

TIME	SESSION	
8.30am – 9.20am	Registration/ Exhibition/ Teas and Coffees	
	MAIN HALL	
9.20am – 9.35am	Event Opening with Chair, Ingrid Miley BL	
9.35am – 10.20am	<p>Review of the Year (Part 1 – 2024 – Looking Back) with Jennifer Cashman, Partner and Head of Employment Law, RDJ LLP</p> <p>Jennifer Cashman is here, as ever, to give her assessment of what’s important for YOU to know for Ireland’s workplaces.</p> <p>Jennifer delivers her annual round-up of the key employment law developments in 2024 and sets out the trends that have emerged since November last year.</p> <p>NOTE: The contents of this session may change to reflect what have been the most important and latest developments as of November 2024. Part 2 of Jennifer’s review of the year closes this conference and looks forward to what you should expect to happen in 2025.</p>	
	MAIN HALL	PARALLEL HALL
	Chair – Ingrid Miley BL	Chair – Marian Jennings
10.25am – 11.10am	<p>Act Now: Understanding the Immediate Impact of the Automatic Enrolment Savings Bill</p> <p>It’s easy to bury your head in the sand, but the Automatic Enrolment Savings Bill marks a major shift in Irish pension provision and HR NEED to be across the details.</p> <p>After numerous delays and complications, the Irish Government has finally advanced the General Scheme of the Automatic Enrolment Savings Bill. With potentially hundreds of thousands of private sector workers impacted, organisations must urgently understand their obligations.</p> <p>In this session, Lorcan Keenan, Partner at Matheson, will cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The workings of the new system, including eligibility and contribution rates. • Your organisations' immediate responsibilities under the scheme, including enrolment, contributions, and staff communication. • Essential steps HR professionals need to take now to prepare for the scheme's launch, including the impact on current pension arrangements. 	<p>Decoding ‘Toxicity’: Identifying and Rectifying Toxic Workplace Norms</p> <p>In nearly every company, there's an employee who perceives their workplace as 'toxic'. The term has become a catch-all to describe a range of work issues: from major problems such as unethical, abusive, discriminatory, and even illegal behaviours, to everyday issues like cultures of long hours, burnout, and grievances with standard workplace policies. Whatever the reason, the toxic workplace label causes disengagement, retention and reputational issues for organisations.</p> <p>In this session, Niamh Gaffney, Organisational Psychologist & Coach from KinchLyons explores effective strategies to foster better productivity, healthier relationships, and enhanced employee satisfaction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying the signs of a toxic work environment and its consequences • Recognising and addressing toxic behaviours through effective strategies • Developing leadership styles that promote positivity and productivity

11.10am – 11.45am	BREAK & EXHIBITOR	
	MAIN HALL	PARALLEL HALL
11.45am – 12.30pm	<p>Restructuring and Employment Law – What Do you Need to be Aware of in 2025?</p> <p>In 2024, the economic landscape in Ireland continues to pose significant challenges for businesses, driven by high inflation, economic pressures, and an increased financial burden. Companies must navigate these turbulent times with careful planning, especially when considering restructuring and redundancy options.</p> <p>Proactive planning and a focus on employee engagement are essential to navigate restructuring successfully. By prioritizing clear communication, legal compliance, and exploring alternatives to redundancy, businesses can aim to maintain in any fallout of necessary restructures.</p> <p>Bláthnaid Evans, Partner at Ogier will provide crucial insights into the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the Employment Law regulations for restructuring your business • Avoiding any negative consequences by adhering to updated regulations and ensuring all notifications and consultations are done properly. • Guidance on practical alternatives to redundancy such as re-engagement in other parts of your business, or even consulting on temporary lay-offs. 	<p>Substance Abuse in the Workplace: HR Strategies for addressing the growing issue</p> <p>A 2023 report by the Health Research Board (HRB) indicates that drug use remains a substantial issue in Ireland. Approximately 7% of the population reported using illegal drugs in the past year, with a notable increase in the use of stimulants such as cocaine, ecstasy, and amphetamines.</p> <p>Managing someone who misuses drugs or alcohol is one of the trickiest situations you can find yourself in, not least because addiction often makes people very secretive. Substance misuse can also have serious legal consequences for employers who fail to provide safe workplaces for their staff. Employers must also consider when an issue meets the threshold of a disability and what reasonable adjustments and support may be required to comply with the law.</p> <p>Caroline Reidy from The HR Suite will talk you through the issues including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs of drug or alcohol misuse at work and addressing issues fairly and in a timely manner • How to handle issues in a compassionate way whilst still adhering to best practice in employment law • What a drugs and alcohol policy should cover <p>This session will provide practical guidance on supporting employees struggling with substance abuse, focusing on creating a compassionate yet legally compliant workplace environment.</p>
12.35pm – 1.20pm	<p>The ROI Case Review 2024 and Key Next Steps</p> <p>Duncan Inverarity, Partner and Head of Employment Law at A&L Goodbody sets out the main developments in ROI cases in 2024. Duncan will guide you through the legal labyrinth of recent case law, enabling you to learn from real-life examples and avoid common mistakes to safeguard your organisation.</p>	<p>The Right to Silence in Investigations (Post-Electricity Supply Board v Sharkey case)</p> <p>The landmark case of Electricity Supply Board v Sharkey [2024] clarified the right to silence for employees in Ireland. This session will unpack the implications for both HR and legal professionals.</p>

