

# Job quality

Explore the CIPD's point of view on job quality and good work, including actions for Government and recommendations for employers

Work can and should be a force for good. As we rebuild our economy, employers and policy makers should aim not just for more jobs, but better jobs too.

Poor job quality continues to cause significant problems in the UK, such as a lack of work-life balance, stress, discrimination, and an absence of meaningful voice at work.

In addition, evidence suggests that enhancing job quality can help boost the UK's ailing productivity growth, with particular gains achieved through improving the quality of work of those with the worst jobs<sup>1</sup>.

Before the pandemic there was a growing recognition among policy makers of the importance of improving job quality. In 2017, the then government commissioned Matthew Taylor to lead a Review of Modern Working Practices which led to the subsequent Good Work Plan and proposals to end 'one-sided' flexibility, clarify employment status and rights and improve labour market enforcement.

The current Government then included some of the Good Work Plan commitments in its Employment Bill which was outlined in the December 2019 Queen's Speech. Since then, the pandemic has seen progress on the Employment Bill stall however the Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, Kwasi Kwarteng, has committed to introduce the Employment Bill 'when the time is right'.

Work can and should be a force for good that benefits people and societies as much as it benefits business and the economy. All jobs have the potential to be better and we should aspire to making good work a reality for all. This would not only boost the wellbeing of workers, but also increase workplace productivity in order to lift wages and, over time, reduce working hours.

It may not be realistic to make all jobs great jobs, but there are several dimensions to job quality and, by being more creative with job design and investing in the people management skills of line managers, employers can and should make work better for everyone. Policy-makers, employers and people professionals all have a role to play in improving working lives for everyone. As we rebuild our economy, we need to invest in job quality, not just quantity.

The CIPD is concerned by the lack of reference in the recent Queen's Speech to the

Employment Bill and would encourage the Government to introduce it as soon as possible.

If introduced in the right way, with the necessary investment, the government's measures to tackle one-sided flexibility, increase access to flexible working and improve labour market enforcement, will significantly improve job quality for many workers and help tackle exploitation and unfair treatment at work.

We'd also like to see the development of a workforce reporting framework to improve the quality of external reporting by employers on how they recruit, manage and develop their people. This would encourage a greater focus on improving people management and job quality, as well as improving transparency and enabling stakeholders such as investors and employees to have a clearer picture of how organisations invest in and treat their people.

Too many businesses say 'people are our greatest asset', but treat their workforce simply as a cost to be managed not as a key driver of value to be invested in. Employers need to ensure that their business strategy is aligned to a clear people strategy, underpinned by effective HR practices.

The CIPD has carried out research to articulate a clear definition of 'good work' and to identify the most suitable way to measure job quality. Based on this, we define good work as work which:

- is fairly rewarded
  - gives people the means to securely make a living.
  - gives opportunities to develop skills and a career, and ideally provides a sense of fulfilment
  - provides a supportive environment with constructive relationships
  - allows for work-life balance
  - enables staff to be physically and mentally healthy
  - gives employees the voice and choice they need to shape their working lives
  - should be accessible to all
- Introduce the Employment Bill and the measures contained in the 2019 Queen's Speech.
  - Improve labour market enforcement through its Single Enforcement Body to protect employment rights and enhance business support to help employers (particularly smaller firms) to comply with employment regulation.
  - Establish voluntary workforce reporting standards, and work with key stakeholders to encourage more organisations to provide better information on how they invest in, lead and manage their workforces for the long term. Similar requirements are

required for the reporting of public sector organisations.

- Provide small firms with HR support, delivered at a local level through key stakeholders like the Local Enterprise Partnership, Growth Hubs and chambers of commerce.
- Work with key stakeholders, like Citizens Advice Bureau, TUC, Acas and the CIPD, to run a public 'know your rights' campaign accessible to all employees.
- Design people strategies that have, as core elements, improved job quality and well-being.
- Collect good quality, relevant and representative data on job quality, and develop analytical capabilities. Use this information as a basis for making decisions on people management practices. Consider replicating questions from the CIPD's [Good Work Index](#), and benchmark against the index.
- Use data-driven insights to target support at disadvantaged or underrepresented groups, and ensure good work for all.
- Seek to pay the Real Living Wage as a minimum for all employees.
- Provide informal and formal flexible working practices, and encourage employees to use them.
- Provide learning and career development opportunities, and encourage all employees to use them.
- Put in place practices that promote inclusion and social cohesion, and effective interventions to resolve conflict when it arises.
- Invest in developing the people management capability of all line managers. They are key to improving job quality and motivating employees.
- Provide effective channels for employee voice – both direct and through representatives.

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## Reports

- [CIPD Good Work Index](#)
- [The road to good work](#)
- [Understanding and measuring job quality](#)

- [Revamping labour market enforcement in the UK](#)
- [Reforming employment status and strengthening rights](#)
- [Building HR capability in small UK firms](#)

## **Guidance and factsheets**

- [Job design](#)