

# People Management

February 2022



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**CIPD**

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The latter half of winter is well and truly here, and the economic outlook is as bleak as the meteorological one; the rate of inflation in the UK has broken its own record more than once recently, and employees are feeling the pinch. But as HR professionals, you have the power to help – our in-depth feature starting on page 24 will tell you how. And if you have some more positive news to share, the 2022 CIPD People Management Awards are now open for entries – you'll find all the info on page 15.

Eleanor Whitehouse **Editor**

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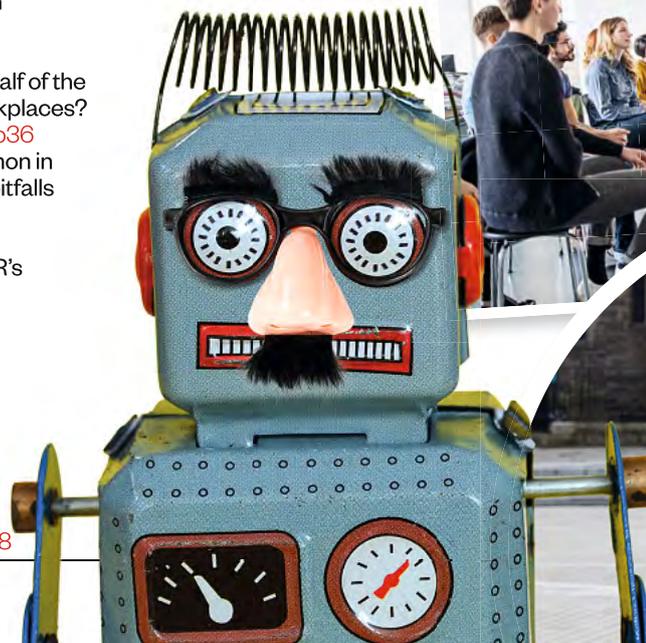
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# Welcome

from the CIPD

## Light at the end of the tunnel?



Peter Cheese  
Chief executive

As we embark on a new year, there is a feeling of 'Groundhog Day'. Reviewing commentary from the start of last year, we were in a new wave of the virus and uncertain about the year ahead. The focus was on keeping people safe, and the importance of wellbeing. While there are now positive signs of light at the end of the pandemic tunnel, those things must remain true and central to our responsibilities as a people profession and as a focus for public policy.

case for investment in training and skills development.

Expectations across our workforces have been raised during the pandemic. How they will be treated and supported, have access to more flexible ways of working, manage workload and stress, and see development

and progression opportunities. A recent published analysis of Glassdoor data across many industries showed that company culture was as much as 10 times more likely to predict attrition rates than pay.

These are all demands on our profession and our ability to understand what is happening in our organisations and the economic, social and political environment we are operating in. There will be many operational pressures such as how to manage returns to workplaces, questions on benefits and sick pay policies, and how to embed fair flexible working practices. People managers at all levels will feel these challenges and they are primary cogs in the wheel of our corporate cultures. They will need more training and support in good people management and how to manage our increasingly diverse workforces and working practices.

So the year ahead will once again have its challenges, but also opportunities to make positive change and grow our impact as a profession. At the CIPD, we will continue to do all we can to strengthen connections and support you. We will further promote wider policy change, building on all that has been learned through these tough times to reinforce our purpose of championing better work and working lives.



p24

However, attention is now turning to other economic and political pressures. A dominant theme for the year will be rising inflation and the impact on individuals as well as businesses and the wider economy. Energy prices, particularly for gas, have risen dramatically, but supply constraints for many products and services, in part driven by staff shortages, are also driving up costs in other ways.

As we are all experiencing, the labour market has become tighter. In many countries, open job vacancies are at historic highs, and sectors such as hospitality, healthcare and construction are particularly challenged. There has been much talk of increasing resignations as individuals reflect on their experiences during the pandemic and reappraise what is important to them and what they look for in a job. And as the Omicron variant continues to spread, absenteeism from work is currently causing further pressure.

As a result, there is upward pressure on pay, particularly in lower-paid sectors and jobs, but also in sectors where there is huge demand, including higher-paid professions such as law and finance. Inflationary pressures will increase expectations on pay, but the pressures to manage costs in uncertain economic times will call for some tough balancing acts.

Short-term responses to addressing skills gaps and retaining people will be needed, but it will be vital also to keep focus on longer-term workforce planning and ensuring we are creating good jobs and positive workplace cultures. Inclusion must be front and centre, opening up recruitment channels to more diverse sources of talent, as well as making the



Key to longer-term workforce planning will be a focus on opening recruitment up to more diverse talent pools

HANNAH J TAYLOR: HINTERHAUS PRODUCTIONS/GETTY IMAGES

# This month we've learned...

## The big lesson



Reducing work hours but not the amount of work employees are expected to do can have a negative effect on health

{Recruitment}

## Most visas from non-EU workers

A year on from the introduction of the UK's new points-based migration system, official figures have shown European workers are not applying for visas at the same rate as individuals from other parts of the world.

Data from the government's advisory body on migration has shown that the rise in the number of skilled worker visa applications last year was driven by non-EU nationals.

The Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) said 2021 saw the number of skilled worker visa applications pick up following the end of the third national lockdown, with monthly applications rising by over 50 per cent between May and June 2021.

In the three months to June 2021, the UK saw 68 per cent more visa applications than in the same period in 2019 – which the MAC said might have been partly due to pent-up demand for visas caused by the pandemic.

But, just 8 per cent of these applications came from nationals from countries in the European Economic Area, which the MAC described as “relatively low usage... compared to the rest of the world”.

In its annual report, the MAC also said that concerns outlined in 2020 that the new skilled worker visa route would be too expensive for employers to use to bring in lower-skilled jobs were valid.

{Health & wellbeing}

## Job quality is key to wellbeing

For years the four-day week has been held up as a panacea for workplace stress. It's a tempting proposition – wouldn't we all be happier with our work-life balance if every weekend was a three-day weekend? But research has suggested that reducing working is not necessarily the best way to improve mental health.

A study conducted by a coalition of universities found factors including feeling that work is meaningful, having good workplace relationships and having enough resources and time to complete work were the most important factors in determining employee wellbeing. And the positive effects of these factors were similar regardless of whether an individual worked full time or just two days a week.

Dr Senhu Wang, assistant professor at the National University of Singapore and lead author of the report, said the research suggested there was no such thing as an optimum number of working hours for wellbeing. “Instead, doing meaningful and

useful work, having a positive relationship with colleagues and low work intensity are particularly important for employees' mental health,” she said.

“Meaningful and useful work is important for mental health”

The researchers also cautioned against reducing working hours without a corresponding reduction in the amount of work expected, warning that the current debate over-emphasised the impact of reducing hours on mental health. In particular, it noted that a compressed week – where employees work the same number of hours over fewer days – could “lead to higher work intensity or a harsher social environment” if not managed correctly.

But, that doesn't mean shorter hours are always bad. Dr Daiga Kamerade, reader in work and wellbeing at the University of Salford and one of the report's co-authors, added that creating “more high-quality, shorter-hour jobs” would be an efficient way to reduce unemployment and protect mental health as the UK looks to recover from the economic impact of the pandemic.



The German court ruled the man's fall was a workplace accident

{Employment law}

## Stairs count as man's commute, court rules

A man who slipped and fell down the stairs on the way from his bed to his home office can claim on his workplace accident insurance because he was technically commuting, a German court has ruled.

The unnamed man was walking down his own spiral staircase from his first-floor bedroom to his desk on the floor below when he slipped and broke his back, according to the *Guardian*.

His insurer initially refused to pay out on the

grounds that the journey did not count as a commute.

However, the Federal Social Court found that the man's first morning trip from his bed to his home office was an insured work route.

"If the insured activity is carried out in the household of the insured person or at another location, insurance cover is provided to the same extent as when the activity is carried out at the company premises," the German-language ruling said.

{Health & wellbeing}

## Mental ill-health on the rise

Stress, anxiety and depression were the cause of half of all work-related illnesses in the last year, the government's health and safety watchdog has said. More than 800,000 people experienced work-related stress, anxiety or depression in 2020-21, the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) revealed in its annual summary, of which 451,000 were newly reported. Unsurprisingly, coronavirus

was a major contributor towards poor mental health among workers over the last year. However, there were many other causes, including rising workloads, lack of support, violence, threats or bullying and changes at work.

"The 12-month period in question coincides with the first national lockdown. The latest figures reinforce our previous concerns around the scale of this issue," said Sarah Albon, the CEO of the HSE.

{Health & wellbeing}

## Homeless risk being fired

Two-fifths of employers said they would try to sack a staff member if they were made homeless, a survey of employers by the charity Crisis found. Of the 250 firms polled, 42 per cent admitted they would likely seek to terminate an employee's contract if they were homeless.

Additionally, almost three in five (58 per cent) said it was likely homelessness would have a negative impact on a prospective employee's application, while a similar number (56 per cent) said it would be detrimental to a

current worker's job.

However, the report said it was unclear even among employers as to why businesses expected such negative outcomes for homeless staff. When asked if they would provide support for people, 84 per cent said they would refer them to an employee assistance programme, and 90 per cent said they would offer them time off.

One employer told Crisis: "We'd help them as much as possible but ultimately domestic issues are not the employer's responsibility."

{Pay & reward}

## Pensions changes could cost employers

Proposed legislation expanding auto-enrolment pensions to include thousands more employees, including younger workers and lower earners, could lead to higher costs for employers, experts have warned. A bill, introduced to parliament by Conservative MP Richard Holden, would see the minimum age drop from 22 to 18, giving employees an extra four years of savings towards their pensions.

The proposal would also scrap the £10,000 minimum earning

threshold that currently triggers auto-enrolment, meaning that all workers over 18 would be enrolled.

Think tank Onward estimated that the changes would allow younger workers to save an additional £20,267.

But the bill could lead to higher costs for employers, who currently contribute at least 3 per cent towards employees' pension savings.

David Robbins, director at Willis Towers Watson, said employees with a large proportion of part-time staff would be most likely to see cost increases. "The changes would reduce revenues by more than £1bn by diverting employers' remuneration spend from taxable and NIC-able salaries to tax and NIC-relieved pension contributions," he said.



MP Richard Holden wants auto-enrolment for younger workers, while Sarah Albon of the HSE warns of worsening mental health at work



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is temporarily closed

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visit [www.nhm.ac.uk](http://www.nhm.ac.uk)

After almost two years of  
fluctuating restrictions,  
many are hoping for a return to  
permanent normality this year

# Omicron: what it will bring for HR in 2022

*Some restrictions are easing (again), but businesses are still beset by Covid absences, as well as a booming jobs market and record inflation*

WORDS FRANCIS CHURCHILL

January was not the start of the year that many businesses were hoping for. Although the UK was spared a post-Christmas lockdown, the Omicron variant still took its toll. More infectious than previous iterations of the virus, hospitals warned of staffing shortages, rail providers introduced reduced timetables and retailers cautioned about shop closures because too many employees were either ill or isolating. The government even asked public sector bodies to prepare for worst case scenarios of 25 per cent absence rates.

But after a week of falling infection rates, the government took the decision to end Plan B measures in England. As of Thursday 27 January, all mandates around face coverings and Covid passes were removed, as was work-from-home advice in England. (At the time of going to print, there had been no changes to the rules announced by the other devolved nations.) Prime minister Boris Johnson went as far as to say that he did not expect to renew the legislation, due to expire on 24 March, that legally mandates people contacted by NHS Test and Trace to self-isolate.

This doesn't mean that concerns earlier this month over Omicron-related absences were completely unfounded. December saw the highest Covid-related absences on record: over the month, 3 per cent of the UK's workforce was either off sick with the virus or not attending work because they had been contacted by Test and Trace or were self isolating, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS). This increased to 7 per cent among service sector businesses including hairdressing and other beauty treatments, while the accommodation and food services sector had an estimated Covid-related absence level of 6 per cent.

But the government isn't alone in feeling optimistic about the year ahead. "The Omicron storm finally broke in December, but the booming jobs market was barely blown off course," says Jack Kennedy, UK economist at Indeed, off the back of another set of promising labour market statistics. ONS figures released in January 2022 showed that, once again, payrolled employment was up, while unemployment was down.

The figures are largely encouraging,

says Jonathan Boys, labour market economist at the CIPD, and indicating that the end of the furlough scheme didn't have as dramatic an effect on the labour market as some feared. But they also point to a challenging year ahead for employers: vacancies also reached a new record high in the three months to December, albeit the rate of growth is still slowing from its peak last July, meaning that competition for candidates will remain fierce.

In part because of this, the year ahead promises to be one of both spiralling wage-increases and a simultaneous crunch on individuals' real earnings. "From creative sectors to sales, events and technology, we are witnessing historic wage growth as businesses offer higher salaries to win the war for talent," says Paul Farrer, founder and chairman of Aspire, who predicted that high staff turnover rates would keep vacancy levels high for some time. At the same time, inflation is promising to eat into any wage increases – the ONS estimated the growth in average total pay of 4.2 per cent in the three months to November 2021 fell to just 0.4 per cent when adjusted for inflation.

"Rising inflation means that Britain's cost of living squeeze will continue to get tighter over the coming months, particularly when energy bills jump in April," says Jack Leslie, senior economist at the Resolution Foundation, which predicts that the fall in real wages could continue well into this summer, and were likely to get worse before they get better. "The impact of high inflation in terms of shrinking pay packets is becoming wearily familiar to younger workers, who have already experienced three sustained periods of falling real wages in their short careers," Leslie adds.

Not all employers will be able to increase wages, says Boys, but there are still things firms can do to attract and retain a wide pool of talent in the year ahead. "Employers will have to ensure that they are taking steps to widen their recruitment strategies and provide flexible jobs to ensure they can attract and retain older workers, people with caring responsibilities and those with long-term health conditions that are willing and able to work," he says.



Legal requirements to wear face coverings in England were relaxed at the end of January

**"We'll see historic wage growth as businesses try to win the war for talent"**

## Latest ONS data brings cautious optimism

The labour market appears to still be in a post-lockdown boom, the latest data from the ONS has shown.

The number of job vacancies in the three months to December 2021 rose to a record high of 1,247,000, an increase of 462,000 on the three months to March 2020. However, the rate of growth continued to slow, a trend since its peak in the three months to July 2021.

Experimental single month vacancy data showed a decrease in the number of vacancies for the second month in a row, which could suggest a return to normality. However, unlike the quarterly data, the single month figures are not seasonally adjusted.

At the same time, the number of payrolled employees increased in December to 29.5 million – up 184,000 on November 2021 and up 409,000 on February 2020.





# Can (and should) firms cut sick pay for unvaccinated staff?

*Several big-name businesses have announced reductions to company sick pay for unjabbed workers asked to isolate – but is that legal?*

WORDS CAITLIN POWELL

**A** growing list of businesses have made headlines after they announced cuts to sick pay of unvaccinated staff.

In January, Wessex Water and retailers Next, Morrisons and Ocado joined Ikea in adopting a policy that states unvaccinated workers who are self-isolating as a contact of someone who has tested positive will receive as little as £96.35 a week, the Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) minimum, unless there are mitigating circumstances.

