Employment Law Cases: Key Lessons for Employers

Court and tribunal decisions show how employment rules work in real situations. The lessons below focus on decisions reported in 2025 and 2026 and the practical records, decisions and procedures employers should review. A case can turn on its particular facts and may be appealed or reconsidered.

1. Employment status: Maritime and Coastguard Agency v Groom

In January 2026 the Court of Appeal considered the status of a volunteer Coastguard Rescue Officer who could receive payments when attending certain activities. The decision is a reminder that labels such as “volunteer” are not decisive: the real arrangements and any obligations and remuneration must be examined.

Employer example | A casual support team

An organisation calls a standby team “volunteers” but pays them to attend operational shifts.

Employer response: Check what is actually agreed and paid, whether work is personally performed and which employment rights may follow. Keep contracts and payment records consistent with reality.

2. Recruitment and beliefs: Ngole v Touchstone Leeds

In February 2026 the Employment Appeal Tribunal found errors in how the original tribunal had analysed allegations of direct discrimination related to religious belief in a recruitment decision. The appeal did not establish that every refusal to hire in similar circumstances is unlawful; the actual reasons for the decision require careful examination.

Employer example | Concern raised after an offer

A recruiter finds public statements by a candidate and worries they may affect the person’s ability to carry out a customer-facing role.

Employer response: Assess the actual requirements of the role and specific evidence, distinguish protected belief from demonstrable conduct, and record fair and proportionate reasons for the decision.

3. Time limits and repeated conduct: Ahmed v Capital Arches Group

A 2025 Employment Appeal Tribunal case considered whether alleged discriminatory treatment formed an ongoing course of conduct or separate acts, affecting when a claim could be brought. A continuing situation is not automatically a continuing discriminatory act.

Employer example | A disputed rota decision

An employee complains that a shift allocation made months earlier continues to affect their earnings.

Employer response: Record the original decision, any later fresh decisions, the reasons and dates. Promptly handle grievances rather than assuming that time limits make the underlying concern irrelevant.

4. What an employer can learn from case law

Lesson	Practical management action
Use accurate employment classifications	Compare contract labels with actual duties, hours, offers and payments.
Make recruitment decisions on evidence	Keep reasons tied to genuine role requirements and review possible discrimination risks.
Preserve an audit trail	Record dates and reasons for key decisions, follow-ups and appeals.
Apply current law, not headlines	Check the judgment and whether it has been appealed or limited by later decisions.

5. Using cases without overreacting

These decisions do not mean that every employer needs a new policy after each judgment. Review the relevant process, identify where a similar factual problem could arise, and make proportionate changes. Managers should understand the underlying issue rather than rely on a headline summary.

How Assyst helps employers keep the underlying evidence

Assyst maintains HR and paperless onboarding records, employee contracts and documents, work schedules, time and attendance, and relevant employee communications. Having dated operational and personnel records together can help employers explain decisions involving working patterns, status or employment history and provide a clearer basis for internal review and advice.

Discuss your workforce requirements with Assyst

Assyst Workforce Management is a workforce management platform for multi-site employers, bringing together HR and paperless onboarding, time and attendance, workforce scheduling, payroll calculations, task management and a mobile staff app. To find out more or discuss how Assyst could support your business, visit www.assyst.uk and contact us through the website.

Useful official sources

Court of Appeal — Maritime and Coastguard Agency v Groom [2026] EWCA Civ 6 | https://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWCA/Civ/2026/6.html

Employment Appeal Tribunal — Ngole v Touchstone Leeds [2026] EAT 29 | https://www.bailii.org/uk/cases/UKEAT/2026/29.html

Employment Appeal Tribunal — Ahmed v Capital Arches Group Ltd [2025] EAT 133 | https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68ca829f995dfd01bff0bfcb/Mr_N_Ahmed_v_Capital_Arches_Group_Ltd__2025__EAT_133.pdf

General guidance for employers in Great Britain, reviewed November 2026. Contract terms and individual circumstances may require professional advice.