

## **Agenda item: HR update – Employment Rights Act 2025 and implications for Healthwatch**

The Employment Rights Act 2025 (ERA 2025) received Royal Assent on 18 December 2025. Representing the most significant upgrade to UK workers' rights in a generation, the Act modernises workplace protections through 28 major reforms phased in over two years.

**Vanessa Hollingworth, Vice-Chair and HR Director, has prepared a briefing outlining the main changes the Act introduces and the implications for HWBH for discussion.**

The government has produced a factsheet about the Act which can be read [here](#).

The Act will introduce additions and amendments to existing legislation, including the Employment Rights Act 1996.

The employment law changes included in the Act will take place over a period of 2 years. Most changes will happen in 2026 and 2027.

Most of the employment law changes have not happened yet.

In addition to Vanessa's briefing paper, some changes have already taken place however these will have limited impact on HWBH.

One change took place as soon as the Bill became law is that the **minimum service level rules for strikes – now removed**. Rules around 'minimum service levels' for strikes were removed on 18 December 2025. These rules were about keeping services running when there's a strike.

### **February 2026 changes**

#### **Increased dismissal protection for industrial action**

Dismissal for taking part in industrial action will become 'automatically unfair'. This will remove the current 12-week limit for claiming unfair dismissal. This will change in February 2026.

#### **Trade union activity**

These changes will happen in February 2026:

- the time needed to give notice of industrial action will reduce to 10 days, instead of 14 days
- unions will need a simple majority to vote for industrial action
- picket supervisors will no longer be required
- industrial action mandates will last for 12 months, instead of 6 months
- industrial action and ballot notices will be simplified
- political fund rules will change