Unvaccinated staff will still receive full sick pay if they test positive for Covid.

Rachel Suff, senior policy adviser for employment relations at the CIPD, warned that the policies could be “divisive for the workforce”.

She said: “While cutting sick pay for certain workers could encourage some to get vaccinated, it could also mean that some are less likely to test themselves or self-isolate because they may not be able to afford to take time off if sick pay is limited.”

Suff also suggested that these policies could come with a potential legal risk. Such risks include

discrimination claims, according to Martin Williams, head of employment at Mayo Wynne Baxter. Making this decision is “not without consequences”, he explained, because an individual could say they have a philosophical belief against vaccination.

However, Yvonne Gallagher, partner at Harbottle and Lewis, told *People Management* that there has only been one employment tribunal claim on the issue of whether vaccine refusal is a protected belief and the tribunal concluded that it was not.

“This was in a case where the individual concerned had taken up other forms of vaccination, and so could

**“Cutting sick pay for certain workers could mean some are less likely to self-isolate”**

not demonstrate a deeply held belief precluding vaccination,” she said, but warned the position might be different if there were longer-standing objections.

Gallagher also stated that, with the reduction of isolation periods for those testing positive for Covid and increase in fully vaccinated individuals contracting the virus, “it may become more difficult for employers to justify different treatment of unvaccinated employees”.

As of 17 January, the minimum self-isolation period for people testing positive for Covid in England was lowered to five full days, subject to returning a negative lateral flow test on days five and six. But reducing the time won't fix the UK's fundamental problem with Statutory Sick Pay, according to the TUC.

The union published a new analysis which estimated that over a quarter of a million private sector workers (267,800) were self-isolating without decent sick pay or any sick pay between 13 and 26 December.

Of this number, around 209,900 workers had to rely on SSP, which the organisation said is “too low to meet basic living costs”, and 57,900 got no sick pay at all.

This is not the first time SSP has been criticised. In December, the CIPD warned that the SSP system is “broken and needs urgent reform”.

In a survey of 1,045 senior HR professionals and decision-makers, the organisation revealed that nearly

two-thirds (62 per cent) of employers agree that the SSP rate is too low and should be increased.

SSP is only available to individuals earning at least £120 a week, and is not currently available to those who are self-employed.

The CIPD warned that 17.2 per cent of the UK's workforce – around 5.6 million people – do not currently qualify for the benefit, based on analysis of Labour Force Survey data from the Office for National Statistics.

“The UK's SSP system has been broken for a long time and the pandemic has only highlighted its failure to protect the lowest paid and most vulnerable members of our society,” said Suff.

She added that, despite a number of government consultations proposing reforms to SSP, there are currently no real plans to improve the system.

“SSP deficiencies can have a devastating impact on people's health and wellbeing, including financial distress,” she said, highlighting that, with an ageing workforce and skills shortages, it was “even more important” that there was an effective SSP system to help employers attract and retain a diverse workforce.

As a result of its findings, the CIPD called for the government to raise the level of SSP to be at least equivalent to someone earning the National Minimum Wage or the National Living Wage, remove the lower earnings limit and introduce consultation on wider reform.

**“The CIPD has warned that SSP is broken and needs urgent reform”**

It also encouraged employers to have a financial wellbeing strategy as well as considering introducing an occupational sick pay scheme to enhance pay above the statutory minimum for employees who can't work when sick.

Mike Brewer, chief economist at the Resolution Foundation, welcomed the calls for reform and called for workers on sick pay to receive at least the value of the Real Living Wage as set by the Living Wage Foundation – which is higher than the Statutory National Living Wage.

“Statutory Sick Pay... misses out two million of our lowest-paid workers – something which is of particular concern given the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic,” he told *People Management*.

Brewer highlighted that only one in eight workers in England are covered by the government's £500 Test and Trace Support Payment, and explained that accessible short-term support during the winter for all workers is an immediate priority.

In response to this report from the CIPD, a government spokesperson told *People Management* that there is a “comprehensive package of financial support in place for workers who need to self-isolate to help stop the spread of coronavirus” which includes a £500 payment for those on the lowest incomes who have been contacted by NHS Test and Trace.

“Many employers pay more than the minimum level of Statutory Sick Pay and employers with up to 250 staff can be reimbursed the cost of up to a fortnight's Statutory Sick Pay,” they added.

## What reasons have companies given?

Discussing its new policy, **Ikea** told the *Daily Mail*: “We appreciate that this is an emotive topic and all circumstances will be considered on a case-by-case basis, therefore anyone in doubt or concerned about their situation is encouraged to speak to their manager.”

A **Next** spokesperson shared a similar statement, saying that the issue is “highly emotive” but it

needs to “balance the needs of the business with those of workers and shareholders”.

**Wessex Water** also provided rationale for its decision: “The vast majority of our workforce has been vaccinated and it's important as a company providing essential services with key

worker employees, that the remainder get vaccinated to protect themselves, customers and their colleagues. Absences due to Covid have doubled in the last week, so we need everyone to be available so we can continue to provide uninterrupted essential water and sewerage services.”



# CIPD

People Management  
Awards 2022

## Back for 2022!

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**#CIPDPMA22**

# Cryptocurrency: the future of payroll?

*Are salary systems due for an upgrade, or will bank transfers continue to reign supreme?*

**J**ust like cash made way for cheques, and cheques eventually succumbed to bank transfers, it's time for payroll departments to brace themselves for another step-change in how staff are paid – at least so say proponents of cryptocurrency.

Once the currency of choice in the shady parts of the internet, cryptocurrency is fast becoming more mainstream. A recent deVere Group poll found that half of under-24s and a third of 25- to 40-year-olds would be happy to receive half of their salary in cryptocurrency, while mayor of New York City Eric Adams has pledged to take his first three paychecks this way.

Bitcoin is perhaps the most famous cryptocurrency, but there are

thousands to choose from: the term is a catch-all phrase for any virtual currency where ownership of funds and transactions are recorded digitally via a decentralised system – for

example blockchain, which stores multiple copies of a database across a network of machines. No banks or central authorities – including governments – are involved.

Paul Rogash, CEO of BetU, has been paying his staff this way since launching the betting firm in July 2021. Its 25 members of staff can opt to be paid in 'stablecoin', a cryptocurrency that has a guaranteed dollar equivalent, but many choose BetU's own currency because they see it having a greater potential for value growth. "Some employees paid in BetU tokens when we first launched the token now have eight times their original salary due to the token appreciating in value," he says.

**"Some staff paid in BetU tokens now have eight times their original salary"**



**Experts warn that manual crypto payments may not be a good fit with automated payroll systems**

## So many cryptocurrencies, so little time

There are thousands of cryptocurrencies to choose from, from small-scale to the multi-billion dollar. Here are three of the biggest:

### Bitcoin

Costing a fraction of a penny when it was first released in 2009, a single bitcoin is now worth just over £30,000. The

currency's total market capitalisation – the value of every available bitcoin added together – is now around £582bn.

### Ether

Created in 2013, ether, the native cryptocurrency of the Ethereum network, has the second-highest market capitalisation at £275bn.

A single token is currently worth around £2,300.

### Tether

Known as a 'stablecoin' because it maintains a cash reserve for every token issued, Tether keeps the value of tokens at US\$1. It has the third-highest market capitalisation at nearly £58bn.

However, although a lot of cryptocurrencies are going up in value in this way, and many people actively invest in them as if they were stocks, this doesn't give companies the green light to safely adopt the technology, adds Rogash. Firms risk running into issues if employees wish to transfer the tokens to their traditional bank

accounts, he warns. On top of this, crypto payments are usually made manually, meaning they might not play well with established automated payroll systems. Companies also risk running into problems if an employee were to provide the wrong 'wallet address': if this happens, it's impossible to recover lost funds.



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# Think your hard work deserves recognition?

*The CIPD People Management Awards are now open for entries – a handful of last year’s winners tell us what taking home the trophy has meant to them*

**B**elieve it or not, it’s the start of a new year already, and with 2021 having been another challenging 12 months for the people profession, there’s no better time to reflect on everything you achieved last year and share your incredible work with your peers.

To that end, the CIPD People Management Awards are now open for 2022 and ready to accept your entries. There are now 23 categories to choose from, including a new addition for this year: Best responsible business initiative.

If that’s not convincing enough, some of last year’s champions have told us below what winning has meant to their teams and to their organisations.

\* For more information and to download an entry pack, visit [cipdpmas.co.uk](http://cipdpmas.co.uk). Early-bird entries close on **1 April 2022**, and the final deadline is **27 April 2022**



The awards are a great chance to reconnect with colleagues and friends and to celebrate the profession’s inspirational work

“The achievement has enabled us to roll out the scheme further, with a selection of our remote colleagues adopting a more agile approach to work. The win has certainly been an inspiration to the leaders across the Group.”  
**The Sovini Group**  
*Winner of Best flexible working initiative in 2021*

“Winning the award was the perfect way to reflect back on a truly unique year and recognise the phenomenal contribution across the whole HR and Communications team”  
**Severn Trent**  
*Winner of Best employee experience initiative in 2021*

“Our pride at being part of this team really came to light when we were drafting the entry. People recognise the CIPD awards and having won will help us with future campaigns and proposals.”  
**Shared Services Connected**  
*Winner of Best digital/technology initiative in 2021*

“We’re so proud to have won, particularly when up against so many superb nominees. It’s the best possible recognition of our incredible Capability team. Winning has enabled us to further promote the quality of our learning offer internally as well as externally.”  
**Boots UK**  
*Winner of Best L&D initiative (private sector) in 2021*

“I gained a lot from entering the awards, and even more from winning. I can say the work I’ve done was recognised by a professional institution and is valued across the globe.”  
**Khaji Kushumbayev**  
*Winner of the Michael Kelly Outstanding Student Award (Foundation/intermediate) in 2021*

ALEX DEVERILL



# You spoke We listened

## Introducing new benefits for members

New ground-breaking tools and courses to help you stay ahead of the game now available on the the CIPD Learning Hub.

**And the best news?** Access is **FREE to all CIPD members.**

Visit the Learning Hub to:

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- Develop your knowledge and the defining behaviours of our profession with **My Courses**



Discover your new member benefits at  
[cipd.co.uk/learning-benefits](https://cipd.co.uk/learning-benefits)



# Woman who did not go to work over Covid concerns loses discrimination claim

*Worker claimed her fear of getting the virus was a protected belief*

**A** woman who stopped attending her workplace because she was scared of catching Covid was not discriminated against, a tribunal has ruled.

The woman, identified only as X, had taken the decision not to return to work in July 2020, citing “reasonable and justifiable health and safety concerns” around Covid in the workplace. She told the Manchester tribunal she also had “a fear of passing [Covid] on” to her partner, who was at “high risk of getting seriously unwell” from the virus.

“I made a protected disclosure in good faith and asserted my statutory employment rights about a danger to the health and safety of myself and others, which I reasonably believed to be serious and imminent,” X told the tribunal.

However, on informing her employer – identified only as Y – of her decision not to return to work, X was informed that she would no longer be paid. According to X’s statement, her employer told her: “I do not accept you had a reasonable belief that returning to work would put you or your husband in serious and imminent danger.”

X argued that her fears around the dangers of coronavirus amounted to a genuinely held philosophical belief, which she described as “a fear of catching Covid-19 and a need to protect myself and others”.

Because her wages had been withheld, X argued that she had suffered a financial detriment because of this belief.

Judge Leach did not dispute that X’s concerns were genuine. However, he ruled that a fear did not amount to a belief, describing it instead as a “reaction to a threat”. He also described X’s concerns as “a widely held opinion [that] attending a crowded place during the height of the current pandemic would increase the risk of contracting Covid-19 and may therefore be dangerous.”

“Few people may argue against that. However, a fear of physical harm and views about how best to reduce or avoid a risk of physical harm is not a belief for the purposes of section 10 [of the Equality Act],” he said.

Kate Palmer, HR advice and consultancy director at Peninsula, said that while an employment tribunal’s ruling was not binding on other courts, this ruling was an indication of how future cases might be treated. “A different court could well find differently on a different day,” she said.

“Nevertheless, the ruling is indicative of the way this matter is likely to be treated and will give some comfort to employers who are faced with similar accusations...”

“Both discrimination and Covid are serious matters; however, this case suggests that fear of one does not lead to the other.”

# Shop worker with dementia asked about retiring was victim of discrimination

A supermarket worker with dementia was constructively unfairly dismissed and a victim of disability and age discrimination after her employer asked her if she wanted to retire, a tribunal has ruled.

Joan Hutchinson, who was 73 at the time, had worked at Asda’s Queensferry store for 20 years and resigned on 25 September 2020 after being treated “unfavourably”.

The tribunal found Hutchinson’s resignation happened only after her employer breached the “implied term of trust and confidence”, including being asked about retirement and having her bag searched without permission.

The tribunal ruled that the multiple suggestions of retirement to Hutchinson, which happened when Hutchinson started displaying signs of her illness and while she was shielding during the first lockdown, “may have been said in a well-meaning way” but amounted to age-related harassment and direct age discrimination. “It made the claimant feel as though she was being pushed out of the business or that the respondent felt that she was too old to be there,” the tribunal said.

It also said that the search of her bag, which happened when a colleague attempted to help Hutchinson find her keys and bus pass, “had the effect of violating her dignity”, noting the conduct was unwanted and related to her condition because it was brought about by her memory impairment and so amounted to disability-related harassment.

An Asda spokesperson said: “Asda is an inclusive employer that is proud to employ colleagues of all ages. We apologise to Ms Hutchinson for her experiences.”

# Digital right-to-work checks to be made permanent

Digital right-to-work checks are to be made permanent from April, the government has announced.

The change was initially deployed to help with remote working in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, and was set to end on 5 April this year. However, the government has said digital checks will now continue past this date.

The move has been

welcomed by employer groups, including the Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC). “Recruiters have told us throughout the pandemic that this system is quicker and easier, reducing the time it takes to get candidates into work while increasing compliance and helping keep staff safe,” said Neil Carberry, REC chief executive.

However, the cost of the digital right-to-work checks is set to be

funded by employers, with an individual check costing between £1.45 and £70, according to the Home Office, which Carberry said could impact smaller firms.

In addition, the costs will only be applied to documents from UK nationals, while the existing free online service can still be used for applications from overseas, something that critics have said might disadvantage UK applicants.

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*I'll tell you something...*

# MATT ELLIOTT

CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER  
AT BANK OF IRELAND

*Collaborating to improve wellbeing will be a priority once Covid is over*

**N**ow the second year of the Covid crisis has drawn to a close, we're still trying to adjust to hybrid working as well as navigate further twists and turns on the road to recovery – as the current wave and new variant remind us – but the peak intensity is hopefully behind us.

