Officer-in-Charge looked momentarily taken aback.

The point was not aesthetic cruelty.

It was functional reality.

Clothing does not manufacture competence.

Then came “Jeans for Genes Day.”

The annual charity fundraiser when staff were encouraged to wear jeans in exchange for a donation.

On that day — and that day alone — the colleague arrived in a perfectly pressed navy suit.

Tie.

Cufflinks.

Pocket square.

When asked why, he replied:

“I prefer consistency.”

And returned to his desk.

The business of the office — service delivery, performance targets, real work — had briefly been eclipsed by a debate about fabric.

That, perhaps, was the point.

# The Arithmetic of Appearance



The conversation eventually turned to a more practical question.

How, precisely, would a locally imposed dress code enhance performance indicators in roles with no external visibility?

There was a pause.  
No measurable answer followed.

And that is often where appearance campaigns begin to unravel — not in defiance, but in arithmetic.

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## When Policy Meets Equality Law

Dress codes rarely remain theoretical for long.

In *Eweida v British Airways plc* and later in *Abercrombie & Fitch Stores Inc v EEOC*, courts examined whether “brand image” could justify limiting individual expression or difference.

In one well-publicised case involving Abercrombie & Fitch, a store assistant with a limb difference was moved away from customer-facing duties because her appearance did not align with the company’s “look policy” — despite wearing the prescribed branded clothing.

The tension was not about fabric.  
It was about conformity.

Courts have consistently signalled that appearance policies cannot override equality law.

Brand identity may matter.  
But it is not absolute.

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## Things to Consider When Negotiating or Implementing a Dress Code

### 1. Role Relevance

Is the requirement linked to the actual duties performed?

### 2. Performance Evidence

Is there evidence that clothing impacts delivery, safety, or client perception?

### 3. Consistency

Will the rule apply equally across grades and functions?

### 4. Inclusion & Equality

Have you considered disability, religion, gender expression and the duty to make reasonable adjustments?

### 5. Proportionality

Is the requirement a preference — or a necessity?

# In the Know



## **This Month's Features**

- **How Tribunals Read Behaviour**  
Part 1: When Persistence Becomes Attrition
- **Immediate Employment Rights Act 2025 changes**
- **Other updates**



## In the Know

*Reading public Tribunal decisions*

# How Tribunals Read Behaviour



## Part Two:

### Conduct in the Room — The Unwritten Rules

**Taken together, patterns of litigation and conduct in the hearing room reveal the same underlying truth: Tribunals read behaviour cumulatively — over time, in the moment, and sometimes in silence.**

In Edition 1, we examined attritional conduct — behaviour perceived as deliberate or strategically belligerent in its engagement with the Tribunal process. But not all difficulties arise from intent. What happens when Tribunal expectations are breached through unfamiliarity rather than defiance?

Employment Tribunals are often described as informal forums. In practice, however, expectations around conduct are rarely articulated. Many participants encounter the unwritten rules only once proceedings are underway.

#### What the rules don't always tell you

In one hearing, a respondent's witness was observed casually drinking a can of Diet Coke while giving evidence. The claimant's legal team — experienced practitioners — were reportedly furious. The Tribunal panel raised no objection; however, the absence of intervention does not mean the conduct went unnoticed.

In another case, a senior HR professional attending Tribunal for the first time entered the hearing room carrying a takeaway cappuccino.

The judge immediately admonished her. No prior guidance had been given. From that point on, she later reflected, her confidence evaporated.

These contrasting experiences illustrate a simple reality: **Tribunal protocol is often learned by mistake**, and enforcement of informal expectations can appear inconsistent.

#### Silence, perception, and confidence

Judicial silence can be difficult to interpret. For experienced practitioners, it may signal pragmatism. For newcomers, it can generate uncertainty about whether conduct has been accepted, noted, or quietly judged.

Once a participant believes they have attracted judicial disapproval — whether explicitly expressed or inferred — composure and clarity can suffer. In a forum where credibility matters, that loss of confidence can have practical consequences.

### *Closing reflection*

Where attritional conduct may be interpreted as deliberate or strategic, unintentional missteps are more often the result of unfamiliarity with Tribunal culture. Yet that distinction is not always visible from the bench. What matters is that behaviour — deliberate or inadvertent — forms part of how engagement with the process is assessed.

