



ActifHR

Where people matter..

November 2024 Update

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

Don't forget the new obligation on Employers to prevent Sexual harassment

We have an Anti-Harassment pack for £300 to include:

- 1. A risk assessment form which is easy to use,**
- 2. An Anti-harassment and Bullying Policy,**
- 3. Practical guidance.**

Keeping the Christmas party legal

Sexual harassment covers anything from innuendo or jokes to more extreme acts of a sexual nature. The preventative duty requires businesses to take positive steps to prevent this harassment from occurring.

In practice, this means employers need to anticipate scenarios in which staff may be at risk in the workplace and take action to prevent it. The definition of 'workplace' is broad, including away days, work drinks events and importantly office parties.

With the Christmas party season looming, what can businesses practically do to comply with the new duty?

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Carry out appropriate risk assessments, including by reference to feedback provided by staff (eg. in grievances or exit interviews).

Identify circumstances that pose a greater risk to staff of sexual harassment occurring (such as late-night gatherings) and the practical things that can be done to minimise those risks - maybe setting limits on the amount of alcohol served per person.

Ensure you have an anti-bullying and harassment policy in place, which is explained to employees. Explain the duty on employers to prevent this type of misconduct and what is expected of staff in terms of compliance as well as reporting of any concerns.

Also consider the possibility of third-party harassment (eg. by clients or customers) and explain what individuals should do if they witness or experience this.

Make sure your managers understand this duty and the standards of conduct expected of them and their team. Make clear that these standards extend to informal/social gatherings, such as the Christmas party.

Make it easy for someone to come forward. Employers should make reporting incidents less intimidating, even including an anonymous mechanism if needed.

Employer: ensure you have put in measures to deal with this preventative duty

Contact us: for our Prevention of Sexual Harassment pack to include a risk assessment, Anti-Harassment Policy and 7 practical steps to follow for employers for £300

Budget – employers tightening their belts?

The recently announced budget could significantly impact hiring and skills investment. NI increase will likely impact employers' recruitment and plans to invest in skills.

With additional payroll obligations, businesses across sectors, especially those in cost-sensitive industries, such as hospitality and childcare, are reassessing their spending on staffing and training.

Benefits and support are powerful retention tools. In light of these budget constraints, many companies are exploring benefits packages as a means of retention and recruitment, particularly if salary rises are limited.

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Nearly half (47 per cent) of employees now prioritise a strong benefits package over salary.

Employers that strengthened benefits packages and improved communication around them could attract and retain talent effectively. Currently, only half of employees say they know exactly what benefits their employer offers.

With limited budgets for recruitment, some organisations are working hard to develop existing staff rather than hire externally. Upskilling can fill critical skill gaps while reinforcing company culture and loyalty.

For smaller businesses still dealing with post-pandemic recovery, retaining talent amid rising costs requires careful workforce planning. Learning and development still remains an important part of employee satisfaction and retention.

However, with the increase NI bill many companies are putting training on hold rather than cutting down on hours or staffing levels. It is vital to take a proactive approach to reward strategies and retention.

Employers: don't be afraid to ask your employees what they value be it benefits, training or learning opportunities.

Contact us: we can assist with planning HR strategies

Four-day week gathers momentum

The government has recently withdrawn its objection to South Cambridgeshire District Council's four-day work week policy.

This move that could set the stage for broader adoption of the flexible work policies across local councils and beyond.

However, meaningful change to a four-day week will require extensive testing and adaption before becoming acceptable.

Although it is suspected that in the drive to recruit skilled employees this may be one mechanism to differentiate one employer out from its competitors.

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However, despite the benefits of a four-day week many professionals are still unwilling to implement it, citing worries about operational feasibility, leadership buy-in and potential impacts on productivity.

The key to success is to think strategically about how to adopt it in a way that is tailored to your organisation's specific needs, resulting in productivity and efficiencies.

For example, if you implement a four-day week but do not change processes and ways of working this may have unintended or negative consequences. There needs to be accompanying activities on processes and ways of working - with changes being kept under regular review with adaptations.

Employers: think creatively at what needs to change if a four-day week is being considered.

Contact us: we can assist with supporting your business



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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