For HR teams, the pandemic has been a defining moment in terms of how we stepped up and provided support and leadership to our organisations. Before Covid, wellbeing was arguably a relatively niche area which some colleagues may even have felt was intruding on their non-work lives. Fast-forward 18 months, and it's become a core part of how our organisations navigated the pandemic.

Covid has changed us. We're not going to revert to life as it was in March 2020; we take the best learnings from the pandemic and apply them to our future plans. And in that context, wellbeing will remain core to what we do as people leaders.

Wellbeing has become mainstream. It shouldn't be seen as a standalone topic because it influences the whole spectrum of HR priorities, not least the organisational culture we are creating. In that sense, wellbeing is part of the overall evolution of HR itself. Having challenged ourselves to become more analytical, business-focused and commercial, it seemed at times caring for our colleagues was a strategically questionable priority.



It's right and welcome that we are more overtly responsible for their wellbeing.

The scope of wellbeing has necessarily evolved too. At Bank of Ireland we focus on the 'four W's': wellbeing, workspace, workload, and working day. It provides the lens through which we view the day-to-day experience of working in the bank. During Covid, this meant becoming a point of connection for our colleagues and helping to mitigate the gap in their social lives. A third of staff now use our private Instagram wellbeing

account, sharing good practice and cheering each other on.

This isn't a passing fad. As some normality returns, our employees will need us to stay focused on their wellbeing in the years

to come. Recognising this is crucial. The mental health impact of the pandemic is largely ahead of us, and now colleagues have seen HR play a different role, there is no going back. So, how do we progress from here?

The first thing we must do is provide the essentials required to support colleagues, from the basics of Employee Assistance Programmes to providing a connection through communication that is personal and meaningful.

Secondly, addressing the challenges that come with new ways of working, whether it's a return to the office for those used to being at home, or the uncertainties of getting hybrid right.

Thirdly, line managers will need help to understand their

expanded role and develop their skill sets so that they are more ready, and able, to care for their teams.

Fourth, our organisations must address mental health directly and persistently. We should stand ready to support colleagues when they need it, whether the reason is work-related or not.

Finally, if we are to create truly inclusive cultures, leaders need to model being caring in their day-to-day actions.

The pandemic has been a defining moment for HR, and we've responded in a way that we can be proud of. Looking ahead, it's evidently possible (and necessary) to be both caring and commercial.

Our duty of care has evolved, and in recognising our greater responsibility for people, the HR community should collaborate to accelerate learning across our organisations. **PM**

**"Wellbeing is part of the overall evolution of HR itself"**

# In practice

*Real organisations, real challenges*

Experian

# “People have told me how great our culture is”

*The financial services firm is retaining its identity as it moves to hybrid*

**Y**ou would expect one of the world's largest financial information companies to be a whizz with data. So it's unsurprising that global information services firm Experian's people and engagement data has allowed it to navigate the pandemic with relative ease in workforce terms. It conducts annual and quarterly 'pulse' staff surveys, gauging everything from its employees' thoughts about working for the company to their mental health, with a people analytics team dedicated to HR data able to provide insights to senior executives and line managers. It even uses data to predict attrition. No mean feat in a company of more than 20,000 employees across 44 countries. "The main use of our data is monitoring how people feel about working here," explains chief people officer Jacky Simmonds. "We share that with the operating committee – each team member takes ownership and we take action where necessary."

And it seems the majority of staff are very happy working for Experian – in 2021 it undertook the Great Place to

Work survey for the first time, and was recognised as a Great Place to Work in 21 countries, with employees reporting feeling connected to the company's culture and purpose – even the 3,000 people it has hired remotely since the pandemic began. The culture itself, Simmonds explains, is "a blend of high performance and people first", with the most positive aspects having been dialled up during Covid. "People have mentioned how great the culture here is, and generally, behaviour drives a culture," she says. "Since being remote, people have been a lot more collaborative, a lot more thoughtful about how they engage and include people in their teams, and have put a lot more structure into how they do that."

But in the UK, given each of its global offices are in countries at different stages of the pandemic, developing its culture with reduced face-to-face contact is

**"Our message is, whatever works for you, we can make work"**

something the firm is planning not just during Covid, but in the long term, too. Its more than 3,500 UK-based employees now have the choice of being hybrid or home-based, as well as 'hub' roles connected to an office, or 'roam' positions relevant for sales teams who need to spend time travelling. It's also offering every employee globally the opportunity to work a maximum of 30 days outside their 'home' country. As part of these plans,

Experian is cutting its number of UK sites from 17 to five and investing in creating more collaborative work spaces, including an overhaul of its UK HQ in Nottingham. "People can also manage their day how they want, including different start and finish times," explains Simmonds. "Our message is 'whatever works for you, we can make work', and that's had a really positive response."

Whether by luck or design, the move to flexible and hybrid working also came at a time when the organisation had increased its focus on diversity, equity



**Jacky Simmonds says Experian has gender diversity targets in place and receives great support from the company's ED&I networks**

and inclusion, with Simmonds having led on creating the organisation's first ever global DE&I report, published in summer 2021. The firm's chief diversity officer in North America was also promoted to global diversity officer. Previously, each country did its own work in this area, but there was "a lot of duplication of effort," she explains. "We felt it would be much better to maximise our impact if we brought it together globally, and we had a much better picture of where we were," she says. Experian now has plans to capture demographic data globally (although Simmonds admits that's more difficult in some countries), and has put targets in place for gender diversity, aiming for women to make up 47 per cent of its total workforce by 2024, compared to the current 44 per cent, and for its executive committee and their direct reports to be 30 per cent female, compared to the current 26 per cent.

Simmonds is also effusive about the role employee networks have played – and continue to play – in Experian's ED&I efforts, having been a constant source of constructive feedback, and work is ongoing to implement a more constant framework, as their size and scale varies widely. "They've been great in telling us what's working and not working," explains Simmonds. "It's a fantastic opportunity for them to help us tune in to what matters to employees."

The employee networks have also been involved in Experian's pertinent work to improve financial inclusion, both among its staff and the communities it serves. (In 2020, it launched United for Financial Health, an initiative that partners with not-for-profits and aims to deliver tools and resources to 100 million people across the globe by 2024.) Staff from its network for black employees, Black at Experian, recently undertook work educating local communities about access to credit and personal finance. "That's been a great bridge, going into communities and sharing what we do, but also getting feedback that feeds into our product development for underserved communities," Simmonds says.

Experian's plans show no sign of slowing and Simmonds has ambitions for the company to make the top 25 Great Places to Work in the world in the not-too-distant future: "Covid has given us the opportunity to adapt, and it's important to focus on how we keep people connected to our purpose and provide great career opportunities."

# “We need to help frontline staff feel more valued”

*The charity introduced benefits that were important to employees but crucially didn't break the bank*

**A**lthough no sector has been immune to the effects of the pandemic, few have felt it quite like health and social care, with the extra pressure on an already overstretched workforce leaving many staff burnt out, and some considering leaving altogether.

But for many organisations in the field, the extra challenges of the last two years have also catalysed more drastic, longer-term improvements to how they hire, manage and care for their people. For London-based substance misuse charity Westminster Drug Project (WDP), Covid acted as a springboard for an overhaul of its people strategy to transform an “old-school”, reactive and bureaucratic HR function, explains head of people and talent development Symon Wheelhouse.

During the four years preceding Wheelhouse joining the charity in 2019, it had successfully won five contracts and almost doubled in size. “The organisation kept growing and did lots of positive work, but some structural things weren't there,” Wheelhouse

explains. A promotion into his current role after a year gave him the green light to push through his plans.

Today, WDP works under a people partnership model, and has a “cascade” of information across different departments thanks to HR partners meeting with service and operations managers once or twice a month. “They have conversations about challenges, recruitment needs and sickness absence data, and look at where there might be any issues,” Wheelhouse explains.

As part of its revamped people strategy, the charity also carried out a pay review and benchmarked all starting salaries to the upper quartile within the sector, with almost all (89 per cent) of its 380 staff seeing a total reward increase. “However, we're still a charity working with limited funds,” Wheelhouse highlights. “We'll never be able to offer the same rates as the private sector, but we can at least commit to being the upper quartile – that's sustainable for us and more importantly, the best we can do for our staff”.

**“I wanted to look at a lot of people policies and ask ‘what can I rip up and chuck out of the window?’”**

But despite not being able to stretch to larger pay increases, the charity was still able to introduce several cost-neutral benefits after listening to employees' needs. Staff now receive full sick pay from the first day of absence for up to six months, and then another six months at half pay, which, Wheelhouse points out, is commonly seen in the NHS. Employees also have the right to request flexible working from the first day of their employment.

Alongside this, Wheelhouse and his eight-strong HR team introduced a number of family-friendly leave policies, such as paid time off for a child's first day of school or for pet bereavement, on top of leave for staff undergoing IVF or gender transition, or experiencing domestic abuse, menopause and perimenopause.

“I wanted to look at a lot of people policies and ask ‘what can I rip up and chuck out of the window?’” he says. “It's not possible to do that in every set of circumstances, but our people are on the front line supporting the most vulnerable in society, so it was really important that we did this in as broad a way as possible.”

Following the overhaul, recruitment has increased exponentially, according



**Simon Wheelhouse says that, as a charity, WDP can't pay the highest wages but staff deserve the best possible pay and wellbeing support**

to Wheelhouse, with a marked increase in applications and subsequent appointments following the introduction of the new policies – specifically in nursing and frontline roles, against the current tide of the sector.

“As a charity, supporting our staff who in turn support vulnerable people aligns really well,” he explains. “We’re here to help people improve their lives and it’s important for me as a people practitioner to recognise that all staff have lived experience, whether that’s relevant to what we do as an organisation or not.”

However, WDP’s benefits offering is also helping to make waves across the wider industry: the health and social care sector is a “very competitive tender environment”, and under TUPE regulations, employees legally retain their terms and conditions when they are moved to a new employer. “When people are looking at jobs, they look at our benefits and rewards package against all others, so it’s gently encouraging other organisations within the sector to say ‘WDP are offering this, now we need to step up’.”

And this ‘ripple effect’ is particularly important to Wheelhouse as a practitioner. “I like being a bit positively disruptive,” he admits. “If there’s a way to influence frontline workers in the sector being better valued in any small way, then people in positions of power need to step up and make those changes”.

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## Cost of living crisis

# Will your staff need a pay rise this year?

*Record rates of inflation and a spiralling cost of living mean employees are feeling the squeeze – but HR can help*

WORDS JO FARAGHER

As HR teams returned to their (mostly virtual) desks after the festive break in January, any residual feelings of relaxation evaporated immediately. They were rushing to cover Omicron-related absences, desperately ramping up recruitment to deal with skills shortages and the threat of the 'Great Resignation' and wondering whether the next government announcement could be the one that pushed their stress levels over the edge. But there's another spectre at the table, and one that could have even longer-term impacts on HR strategy – high and rising inflation.

After decades of reasonably low UK inflation and relatively low wage increases as a result, when inflation hit 5.4 per cent in the year to December – its highest rate in 30 years – many economists and observers saw this as a cause for concern. Unions called for immediate action to protect

As the price of goods and services continues to climb, firms will be looking for innovative ways to offer financial help to workers



**An energy bill price cap review in April could mean employees' pay being further squeezed**

workers on lower pay, claiming they would face a cost of living crisis without real-term pay rises. In April, when the national living wage is set to increase by 6.6 per cent to £9.50 per hour, this won't be enough to absorb the cost of living rises caused by inflation, as workers will also face a 1.25 per cent hike in national insurance contributions and tax. The Institute for Fiscal Studies said that "price increases of this magnitude have significant implications for living standards", using the example of an individual with a salary income of £30,000 in April 2021 (and post-tax income of £24,060) needing to see wage growth of 7.1 per cent to April 2022 in order to maintain the same standard of living. Former Bank of England chief economist Andy Haldane, meanwhile, warned of "the sort of wage-price spiral familiar from the 1970s and 1980s" if organisations tried to outpace prices with wages.

While a return to "stagflation" of the 1970s is unlikely (see box on page 28), Haldane's warning is not without foundation. A poll by the British Chambers of Commerce in

January found that 58 per cent of businesses planned to raise prices for goods and services in the next three months, and from April the cap on energy bills will be reviewed, meaning thousands of households could face huge rises in utility payments. Faced with mounting bills and higher prices at the supermarket, a 1 or 2 per cent pay rise gets eaten up pretty quickly. And in a tight labour market where workers are evaluating their employers with a critical eye, the knee-jerk reaction could be to increase pay across the board. Ruth Thomas, pay equity strategist at Payscale.com, offers a word of caution: "Tracking real wages gives us a sense of just how much money you have after you have adjusted for the impact of inflation," she says. "In the years 2000 to 2008, real wages were rising steadily. But since the financial crisis they have flatlined, and we have experienced a decade of lost real wage growth." The recent rises in inflation will drive workers' expectations, she adds, and many employers will increase wages amid fears that staff will move

for a better offer. "Raising wages is one solution in the face of immediate demand and perceived talent shortages, but this is a very transactional approach," says Thomas. "Our research supports that perceptions of fair pay are more important when it comes to talent retention than actual pay. So hiking pay for new hires will drive pay compression internally and you actually put more talent at risk."

Over the course of 2021, the average pay rise in the private sector hovered around 2 per cent, despite the economic pressures of the pandemic. But pay analysts predict this will climb in 2022 due to the pressure on reward teams to reflect cost of living rises and hold on to restless staff. The CIPD's latest *Labour Market Outlook*, covering autumn 2021, found that pay intentions for the coming year had already grown to 2.5 per cent in the private sector. Ken Mulkearn, director of research at Incomes Data Research, takes a similar view. "Most pay setting takes place in January and April and we'll probably see the median [pay rise]

increase further,” he says. “Inflation affects everyone so is important for annual pay reviews. But pay tends to lag behind inflation, so most rises will lag the former and be below it. Employers generally want to maintain the value of their employees’ wages relative to the cost of living, affordability permitting. If they don’t, there’s an impact on morale because employees are dealing with petrol price rises, the cost of clothing and the like.”

CIPD senior reward adviser Charles Cotton warns against simply offering lucrative starting salaries in a bid to lure in hard-to-find talent, however. “The problem with giving new recruits more money is that you have to justify why they’re getting it and the rest of the workforce isn’t. Perhaps it’s new skills, but over time that diminishes as existing staff acquire them, creating potential pay disparities and disputes,” he says. Being open and fair about how pay is set, and offering a rate that provides employees with a reasonable standard of living is more important, he advises. This could take a number of guises: increasing pay frequency so employees can cope if there is a sudden financial emergency; financial education or awareness programmes that stop them getting into trouble in the first place; higher than statutory

occupational sick pay or support with living costs such as childcare or travel. “Crucially, employers need to normalise conversations about money so people don’t feel embarrassed seeking help. The earlier they can act, the less likely money problems will impact their mental wellbeing and productivity,” Cotton adds.