	<p>NOTE: Subjects covered in this session may vary from those shown and will focus on the most important ROI cases by November 2024.</p>	<p>Join Michelle Halloran of MH Human Resource Management Services Solutions as she provides us with an understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Right to Silence: when can an employee refuse to answer their employer's questions during an investigation? • Balancing Interests: Weighing the employee's right to silence against the employer's need for information, particularly in conjunction with criminal investigations. • Practical Considerations for HR: How to navigate internal investigations in light of the Sharkey case. • Legal Considerations & Potential Risks: Potential consequences for employers who disregard the employee's right to silence. • Applying the principles to real-world scenarios and exploring best practices for handling employee silence during investigations.
<p>1.20pm – 2.15pm LUNCH & EXHIBITOR</p>		
<p>2.15pm – 3pm</p>	<p>Compliance in the new world of AI: an Introduction to the upcoming AI Act</p> <p>The AI Act is a landmark regulation proposed by the European Union, designed to ensure the safe, ethical, and transparent use of artificial intelligence across industries. As employers, understanding the key aspects of this regulation is crucial for compliance and leveraging AI responsibly.</p> <p>With the AI Act expected to be adopted by the EU institutions by the end of 2024 or early 2025, employers in Ireland should start preparing now by familiarising themselves with the AI Act's requirements, assessing their current AI systems, and planning for compliance to ensure a smooth transition when the regulations come into force.</p> <p>Join Linda Hynes, Partner of Lewis Silken as she looks at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the AI Act categorise AI systems into risk levels (and where does HR/employment sit within it)? • What are the compliance requirements for High-Risk AI? 	<p>CASE STUDY: An unstoppable force meets an immovable object – philosophical beliefs in the workplace</p> <p>Gender critical beliefs, trans rights, and the ongoing conflict between Israel and Gaza may make for interesting talking points around the water-cooler, but what happens when an unstoppable force meets an immovable object in your workplace?</p> <p>Dr Gerry McMahon of Productive Personnel Ltd leads this case study where, in a typical Dublin office, an everyday conversation suddenly escalates into a debate fit for the UN, landing a heap of dilemmas on HR's desk...</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will the AI Act be governed and enforced? • According to a legal report by Cloisters, there are specific 'Red Line' boundaries in AI usage that should not be crossed. What does this imply, and how should HR prepare and provide guidance on its use? 	
3.05pm – 3.50pm	<p>From Office to Anywhere: When Employees Demand Remote Options, How Can Employers Address it?</p> <p>In an increasingly digital and flexible work environment, the demand for remote work options has surged. Employers are faced with the challenge of accommodating these requests while maintaining productivity and company culture.</p> <p>Employers must also consider requests as outlined in the Right to Request Remote Work Bill 2022.</p> <p>Ciara O'Kennedy of LK Shields will discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore current trends in remote work demand and employee preferences, as well as practicalities in how to implement this into your workplace. • How to develop comprehensive remote work policies that outline expectations, communication protocols, and performance metrics • Ensure compliance with laws and regulations regarding remote work – including consideration of those wishing to work abroad. 	<p>HR's Guide to Managing Ill-Health</p> <p>In Ireland, addressing workplace ill-health is becoming increasingly important as the number of workers facing long-term health issues rises. Recent statistics indicate a notable rise in sickness absence rates in Ireland. In 2023, the average rate of employee absence reached 7.8 days per employee per year, up from 5.8 days in 2019. This increase underscores the challenges organisations face in managing health-related absences and maintaining productivity</p> <p>Organisations must also ensure that their Sick Pay Scheme is adhering to the rules governed by the Sick Leave Act 2022, which will be reviewed and updated in the coming years.</p> <p>Creating a healthy and supportive workplace is essential for maintaining a productive and engaged workforce.</p> <p>Join our expert as they address ill-health issues including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we create a supportive workplace environment for employees with health issues? • What are the best practices for developing and implementing health policies and reviewing your sick pay scheme? • How do current employment laws impact our approach to managing ill-health in the workplace?
3.55pm – 4.35pm	<p>Review of the Year (Part 2 – Looking Forward to 2025)</p> <p>In her second session of the event, Jennifer considers the likely employment law developments that we'll see in Ireland in 2025 and what we can do now to mitigate risk and maximise opportunities. Jennifer's insights aim to equip attendees with practical steps to safeguard</p>	<p>Probation: Perils & Pitfalls</p> <p>Employers can no longer adopt a relaxed approach to managing probationary periods without facing potential risks. With the introduction of the European Union (Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions) Regulations 2022, there have been significant changes to probationary periods in employment contracts within Ireland.</p>

	<p>their workplaces and leverage the best opportunities in the evolving legal landscape.</p> <p>NOTE: The contents of this session may change to reflect the most important and latest developments that are expected for 2025 as at November 2024.</p>	<p>It is essential for organisations to proactively manage these periods, conduct regular performance reviews, and provide clear documentation and feedback to ensure compliance and support employee success.</p> <p>Join Damien McCarthy, Managing Director of HR Buddy consultancy as he explores:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How to effectively manage probationary periods within the new legal framework.• Best practices for performance reviews and feedback.• Legal considerations and compliance to avoid common pitfalls, including when and how to extend a probationary period.
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