Understanding this is not about gaming the system. It is about recognising that Tribunals read behaviour not only through documents and submissions, but through conduct — across time, in the moment, and sometimes in silence.



## In the Know

Reading public Tribunal decisions

# Endometriosis, Performance Targets and a Fair Day in Court



## Why one consultant's appeal matters far beyond Accenture

A former Accenture consultant, **Sanju Pal**, has won an important appeal that could change how employers deal with long-term health conditions at work — particularly where performance targets and promotion expectations are tightly linked.

Ms Pal was dismissed after being labelled “unpromotable” while managing the impact of **endometriosis**, a chronic and often painful condition that affects many women. Her case has now been sent back to a new Employment Tribunal after the **Employment Appeal Tribunal (EAT)** found serious problems with how the original tribunal approached the law.

### What happened?

Ms Pal worked at Accenture for almost ten years. Like many large consulting firms, Accenture operates an “**up or out**” model — staff are expected to keep progressing to the next level within a set period. If they don't, they may be managed out, even if they are performing their current role competently.

During this period, Ms Pal was experiencing significant symptoms linked to endometriosis. She underwent surgery and returned to work on a phased basis. Her billable hours and performance scores suffered as a result — and she was eventually dismissed.

### The first tribunal decision

In 2022, an Employment Tribunal found that Accenture's dismissal process was **procedurally unfair**. The company had not followed its own policies properly.

However, the tribunal also decided that:

- Accenture would probably have dismissed Ms Pal anyway, even if the process had been fair
- Her compensation should therefore be reduced to **zero**
- She was *not* disabled under the Equality Act 2010
- Accenture could not reasonably have known she might be disabled

This meant that, despite winning on unfair dismissal, Ms Pal was left without meaningful remedy.

### Why the appeal mattered

The Employment Appeal Tribunal took a very different view.

It found that the original tribunal had made **legal errors**, including:

### Assuming the outcome

The tribunal should not have guessed what *might* have happened if a fair process had been followed. That assumption removed the protection the law is meant to provide.

*Continued...*

## In the Know

Reading public Tribunal decisions

# Endometriosis, Performance Targets and a Fair Day in Court



... continued

### Confusing performance with promotion

The EAT made clear that being “not ready for promotion” is not automatically the same as being incapable of doing your job. Capability must relate to the role you are employed to do — not the next rung up the ladder.

### Failing to assess disability properly

The original tribunal did not properly examine how endometriosis affected Ms Pal’s daily life, nor whether those effects were long-term. This analysis was described as inadequate.

### Knowledge of disability

The tribunal also fell short in considering whether Accenture *should* have known about the impact of Ms Pal’s condition, even if it was not labelled as a disability at the time.

Because of these failings, the case has been sent back to a **new tribunal**, which will look again at the discrimination claims and compensation from scratch.

### Why this case matters

Endometriosis affects around **1 in 10 women**, yet it is still widely misunderstood in workplaces. This case highlights several important issues:

- Long-term health conditions may qualify as disabilities even if they are not always visible

- Employers must be careful not to penalise staff for health-related impacts through rigid performance models
- Dismissals based on “future potential”, rather than current role performance, are legally risky
- Following internal procedures properly really matters — especially when someone’s livelihood is at stake.

### The bigger picture

This judgment sends a clear message: **process matters, context matters, and health cannot be treated as an inconvenience.**

For employees, it offers reassurance that tribunals are willing to look again where things have gone wrong.

For employers, it is a reminder that fairness is not just about ticking boxes — it’s about understanding the reality of people’s working lives.

### A Note from SAS

*This case is a reminder that tribunal decisions are not always the final word — and that where analysis or process falls short, appeals can change the outcome.*

*For readers, it underlines why understanding how a decision was reached can matter just as much as the result itself.*



## PRACTICAL GUIDANCE



### Employment Rights Act 2025

*These are the areas where the law is settled in direction, but the machinery switches on over the following months.*

## 1. Probation and early dismissal: procedure will matter sooner

### MID-TERM

#### Focus:

*Probation has long been treated as a low-risk zone. That assumption is beginning to shift.*

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#### What is changing (mid-term)

The Act signals a clear intention to **tighten expectations around probationary management**, even where unfair dismissal thresholds are not yet fully aligned.

This includes:

- greater scrutiny of early termination decisions;
- clearer expectations of process, communication, and record-keeping;
- reduced tolerance for informal or ad-hoc probation failures.