If across-the-board pay rises are not manageable, how can reward teams make their reward budgets go further? “First, have a strategy that’s longer than one or two months,” advises Duncan Brown, an independent reward adviser and principal associate at the Institute for Employment Studies. “For much of the pandemic, HR and reward

teams were simply getting through to the end of the week, dealing with issues such as furlough. Now they need to give this time and resource. Think about what will recruit, retain and engage staff rather than the cost. If you’re looking to cut costs first, you’re looking at it the wrong way round.”

Eva Jesmiatka, rewards director at Willis Towers Watson, says this approach is becoming more common among clients. “A lot of companies are looking at reward in the context of the broader employee experience,”

she explains. “Lots of people right now are thinking about a change in career so they’re considering ‘what do we offer as a company?’ and ‘how can we be an appealing employer?’ because they don’t have an endless amount of money to throw at the issue.” In the talent-hungry digital sector, she adds by example, employers are looking at what skills development they offer rather than over-inflated salaries. Willis Towers Watson’s research into what employees value identified four, non-financial elements: the purpose of the organisation and whether they feel inspired by it; the type of work people do; the type of career they can have; and how they are treated. “Leaders assume employees want more money, but really they want opportunities to grow and develop, or a better work-life balance,” she says.

Indeed, changes to work patterns or job design can have a major influence on employees’ satisfaction with their salary. “Take stock of how you organise jobs and whether you can improve employee productivity by making people work smarter rather than harder,” advises Cotton. “Productivity improvements will pay for increases in wages, while upskilling people means they can progress in their careers but is also beneficial for the company.” Offering flexible working arrangements, reasonable notice of

**“If employers don’t maintain the value of staff wages it has an impact on morale”**

## How does inflation actually work?

Put simply, inflation is the rate at which prices are rising for goods and services. Small increases in inflation may feel unnoticeable, but over the long term can have an impact on how far our wages will stretch – the cost of living. If wages rise in line with inflation, in theory that cost of living should be manageable. Above or below-inflationary pay rises could mean the difference between being able to manage an unexpected bill and being thrown into debt.

That cost of living rose 5.4 per cent in the year to December 2021: the highest rate of inflation for 30 years. This is measured by the consumer price index (CPI), which tracks the average price of more than 720 goods

and services purchased by households. But a number of unions want employers and the public sector to base wage increases on the retail price index (RPI), which tends to be higher. The RPI takes into account the cost of mortgages, so unions argue this is a more accurate reflection of what employees spend. In their terms, the 6.6 per cent rise in the national living wage from £8.91 to £9.50 in April 2022 will be below inflation, and workers on this rate will struggle to cover the rising cost of living.

In December, the Bank of England decided to increase interest rates for the first time in three years in response to rising inflation, from a record low of 0.1 per cent to 0.25 per cent.

Increasing interest rates is a way of preventing inflation from rising at an unmanageable rate, as it softens demand for goods as the cost of borrowing rises. Interest rates have been at a record low since the start of the pandemic.

In November 2020, the government announced plans to overhaul the way it measures inflation, so by 2030, RPI will be replaced by CPIH. CPIH includes housing costs, but uses ‘rental equivalence’ that looks at how much someone would pay in rental for their property. While this is unlikely to have a major effect on pay bargaining, thousands of employees with pensions in defined benefit (or final salary) schemes could end up worse off.

# Cost of living crisis

## Why we don't want to go back to the 1970s

While the current rate of inflation may seem high at around 5 per cent, this will seem like small fry to anyone who was in the workforce in the 1970s. In the early part of the decade, it was assumed that periods of high inflation were not a problem – a growing economy meant businesses would hire more people, there would be more demand for goods and services and this would keep consumer prices down. But after the oil crisis of 1973 forced petrol prices up sky high, inflation spiked, reaching a high of 22.6 per cent in 1975.

The end result was stagflation, where the prices of staple goods grew quicker than overall economic growth. The government ended up rationing electricity, there were queues at fuel pumps and unemployment grew because factory production became more expensive. An enforced three-day week was introduced. In the latter part of the decade, trade unions began making pay increase demands way above the 5 per cent cap the Labour government had imposed, and 1979 brought a wave of strikes and what became known as the 'winter of discontent'. Thatcher's Conservative government came into power in May that year, and its first task was a sharp rise in interest rates. This tamed inflation, but unemployment and industrial unrest continued to soar until the late 1980s. The following three decades have seen governments maintain a balance of relatively low inflation and interest rates, but also minimal wage increases in real terms.



The 1970s saw ABBA dominate the charts, but against a backdrop of inflation, unemployment and an enforced three-day week

shifts and guaranteed hours not only improves the financial wellbeing of workers, but the reputation of the business. He adds: "This not only impacts employees, but also the organisation as it helps you to stand out in the labour market. Customers don't want to buy from businesses that exploit workers, and investors scrutinise this too."

The pandemic increased employees' focus on physical wellbeing and mental health support, so ensure these benefits are prominently communicated, advises Steve Herbert, head of benefits strategy at Howden Employee Benefits and Wellbeing: "Many group income protection plans have tools free of charge that they didn't have five or 10 years ago, such as free remote GP appointments. Or helping employees understand how to manage their salary through a financial intelligence session is nothing compared to the cost of a pay rise." Smaller, relatively low-cost perks such as local discounts or subscriptions to mindfulness apps can also have a positive impact on engagement where reward budgets are tight, he adds.

And if employees don't know what's available, that budget will go to waste whatever you offer. Stuart Hyland, head of reward advisory for Europe at Aon, says the current situation is an opportunity for reward professionals as well as a challenge. "During the last recession when pay was higher than inflation we reminded employees that, for example, they get life insurance so they don't need to get that from their mortgage provider. Or that their reward package included a tool that can help with the value of their shopping. Communicate with employees about the other benefits they receive from working for you as an employer – not just salary," he says. Where organisations have invested in large-scale online reward platforms, reinforce areas that can soften the impact of price rises – a

purchasing scheme that enables the business to buy supermarket vouchers at a discounted rate, for example. "There will always be someone that can pay people more," adds Hyland, "but you can build loyalty by showing employees you were there with them through thick and thin. This year will be difficult for a lot of people, and showing them what they can have can create a sense of togetherness."

Looking forward, organisations are taking a broader, longer-term view of how pay sits with their values. As part of the push towards 'good work', they argue, that should also mean a fair wage and transparency about how wages are set.

This is reflected in the huge number of companies signing up to become Living Wage employers, offering a higher minimum rate set by the Living Wage Foundation rather than the government's statutory minimum. More than 3,000 organisations have signed up to pay this rate – £9.90 an hour outside London and £11.05 an hour in the capital – since the start of the pandemic. "Covid upped the ante on awareness of the Living Wage in the UK and its counterparts in other countries," adds Brown. "The low-cost, low-pay, just-in-time model has been exposed as totally undesirable in many settings. At the moment we have high price inflation but low employee bargaining power, and this could be an opportunity to turn this around." At the lower-paid end of the spectrum, real cash rises make more of a difference, he argues: something that has driven a rise in unionisation in recent years (6.2 million to 6.6 million between 2016 and 2020, according to the Resolution Foundation) in a bid to secure a decent standard of living for those in precarious employment.

With some predictions of a 2023 election, it's unlikely the current government will ignore the Low Pay Commission's recommendations that the national living wage hits two-thirds of the median wages in 2024, adds Mulkearn. "The pressure on the statutory floor is generally

**"Customers don't want to buy from businesses that exploit workers"**



More employers are signing up to offer the Living Wage as part of the push towards 'good work'

upwards and with talk about a high-wage economy and levelling up, there's political pressure to keep it that way, so I don't see the target changing."

Nikos Bozionelos, professor of international HR management at emlyon business school, adds that unions and other bodies will use inflation to argue for a hefty increase, but this does not guarantee it will happen. "On the other hand, the government may use the argument that it has already pumped substantial amounts of money to support the economy and the active population, along with the healthcare system, during the Covid crisis. Or it might argue that the Covid situation is only temporary, so it cannot implement long-lasting changes as response to a temporary state," he says. There have been some discussions in government about not going ahead with April's tax and NI increases, but Bozionelos adds that "much will depend on the will of the government, as Covid showed that health and social services are critical and they must be funded accordingly. NI contributions serve exactly that purpose."

Ken Charman, CEO of uFlexReward, a spin-off of Unilever, believes HR and reward professionals must become more data driven so they can offer employees a package that matches their needs but also those of the business. "Digitising reward makes a big difference," he

**"Digitising reward makes a difference. It allows staff to decide for themselves"**

argues. "It means you can target tools to help employees while not increasing the total labour cost of the business by trying to keep wages apace with inflation." In theory, this would allow employees to, for example, consider swapping out certain perks for cash one year because they need the money. "The technology is there to allow employees to decide for themselves rather than companies making paternalistic decisions about what they think employees need, and I predict we'll see more of this as we see more pull in the marketplace," he adds.

As employment itself becomes more flexible in the longer term, with workers taking up multiple contracts or juggling side hustles with their core roles, reward will need to become more responsive to follow suit, Charman says. And while it's complicated to take a global view on fair pay, a number of global employers are now looking at how they build sustainable

and fair policies across their regions and into the supply chain. Schneider Electric, for example, has a global pay equity framework that helps teams in different countries to benchmark salary data and overcome some of the complexities, and extends expectations around fair play to its bigger suppliers. Other options to increase wage flexibility include 'earned wage access' tools such as Wagestream, which allow employers to offer workers access to money they have already earned before their usual pay day.

The pandemic has brought almost two years of disruption, with HR having to think on its feet and react to events and announcements as they dropped. The labour market may be tight and employees eager to chase a pay rise while their skills are in demand. But with high inflation predicted to last beyond 2022 – providing pay decisions are fair, transparent, and enable a reasonable standard of living – is it time to play the long game on reward? **PM**

A woman's arm is visible on the right side of the frame, resting on a dark, weathered metal railing. She is wearing a black sleeveless top and a silver bracelet. The background shows a wide body of water and a city skyline with several tall buildings under a clear blue sky.

# “My male line managers saw it as a joke”

*Employment tribunals citing menopause have skyrocketed – so why is there so little support for those suffering from its often debilitating symptoms?*

WORDS VERITY GOUGH



**Motivated by her own negative experience, Dawn Coker hopes to normalise the menopause**

The UK has nearly four million employed women aged between 45 and 55, making the menopausal age group the largest proportion of the current workforce. According to a 2021 report from 50Plus Choices Employers Taskforce, a quarter of women consider giving up work as a result of menopause symptoms, while a 2019 CIPD study found that almost a third of respondents were forced to take sick leave. Worryingly, data from the Menopause Experts Group found that suicide rates in women of menopausal age have also risen by six per cent in the last 20 years. Add to this the jump in the number of employment tribunals citing menopause-related discrimination, coupled with the risk to women's pensions from early retirement caused by menopause symptoms, and the outlook for women in the workplace certainly looks bleak.

### Why such a poor response?

Despite the damning statistics, the majority of organisations only pay lip service to the issue. A study by Aviva found that one in three people say their workplace doesn't offer any support to those experiencing menopause symptoms and more than half would not discuss menopause with their manager: "If colleagues were to make a joke about any other protected characteristic in the workplace there would be consequences," says Lynda Bailey, co-founder and director of Talking Menopause. The complete absence of reference to the menopause in many companies' policies around reasonable adjustments, performance and absence management, and recruitment and retention, shows how dismissive companies are. Worse still, many symptoms are potentially embarrassing, meaning employees don't feel comfortable citing the menopause as a reason for quitting their job.

"Historically, our mothers and grandmothers never discussed the menopause. Women were taught to put up with their symptoms and not complain," says Dr Shirin Lakhani, a women's intimate health specialist who is currently collaborating with MPs to

raise awareness of the importance of menopause rights at work. "It's taken so long to be addressed in the workplace, because in the past many of the more senior positions were held by men," she adds. What's more, while most experience the menopause between the age of 45 and 55, some can be affected much earlier, further compounding the reluctance to speak up, and with more than 30 recognised symptoms that can begin years before (in the perimenopause) and persist thereafter, women can suffer symptoms such as memory loss and digestive issues, through to osteoarthritis, palpitations and hair loss.

"Hot flushes can be both embarrassing and distracting when occurring in the work environment, and an increased need to go to the toilet can also disrupt sleep, leaving women tired and lacking in energy. When combined, these menopausal symptoms can erode both wellbeing and confidence," adds Dr Nicky Keay, an endocrinologist, chief medical officer at Forth and an active member of The Menopause Society.

### The legal implications

From a legal perspective, developing a robust menopause policy and wellbeing support strategy will ultimately help businesses retain talented and experienced staff and avoid costly

lawsuits, but statistics show that the number of employment tribunals that include references to the menopause is on the rise, more than tripling from five in 2018 to 16 in 2020: "We are receiving increasing numbers of queries regarding this issue, and although I haven't had any claims specifically on it, it's likely we

will see more in the future," says Maria Hoeritzauer, a partner at Crossland Employment Solicitors. "If an employee is the subject of derogatory comments about hot flushes or night sweats, even if they are not intended to be offensive, that could constitute harassment on grounds of sex, age and/or disability," she explains.

"Compensation under the Equality Act is uncapped, meaning employees can claim for loss of earnings, loss of pensions and issue proceedings against individuals



Dr Shirin Lakhani is working to raise the profile of menopause issues in the workplace

in the workplace, who could have personal liability for any compensation awarded," adds Kate Hindmarch, head of employment law at Langleys Solicitors. "This type of case can damage an employer's standing in terms of being a good and reasonable employer, and supporting the health and wellbeing of all employees – not just women," she notes.

### Breaking the taboo

The menopause has recently gained traction in the media thanks to frank discussions by celebrities like Davina McCall and Emma Thompson, while MP Carolyn Harris's campaign in 2021 for women to receive free hormone replacement therapy (HRT) prescriptions has also brought the subject to the fore. "There is growing recognition from employers that they need to improve their menopause support if they want to recruit and retain women who are often at the peak of their careers," says Claire McCartney, senior resourcing and inclusion adviser at the CIPD. "This ties into wider changes employers are making to support a more mature workforce, given people are now working for longer."

Indeed, there are plenty of examples of companies that are ensuring menopause-positive experiences for their employees. Timpson has offered to pay for HRT prescriptions for its 450 female staff going through the menopause, and

**"A quarter of women consider giving up work as a result of menopause"**

has found the initiative has prompted more open discussions: “The most important benefit is that people feel more comfortable to talk about menopause; the fact we are paying for the HRT prescriptions is a by-product,” explains Laura Garside, menopause champion at Timpson.

“The more general shift towards conversations about diversity and inclusion is helping with much of the heavy lifting of mindset shift,” says Lesley Cooper, co-author of *Dangerous Waters* and founder and CEO of WorkingWell. “Leadership is taking more interest in wellbeing at an individual level, rather than through a purely team-focused lens, which makes the ‘menopause impacts’ conversation much easier to have,” she adds.

