

NEWS FROM THE HR TEAM



# So, what is the likely impact for companies, from the incoming administration...



The polls were proved to be correct, and Sir Keir Starmer returns to Parliament as Prime Minister.

It is difficult to be certain of the likely impact of the arrival of the new administration as Labour has fought a campaign seemingly based on making the fewest possible commitments and offering the least number of hostages to fortune in its manifesto and other publications.

**Employment**

When it comes to employment, we have an idea as to the new administration's thinking in this regard, as this was set out in a recent publication, Labour's Plan to Make Work Pay.

This highlights plan to restrict zero-hours contracts, with stronger anti-avoidance measures being introduced, and to replace the recently published Code of Practice on fire and re-hire practices with a tougher version.









While the document states that Labour will ensure that employers can "operate probationary periods to assess new hires", it also makes clear that the

right not to be unfairly dismissed, sick pay and parental leave will all be in place on the first day of employment.

Among other proposals, the new Government will consult on removing the current distinction between employees and workers, provide for redundancy consultation to be determined by the number of people affected across the whole business rather than in one workplace, and strengthen the existing protections for whistleblowers and workers subject to TUPE processes.

One proposal that seems certain to go ahead is the repeal of the Trade Union Act 2016 and the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023 while it is expected that all three-month employment tribunal limitation periods will change to six months.

A lot to take on board! This will mean big changes to your employee/worker contracts, handbooks and policies. Let us take this pressure off of you and allow you to concentrate on the business! Get in touch, we'd love to chat.

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## Why you should have a company handbook and how we can help



Think of a handbook as your company's go-to manual – it is the cornerstone of your workplace resources, containing all the vital information and guiding principles of your business in one central resource.

Here are 3 reasons as to why you should have one for your business.

### Reason 1: Legal compliance and risk mitigation

Policies outline how you expect employees to behave, and your handbook is where all your policies come together into a single document.

When there is an issue, you can fall back on your policies and handbook to evidence your expectations and to protect you.

### Reason 2: Smooth operations

Think of your handbook as the nucleus of your company's operations.

It should contain everything your company needs to keep running smoothly and to avoid disagreements with employees about certain matters.

### Reason 3: Culture and values

By creating a handbook, you can also outline the values and culture you are trying to create and expect from employees too. It provides important clarity.

### Here's 3 reasons why you should get an HR Consultant to help you:

While it can be tempting to download a generic template, it's unlikely to be the right fit or legally compliant. Instead, partnering with an HR Consultant will help you create a personal handbook that meets your distinct needs and complies with legal requirements.

**Tailored Solution:** An HR Consultant will create a bespoke handbook that reflects the diverse needs of your business and teams, capturing your unique voice. Relying on a template that doesn't align with your organisation's values, such as supporting an employee experiencing menopause symptoms, can lead to complications.

**Expert Guidance:** By engaging an HR Consultant, you tap into their vast knowledge and expertise to develop a comprehensive, legally compliant handbook, which reflects current trends.

**Ongoing Review:** An HR Consultant can regularly review your handbook to ensure it remains up-to-date, providing continuous protection. They will ensure it grows with your business, embodying your culture and values, and is always exceptional!

Our latest guide explores everything you need to know about a company handbook.

Get in touch for your FREE copy.

## Will HR teams using AI create unease and distrust?

According to new research by SurveyMonkey, over half (54%) of employees are uncomfortable with their HR team using AI. A further 39% of workers also lacked trust in HR departments who use the automated technology.

For some HR professionals, AI is still very much uncharted territory, with 69% of HR teams still yet to implement the new technology. However, there is a growing concern that employees will feel "uneasy or distrustful" of AI and how it integrates into the HR world, seeing it as a threat to job security. For instance, some employees may have concerns about the impact on fairness, data safety, and security and risks.

To address these concerns, HR professionals need to foster trust for AI by implementing clear policy frameworks on ethics and data protection, educating employees about AI's benefits and limitations, and ensuring human judgement is involved in key decisions, rather than relying solely on automation.

<https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/article/1868607/half-employees-uncomfortable-hr-teams-using-ai-survey-finds>



## Silence Is Not Golden: Over Half Of Uk Job Seekers Don't Hear Back

Job hunting and applying for a new role can be frustrating and demoralising. A recent study by global matching and hiring platform, Indeed, reveals that a staggering 55% of job applications in the UK go completely unanswered, leaving applicants in limbo and facing a frustrating reality.

Despite 916,000 job vacancies across the UK reported by the Office for National Statistics, the hiring process remains inefficient. The survey, with insights from 1,000 working individuals and 1,000 hiring professionals in the UK, reveals inefficiencies that affect both job seekers and businesses, leading to prolonged vacancies and misaligned roles.

The survey found that when a potential employer is unresponsive, it greatly impacts an applicant's confidence, with 86% of respondents preferring a clear rejection rather than total silence. Hiring professionals also suffer, with 61% experiencing wasted time due to inefficient or lengthy hiring processes, or discovering candidates are unsuitable due to avoidable factors, such as location or lack of interest. Indeed plans to transform and personalise the hiring process using AI-powered tools, a new mobile app and other tech innovations.