#### Why this matters in practice

Probation has long been treated as a **low-risk zone** for employers and a **high-risk silence zone** for workers.

Mid-term reforms begin to rebalance this by making it harder to rely on:

- vague “not the right fit” rationales;
- undocumented concerns raised late;
- inconsistent treatment across new starters.

#### What needs to shift now

- Probation policies should be reviewed for **clarity and fairness**, not just flexibility.
- Managers should be trained to treat probation as a **managed process**, not an extended trial.
- Workers should understand that early concerns can — and should — be raised without being labelled “problematic”.



## PRACTICAL GUIDANCE



# Employment Rights Act 2025

## 2. Predictability and working patterns: systems, not slogans

 MID-TERM

### Focus:

*Flexible working has long been framed as a cultural value. Increasingly, it is becoming a question of structure, evidence, and justification.*

This is not a “theme”. It is a distinct area of regulation tied to:

- variable-hours contracts
- scheduling practices
- worker protections around certainty of income and time

It sits naturally alongside SSP and family rights because **it addresses economic security**

### What is changing (mid-term)

The Act strengthens the direction of travel toward **predictable working arrangements**, particularly for workers on variable or insecure hours.

While not all changes are immediate, the expectation is clear: working patterns should be **explainable, justifiable, and reviewable**.

### Why this matters in practice

- Many organisations already rely on flexibility — but without documenting *who benefits*.
- Mid-term reforms make it harder to defend arrangements where:
  - hours fluctuate without explanation;
  - availability is treated as obligation;
  - workers absorb all the risk.

### What needs to shift now

- HR systems should be capable of evidencing **how hours are set and reviewed**.
- Managers should anticipate conversations about predictability — not resist them.
- Workers should document patterns early, rather than waiting for disputes.



## PRACTICAL GUIDANCE

# Employment Rights Act 2025



### 3. Flexible working: shifting the refusal threshold

 MID-TERM

**Focus:**

*Flexible working is not a new right. What is changing is the scrutiny applied to how — and why — requests are refused.*

**Why this works**

Flexible working is already a **defined statutory right**, including:

- application processes;
- refusal grounds;
- increasing legal scrutiny.

Mid-term reforms are concerned with **how refusals are justified**, not whether the right exists.

This mirrors exactly how:

- whistleblowing clarified protection, not speech itself;
- SSP removed filters, not illness.

**Support note:**

*Requests for flexible working are often handled informally — declined quickly, poorly documented, or framed as “not workable” without explanation.*

*As expectations tighten, both workers and employers benefit from treating flexible working requests as structured decisions rather than discretionary favours. Where a request is refused, the reasoning — and the process by which it was reached — is likely to matter as much as the outcome itself.*



## PRACTICAL GUIDANCE



# Employment Rights Act 2025

## 4. Collective consultation: re-establishing workforce voice

### MID-TERM

#### Focus:

*Collective consultation is not limited to industrial action. What is shifting is the expectation that workforce voice is engaged earlier, more consistently, and with greater seriousness*

#### Why this belongs here

This is the **legal mechanics** of how organisations listen — and respond — before disputes escalate.

It covers:

- statutory **consultation duties**;
- structured **workforce engagement**;
- collective processes **short of industrial action**.

Mid-term reforms reinforce the idea that consultation is not a last resort or a procedural hurdle, but part of ordinary workplace governance.

#### What is changing (mid-term)

The Act strengthens the direction of travel toward:

- earlier engagement with recognised representatives or workforce forums;
- clearer expectations around **meaningful consultation**, not notification after decisions are made;
- reduced tolerance for “tick-box” approaches that satisfy form but not substance.

While not all changes take effect immediately, the expectation is clear:

**collective voice should be surfaced before positions harden.**

#### Why this matters in practice

Where collective mechanisms are weak or bypassed:

- concerns individualise;

- workers become isolated;
- disputes escalate unnecessarily.

Mid-term reforms begin to rebalance this by normalising dialogue and making it harder to defend avoidance.

#### What needs to shift now

Employers should review whether consultation structures are **active in reality**, not just on paper.

HR and leadership teams should anticipate dialogue rather than defaulting to containment.

Workers and representatives should expect engagement earlier — not only once conflict is entrenched.



## PRACTICAL GUIDANCE



# Employment Rights Act 2025

## MID-TERM CHANGES SUMMARISED

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### Mid-term overview

Across probation, predictability, flexible working, and collective consultation, the direction of travel is consistent.

