



ActifHR

Where people matter...

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## June 2021 Update

Welcome to this month's update - where we discuss the latest guidance and legislation.

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In this Edition we report on:

- Is your business ready for employee flexibility?
  - Businesses welcome further delay to in-person right to work checks
  - Dealing with employee loneliness with hybrid working
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### Is your business ready for employee flexibility?

The world of work is changing - employee expectations are altering. Different values and motivations are coming to the fore, meaning employers need to become more agile as they reassess traditional ways of working to recruit and retain happy, engaged, talented and productive workers.

#### **Employee choice:**

Business owners should take the time to look hard at workstyles, workspaces and workflows, to see how they can facilitate an open, intelligent and safe environment, where workers can connect to and interact with each other using smart, collaboration technology.

But the biggest change is that after almost a 15-month absence from the office, more employees are demanding greater flexibility and choice.

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According to a recent survey by Totem, older people and higher earners want hybrid working (a mixture of working from home and the office). Although younger workers are keener to work in the office full time.

In particular, starting a new job is where people of all age groups are more likely to want face-to-face interaction, with new starters wanting their onboarding process in the office, rather than online.

#### **A better balance:**

While remote work has removed the commute, allowed more family time and a better work/life balance, the lack of face-to-face contact with colleagues/teams, feelings of isolation, digital exhaustion and in some cases insufficient resources to work effectively from home have caused employee wellbeing issues.

The key to success is listening to your workers to gauge their needs, as well as allowing them greater choice about where they work. In many cases they may not want to be limited to one location, preferring to combine days in the office and at home, or perhaps in a co-workspace or other location. Plus, in many cases, the need to work from more than one location, may mean employees are willing to forfeit benefits, perks, and even money to do it.

#### **Getting inductions right:**

1 in 5 people leave their job during their probation period.

This number is far too high and of course costly when it comes to finding replacements.

This number can be reduced by having a good induction process.

This is where managers ensure that the employee understands the ethos of the business, their contract documents, their role and how they will be supported through their first few months so that they can be effective as possible

**Employers:** Make sure that have right to work checks in place for current and new employees and workers.

**Contact us:** For specialist HR advice and guidance, including contracts of employment and policies

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### **Businesses welcome further delay to in-person right to work checks**

A further delay to the reintroduction of in-person right to work checks has just been introduced and welcomed by many businesses.

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The temporary measures put into place by the Home Office at the start of the pandemic to allow businesses to work remotely will be extended until the end of August. Employers will not need to resume in-person checks from 1 September onwards.

This is the second time the reintroduction of in-person checks for new employees and workers has been pushed back. In-person checks were expected to be brought back in by May, however the deadline was pushed back to 21 June to bring them in line with the hope that the last remaining lockdown restrictions in England would be lifted.

The in-person checks is an opportunity by businesses to fully review their recruitment practices, including the questions at the screening stage to the wording in offer letters and employment contracts.

**Employers:** Make sure you incorporate in-person checks by 1 September and review your recruitment procedures

**Contact us:** We can help your business with reviews of staff structures and your onboarding process

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## Dealing with employee loneliness with hybrid working

Many employers are reviewing what the future of work will look like in terms of working from home, returning to the office or some kind of hybrid working. For now, the adoption of hybrid working, appears to be the preferred approach for those working in the professional services sector.

Although for many, the enhanced autonomy of remote working has benefits for both employers and employees, the loss of in-person collaboration and networking opportunities makes many remote workers left feeling isolated and disconnected from friends and colleagues.

Loneliness can become a chronic source of stress and result in the development or worsening of mental illness. Just as with other sources of stress, loneliness can lead to risks of sickness and performance issues, employee relations deteriorating and possible legal claims.

Recent guidance suggests considering the following:

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- Recommending employers forge an inclusive and open organisational culture to allow sensitive conversations around loneliness to be treated with empathy;
- Appointing an employee champion for staff to talk to;
- Ensure that line managers are provided with training on loneliness so they are equipped to spot the signs that a colleague is struggling;
- Add employee wellbeing into corporate values and take positive steps to reduce the risk of loneliness;

As businesses move out of full remote working, creating opportunities for people to safely come together and interact in person will be more important than ever.

**Employers:** Employers that engage at an early stage to encourage colleagues to keep connected on work and social levels to communicate openly and build relationships will benefit from a healthy, positive and enthusiastic culture.

**Contact us:** We can assist with staff wellbeing and engagement



Caroline has a wealth of experience supporting business clients with practical hands on HR and Employment Law advice. Caroline's pragmatic approach helps businesses of all sizes deal with complex HR situations. She qualified as a Solicitor in 1999 and now acts as a specialist Human Resource / employment Law Consultant to business.

**Caroline Robertson, Director**



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