

Government commits to reviewing default retirement age of 65 in 2010.

The Government has announced in its strategy 'Building a society for all ages' (which is intended to help Britain prepare for an ageing society) that it will bring forward its review of the default retirement age to 2010. The review was originally scheduled to take place in 2011 but has been brought forward to reflect 'changing demographic and economic circumstances' since the default retirement age of 65 was first introduced. The Government has now begun engaging with stakeholders and gathering evidence in order to inform the review.

Currently, employers can require all staff to retire at 65 regardless of their circumstances provided the employer has followed a statutory retirement procedure. Whilst the majority retire before 65, 1.3m people choose to work beyond it and many more say they would work past 65 if their employer permitted it.

If the default retirement age is found to be no longer necessary then any changes would not be implemented until 2011 to allow employers to prepare and employees to consider their retirement plans.

Employees may be permitted to self-certify for up to two weeks of sickness absence

The Government is apparently actively considering doubling the amount of time that employees can self-certify during sickness absence from seven to 14 days, as a response to the current swine flu pandemic. If this emergency measure is put in place, which is designed to free up medical resources and reduce the spread of swine flu in GP surgeries, it is likely to last for a six-month period only and there will probably be no advance consultation with employers before implementation.

Under the current rules, employees can self-certify for up to seven calendar days of sickness absence and thereafter they are required to produce a medical certificate from their doctor for further periods of sickness absence.

The plan is currently under review by the Ministerial Committee on Civil Contingencies at the Cabinet Office.

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