Existing rights and duties are not being replaced, but the expectations around how they are exercised are tightening. Informality, weak reasoning, and procedural shortcuts are becoming harder to defend — even where discretion remains.

The mid-term shift is not about removing judgement or flexibility. It is about requiring that judgement to be exercised transparently, evidenced properly, and in line with the purpose the law was always intended to serve.

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# EMPLOYMENT LAW UPDATES

***A concise recap of key statutory changes already in force — plus those approaching***

## 1. Employment Rights Act 2025

- Statutory Sick Pay reform
- Day-one family rights
- Whistleblowing clarification
- Trade union recalibration



*See January and February 2026 Chinwag! editions for detailed analysis*

## 2. Sexual Harassment Preventative Duty — Early Application

Since the duty came into force, attention has shifted from policy wording to practical implementation.

Early Tribunal scrutiny suggests increasing focus on whether employers have:

- carried out risk assessments,
- delivered meaningful training, and
- taken proactive steps beyond responding to complaints.

The existence of a written policy alone is unlikely to be sufficient.

## 3. Holiday Pay Reform — Record-Keeping and Calculation Queries

Following the 2024 Working Time amendments, early disputes are emerging around:

- irregular-hours calculations,
- rolled-up holiday pay arrangements, and
- averaging methods.

Accurate record-keeping and correct formula application remain essential to reduce underpayment risk.

## 4. Protected Conversations — Early Use in Practice

There has been a noticeable increase in the use of protected conversations at earlier stages of workplace disputes.

Settlement discussions are, in some cases, being initiated prior to formal disciplinary processes. The strategic use of such discussions requires careful handling to ensure clarity and compliance.

## 5. Recruitment and Automated Decision-Making

Regulatory bodies continue to signal increased scrutiny of automated recruitment tools and algorithmic decision-making.

Organisations using technology-assisted screening should ensure transparency, fairness, and the ability to explain decision pathways where required.

## 6. Probationary Processes Under Review

With further dismissal reforms anticipated, some organisations are reviewing probation management practices.

Clear documentation, consistent expectations, and proportionate decision-making remain important during early-stage employment.

## Quick Reference

- ✓ Employment Rights Act 2025 (See Jan & Feb 2026 Chinwag! editions)
  - ✓ Sexual harassment preventative duty (in force)
  - ✓ Holiday pay reforms — calculation & record-keeping
  - ✓ Increased use of protected conversations
  - ✓ Recruitment & automated decision-making scrutiny
  - ✓ Probationary process review
-

# Training Supplement

## What's On at SAS – February 2026



## THIS MONTH'S HIGHLIGHTS



### — A Quiet Pattern We're Seeing More Often

#### — Drop-In Surgeries

What they are, who they help, and why they continue to be one of the most valued SAS support services.

#### — ET Modules – Your 2025–26 Learning Pathway

A clear overview of all modules, including ET1, ET3, COT3/Settlement Agreements, Case Management, and the Essential Guide to Disciplinary.

#### — March Calendar – At a Glance

All sessions, dates, and times for the month, helping you plan your learning with ease.

#### — NEW: Employment Law Updates in Audio

You can now listen to our employment law updates. These short, clear explainers break down what the latest legal changes mean for you, why they matter, and how they could affect day-to-day working life. They're designed to support different learning preferences and make staying informed easier than ever.



# Drop-In Surgery: Employment Law Clinic

info@seriousaboutsolutions.com ✉  
(+44) 07480 687 458 ☎

2025 DROP INS:  
🕒 7PM

**SERIOUS ABOUT SOLUTIONS**  
UNEARING THE GOLD IN MODERN WORKPLACES

You shouldn't have to 'just deal with it.' A quick chat could change everything."

## DROP-IN SURGERY

FREE MONTHLY ONLINE SUPPORT

Next session:  
Thu 26 March 2026  
6:30 pm – 7:15 pm  
Small group appointments to sense-check workplace concerns.

"Not every issue needs a legal case. But every concern deserves to be heard."

"You don't need to know the law – just that it's OK to ask."

"Wondering if workplace stress is 'just part of the job'? You're not alone."

📅 Booking Required

🗨 Confidential • Supportive • Small Group

## Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2026

**6:30pm – 7:15pm**

**Booking:** [Select here](#)

Short, structured small-group session to sense-check workplace problems and clarify your options before things escalate. Ideal for concerns about disciplinaries, probation, sickness/adjustments, grievances, or early-stage "something isn't right" situations. Pre-booking required.

