

#82 HR Newsletter

May 2016:

Trade Union Reform Bill

The Trade Union Bill has been finalised and received Royal Assent 2 weeks ago.

The precise implementation date has not been confirmed. However, it is expected that the new rules will be in force by October 2016. The key aspects for employers are:

- It's going to be **harder** for workers to go on strike. Unions will need to gain a 50% turnout figure in any secret ballot before their members can take lawful strike action;
- Workers in '**important public services**' like schools will need to achieve a 40% Yes vote to strike, as well as the 50% turnout threshold;
- In a concession to the unions, there will be a review of the possible use of '**e-voting**' in strike ballots, via online and mobile phones, which may include pilot schemes, but without any commitment to introducing this to replace postal ballots;
- Employers will get more time to prepare for strikes - **two weeks' notice** instead of the current seven days. This will assist contingency planning;
- Industrial action ballots will expire after **6 months**, so in long running disputes, unions will have to re-ballot or abandon their action.

It is not clear yet on whether the Government will press ahead with proposals to lift the ban on the use of agency workers to cover for striking employees.

There is a risk that the tighter rules on traditional forms of industrial action will make leverage action even more attractive to trade unions. This is where pickets stand outside Managers houses and make a more personal attack on staff rather than targeted at businesses.