**Equal pay and minimum wage laws**

The basic rule that a start-up business has to remember is that:

Men and women are entitled to equal pay for work of equal value

Looking at that rule in a little more detail:

* “Pay” includes everything in the employment contract - bonuses and pension contributions, as well as basic wages or salary
* Workers have the right to ask their employer for information to check equality – using the equal pay questionnaire
* If employees believe their pay is unequal, they can take the employer to an Employment Tribunal

The right of employees to be paid at least the National Minimum Wage (NMW) is also protected by legislation. It makes no difference when a worker is paid (monthly, weekly, daily, hourly) - the NMW still applies.

**Discrimination**

Discrimination is the treatment in an unacceptable way of anyone who is termed to be different. In the UK, it is illegal for an employer to discrimination against an employee on the basis of:

* Sex, including pregnancy and maternity
* Marital / civil partnership status
* A person's disability
* Race
* Age
* Sexual orientation
* Religion/belief
* Trade union membership or non-membership
* Status as a fixed-term or part-time worker

Discrimination laws apply in many areas of employing staff - i.e.

* Recruitment
* Employee contract - terms and conditions
* Promotions and transfers
* Providing training
* Deciding what fringe benefits employees receive
* Employee dismissal

**Employment Acts – employee rights**

An employment right is something to which an employee is entitled which is protected by law. Laws provide a variety of “rights” for employees, including:

* Reasonable notice before dismissal
* Right to redundancy
* Right to a written employment contract
* Right to request flexible working
* Right to be paid national minimum wage
* Right to take time off for parenting

WORKING TIME DIRECTIVE

A worker must NOT work more than:

* 48 hours in any week.
* Eight hours a day if a worker works more than five days a week.

Overtime

If overtime is needed, workers must agree to do it and they may not work for more than three hours overtime a day or ten hours overtime a week.

Meal Breaks and Rest Periods

A worker must have a meal break of 60 minutes after five hours' work.

A worker must have a daily rest period of 12 continuous

Sunday Work

A worker who sometimes works on a Sunday must get double pay. A worker who normally works on a Sunday must be paid at 1.5 times the normal wage.

Night Work

Night work is unhealthy and can lead to accidents. That is, workers working between 18:00 at night and 06:00 in the morning must get extra pay or be able to work fewer hours for the same amount of money.

Public Holidays

Workers must be paid for any public holiday that falls on a working day.

Annual Leave

A worker can take up to 21 continuous days' annual leave

Sick Leave

A worker can take up to six weeks' paid sick leave during a 36-month cycle.

Maternity Leave

A pregnant worker can take up to four continuous months of maternity leave. She also may not work for six weeks after the birth of her child unless declared fit to do so by a doctor or midwife.

A pregnant worker is not allowed to perform work that is dangerous to her or her child.

Job Information – contracts

Employers must give new workers information about their job and working conditions in writing.

Notice

A worker or employer must give notice to end an employment contract of not less than:

* One week, if employed for six months or less.
* Two weeks, if employed for more than six months but not more than one year.
* Four weeks, if employed for one year or more.

Severance Pay

An employer must pay a worker who is dismissed due to the employer's operational requirement pay equal to at least one week's severance pay for every year of continuous service with that employer.

**Health and safety**

Health and safety is about preventing people from being harmed at work or becoming ill, by taking the right precautions and providing a satisfactory working environment.

The important thing for management to remember is that it is not just about protecting staff – health & safety applies to any people who come into contact with the business. That means that proper health and safety needs to be provided to:

* Employees working at the business premises, from home, or at another site
* Visitors to the premises such as customers or subcontractors
* People at other premises where the business is working, such as a construction site
* Members of the public - even if they're outside the business premises
* Anyone affected by products and services the business designs, produces or supplies