- **Location:** Online via Zoom
- **Format:** Online small group (up to 5)
- **Length:** 45 minutes
- **Who it's for:** Anyone dealing with a workplace issue and needing quick, informed guidance
- **Bring:** Any letters/emails, key dates, meeting invites
- **Booking:** [Select here](#)
- **Cost:** Free!

**Important:** These sessions provide guidance, not representation. Follow-up services are available separately.



# ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO DISCIPLINARIES

## WORKSHOP

### 📅 NEXT SESSION:

- 📅 5, 15, 19, 22, 26 JANUARY 2026
- 📅 2, 12, 16, 19 FEBRUARY 2026
- 📅 2, 12, 16, 19, 30 MARCH 2026

### Interested? Here's what you need to do next:

- ✔ Select the 'Online Booking' button below
- ✔ Await joining details
- ✔ Ensure you log in 15 minutes before the session is due to begin for administration purposes
- ✔ Have a pen and notepad ready for the session

 [Online Booking](#)

**Disclaimer** - Please note that attending this workshop does not guarantee success at any stage of the Disciplinary process!



info@seriousaboutsolutions.com ✉  
(+44) 07480 687 458 ☎



**ESSENTIAL GUIDE  
TO DISCIPLINARIES**  
WORKSHOP

💰 Booking Required

👥 Confidential • Supportive • Small Group

# A Quiet Pattern We're Seeing More Often

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March 2026

Over recent months, we have seen a growing number of individuals who:

- Struggle to complete and submit their **ET1 claim form** correctly
- Attempt to navigate the Tribunal process alone
- Seek legal advice only **weeks before a hearing**, or
- Contact us after the Tribunal has **rejected their claim on procedural grounds**

By that stage, options are often limited.

In some cases, time limits cannot be revived.

In others, the claim has been framed in a way that makes it harder to recover ground later.

Sometimes thousands of pounds have already been lost — not because the case lacked merit, but because early structure was missing.

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## WHY EARLY ADVICE MATTERS

Employment Tribunal litigation is not simply about “telling your story”.

It is about:

- Framing claims correctly
- Identifying the legal basis
- Understanding limitation periods
- Drafting in a way that preserves strategy
- Assessing whether proceeding is appropriate at all

A relatively modest investment at the start of the process can prevent:

- Procedural rejection
- Struck-out claims
- Adverse cost exposure
- Poorly drafted pleadings that weaken settlement leverage

In practical terms, early clarity can save **thousands of pounds — and months of stress — later on.**

### COLLECTIVE REDUNDANCY? EARLY ADVICE IS EVEN MORE CRITICAL.

Where 20 or more employees are affected, additional legal duties arise around:

- Consultation
- Information disclosure
- Protective Awards
- Fair selection processes

Waiting until dismissals have taken effect — or until a group hearing date looms — significantly narrows strategic options.

If you are part of a collective situation, coordinated early advice is essential.

### PREVENTION, NOT PANIC

At Serious About Solutions, our approach is preparation-led.

We consistently say:

*Success is not luck — it is preparation, clarity and knowing what a win truly means for you.*

That preparation starts at ET1 stage — not at the Final Hearing.

### FURTHER READING

Our **January publication of *Chinwag!*** explores:

- The strategic purpose of the ET1
- Common early errors
- What most people misunderstand about Tribunal outcomes
- Why many claims never reach hearing

If you are considering a claim — or supporting others who are — it is **worth reading before you proceed.**



# The SAS Employment Tribunal Workshop Suite

*“Success is not luck —  
it’s preparation, clarity and knowing what a win truly means for you.”*

## THE SAS EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNAL WORKSHOPS

### About this workshop suite

The SAS Employment Tribunal Workshop Suite is designed to support informed decision-making before and during the Tribunal process.

Participation does not imply that a claim should be brought, pursued, or continued. In many cases, the purpose of early preparation is to help individuals decide **whether proceeding is appropriate at all**, and what alternatives may better serve their interests.

Every year, tens of thousands of workers begin the Employment Tribunal journey. Based on HMCTS data, most claims never reach hearing: 77–79% conclude beforehand.

