

NEWS FROM THE HR TEAM



Do you know how inclusive your workplace really is?

It's not a trick question.



You see, while you may have a diverse workplace, employing people of different ages, races, sexual orientations, etc., that doesn't mean that your business is inclusive.

Inclusion is where everyone, regardless of their circumstance or background, feels accepted and valued within a business, and has the same opportunities for career growth and development, too.

It's really important that your business looks at how inclusive it really is for a number of reasons. Importantly, when your people feel included, they're more likely to be happy and motivated in their role. That means they're more productive and more loyal to you as well.

But also, a diverse and inclusive business will attract the best talent when the time comes to expand your team. It goes a long way towards giving your business an excellent brand reputation, and that means that people will be really keen to work for you when a position becomes available.

So, what can you do to make sure your business is as inclusive as it can be?

First, you need to find out what your employees' experience of the company is. And you do this by asking them! There are lots of different ways you can gain their feedback and insight.

When you know how people are feeling, you can start to look at where improvements need to be made. New policies and initiatives might be a solution, or it may be a case of training and workshops for everyone in the company to make sure people are treating everyone the right way.

It's not always a simple solution, but once you've taken the right steps, it should be relatively easy to maintain your inclusive business as you move forward.

We've written a new guide that explains in detail some of the best things you can do to find out how well your business is currently doing, and the types of initiatives you could introduce to really make some positive changes.

If you'd like a free copy, just drop us an email. If you'd like further advice or help with any aspect of your HR, we'd love to talk. Call the office on 01279 874 676 and arrange a conversation.

	Do you know how inclusive your workplace really is?	1
	International Week of Happiness at Work is 19th - 25th September	2
	Do your employees want more flexibility?	2
	Workforce disputes are at an all time high - what does it mean for your business?	2
	Menopause at work	2
	GPs no longer have to sign fit notes	3
	Q&A	3

INTERNATIONAL WEEK OF HAPPINESS AT WORK

19 – 25 September 2022

We spend a lot of time at work, so it's really important that we're all happy in what we do. And, when we're happy at work, it makes us happier in other areas of our lives too.

As a business owner or manager, it's important that you take the happiness of your people seriously. If it's not something you'd thought too much about before, this week is the perfect

opportunity to see where you can make some valuable changes.

Invite feedback from your employees about things that make them happy at work. Organise some activities, plan after work drinks, or order in pizzas for a treat one lunchtime. Something that shows your people they're appreciated - it can go a really long way!

Workforce disputes are at an all time high - what does it mean for your business?

Over the past few months, you've probably listened to news stories about industrial disputes with a level of concern. And whilst it's big industries that are being impacted at the moment, it reflects a feeling that isn't uncommon in businesses up and down the country right now.

As a business owner you need to pay particular attention to this, and look at the things you can do within your own company to not only make sure your people are happy and have no reason for dispute, but also to protect yourself. Disputes have the potential to get legal, and if you don't have the right policies and strategies in place, you're opening yourself up to danger.

You may also find yourself in a position where you have staff walk out or leave at short notice, which can leave you struggling to maintain your business function, or relying on agency workers. In a small business that isn't ideal.

It's a good time to look at your HR documents and update anything that needs it. Employment law changes quickly, and if you still have out of date policies in place you risk legal action should you face an issue with an employee and your documents don't back up your stance.

You might also consider when you last held pay reviews with your people. Many of the industrial disputes revolve around pay, so if helping your employees in this way is something you can do, get your team working towards goals to reach a pay increase.

If you're not in a position to hand out pay rises right now, look at other ways you can reward your people for doing a great job. Perks can go just as far as more money. Help with things like childcare costs, vouchers towards shopping, or even subsidised gym memberships can go a long way to helping people reduce everyday expenses.

Take the time to speak to your employees regularly. Find out what's going well for them and ask them about the things they feel aren't going so well. This can give you a great insight into the things that you wouldn't necessarily see as a business owner or manager, and gives you the opportunity to put things right or make changes before a small issue becomes a big problem.

As with most things, communication really is the key to success when it comes to creating and maintaining a happy and motivated workforce. It's not always easy to begin the process without help, but if you feel you need a hand, we'd love to assist. Just give us a call!



Do your employees want more flexibility?

