

*in brief

Age Discrimination

New proposals coming into force on 1 October 2006 aim to tackle age discrimination against young and old and will impact on many aspects of employment: from recruitment to dismissal and include pay and benefits, training, redundancy and retirement. The regulations have been heralded as the biggest development in UK employment law in a generation. UK employers fear that these new discrimination laws will have a greater impact on their businesses than any other form of anti-discrimination legislation.

A poll of 100 major UK employers by the

Employers Forum on Age (EPA) found that:

- The majority think age discrimination will have a bigger impact than gender, race, disability, sexual orientation and religious discrimination laws.
- 40% of employers believe that the majority of tribunal cases will contain some element of age discrimination after 1 October.
- The introduction of age discrimination legislation in the US resulted in a 40% increase in tribunal claims. In Ireland, age is now the basis of 19% of tribunals.

Size matters

A black equal opportunities officer has won £70,000 in compensation after an Employment Tribunal ruled in his favour of his claim of racial discrimination, over the size of his desk. 6ft 4in Richard Smith's requests for a larger work area were ignored, even when an outside firm advised his employer Doncaster Council that his 5ft desk should be heightened and his chair modified. The tribunal ruled that Richard, 35, was the victim of racial discrimination and had been constructively dismissed. He commented afterwards: 'I was not treated the same as everybody else. I was fobbed off all the time.' Doncaster Council offered an unreserved apology.

Source: *The Metro*

Looking for training?

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Bespoke Courses Available

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£32m a year in poor performance

Staff under performing cost employers £32m per year, according to a Tough Love survey of 800 HR professionals. On average, 16% of staff in those organisations were rated as 'poor' which, when taking an average of respondents' salaries as £22,000, equals £32m across the UK. The public sector is the main culprit for not dealing with poor performance, 63% of respondents admit that poor performance in staff is not dealt with as it should be, as it is an accepted part of the culture. It also found that line managers spend an average of 1.6 days dealing with poor performance, this level rises to more than 2 days in the health and retail sectors.

Source: www.personneltoday.com

Blitz visits leave 25% of employers with enforcement notices

An inspection, by HSE and Bedford Borough Council, of approximately 60 commercial and industrial workplaces in the Bedfordshire area has resulted in almost 1 in 4 of the employers visited receiving some kind of enforcement action. During the visits, 13 Improvement Notices were issued for risks from work at height, exposure to hazardous substances and incorrect guarding of machinery. A Prohibition Notice was also issued for poor guarding of engineering machinery, that presented an imminent risk to the operator's safety.

Source: www.safety.co.uk

Cost of tribunals

Research from Committed2Equality has found that employers in the UK are paying £210m a year on employment tribunal claims. Committed2Equality advise the Government on workplace discrimination and have predicted this figure is set to rise to £360m by 2007, with age discrimination becoming illegal in October this year.

Around 30,000 claims are filed with the Employment Tribunal Service each year and on average, although many are eventually settled out of court, they still cost companies £7,000 on average. The costs are mainly incurred due to lawyers' costs and result from companies' failures to update their procedures in line with legal changes.

Source: www.personneltoday.com