### WHY MOST CLAIMS NEVER REACH A HEARING

- Settled via Acas: 71% of non-hearing cases.
- Withdrawn by claimant: often due to settlement or stress.
- Struck Out: around 8% for procedural failings.

### OUTCOMES WHEN CASES DO REACH HEARING

- Only 14–23% reach full hearing.
- Claimant success: approx. 27%.
- Employer success: remaining proportion.

### CLAIMS NOT ACCEPTED AT ALL

Many claims never enter the system due to time limits, formatting errors, missing information or invalid ACAS EC details.

## HOW SAS PREPARES YOU

### ET1 Workshop

Helps you submit a correct, accepted ET1 and understand the strategic purpose of your claim.

### ET3 Workshop

Demystifies the employer’s response and prepares counterarguments that shape early strategy.

### COT3 and Settlement Agreements Workshop

Explains negotiation timing, evaluating offers and understanding agreement wording.

### Case Management Workshop

Shows you how to navigate bundles running into hundreds or thousands of pages and comply with Case Management Orders effectively.

### Before You Begin Your ET Journey

- Why am I making this claim?
- What does a win look like for me?
- Can I afford the representation I might need?
- What could a loss mean for me professionally or financially?

These questions don’t discourage — they prepare. Our ET workshop suite helps you answer each one with clarity and confidence.

# March 2026

## Training and Events Calendar

*All workshops are free to Serious About Solutions subscribers*

### Drop-in Surgery

#### Drop-In Surgery

- Thursday 26 *March* 2026

7:00pm – 8:00pm

Short appointments to sense-check workplace concerns.

[Select here](#)

### Disciplinary Workshop

#### Essential Guide to Disciplinarys

- Monday 2 March 2026
- Monday 16 March 2026
- Monday 30 March 2026

7:00pm – 8:30pm

A practical workshop on representation, mitigation, evidence and fairness.

[Evening Session](#)

### ET1 Workshop – Morning

#### Completing Form ET1

- Wednesday 18 March 2026
- Wednesday 18 February 2026

10:00am – 11:30am

A clear walkthrough of the ET1 form and drafting strategy.

[Morning Session](#)

### ET1 Workshop – Evening

#### Completing Form ET1

- Thursday 19 March 2026

6:00pm – 7:30pm

A clear walkthrough of the ET1 form and drafting strategy.

[Evening Session](#)

### Disciplinary Workshop

#### Essential Guide to Disciplinarys

- Thursday 12 March 2026
- Thursday 19 March 2026

7:00pm – 8:30pm

A practical workshop on representation, mitigation, evidence and fairness.

[Evening Session](#)

### ET1 Workshop – Saturday

#### Completing Form ET1

- Saturday 21 March 2026

10:30am – 12:00pm

Weekend session for those needing flexible attendance.

[Saturday Session](#)

\* *Note: Past sessions shown struck through for reference*

# MARCH – APRIL 2026

## Training and Events Calendar

*\*Check website to see if fee or membership needed to attend*

### Disciplinary Workshop

#### Essential Guide to Disciplinary

- Monday 30 March 2026  
7:00pm – 8:30pm  
A practical workshop covering representation, mitigation and procedural fairness.

[Evening Session](#)

### Disciplinary Workshop

#### Essential Guide to Disciplinary

- Thursday 9 April 2026  
7:00pm – 8:30pm  
A practical workshop covering representation, mitigation and procedural fairness.

[Evening Session](#)

### Disciplinary Workshop

#### Essential Guide to Disciplinary

- Monday 13 April 2026  
7:00pm – 8:30pm  
A practical workshop covering representation, mitigation and procedural fairness.

[Evening Session](#)

### Disciplinary Workshop

#### Essential Guide to Disciplinary

- Thursday 23 April 2026  
7:00pm – 8:30pm  
A practical workshop covering representation, mitigation and procedural fairness.

[Evening Session](#)

### ET1 Workshop – Morning

#### Completing Form ET1

- Wed 15 April 2026  
10:00am – 11:30am  
A clear walkthrough of the ET1 form and drafting strategy.

[Morning Session](#)

### ET1 Workshop – Evening

#### Completing Form ET1

- Thursday 16 April 2026  
6:00pm – 7:30pm  
A clear walkthrough of the ET1 form and drafting strategy.

[Evening Session](#)

### ET1 Workshop – Saturday

#### Completing Form ET1

- Saturday 18 April 2026  
10:30am – 12:00pm  
Weekend session for those needing flexible attendance.