According to a new poll, yes. In fact, a huge 60% of UK workers would like more flexibility over when they work, including moving to a 4-day working week model.

A staggering 40% said they'd even take a pay cut if it meant they had total flexibility over when they worked.

Is it time to look at how flexible your business is, and how making a few simple changes could positively affect staff engagement and motivation?

A third of UK employees are living pay day to pay day, making the cost of living crisis even harder to deal with. It's also leading to an increase in anxiety and loneliness. Does your business offer financial wellbeing packages?

Menopause at work

An increasingly major focus for employers is how menopause symptoms may impact on their female staff – and what they, as employers, can do to help support these women at work.

Menopause already affects a substantial number of female staff and numbers are expected to grow as an increasingly larger number of mature women remain in, or return to, employment.

Although a natural part of aging and not an illness, symptoms can affect both the physical and mental health of women and cause them to lose confidence in their competency to do their job.

Mature women, particularly those in their 50's, make up the fastest growing demographic in the workplace. So you should be looking at how you can support and encourage their personal and professional growth within your organisation – and help you retain all that quality experience and knowledge these women can offer.

GPs no longer have to sign fit notes

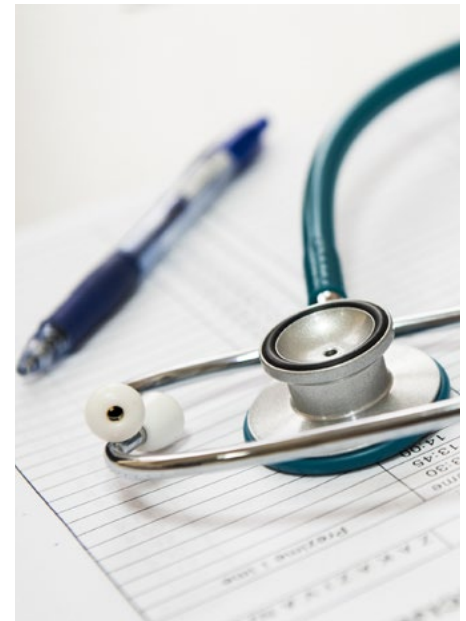
On 1 July 2022 the Social Security (Medical Evidence) and Statutory Sick Pay (Medical Evidence) (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations 2022 came into force. These Regulations, which apply in England, Wales and Scotland, amend the previous statutory requirement that a fit note could only be issued by a doctor, such as the employee's GP or in-patient consultant at a hospital.

Now a fit note may also be issued by a healthcare professional who is either a: registered nurse; registered occupational therapist; registered pharmacist or a registered physiotherapist. Training is being rolled out to these healthcare professionals to support them with this extension.

Why has it happened? There are two main reasons behind the fit note change. Firstly, it has been implemented to free up GP appointments. Rather than spending time issuing fit notes, the government wants GPs to focus on dealing with sick patients and those with complex medical needs - a decision which is widely supported by the medical profession.

Secondly, there are many instances where a GP is not the employee's first point of contact for an illness or medical condition. For example, an employee who is off work due to a bad back may be in regular contact with a registered physiotherapist, who is more likely to have a better understanding of their day-to-day needs and abilities than their GP. Alternatively, an employee who's been diagnosed with cancer could be under the care of a multi-disciplinary healthcare team which is led by a registered nurse, instead of the employee's GP.

The extension to the categories of healthcare professional who can issue fit notes does present an increased opportunity for fake documentation. However, if you have any doubts, just like with doctors, registered healthcare professionals will be required to confirm to you that they've issued a fit note. They can do this by checking the bar code and you do not need the employee's consent to make this enquiry.



Q&A



Do I need to pay for my employee's glasses?

As an employer you must arrange an eye test for any DSE (display screen equipment) users if they ask for one. You only have to pay for glasses if your employee needs them only for using DSE

Should I give employees additional holiday unpaid?

It's not a legal requirement, but you may want to consider the circumstances of the request. For example, emergency situations may require reasonable time off. It can also go a long way to demonstrate how you value employees if you grant unpaid leave in certain situations.

How do I stop employees scrolling social media when they should be working?

Create a clear social media policy and make sure everyone in the business has read it and has access to it. This way everyone will know what is acceptable use and the consequences if they don't follow your policy