However, HR should be mindful of the approach it takes to ensure inclusivity in its policies and processes: “It is difficult to gauge statistically the number of people who experience the menopause from the non-binary, trans or intersex communities. Experiences and perceptions may also differ in relation to disability, age, race, religion,

sexual orientation, or marital or civil partnership status. It is important to recognise that people’s individual experiences of the menopause may

differ greatly,” points out Melanie Darlington, HR technical manager at risk management business Alcumus, which has developed its menopause strategy alongside a global programme to champion women in the organisation to meet their full potential. “We encourage people to talk about this subject with

colleagues facing the same issues and learn more about how we can support our female employees and create a great work environment,” she explains.

### The role of the line manager

The importance of training line managers is something companies with effective menopause policies stress is the key driver to success, as Gosia Bowling, national lead for emotional wellbeing at Nuffield Health, explains: “There’s a lot of mystery and misinformation about this life stage. Managers need to talk with both the women and men on their

team about how they might approach accommodation strategies like flexible work schedules, options to work from home, delivering company training or work condensed hours so employees can take an extra day off for more rest and recuperation.” She believes that when menopausal transition is addressed as a relevant, work-related issue, businesses will see a positive impact on productivity, culture and the bottom line.

McCartney also highlights that HR professionals need to be more proactive about creating or maintaining a culture where the menopause can be talked about more openly while training line managers on this issue, as they will most likely be the first port of call: “Employers shouldn’t take the view that because they’ve got a policy their work is done. They should be aiming to get to the point where the menopause is treated as a health condition and open, supportive conversations are the norm. They should also understand what simple adjustments can be made to make those experiencing menopause symptoms feel more comfortable in the workplace – and what support might also be available through occupational health and employee assistance programmes.” ▶

## “My negative experience helped me develop our menopause policy”

Dawn Coker, founder and CEO of Access2Funding, has created a health and wellbeing policy that normalises menopause

“I was thrown into early menopause at 37 following a hysterectomy, which was challenging working in the banking sector, where colleagues had little to no understanding. I suffered with debilitating and embarrassing symptoms, including memory loss that made me feel stupid, and horrific hot flushes that caused my hair to be plastered to my head with perspiration.

“While HR is prevalent in the finance sector, knowledge and understanding of menopause

and its experiences is not. Gender diversity is poor, with women making up just 20 per cent of major financial services executive committees. All my direct line managers were men, who didn’t understand why sometimes I needed to sit by a window for fresh air or have a fan on my desk. It was almost a joke to them. No one wanted to talk about menopause, so I put on a brave face. In 2014, I joined the housing sector and finally felt able to open up. I partnered with the HR team and helped to roll out support to staff, especially for female health issues.

“I launched our menopause policy in June last year, motivated by my own negative

experiences. We are a growing business with a predominantly female management team that I want to retain, and whose needs I want to recognise in the way mine were not. I also want to increase understanding of menopause in the workplace for male managers and ensure they are trained to support female staff, as well as women in their personal lives, too. The menopause policy encourages colleagues to openly and comfortably instigate conversations about the menopause. No one should feel too embarrassed to talk about a natural transition, so the policy encourages employees to inform their line manager at an early stage if they are experiencing menopausal symptoms, so it can be treated as an ongoing health issue, rather than individual instances of ill-health.

“It was received with great enthusiasm, especially as most employees are female, but I was also contacted directly by two men in the business to applaud the policy and training as it provided them with a greater understanding of how menopause was affecting their wives.”



**Menopause workshops  
have proven popular with  
both women and men**

# Menopause

“There is real societal stigma around the menopause, which makes talking about it at work challenging. I like to think we have a progressive culture at Aster, but even so, continuous education has played a crucial role in bringing our employees along with us

**Rachel Credidio has put in place a host of initiatives that have helped reduce the stigma attached to menopause**

## Leading the way

One organisation that has made incredible leaps is law firm Browne Jacobson; its appointed menopause sponsor, legal director for risk and compliance Mandy Cooling, has created several initiatives that have led to the firm being accredited with menopause-friendly status. As well as launching a policy endorsed by colleagues with lived experience, Cooling has established a thriving community that meets quarterly and ensures that menopause support stays on the agenda all year round, while the private peer-to-peer community on the company’s social media channels helps to signpost staff and managers to resources they might need. “Three other colleagues and myself also shared our lived experience of menopause in an hour-long webinar, which was open to all, and we were pleased that some of our male colleagues joined us,” she adds.

Aster Group – a housing association that employs more than 1,450 people – has also received acclaim for its progressive approach to menopause policy development, as chief transformation officer Rachel Credidio explains: “One of the key initiatives we introduced was ‘Pause for Men’ – a series of workshops for male colleagues to help them understand the menopause, and how they can help.” The organisation also runs its ‘hot topic’ discussion group and regular sofa sessions to provide video e-learning, webinars and workshops on nutrition, exercise and HRT.

Since introducing this raft of initiatives three years ago, the proportion of Aster’s workforce who said they felt uneasy discussing the menopause has dropped from 43 per cent to just four per cent.

in developing our menopause support offering – it still does now,” Credidio says.

Insurance firm Zurich UK has also been working to develop its menopause-friendly policy, and has hosted a menopause café and group ideation sessions, where employees and leaders have shared their experiences and suggestions: “We’ve learned our colleagues want a supportive and empathetic environment, where symptoms don’t need to be hidden and where they are given flexibility and support. This enables people to continue to thrive in their careers, without letting the menopause become a blocker,” explains Steve Collinson, head of the firm’s UK people team. “With the impending recruitment crisis, retaining valuable talent has never been more important.”

The tide does appear to be changing, and with education, awareness and discussion, the future is looking more open: “This is definitely not just a ‘hot topic’ but one that needs sustained attention, and given our changing labour market demographics, employers recognise they need to adjust from a business perspective but also a moral one,” says McCartney.

Addressing this sensitive issue is certainly not a ‘one size fits all’ approach, but providing affected staff with care and support, and encouraging open conversations to identify issues will normalise menopause in the workplace and help retain the wealth of expertise and talent that women of all ages provide. **PM**

\* Find CIPD resources on supporting employees through the menopause at [bit.ly/CIPDMenopauseGuidance](https://bit.ly/CIPDMenopauseGuidance)

**“Having open conversations to identify issues will normalise menopause in the workplace”**

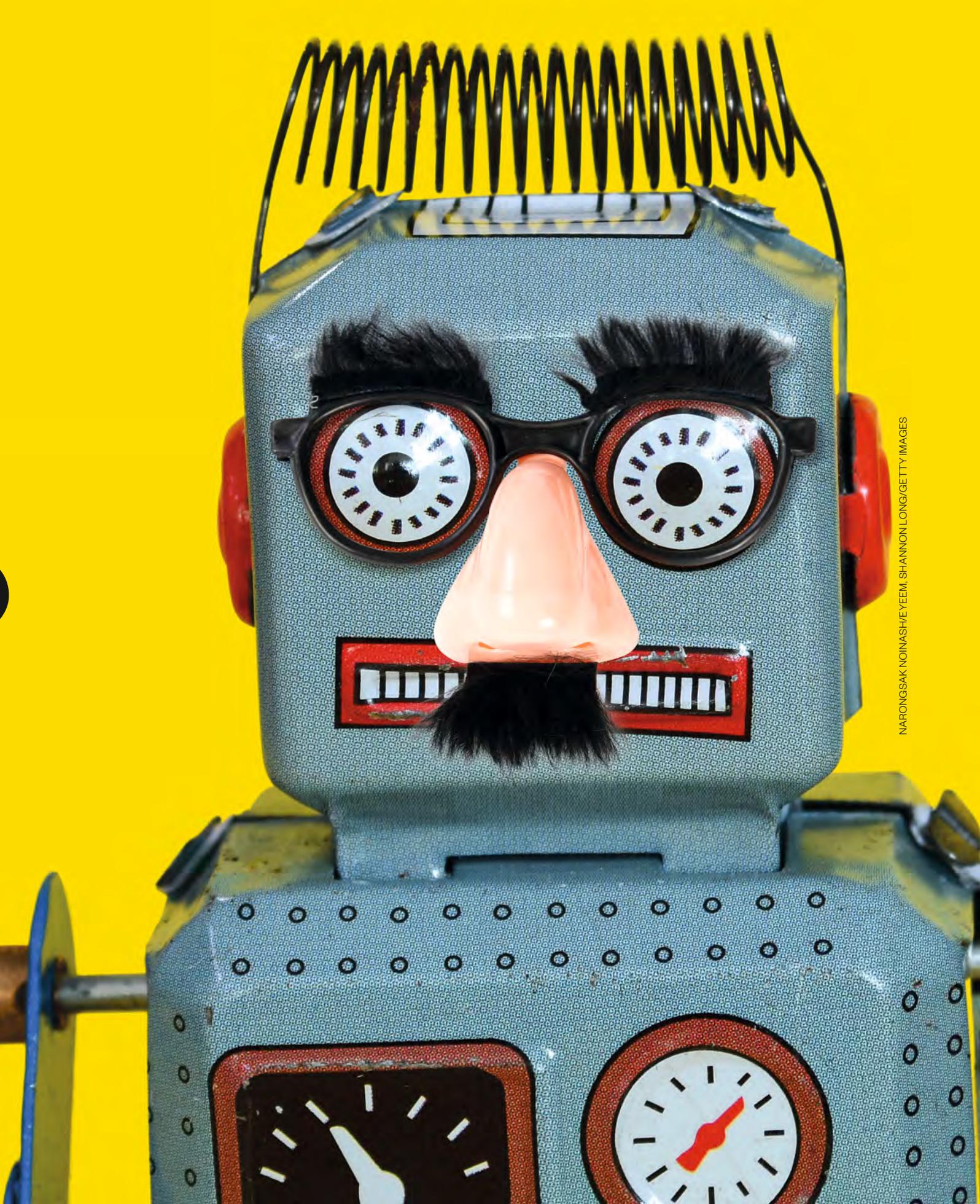
# What type of person would a robot hire?

*AI can take the legwork out of recruitment – but with debates over algorithm bias and the risk of human redundancies still raging, HR needs to tread carefully*

WORDS ROB GRAY

**O**n paper, artificial intelligence-powered recruitment sounds ideal. Computer programmes that can take all the hard work out of hiring and write job descriptions, source suitable candidates from pools of millions, screen out unsuitable applicants and even assess their personality and attributes via video interview? It's little wonder the technology has already proved popular with thousands of organisations.

And yet, the concept on paper is very different to reality – and far from the perfect, technology-driven haven that was intended. As well as widely reported issues with bias ►



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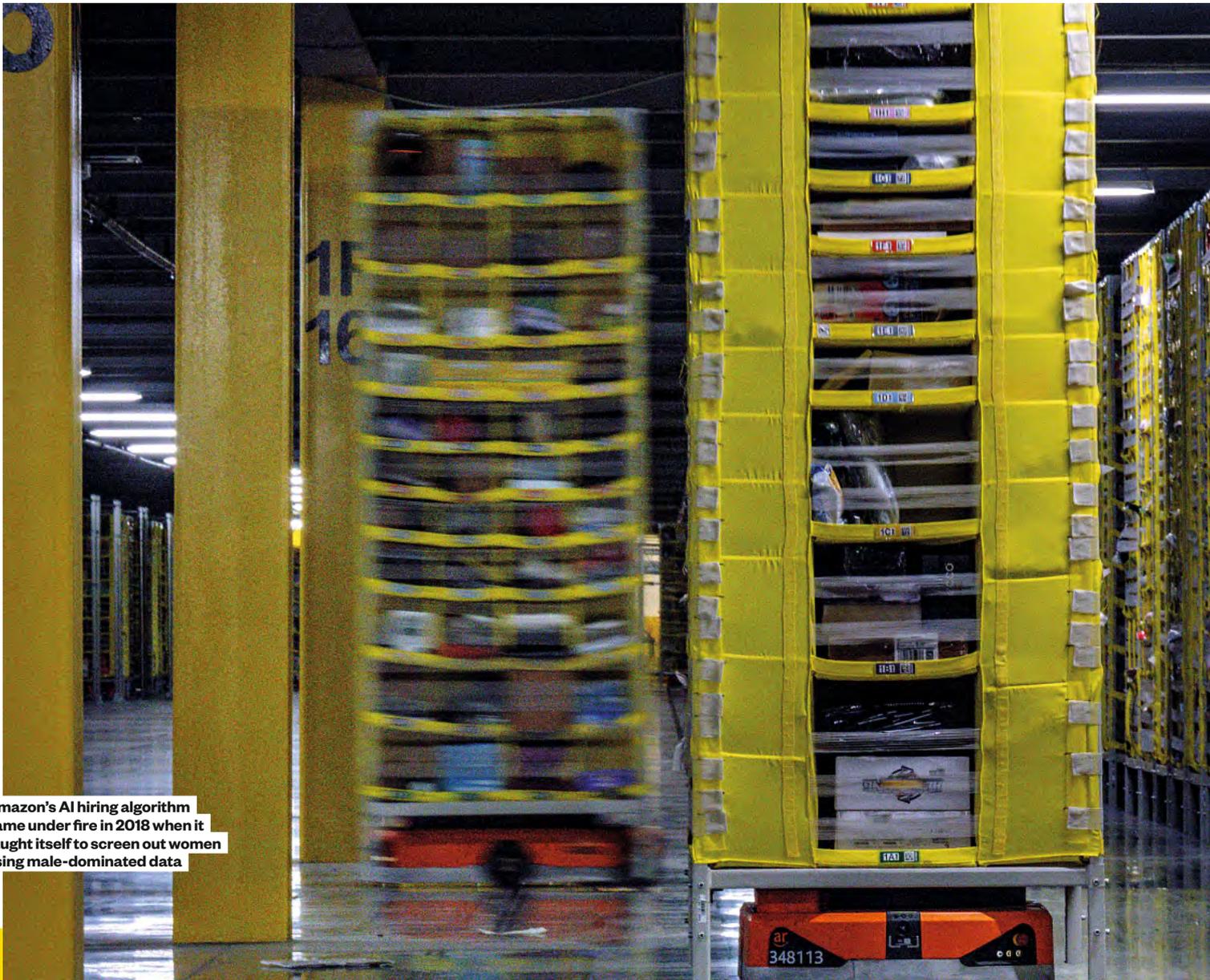
among some AI recruitment tools (for example, in 2018, Amazon was forced to scrap an AI hiring programme it had been testing after the algorithm, which was based on 10 years' worth of application data predominantly from men, taught itself to screen out female candidates), it has also rightly raised widespread concern about roles being at risk of being replaced altogether by algorithms as the technology gathers pace. So with this in mind, do the time and money-saving advantages of automation actually come at too high a cost when weighed up with the potential risks – logistical, legal and reputational – of AI getting it wrong?

Above all, use of AI in the recruitment process needs to be relevant to the role, fair and inclusive to all candidates, says Hayfa Mohdzaini, senior research adviser at the CIPD. That means implementing it with thought and care to ensure the applicant, not just the organisation, is considered – and that it aligns with an employer's values and brand. "AI needs to be tested before rollout and routinely afterwards to ensure it's not introducing bias or disadvantage into the process and is easily accessible for all candidates," says Mohdzaini.