[Saturday Session](#)

### Disciplinary Workshop

#### Essential Guide to Disciplinary

- Friday 30 April 2026  
7:00pm – 8:30pm  
A practical workshop covering representation, mitigation and procedural fairness.

[Evening Session](#)

### Drop-in Surgery

#### Drop-In Surgery

- Thursday 23 April 2026  
7:00pm – 8:00pm  
Short appointments to sense-check workplace concerns before they escalate.

[Select here](#)

\* Note: Past sessions shown struck through for reference

# GLOSSARY of TERMS USED

*A quick guide to the key terms used in this edition of Chinwag!*

## A

### **Apprenticeship Degree**

A higher education qualification earned while working. The employer funds the training (often via the Apprenticeship Levy), and the learner gains both a salary and a degree.

### **Apprenticeship Levy**

A UK government scheme requiring large employers to contribute funds towards apprenticeship training.

### **Associative Disability Discrimination**

Unlawful treatment of someone because they are connected to a disabled person (e.g. a carer).

## C

### **Collective Redundancy**

When an employer proposes 20 or more redundancies within a 90-day period. Specific consultation rules apply.

### **Comparator Test**

Used in discrimination and equal pay claims. The tribunal asks: "How would a comparable person of the opposite sex / without the protected characteristic have been treated?"

## D

### **Disability (s.6 Equality Act 2010)**

A physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

### **Dual Nationality**

Holding citizenship of more than one country. Documentation requirements may vary depending on residence and passport status.

## E

### **Early Conciliation**

A mandatory process through ACAS before submitting an Employment Tribunal claim. A certificate number is required to lodge an ET1.

### **ET1**

The claim form used to start an Employment Tribunal case.

### **ET3**

The response form completed by the employer.

### **Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)**

A process used by public bodies to assess how a policy may affect people with protected characteristics.

## M

### **Medical Model of Disability**

A framework that views disability as a condition to be treated or managed within the individual.

# GLOSSARY of TERMS USED

*A quick guide to the key terms used in this edition of Chinwag!*

## N

### **Neurodivergence**

A term describing variations in cognitive functioning (e.g. autism, ADHD, dyslexia). Not all neurodivergent individuals are legally disabled.

## R

### **Reasonable Adjustments**

Changes an employer must make to remove substantial disadvantage for a disabled employee.

## S

### **Settlement Agreement**

A legally binding agreement ending employment in return for compensation. Independent legal advice is required.

### **Social Model of Disability**

A framework that views disability as arising from barriers in society, not from the impairment itself.

### **State Pension Age**

The age at which individuals can claim the UK State Pension.

### **Subject Access Request (SAR)**

A request under UK GDPR for copies of personal data held by an organisation.

## T

### **Time Limits**

Strict statutory deadlines for bringing Employment Tribunal claims, calculated from specific legal trigger points. Missing a time limit can prevent a claim from being accepted at all.

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# Diary Dates of Note in the Workplace



## March is...

<b>1</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ St David's Day (Wales)</li></ul>	<b>17</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ St Patrick's Day (Ireland)</li></ul>
<b>3</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ World Wildlife Day</li></ul>	<b>20</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ International Day of Happiness</li></ul>
<b>5</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Ash Wednesday (Christian – date varies)</li></ul>	<b>21</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination</li><li>▪ World Down Syndrome Day</li></ul>
<b>8</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ International Women's Day</li></ul>	<b>22</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ World Water Day</li></ul>
<b>10</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Commonwealth Day (second Monday in March)</li></ul>	<b>24</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ World Tuberculosis Day</li></ul>
<b>14</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Holi (Hindu festival – date varies)</li></ul>	<b>30</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Mother's Day (UK – date varies)</li></ul>
<b>15</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ World Consumer Rights Day</li></ul>	

# Readers' Corner

Your Questions • Your Voice • Your Community



## Questions

What's puzzling you about the world of work?

Whether it's employment law, workplace culture, learning and development or navigating tricky situations, send in your questions.

We'll answer selected submissions in future editions of *Chinwag!*.

## Feedback

Have thoughts on this edition of *Chinwag!* or ideas for future topics?

We'd love to hear from you. Your insights guide our content and help shape the questions that matter.

## Community Notes

Are you hosting an event, launching a project or involved in something others might want to know about?

Share it with us and we'll highlight a selection of community updates here.

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