<https://hrnews.co.uk/brits-dont-hear-back-from-more-than-half-the-jobs-they-apply-for/>



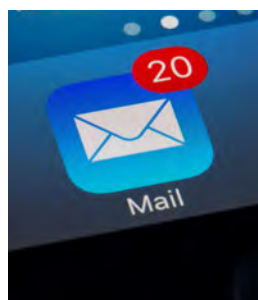
## Late Night Emails: Gen Z's Bedtime Work Reading

A new survey commissioned by DUSK, a luxury bedding and furniture company, has uncovered a worrying trend; almost a third of young adults (aged 18 to 34) are taking work to bed and checking their emails. The study, encompassing 2,000 UK adults, also found that 19% even respond to them. Worryingly, 82% of 18 to 24-year-olds and 77% of 25 to 34-year-olds, are phone scrolling from the comfort of their bed, which also negatively impacts their sleep.

Sian Guest, DUSK's Head of Brand, emphasises the blurred lines between work and relaxation, and the negative impact of these habits on wellbeing, including poor sleep quality linked to reduced productivity, concentration, motivation and increased stress levels.

In recent years, there have been discussions about the "right to disconnect" with Trade Unions and think tanks, advocating for legislation that would restrict employers from contacting employees outside of working hours, to address growing mental health concerns at work. Labour proposes to introduce "right to switch off" legislation, similar to measures seen in countries such as France and Italy. These measures aim to promote a healthier work-life balance, set behavioural expectations, and reduce the risk of burnout.

<https://www.hrgrapevine.com/content/article/2024-05-03-gen-z-cant-stop-checking-their-work-emails-before-bed>



## Is your business guilty of wellbeing washing?

A recent poll by a law firm, Winckworth Sherwood, shows that employers and employees aren't on the same page when it comes to wellbeing priorities. This puts businesses at a risk of 'wellbeing washing' - claiming to have good benefits in place but falling short when wellbeing issues arise.

Even though most employers (86%) believe their wellness initiatives reduce sick leave rates, their main goal was to increase productivity. Alarmingly, only half of businesses surveyed offer essentials like 'good work', fair pay and reward, and promote flexible working - crucial for good mental health, say both employers and employees.

The study also shows a disconnect between mental health support strategies. While 37% of employers focus on perks like yoga, only 26% of employees want them. They'd rather have good work and autonomy.

Bridging the gap and adopting a holistic approach to wellbeing is crucial for fostering a supportive work culture. Neglecting to do so not only undermines employee satisfaction, but could risk the organisation's reputation.





# Flexible Working - how can you keep it on your terms?



The Flexible Working (Amendment) Regulations came into effect on 6 April 2024, bringing significant updates to the UK's flexible working regulations.

Notable changes included granting employees the right to make a flexible working request from day one of their employment and a more streamlined process, with employees no longer needing to justify how their flexible working request might impact the business or their work.

With a greater say on when, where and how people can work, employers could now expect a surge in requests for flexible working arrangements.

Research conducted by the CIPD indicates that individuals who work flexibly are more committed, have a higher level of job satisfaction, and are healthier and less stressed.

From an employer's standpoint, adopting a flexible approach can lead to increased productivity, reduced absence and enhanced talent strategies, by appealing to a more diverse pool of candidates.

Yet, as a business owner, how can you create a flexible working culture that supports good work-life balance and meets your own needs? Here are some strategies to help you strike a harmonious balance and ensure that flexible working 'works' for you:

1. Develop a flexible working policy that clearly communicates your expectations as a business, while empowering your employees to work in a way that gets the job done and suits their personal lives.

2. Consider implementing core hours for availability. This can provide structure for meetings, team updates and other core activities, while allowing your employees flexibility to squeeze in a pre-work yoga session or manage caring responsibilities, with time for a quick cuppa before logging on.
3. Be transparent from the outset about the level of flexibility your business can offer, including in job advertisements and on your company website. This can help to manage expectations and attract great candidates who align with your approach.
4. Prioritise building a culture of trust, autonomy and support, where value is placed on output and results rather than hours worked or location. This encourages a healthy balance between productivity and wellbeing.
5. Regularly review your flexible working policies and initiatives, based on feedback and pulse survey results, performance data and the evolving needs of your business. This will ensure your offering is fit for purpose and that everything is running nice and smoothly.
6. Lastly, embrace the shift in workplace dynamics and the change in attitudes towards flexible working, while keeping a close eye on what works best for your business and objectives.

Implementing these strategies could lead to numerous business benefits, such as increased engagement, better retention and a diverse and inclusive organisation, and could be a win-win!

## Q&A

### I run a business and employ members of my family. Do they need employment contracts?

Yes! Anyone legally classed as an employee has the right to a 'written statement of employment particulars' or an employment contract. As a business owner you can hire who you like, including family, but providing a contract will ensure consistency and fairness, and could provide you with protection if a dispute arises, rather than simply relying on good faith or loyalty.

### Can I employ someone on a casual basis if they're under 16?

Children between the ages of 13-16 can take on 'light work' if it doesn't affect their health and safety or interfere with their education. If you want to do this, you normally need to have a permit from the local council's education department or education welfare service. There are also several restrictions on where, when and how they can work, depending on their age.

### My employee hasn't signed their updated contract of employment - what now?

If you have proposed changes to the agreed terms and conditions, you both must agree to the changes. Although you can't force your employee to sign it, their failure to do so might suggest acceptance of the implied terms. A proactive and supportive approach would be to have a conversation with them; try to understand their reasons for not signing and address any concerns or uncertainties they may have.