"Organisations should also be evaluating the use of AI by asking candidates and hiring managers for feedback and responding accordingly. They should also monitor the impact AI has on the diversity of its candidates."

While it's currently the responsibility of employers to monitor the impact of AI on candidates, there are growing calls for more oversight and governance in this space. The All-Party Parliamentary Group on the Future of Work is calling for employers to pre-

**"AI needs to be tested before rollout to ensure it's not introducing any bias"**



Amazon's AI hiring algorithm came under fire in 2018 when it taught itself to screen out women using male-dominated data

emptively consider the impact of using automated decision-making technologies on workers from as early as the design stage. The government is also exploring six priority areas for developing an effective AI assurance system, which includes introducing regulation and mandatory third-party audits of AI tools. One significant aspect of the



**Emy Rumble-Mettle's organisation uses online testing to help keep job ads gender neutral and unbiased**

rhetoric around AI is its perceived ability to help organisations make more objective and transparent decisions. However, according to Dimitra Petrakaki, professor of

technology and organisation at the University of Sussex Business School and member of the Digital Futures at Work Research Centre (Digit), this is largely based on the view that replacing humans for technology also means that bias, emotions and subjectivity are removed. "There is evidence that suggests this is not the case," he says. "AI technologies remain political technologies by their design. This means as humans develop AI, their assumptions and stereotypes are transferred and become reflected in the AI.

For example, AI may discriminate against candidates on the basis of their postcode or accent, reflecting assumptions about candidates' socioeconomic backgrounds.

**"As humans develop AI, their assumptions and stereotypes are transferred and reflected"**

Similarly, the ability of artificial intelligence to interpret information on the basis of patterns found in existing data sets also indicates that AI is prone to produce bias."

As long as humans are behind their design, says Petrakaki, it will always be challenging to create watertight AI systems for hiring. Yet there are ways of critically reviewing the decisions they make post hoc, and challenging them as and when needed to ensure bias does not creep into the process. Among the key questions to address are whether the algorithm makes decisions on the basis of candidates' performance independently of their characteristics, and whether ▶

## HOW KRAFT HEINZ RECRUITS USING ALGORITHMS

"Both human-based and AI-based recruitment processes can have bias – but humans cannot be audited or reprogrammed," says Pieter Schalkwijk, director of talent acquisition at Kraft Heinz International Zone. "When using AI in your recruitment process, it should be designed in such a way that it can be continuously audited and checked for bias."

Not only does the food and beverages giant audit its AI for bias, it also uses AI to analyse job descriptions in a further effort to reduce any unfairness, helping recruiters find language that is inclusive of all gender and age groups.

As well as this, the company also uses a gamified assessment to evaluate a candidate's cognitive and behavioural attributes. Before the AI is deployed, the algorithm is heavily checked and audited for any bias through an open-sourced algorithm auditing tool.

"We will likely slowly increase the use of AI in the recruitment process, always testing and learning in a way that will improve and de-bias our process," says Schalkwijk. "But we will use the insights from the AI as extra data points, not to replace human interviews from our process."



**Pieter Schalkwijk says the company plans to increase its use of AI in recruitment but won't replace interviews**





**Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic advocates tactical reskilling and upskilling to ensure humans can work creatively alongside AI**

it can make hiring decisions that reflect principles of equity, or if their decisions are driven by performance standards that assume their general applicability.

For larger employers with more significant recruitment pipelines, however, hiring automation has a compelling allure. Consumer goods giant Unilever, for example, receives more than two million applications in an average year. Given the high volume and associated time pressures – not to mention the

added uncertainties in the era of a global pandemic – the company has found automated online testing can offer candidates a unified, simple, user-friendly journey with feedback in real time.

“Online testing has proven very successful as part of our selection processes for early career programmes,” says global head of employee experience Tom Dewaele. “The way in which we feed back to applicants varies based on the role, market and recruitment tools used. For example, candidates that complete our global gamification online assessment receive constructive

feedback that is automated, but our recruitment team is always on hand to support candidates.”

Similarly, betting and entertainment group Flutter uses Textio across two of its businesses to actively evaluate the language used in its job adverts and ensure they are gender neutral and unbiased. Chief people officer for the UK and Ireland,

Emy Rumble-Mettle, appreciates the value they bring to the company: “Much of the language inherent in the talent space has been perceived as biased, so we wanted to rule that out as quickly as we could and create adverts that ignite interest for as many people as possible.”

Nevertheless, she stresses that while AI will undoubtedly play a part in advancing the candidate experience at Flutter, it will act as an enhancement of the people experience rather than a replacement. “We wouldn’t want to lose our customer-centric focus by leaving some of the key decisions of our talent agenda to an AI tool,” she explains. “Our colleagues will

always have a key part in how we apply more laser-focused emerging practices to our business without losing the human touch. AI is an enabler for our business, not a strategic lever.”

Fears around job automation have also received substantial focus

in recent years; PwC’s recent *Hopes and Fears* study found that three in five (60 per cent) respondents are concerned about the issue, with two in five (39 per cent) thinking their jobs could become obsolete within five years. And the worries are by no means unfounded; 2019 data from

the Office for National Statistics found 7.4 per cent of 20 million jobs analysed – around 1.5 million in total – were at high risk of being automated in the future, including 58 per cent of administrative HR roles and 40 per cent of HR and industrial relations officer roles. However, this overlooks the huge opportunity for HR and recruitment professionals

to upskill into new professional categories: domain experts capable of bringing together the right technology that reduces the administrative burden, a data-driven approach that enhances

decision-making, and a human-led approach that produces real results for members of the workforce.

Rob McCargow, technology impact leader at PwC UK, issues a clarion call for people practitioners: “Now is the time for HR professionals to upskill themselves in how AI tools work, how to challenge vendors on their approach to mitigating risk, and how to implement effective governance that takes into account the particular features of these technologies.”

The sentiment is echoed by organisational psychologist and author of *I, Human* Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic, who argues the only intelligent solution is to invest in reskilling and upskilling. Just like in any technological evolution or revolution before, technology and innovation will destroy certain jobs while creating others, he says, but the new jobs require new and improved skills from humans. We need to worry not about AI’s ability to replace humans in mundane and predictable tasks or jobs, he explains, but about whether humans can acquire the skills to deploy their creativity and imagination in new, more complex jobs that AI cannot do.

Chamorro-Premuzic advises that best practice should be based on a simple principle: humans augmented by AI is still better than ▶

**“Now is the time for HR professionals to upskill and find out how AI tools work”**

**“We wanted to create job ads that ignite interest for as many people as possible”**

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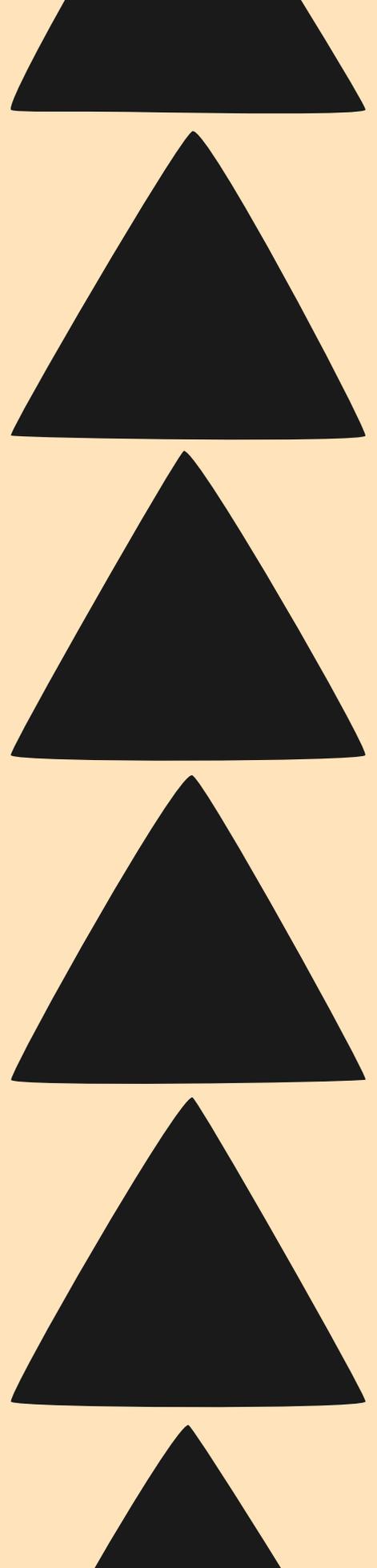
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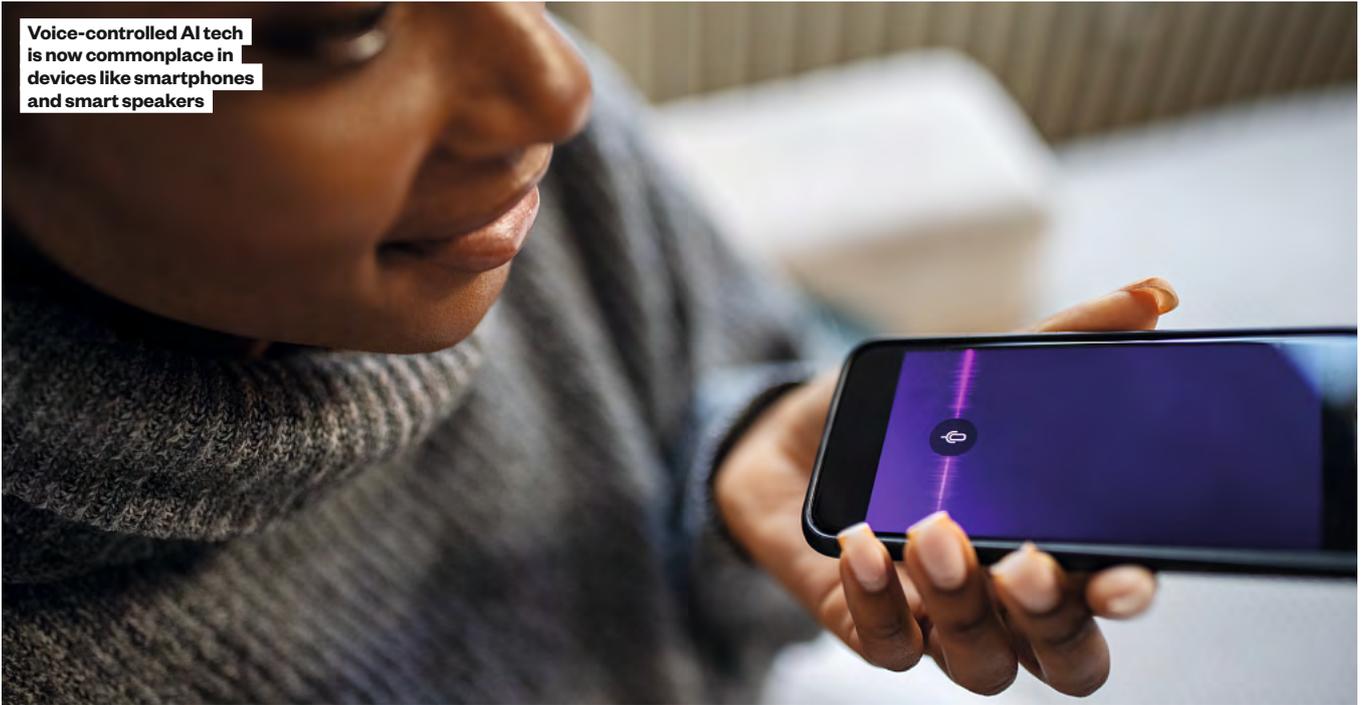
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Voice-controlled AI tech is now commonplace in devices like smartphones and smart speakers



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one without the other. This means that AI should be used to take care of predictable, repetitive, and low-level tasks, leaving humans to provide the creativity, curiosity, and empathy that AI cannot provide. He suggests thinking of AI as a prediction engine: its accuracy and fairness depends on the quality of the training data, as well as the strength of the patterns in the data.

“The problem of bias, at least in HR, is nothing new in the AI world,” he says. “It often derives from the problem of replicating human bias. Because the training data or observations that we use to help AI learn are themselves based on biased outcomes or data, we are transferring human bias onto AI, and then replicating it or augmenting it at scale.”

He gives the example of training self-driving cars, during which humans classify objects as traffic lights, trees, or pedestrians, so AI can quickly learn to detect traffic lights, trees and pedestrians. However, when AI is trained to identify high-potential employees or people who are a good cultural fit, the training

data is based on human preferences. “In other words, we ask AI to learn which people are generally designated as high potential or a strong fit in a given system without realising that those people may not necessarily be great at their job – they are just popular or privileged,” Chamorro-Premuzic explains.

So, when chatbots are accused of sexism because they successfully

predict that middle-aged white male engineers are more likely to get promoted, they are not being biased or sexist, they have just reverse engineered the algorithm that is currently used in that organisation. But fixing the problem, he says,

entails not asking AI to predict biased preferences. Instead, it should be trained to predict actual value added, talent, and performance, which calls for careful measurement of such attributes. This, Chamorro-Premuzic emphasises, is not a task for AI, but one for humans.

Duncan Harris, director of Gartner’s HR practice, points out

that AI can be used even before the recruitment process begins. From labour market analysis to sourcing and marketing tools, AI may prove a vital resource before recruiters and HR leaders begin to establish relationships with candidates.

“Companies might experience several problems in their recruitment process,” adds Harris. “They may have too many candidates for too few positions, too much hiring volume to process, difficulty in finding specialist candidates or low hiring volume. Therefore, HR leaders should invest in AI capabilities that are aligned to solving their key talent challenges.

Equally, Harris adds that it’s important HR determines which roles might benefit from hiring algorithms that predict performance and find ways to leverage AI to enable higher-quality, high-touch interactions between recruiters and candidates. “But they should keep in mind that many still believe AI is being used to automate the decision about who should be hired, so it’s important to communicate regularly and be transparent about how AI is really being used.” **PM**

**“HR leaders should invest in AI that’s aligned to solving their key talent challenges”**

# “HR can’t just sit at the side and create nice messages”

*First Bus chief people officer Kevin Green on the importance of putting sustainability at the heart of a significant transformation agenda*

**H**e’s a former Royal Mail HR director who spent the best part of a decade as CEO of the Recruitment and Employment Confederation, not to mention holding non-executive director positions with a plethora of organisations, including chair of Timewise. Over the last few years, Kevin Green has enjoyed, as he puts it, the “plural life”, boasting an enviable portfolio career. And yet, after joining FTSE 250 transport provider First Bus as interim HR director in 2021, he subsequently found himself signing up permanently in September.

At a crucial time for the transport sector, as both employees and customers begin to vote with their feet around organisations’ environmental, social and governance (ESG) activity, *People Management* spoke to Green about First Bus’s ambitious plans to improve sustainability and its impact on the climate crisis.

