



TATTOOS

Love them or hate them, are they acceptable in the workplace?

Despite the rise in popularity of tattoos in recent years, many employers still consider them to be unacceptable in the workplace.

According to an Acas commissioned study in 2016, a large number of the 33 anonymously interviewed individuals, ranging from a senior manager in the emergency services to a regional director of an accounting firm, said that they would be hesitant in hiring applicants with visible tattoos.

So, what does the law say?

Apart from religious markings, body art is not considered a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, therefore employers are free to base their hiring decisions on this aspect alone.

Furthermore, in certain circumstances and where there are no contentious issues to consider (as well taking into account an employees' length of service), employers could consider visible body art as a valid reason to dismiss existing employees, especially if they are frequently dealing with clients and customers.

Employers have every right to promote a certain image through their workers which they believe reflects the ethos of their organisations. Sometimes this can mean that they ask workers to remove piercings or cover tattoos while at work, especially when dealing with customers. If an employer does decide to adopt a dress code or appearance code it should be written down in a policy which should be communicated to all staff so they understand what standards are expected from them.

However, according to a new report by Acas, some companies are starting to realise they could be missing out on talented staff due to their outdated attitudes towards people who have a tattoo.

Acas, an employer's advice group and conciliation service, urged firms to change their attitudes and relax their dress codes. It argued that a third of young people have a tattoo, but some companies and individual managers were still worried about the image it would give to potential customers.

Please contact Angela or Christine if you have any recruitment queries