

# Employers Urged To Prepare For Parent's Leave Increase

Parent's leave is to increase from two to five weeks and will apply to both parents and adoptive parents under new legislation which comes into effect in April 2021.

**H**R Team Director, Martina McAuley, said: "Parents in Ireland will be able to take the five weeks of leave at any time within the first two years after a child's birth or adoption instead of in the one-year period that was previously provided for in the Parent's Leave and Benefit Act 2019. "The new legislation means it is now time for employers in Ireland to establish new policies and procedures, or review their existing ones to ensure employment law compliance," she added. The new law will have benefits for both employees and employers, Ms McAuley said. "The increase of parent's leave entitlement from 2 weeks to 5 weeks will enable employers to retain a more diverse workforce, thus aiding gender diversity and work-life balance. Particularly, those employees with childcare responsibilities will benefit from this increase in leave entitlement. It may also enable employers to more effectively manage employees during the current pandemic, as the use of this type of family leave can be used where necessary."

## Employers advised to update Parent's Leave policy

"Employers are advised to update their leave policies; in particular their 'parent's leave' policy and procedure," Ms McAuley said.



**"It is essential to have established all the answers to potential questions employees may pose by ensuring that your policies and procedures on parent's leave are entirely up to date and then clearly communicated to all employees"**

"The policy and procedure should be written - ideally in an employee handbook - so that employees have direct access and can fully understand their obligations surrounding how to notify their employer

that they wish to book the leave and the associated timeframes. Employees should also be fully informed of the eligibility criteria.

"It is recommended that employers be prepared well in advance to deal with any applications that will arise. It is essential to have established all the answers to potential questions employees may pose by ensuring that your policies and procedures on parent's leave are entirely up to date and then clearly communicated to all employees," Ms McAuley added. The Family Leave Bill, introduced by Minister for Children Roderic O'Gorman, will apply to both parents, as well as adoptive parents, is aimed at achieving an improved work-life balance for all parents. The Minister said: "The extension to parent's leave and benefit is intended to provide them with an additional period of leave to spend with their child. An important facet of parent's leave is to encourage the sharing of childcare." Under the new legislation, adoptive couples can decide which parent takes up the twenty-four weeks leave, and paves the way for gender equality. Ms McAuley added: "Parent's leave can be taken as one continuous period of 2 weeks leave or periods of not less than one week. Employers should receive at least six weeks' notice of an employee's intention to take the leave."

# The Benefits Of Conducting Performance Appraisals

## What Is A Performance Appraisal?

A performance appraisal is one important element in the broader set of processes that make up performance management. Its purpose is to identify areas for growth and improvement, to inform suitable development plans, or to inform administrative decisions on contractual areas of employment - such as pay, bonuses, promotions or redundancy.

HR Team Director, Martina McAuley, said: "Performance management is not just about dealing with poor performers. It is a process that begins with getting the right employees, setting the correct expectations, coaching employees to deliver efficient, high-quality work, and dealing with under-performance in a proportionate and appropriate manner."

## The Advantages Of A Performance Appraisal:

### Performance Reviews Improve Communication

The performance appraisal process can provide valuable insights about your employees. The key is to communicate openly with your staff members before, during and after the review. Less than one third of employees say they always know how they perform at work and this process ensures they are clear on their performance levels. Ensure to set clear expectations throughout the year and communicate them to your staff. An employee who assumes that everything is fine won't have the chance to correct a problem. This kind of situation can lead to frustration, reduced productivity, poor morale and potential resentment. Performance appraisals can help strengthen the bonds with your team. They not only reduce uncertainty but also allow you to set strategic goals for your staff and address behavioural issues in the early stages, but employees also have the chance to express

their concerns and discuss their training and development needs. Staff can learn what is expected of them and how their performance is evaluated.