## **What is First Bus doing to improve its environmental impact?**

As a provider of public transport with around 5,500 diesel vehicles, this is clearly a big issue for us. Our customers, partners and the government are saying this is important, and we want to be assertive and show that transport companies can take this agenda and run with it. By 2035, we’ll be carbon neutral for emissions – that means spending £100m a year for the next decade to replace our entire diesel fleet with electric and some hydrogen vehicles.

At the same time, we’re in the process of a big organisational transformation, moving from being an asset-based business focused on buses, to one that’s more customer and service-orientated, and trying to encourage more people out of their cars and onto the bus. So our culture is changing against the backdrop of big decarbonisation efforts, and we’re

planning to use this to engage our people so they understand this is a differentiator in the market. Surveys tell us our staff love that we are trying to have an impact on climate change in a sustainable way.

## **What HR challenges will that bring?**

It’ll change how we hire and train bus drivers. At the moment it’s about their technical skills, but we need them to think about how they engage customers. We’re starting to measure our NPS and compare ourselves to other service businesses rather than other transport organisations.

It will involve retraining our engineers as well, as we move to electric and hydrogen. We’re thinking about how our apprenticeship programme can help, and looking into training and development, and management capability for frontline staff. The aim is to create an environment where people feel it’s not happening to them, but where we’re educating them about why this is a good business strategy.

## **Why is it key for HR to drive this work?**

We’re trying to unlearn what we’ve been doing for a long time. That creates tension, and that tension is what HR needs to work through. We’re changing mindsets, attitudes, skills, capability and how we do things, so HR needs to be at the centre. We can’t just sit on the sidelines and create nice messages: it has to be real and meaningful. If your people don’t understand, it will just be seen as a nice thing to do. That’s why it’s exciting: because people can see this isn’t just lip service.

## **What advice would you give other organisations considering their impact on the environment?**

Ask why this is important. Talk to your workforce and your customers, and if it’s in the top five reasons they choose your company, then you need to have a response. When you’re thinking about competing for young talent, consider if it can help you differentiate yourself and attract people you normally wouldn’t. It’s becoming a question HR can’t ignore; it needs to be a question of how you compete, make money and become successful, and sustainability is part of the answer. The government has been very clear about setting direction and focus, now every organisation needs to choose the right way to do this for themselves.



SIMON FERNANDEZ

# Career path

## Helping you get further

**Research:**  
managers have  
a more positive  
view of ethical  
standards than  
frontline staff

p53

### Masterclass

## How to make a more collaborative office



**Tim Scott** is people director at Fletchers Solicitors

The pandemic completely changed the way my organisation operates. At the start of 2020 we had around 480 employees, the majority of whom were office based, but there was no hot-desking or remote working.

Throughout the pandemic, we conducted pulse surveys and found most of our team were on a scale, with “I hate working from home and can’t wait to get back to the office” at one extreme and “I never want to set foot in the office again” at the other. Overall, the cultural changes were welcomed as long as we maintained as much flexibility as possible.

We quickly established a cross-functional team of HR, operations, facilities and tech and decided to create a collaborative space on the ground floor with more conventional office space on other floors. We deliberately chose to have a variety of spaces because we recognised the need for different types of interaction.



Previously, we had a mix of meeting rooms but our people told us they needed spaces for one-to-one conversations as well,

### “Think carefully before making big investments”

plus some larger spaces for full team collaboration. This fits in with our new way of working as many of our teams are only in the office to work together. This maximises people’s ability to have meaningful facetime when they are in the office.

If you are going to make a collaborative office space, you need to think creatively about communication. We hit some skepticism because people were

apprehensive that we wouldn’t make a culture change, and not everyone was in the office to see what was happening. We created a video walk-around to show our new furniture and meeting pods, and put it on our internal Yammer group.

There’s no single magic solution. In the past, it felt like everyone wanted to be Google and thought it was cool to have foosball tables, but if that isn’t your culture you are wasting your time. Like a lot of initiatives, I suspect one of the pitfalls is trying to emulate what other companies are doing.

There’s no point installing funky one-to-one pods around an office if no one is comfortable having conversations in them. Building in flexibility is important too.

We’re fortunate that some of our rooms lend themselves to being partitioned in such a way that they can be opened up into larger ones as and when required.

Lastly, I’d suggest thinking carefully before making major investments in office furniture or renovations – it’s early days and we’re still learning about the world of post-pandemic work.

### Taking it further

**Watch**  
Co-working & the future of office design webinar by Morgan Lovell [bit.ly/CoWorkingOffice](https://bit.ly/CoWorkingOffice)



**Listen**  
Rethinking the office podcast by BDO [bit.ly/IndustryAngles](https://bit.ly/IndustryAngles)



**Read**  
Working miracles, the office design revolution by The RIBA Journal [bit.ly/RIBADesignRevolution](https://bit.ly/RIBADesignRevolution)

## Who I am

Elina Takala

HR Advisor at Schuh

**My undergraduate degree was in psychology and business**, but I wasn't sure about a specific path so I didn't want to specialise. I did some modules in HR and thought "I really like that", specifically the strategic part. Now, I'm most interested in getting the best out of people through training, coaching, and helping them find their path, where they want their career to go and enabling them to do the best they can.

**HR acts as the outside opinion in an organisation** – we can point out things that managers might overlook. A lot of the other areas of business focus on results, which are important, but those results come from people. The function is important because it has become more strategic rather than administrative, especially with things like remote working, where it can make sure people stay connected and feel like they are a part of an organisation.

**A big moment in my role was early on when an employee called me**, upset and unhappy with their situation. As it was during the pandemic, I had to speak to her over the phone. In the end, she was much happier with where she was in her career and understood how to best resolve the problem. It was a good moment for me because I was able to help her through the situation and make her feel happy in her role again.

**When I started getting into fitness, it really improved my self-confidence**. A lot of other people could have similar experiences, so I would love to encourage people to be more active in their own way. Everyone knows being active is good for you, but if I motivate and encourage people, support them in their careers while pushing the confidence they gain from activity, they will have more energy and be more engaged at work.

**I help run a wellbeing group in the south-east Scotland branch of the CIPD**. We're focusing on an event that will look at how to help people engage with different wellbeing initiatives and companies. There are a lot of great ideas about what companies can do around physical activity and mental health, but a big piece of the puzzle is how to engage people, especially if a lot of them are working remotely.

**I don't know HR without Covid**. I worked in my part-time job for around six months and then Covid happened and it's been that way for the past two years. However, there have been a lot of changes in the profession during the pandemic. A lot of companies now see HR as more important and strategic because the function was responsible for a lot of the preparation and advice.

## CV

Elina Takala completed her Master's in human resource management at the University of Edinburgh in 2020 before working at the Students' Association. She started her career mid-pandemic and worked as an HR admin assistant at NHS Education for Scotland before joining retailer Schuh as an HR advisor. She was a CIPD student ambassador and now volunteers at her local branch.



## CIPD Online Student Conference, 2 April 2022

Free for members!

This year's Student Conference, free for members, will bring together hundreds of students and early-career professionals from across the UK and Ireland to explore the big and emerging workplace themes such as:

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- Diversity and inclusion in the workplace
- Wellbeing and mental health
- Using the learnings from your study to impact your work

[cipd.co.uk/stuconf22](https://cipd.co.uk/stuconf22)

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**#StrongerWithCIPD**

*“Looking back at 2021 as ‘that time everyone worked remotely’ would be a missed opportunity”*

## Reviews

# Remote Workplace Culture

Sean O’Meara and Cary Cooper, Kogan Page, £19.99/£19.99 e-book

If the mass upheaval of the last two years has taught us anything, it’s that many aspects of our working lives that work in person don’t do so when simply replicated online.

But many organisations’ mass move to dramatically increased – if not permanent – remote working in the wake of the pandemic should be seen as an opportunity, say Cooper and O’Meara. If we end up looking back at 2020 and 2021 as ‘that time when everyone worked remotely’, their muse, we’ll have

missed a “massive opportunity” to capitalise on the benefits that remote working can offer when done right.

And it seems plenty are finding it tricky; a poll of 2,500 workers in December 2021 by OC Tanner found that just a quarter (26 per cent) believed their employer had been effective at fostering a company culture since the start of the pandemic, and the majority (83 per cent) said they recognised the value

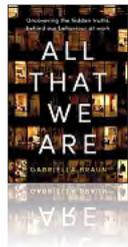
of the office for creating said culture.

*Remote Workplace Culture* is a catch-all guide to ensuring a business and its employees can thrive in a newly digital landscape, demonstrating how a strong culture for remote, hybrid or flexible work can be a business’s biggest asset.

It looks in detail at several key areas that can – and do – benefit from remote working, including employee wellbeing, inclusion and diversity, and recruitment and retention,

as well as highlighting some more easily fixable problems, such as equity of home office setups and conducting remote meetings.

A chapter written by O’Meara about his experience of setting up a remote-first communications consultancy also provides extra valuable advice based on what he’s learnt along the way, including a ban on unscheduled calls between members of the team, giving workers greater autonomy to make decisions, and using cloud-based document storage.



{Book}

## All That We Are

Gabrielle Braun, Piatkus, £16.99/£9.99 e-book

In *All That We Are*, Braun argues the workplace has spent years being ‘dehumanised’ to boost productivity and profit, at the expense of our relationships and mental health. Yet being able to understand the unconscious motivations behind our behaviours can lead to happier and healthier working lives. Packed full of examples and advice from Braun’s 20+ years in consulting, it’s a must-read for those interested in bringing psychoanalysis into the workplace.

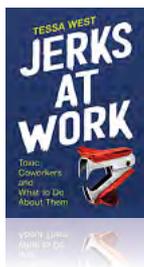


{Podcast}

## Squiggly Careers

Sarah Ellis and Helen Tupper, available via all good podcast providers

Hosted by Amazing If founders Ellis and Tupper and now boasting more than 250 episodes, *Squiggly Careers* is the ultimate guide for career development, no matter what path that takes. The weekly podcast explores issues from problem solving and negotiating to effective mentoring and rediscovering inspiration, as well as speaking to special guests including former Twitter EMEA VP Bruce Daisley, presenter Mary Portas and author Elizabeth Uviebinené.



{Book}

## Jerks at Work

Tessa West, Ebury, £11.99/£9.99 e-book

New York University psychology professor West has put into words what many of us have needed to do at one point or another during our careers: learn how to deal with that awful person we’re forced to work with. Splitting the book into her ‘taxonomy’ of jerks (including gaslighters, micromanagers and credit stealers), West advises how to identify each one, explains the psychology behind why they act the way they do, and offers clear-cut advice on managing their behaviour.



{Book}

## Artificial Intelligence for HR

Ben Eubanks, Kogan Page, £29.99/£28.49 e-book

For the uninitiated, venturing into the world of AI can seem a prospect more likely to compound further issues than solve existing ones. But done right, using algorithms in HR can free up valuable time. Eubanks’ chapters on the basics of AI and its application to HR explain the tech to even the least experienced, and subsequent sections take time to break down how AI can be used successfully in different areas, including L&D and recruitment – all featuring case studies from the likes of Unilever and IHG.

## What’s new

In **Growth**, management consultant and the world’s first professor of consulting, Joe O’Mahoney, draws on his own considerable experience, as well as interviews with more than 70 founders of successful firms, to offer best practice for growing a consultancy and avoiding being part of the almost half that fail within five years.

Meanwhile, in **Kindness: A Pocket Guide**, Birkbeck College and London School of Economics researcher Sebastian Bóo pulls together key research into the topic and makes the case for more kindness in the workplace to benefit individuals and teams alike.

## Your problems



### Guest fixer Idris Arshad tackles your queries

An experienced HR professional, Idris Arshad is currently a people and inclusion partner at south-east London-based hospice St Christopher's. He has previously worked with a number of faith-based charities, as well as with housing and homelessness organisations, and also lectured on a part-time basis at London Metropolitan University. He was recently mentored as part of CIPD's Aspiring HR Director Mentoring programme.

His replies are written in a personal capacity and do not reflect the views of *People Management* or the CIPD, nor are they a substitute for professional legal advice. Not all queries submitted can be answered, and personal replies are not possible. To pose an anonymous query, visit [bit.ly/pmfixer](https://bit.ly/pmfixer)

# How can mask-exempt carer return to work?

**I am HR director for a small care home provider, and we obviously have stringent PPE policies. One of our carers is autistic and exempt from wearing a face mask as a result, but for obvious reasons we cannot allow them to provide frontline care to residents. Being protected by the Equality Act means we have no choice but to keep them at home on full pay. They are understandably frustrated with the situation. However, the pandemic isn't going away any time soon, and I can't see a scenario in which they'd be able to come back to work in the foreseeable future. Is there any other way around this?**

This is undoubtedly an unfortunate situation, although it is important to keep in mind that you are only fulfilling your

obligations as an employer and care home provider by following the current rules. However, you are left with this issue that requires you to act reasonably and fairly.

In these circumstances, as an employer I would always encourage you to go above and

many stories of people who have found a different career, which started with an ad hoc conversation with a manager.

It would be useful for the employee's line manager to have this conversation with the employee, with your presence as the HR director.

**"I would always encourage you to go above and beyond and show an extra bit of compassion"**

beyond and show an extra bit of kindness and compassion.

The option that carries the least risk, in my view, is to see if there is another role for the person to do even temporarily. Start at the beginning and speak to the employee about their strengths, potential, experience, talent, hobbies and interests, finding out as much as you can. It may not be as straightforward as 'what do you want to do?', but may well give you the answer. There are

With this information, you could also carry out an exercise to identify gaps or business needs in your operations to see if there is a new role that is required. Or if there is a current vacancy, you can see if their skills and interests are a potential match. A temporary redeployment would still be a good interim option, and hopefully when things get back to normal, it will allow the employee to make a choice between the two roles.

## Employee is vocal over alleged ethnicity pay gap

**A manager at my company, who is black, is becoming increasingly agitated over a pay disparity between her and the other manager in her team, who is white. It's true she and her colleague have the same job title; however, the other employee has more experience and handles some of the more high-level work because of this. We've tried to explain this, but she maintains it's unfair and thinks we're being racist. I'm worried about reputational**

**repercussions even though I believe the company is in the right. What should we do?**

I would encourage you to challenge your own view of the company being right. Number of years doesn't necessarily mean more experience, so look at the quality of the experience. Also, ask yourself if the value of the extra responsibilities really justifies the difference.

Checking what extra work or responsibility the employee

who has raised the issue is doing would make sense, to ensure you are rewarding them fairly. If you have an internal job evaluation process, updating both job descriptions and conducting this exercise would go some way to giving an answer. However, given the dissatisfaction from the employee so far, you may want to engage an external company to provide an objective job evaluation service. If the outcome supports your current view, this could help explain the situation to the employee. If the outcome goes against your position, it is only right to be transparent with the employee

by acknowledging the situation and reward them appropriately.

More broadly, it would be good to review how transparent your pay and reward principles are. I would recommend implementing an internal job evaluation process to help reduce the chance of future issues such as this. If you were to adopt ethnicity pay reporting, which is not mandatory, this would show your commitment to tackling this issue organisationally, as well as helping you to address any gaps. The CIPD has useful guidance on this.

\* [bit.ly/CIPDEthnicityPayReporting](https://bit.ly/CIPDEthnicityPayReporting)

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# People and posts *Who's making HR headlines?*



1



2

Pearson has announced the appointment of **Ali Bebo (1)** as chief human resources officer. Bebo was previously at medical tech firm Hologic and brings 20 years of HR experience.

**Ann Limb** has taken over from Sir John Armit as chair of vocational training and apprenticeships provider City & Guilds. Limb has been chair of youth organisation The Scouts for the past six years.

**Caroline Butler (2)** is leaving Hertfordshire County Council to take up a new post at Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire (BCH) Police as its assistant HR director. Butler has over 20 years of HR experience, having undertaken roles in both the private and public sector.

Property lender Propertunity has appointed **Janet Klin** as its VP people & culture. Klin has previously worked at FLEX Capital, Forto and Honest

Food, and specialises in employment law.

UK satellite start-up Isotropic Systems has appointed **Dara McCann, Chartered FCIPD (3)**, as its new chief people officer. McCann brings with her more than 10 years' HR experience in the satellite tech sector, having previously worked for O3b and SES Networks.

**Nisha Popli** has been appointed chief human resources officer at Cuemath. The online education provider plans to expand in 2022 and values Popli's experience with KPMG, Grant Thornton and Ernst & Young, among others.

**Lloyd Stephenson (4)** has been appointed global director of inclusion & diversity and recruitment at law firm Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner (BCLP). Stephenson moves to the newly created role from Ashurst LLP.

Residential property company Grainger has

appointed **Michelle Boothroyd, Chartered FCIPD** to its executive committee as chief people officer. Boothroyd joins from Nationwide and has previously worked at Santander and RBS.

Social enterprise Devon Doctors Group has appointed **Sam Fraser, Chartered MCIPD (5)** as its new associate director of people and OD. Fraser was previously the not-for-profit healthcare provider's head of HR.

**Claire Williams, Chartered FCIPD** has been promoted to the newly created role of chief people officer at HR software company CIPHR, where she has worked for the last three years overseeing the business's HR function and consultancy services.

Virgin Money has appointed **Syreeta Brown, Chartered FCIPD (6)** as group chief people and communications officer. Brown joins from Citi, where she worked for 11 years.



3



4



5



6

# The next step *We help you to help your career*

**I was made redundant in December 2020, and since then I've applied for so many HR manager, HR assistant and employee relations roles. I'm CIPD Level 3 qualified in HRM, and studying Level 5. I need to work remotely and I'm struggling to find a job - it's soul-destroying. In the past I have run my own business, as well as being in business with family, and until my redundancy (when the business was sold and merged) I worked for a friend's startup in an HR role. I don't know where to go from here - I'm in my early fifties and beginning to think I'll never get another job, but I'm not ready for retirement yet.**

Keep a positive mindset by embracing the level of your experience, says Jo



Benelisha, director of HR recruitment & search at Strictly Recruitment (pictured).

Play to your strengths and apply to roles at a level that suits your skills. Don't self-select out of roles either. Why would you want to undertake an HR assistant role when you are an HR manager?

With age comes experience - and there is a competitive advantage in that. HR is a unique profession, where personal skills and empathy are every bit as important as academic qualifications.

When it comes to practical steps you can take: update your CV, keep up to date with employment law, and practise interview techniques.

The first thing anybody should look at when setting out to secure a new role has to be the CV - it is your best chance of securing an

interview and it needs to include as much information as possible.

The second step is to stay on top of changes in your profession, particularly in areas such as employment law. Continuing with your studies will be attractive to potential employers and, if you haven't already done so, update yourself with the latest technology.

Finally, practise your interview skills. You can use HR recruitment specialists to help in this. It might also be a good idea to broaden your experience; consider taking on some contract work as that will add value to your CV and offer a chance to work in a new sector or larger business.

Since the pandemic, remote working is now offered almost everywhere. It does, of course, depend on circumstances but it certainly shouldn't impact your search.



## Research

# Managers have rosier view of ethical standards

A study by the Institute of Business Ethics (IBE) has found that managers are likely to have a more positive view of ethical standards than frontline staff.

The survey from May 2021, which looked at data from 10,000 employees in 13 countries including the UK, found that more than two in five (43 per cent) respondents who spoke up about ethical misconduct experienced retaliation as a result.

The study, which surveyed 750 respondents in each country, also found that almost half (48 per cent) of employees said that their line manager rewards workers who get good results, even if they do so by unethical means.

The study also found that half (57 per cent) of respondents said their



Businesses need to weigh up the benefits of ethical practices over profits and resist compromise

organisation provided employees with a means to confidentially report misconduct. However, two-thirds (64 per cent) of managers were aware of a means to report misconduct,

compared with just half (52 per cent) of non-managers.

A fifth (21 per cent) of all respondents said that they had felt pressured to compromise their organisation's standards of misconduct. The figure was higher for managers: 14 per cent reported that they

felt pressure, compared to 10 per cent of non-managers.

For employees who had been pressured to act unethically, the most common reason given was time pressure or unrealistic deadlines, with a third (35 per cent) reporting this.

Richard Kwiatkowski, professor of organisational psychology at Cranfield School of Management, which is the UK academic partner of the IBE, said: "While most people suggest that their organisations are actually acting ethically, from a psychological point of view, internal sensitisation to ethical issues seems to motivate greater involvement, awareness and hence reporting.

"Organisations should welcome this, as good business is what we need to be striving for."

\* [bit.ly/CranfieldEthicsStudy](https://bit.ly/CranfieldEthicsStudy)

## Companies with female directors are more ethical

Having women on boards decreases the likelihood of unethical 'backdoor' transactions taking place, a French study has found.

The research, which analysed data from 97 companies between 2001 and 2017, looked at French firms both before and after 2011, when a gender quota law led to an increased representation of women on boards.

The researchers, from Le Mans University, Montpellier Business School and Emlyon Business School, found that the number of reduced-party

transactions (RPTs) decreased when more women were on the board of a company.

Previous studies indicated that RPTs are associated with unethical behaviour, such as opportunistic behaviour by insiders and expropriation of minority shareholders.

The study, which was published in the *British Journal of Management*, found that female directors are more motivated by reputational risk.

Mehdi Nekhili, finance professor at Le Mans University and co-author of the study, said: "Female directors involved in monitoring duties are more inclined to assert their role."

\* [bit.ly/FemaleDirectorStudy](https://bit.ly/FemaleDirectorStudy)

## Daily commute can predict job performance

A study led by US-based Dartmouth College has found that good performance in a job can be predicted by an employee's commute.

The study, which analysed data from 275 workers over a one-year period before the Covid-19 pandemic, monitored employees during their commutes, and for 30-minute periods before and after their commutes.

Participants were given a smartphone-based sensing app, which assessed their activity levels, heart rate, phone usage and stress.

The workers were then asked to assess their levels of counterproductive work behaviour – actions that deliberately harm an organisation – and organisational citizenship behaviour – beneficial actions – using a questionnaire.

The researchers found that those who perform well at work were more likely to have consistent arrival and leaving times, had greater physical fitness and reduced variability in their commute.

Poor performers had higher stress levels during their commute and used their phone while travelling. Those with a higher step count were found to be more productive.

\* [bit.ly/DartmouthCommuteStudy](https://bit.ly/DartmouthCommuteStudy)

## Welcoming the new CIPD president

*The CIPD thanks outgoing president Professor Sir Cary Cooper CBE and welcomes Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith CBE to the role*



The role of president of the CIPD is an honorary and prestigious position as an ambassador and champion of all that the CIPD does. It has been a great privilege over the last six years to have Professor Sir Cary Cooper CBE fulfil that role. He has been an incredible advocate, engaged widely with CIPD members, stakeholders and partners, spoken at many events, and promoted what the CIPD does as a professional body and as a profession far and wide.

As one of the world's leading experts on wellbeing, he has helped bring attention to this vital contributor to better work and working lives.

The CIPD is indebted to Cary, but also delighted to welcome Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith CBE as the new president. Ruby is an extraordinary leader and businessperson who has led

on and championed many of the issues that are central to the CIPD's agenda. She was recognised as a top 50 female world business leader by the *FT* in 2013, and in 2015 was granted a life peerage, becoming a member of the House of Lords in recognition of her achievements, not least in being among the small group of women who have held the position of chief executive in a FTSE 250 business, and the first Asian woman at this level.

Ruby has held a number of influential leadership roles, including president of the British Chambers of Commerce, chair of the Institute of Apprenticeships and Technical Education, and a non-executive director at the Department for Education. She has been chair of the UK government's Women's Business Council and a business ambassador for the UK, and is currently chair of Mind Gym.

Responsible for the 2017 independent report to the UK government on race in the workplace, Ruby was appointed to lead the In-Work Progression Commission in 2020. She is a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales and was awarded the Outstanding Achievement Award in 2015, the profession's most prestigious award.

Ruby is pleased to be taking on the role of president at this important time of opportunity for change. In particular she is looking forward to promoting and supporting the CIPD's wider purpose and the development of the people profession, and engaging on CIPD campaigns for greater transparency, better work and responsible business.

**Peter Cheese, CIPD chief executive**

EXTRA  
EXTRA

### Inclusion Calendar

Produced in partnership with Diversiton, CIPD members can download the 2022 Inclusion Calendar, highlighting more than 240 key dates including holy days, religious festivals, health and wellbeing awareness days, special events and bank holidays.

\* [bit.ly/InclusionCalendar2022](http://bit.ly/InclusionCalendar2022)

### EVP podcast

Whether the 'Great Resignation' is a phenomenon supported by statistical evidence or not, the pandemic has prompted many to reassess what they want from their jobs. Listen to the CIPD's latest podcast, which discusses how employers might raise their employee value proposition and meet the demands of the post-pandemic labour market.

\* [bit.ly/EVPPodcast](http://bit.ly/EVPPodcast)

### Digitising reward management

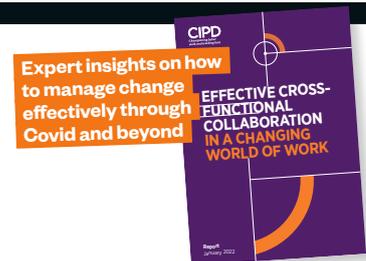
What do e-payslips, flexible benefits and peer-to-peer recognition platforms have in common? They digitise reward activities with the aim of making them simpler and accessible to more people. The CIPD's latest digital transformation insight article explores how technology can make reward more accessible and performance management fairer.

\* [bit.ly/DigitalReward](http://bit.ly/DigitalReward)

### Cross-functional collaboration

The pandemic has brought teams together like never before – harnessing this alignment around a core purpose will become even more important in the future. The CIPD's new report provides evidence-based insights exploring how people professionals are partnering across business functions to future-proof their organisations.

\* [bit.ly/CIPDCollaborationReport](http://bit.ly/CIPDCollaborationReport)



*"The updated Code will reflect the expectations and aspirations of key stakeholders"*

# CIPD presents ethnicity pay evidence to parliament

Calls to make ethnicity pay reporting mandatory have stalled, according to experts who attended a Women and Equalities Committee meeting on the subject in January.

The CIPD was invited to provide evidence at the meeting, where Charles Cotton, senior performance and reward adviser at the CIPD, said: "Ethnicity pay reporting is an opportunity for organisations to explore how they are rewarding people, to see whether it is fair. It also brings in the issue of how you recruit and promote people in the organisation, and how you develop and train them."

In the absence of legislation, the CIPD believes employers should aim to voluntarily compile ethnicity pay reports as part of their approach to improving inclusion and tackling inequality in the workplace.

Ethnicity pay reporting offers a solid foundation to start addressing workplace inequalities, developing greater transparency and accountability, while building a reputation as a fair and progressive employer. The CIPD's latest guidance explores how employers can publish annual ethnicity reports.

\* [bit.ly/EthnicityPayReporting](http://bit.ly/EthnicityPayReporting)

# CIPD Code of Conduct review

The CIPD is carrying out a review of its Code of Conduct a decade after it first launched, with the aim of reflecting changes in the people profession and wider world of work.

A session was included at December's Council meeting on 7 December, to review the standards and gather feedback on areas for development. This followed a number of focus groups and round tables at the CIPD Annual Conference and Exhibition as well as events across the UK, to ensure a cross-section of CIPD membership was consulted.

The updated Code will reflect the expectations and aspirations of key stakeholders – in line with the changing world of work – and importantly protect members of the public and their interest.

The CIPD is calling on all global stakeholders including members and non-members, and HR and business researchers and academics, to input into the review via an online survey. Your input into the content will ensure the CIPD Code is not only relevant now but supports the profession to ensure it remains future fit.

\* [bit.ly/CIPDCodeReview](http://bit.ly/CIPDCodeReview)

## Chartered Companion Nominations 2022

Chartered Companion status is the highest accolade and level of membership awarded by the CIPD, recognising outstanding and distinguished service to the people profession. Chartered Companions can be nominated by any CIPD Chartered Member, Fellow, Companion or Academic Member or Fellow. Nominees must be a CIPD Chartered Fellow or Academic Fellow member and nominations must be submitted before midnight on 15 May 2022.

\* [bit.ly/CCIPDNominations](http://bit.ly/CCIPDNominations)

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The behaviour of Eric Matthews towards his staff, including special agent Gracie Hart (left), could be seen as bullying or sexual harassment



## Could HR solve...?

# MISS CONGENIALITY

*A senior FBI agent crosses the line into bullying when he takes a joke too far*

### The problem

In an attempt to find the perfect member of his team to go undercover at a beauty contest, agent Eric Matthews runs a computer simulation that shows what staff would look like in a bikini. The activity attracts a crowd, who all jeer at the results on screen, which include older women and senior leadership. Could this be classed as bullying and discrimination, and could HR have stopped this from happening with proper training?

### The solution

On the surface, this seems like banter, but it could be construed as bullying, says Amo Bains, HR advisor at University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust (pictured).

“We all deserve to work in an environment where we feel respected and valued, not for what we look like or our age, but for the knowledge and skills we bring to our roles,” he says. Jeering at what senior leadership and older female colleagues would look like in bikinis could potentially be classed as direct discrimination on the grounds of the protected characteristics of age and sex, he points out.



“Although bullying is not defined by law as such, it is often characterised as behaviour that is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting and is often intended to humiliate or injure the recipient,” he explains, adding that allowing the behaviour to continue sends a clear message to employees that bullying will, in fact, be tolerated.

It is important for senior leadership to buy into this and be fully committed, Bains says: “HR practitioners should start by having a policy and procedure in place that outlines what constitutes bullying and discrimination in the workplace and how it will be dealt with.” These should be communicated to all employees, he adds.

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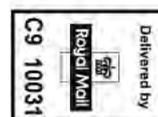
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