### Reward Top Performers

The purpose of performance appraisals is to identify employees' strengths and weaknesses. Managers can use this information to determine who has contributed the most to the company's growth and reward those who have made great efforts. Managers may show unconscious bias against employees based on non-performance-related factors. That's why it's important to gather data from multiple sources and set clear expectations for each role.

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PERFORMANCE REVIEW

OUTSTANDING

COMMENDABLE

SATISFACTORY

NEED IMPROVEMENT

SATISFACTORY

### Supporting Development

Performance appraisals can reveal opportunities for improvement and help managers identify the training needs of their staff, leading to a more productive organisation. They also allow you to spot potential talent. Also, companies that invest in employee development find it easier to attract and retain talent.

### Boost Employee Morale and Motivation

While most employees do not look forward to appraisals, these evaluations can serve as a motivational tool. Bonuses, promotions, training programs, and other outcomes of performance reviews may improve team morale. Praising your team members for their accomplishments is just

as important. Encourage your employees to try to better themselves and offer specific steps for improvement. Focus on the positive and show your team how to build on those strengths. Ensure to provide constructive feedback, regardless of an employee's performance. Encourage the top performers in your team to seek new goals and challenges. Ask your staff to complete self-assessments to determine where they see themselves and what they want to improve. Use this information to help employees achieve their full potential through ongoing feedback and training programs. It is important to remember that the performance appraisal is only a small part of the process which should be occurring continually throughout the year.



Managers and employees should continually review their progress. Business leaders should give their team feedback to ensure that the organisation gets the most out of their employees.

# HRQ&A

## What can I do if an employee refuses to take a Covid-19 test?

In the absence of a legal requirement for employees to take a test, no individual can lawfully be forced to take one, as such action could technically be considered an assault. Employees who have no symptoms should only be asked to take a test on a voluntary basis. Employees who have no symptoms and are not a close contact of a confirmed Covid-19 case may question the legality of being required to take a Covid-19 test before entering the workplace. In this scenario, the purpose of the test should be explained to the employee and if the employee continues to refuse the test, employers must act cautiously about the matter to avoid employment law compliance issues.

## What does Ireland's new National Remote Work strategy mean for employers?

The legislation underpinning this new employee right is expected to be in place by the end of September, 2021. While employees will have the right to request remote working arrangements, it's not an absolute right and employers may refuse a request, provided that they have a justifiable reason to do so.

However, employees will have the right to bring a case to the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) if they're not satisfied with the employer's reason for the refusal. The WRC is also developing a code of practice on 'the right to disconnect' in disputes.



**OUTSOURCE**

**INHOUSE**

# WHY OUTSOURCING HR IS BETTER FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Ongoing HR support for employers removes the headache caused by staffing-related issues and provides peace of mind regarding employment law compliance.

Outsourcing HR is more cost effective than employing full-time, salaried employees. The national average for a HR manager's salary is €51,459 per year in Ireland. Would you rather pay this or avail of HR Team's fully-outsourced HR management service. There is no obligation to sign up to lengthy contracts – clients can choose a fixed monthly fee or a pay as you go option, allowing you to benefit from our knowledge and experience as and when required.

## What does HR outsourcing involve?

HR consultants perform a large variety of tasks while always maintaining employment law compliance. HR tasks include performance management, the creation/updating of employee

contracts and company handbooks, managing recruitment and selection, absence management, managing disciplinary and grievance procedures, overseeing redundancies and much more. Every business needs to manage HR, however business owners may not have the time and/or resources to do so. Outsourcing HR can be a flexible and cost-effective solution, here's why:

## Benefits of outsourcing HR

- Reduced cost.
- Increased efficiency.
- Improved management information.
- Access to HR expertise to ensure best practice.
- Increased flexibility and speed of response.
- Employment law compliance.
- Reduced staff turnover.

## Questions to ask yourself before outsourcing HR:

1. Do I have a high staff turnover rate?
2. Are my staff records up to date and stored properly?
3. Do my employees have a staff handbook and do all employees have access to it?
4. Do I need help with staff recruitment and retention?
5. Is a performance review process in place?

**Don't leave your business vulnerable to costly litigation issues or at risk from breaches of employment law.**

## HR TEAM'S NEXT HR ESSENTIAL 60 WEBINAR

# THE PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

### What will you learn from the webinar?

The performance appraisal is an effective tool in ensuring that employees receive structured feedback on their overall performance.



Many organisations do not approach the performance appraisal in the most effective way, often resulting in negative consequences. This webinar will give employers a snapshot on the following elements of the performance appraisal:

1. Performance Management versus Performance Appraisals.
2. How to put a robust performance management structure in place (The B.E.T. system) to get the most out of the appraisal process.
3. How to manage staff performance on a day to day basis (feedback and communication) so that the performance appraisal is more of a constructive exercise and an overview of the timeframe concerned.
4. How to conduct an effective performance appraisal and what paperwork to use.
5. The Dos and Don'ts of the performance appraisal.

### Who should participate?

Line managers, supervisors/team leaders, middle/senior managers, HR personnel and business owners.

### About HR Team

HR Team is a leading consultancy firm which provides HR, employment law, and health and safety services to employers in Ireland and the UK.

The firm provides employment law and strategic human resource services to business start-ups, SMEs and large multi-national organisations. HR Team has offices in Dublin, Derry and Belfast.

### When is the webinar?

**Date:** Thursday, March 25, 2021

**Time:** 10.00am – 11.00am

**Cost:** Complimentary

Please join this webinar by clicking [here](#).

## FORTHCOMING HR AND EMPLOYMENT LAW WEBINARS IN 2021

HR Team has a number of free employment law and HR Essential 60 webinars planned throughout 2021.

Employers and managers will gain expert insight from our highly experienced HR professionals during these interactive 60-minute sessions.

Whether you have a specific HR question related to Covid-19 or you want to keep up with the ever-evolving developments, we invite you to join our experts as they discuss the key areas that are affecting employers right now.

Registration is free. The full list of upcoming HR Essential 60 webinars, along with links to join the respective events, are below.

### Thursday, March 25

#### The Performance Appraisal

Time: 10am-11am

Join the webinar [here](#).

### Thursday, April 29

#### Managing Sickness

#### Absence

Join the webinar [here](#).

### Thursday, May 27

#### The Disciplinary

#### Process

Join the webinar [here](#).

### Friday, June 25

#### The Grievance Process

Join the webinar [here](#).

### Thursday, September 23

#### Recruitment and Selection

Join the webinar [here](#).

### Thursday, October 28

#### Managing Social Media in the Workplace

Join the webinar [here](#).

### Thursday, November 25

#### Managing the Probationary Period

Join the webinar [here](#).

### Thursday, December 16

#### Setting Employee Targets for the Year Ahead

Join the webinar [here](#).

**Cost of Webinars:** Complimentary

### Who should participate?

Line managers, supervisors/team leaders, middle/senior managers, HR personnel and business owners.

### Do you have an employment law question?

We help business start-ups, SMEs and large multinational organisations. Call to speak to us today on any aspect of employment law or strategic human resource services.

Call us on **01 695 0749** or from NI/GBI on **028 71 271**

**882**. Alternatively, contact us via email:

[Hello@hrteamgroup.com](mailto:Hello@hrteamgroup.com)



If you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact HR Team.

**Republic of Ireland**

Level 1,  
The Chase,  
Sandyford,  
Dublin,  
D18 Y3X2

**Northern Ireland**

Hr Team Limited  
Catalyst Inc,  
Bay Road,  
Derry ~ Londonderry  
BT48 7TG

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[www.hrteamservices.com](http://www.hrteamservices.com)

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Tel 01 695 0749  
NI/GB +44 (0) 28 71 271 882

[hello@hrteamgroup.com](mailto:hello@hrteamgroup.com)