

HR IN 2021: FIVE CHANGES YOU NEED TO KNOW

In 2020 we saw the global economy spiral downwards with largescale redundancies in some sectors and pressure for employers to rapidly transition to remote working.

From a HR perspective, the pandemic has prompted much more than a rapid homeworking experiment. It has tested the foundation upon which our working lives operate and has required us all to embrace changes to the status quo.

For good or for bad, the challenges of 2020 present some useful HR learnings for 2021.

1. WORKING FROM HOME IS HERE TO STAY... AT LEAST IN SOME PART

One positive outcome of the pandemic is that many companies have embraced remote working to some extent.

Working from home undoubtedly offers opportunities to improve our work life balance – be it through reduced commuting, greater efficiency, or flexibility to integrate our professional and personal responsibilities.

For industry sectors that continue to embrace remote working or are moving towards hybrid models, employers should pay heed to the need to balance the aforementioned positives with the emerging risks of homeworking:

- **GDPR Risks** – is your confidential information being printed, copied to a USB, or otherwise mishandled by your remote staff? Can confidential discussions be overheard in the home?
- **Health & Safety** – What steps has your business taken to ensure your employees are physically and mentally safe in a remote environment?

Are their home work areas appropriate for their physical needs? Are your managers trained to recognise signs of stress, loneliness and poor mental health in remote workers?

- **Performance Management** – How are your staff being managed remotely? Do you have effective performance management measures in place? Are your managers sufficiently trained to manage remote workers?
- **Policies and Processes** – Are your employees clear on their responsibilities when working from home? For example, does working from home mean they can also work flexible hours, or are they expected to be logged on at the same time every morning?

2. THE NEW POINTS-BASED IMMIGRATION SYSTEM, DOES IT IMPACT YOUR ORGANISATION?

The Post-Brexit immigration system was introduced from 1 January 2021. EEA nationals arriving in the UK will now need to comply with the same visa requirements as other non-UK nationals. EEA nationals who were already here and who have been working before the end of the transition period on 31st December 2020, have a grace period until 30 June 2021 to apply under the EU Settlement Scheme.

- Do you understand how the new system affects your resourcing plans and does your business need to apply for a sponsor licence?
- Have your existing EEA employees applied for settled or pre-settled status? Have you thought about how you can gently encourage them to do so?
- Are you fully up to speed with the rules on right to work checks during this transition phase and post?



3. CORONAVIRUS JOB RETENTION SCHEME AND WHAT HAPPENS POST-SEPTEMBER 2021?

The extension of the CJRS scheme until September 2021 has provided a welcome respite for many employers and employees. With alarming rates of COVID-19, the furlough scheme has enabled many organisations to manage the ongoing dilemmas presented by home-schooling and maintaining business continuity, whilst holding at bay the immediate threat of redundancies and, most importantly of all, has helped to protect the health and safety of employees and the public.

Have you assessed how the end of furlough will impact your business? Will you need to restructure your business? Are you fully aware of redundancy and consultation legislative requirements? How will you re-onboard and re-engage employees returning from furlough?

4. INCREASE TO NATIONAL MINIMUM WAGE AND OTHER STATUTORY RATES

The national minimum wage rates increased on 1 April 2021. Have you conducted your annual review of employee wage rates? You should note that the National Living Wage has been extended to 23- and 24-year-olds from 1 April 2021.

Watch out for those hidden scenarios such as employees purchasing company uniforms, contributing to training, or failing to move an employee into a new age bracket on their birthday.

Also ensure you are aware of the increases to statutory rates including sick pay, family-related pay, redundancy pay etc. since 1 April 2021.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT: FREE SEMINARS

Think People Consulting run a number of free seminars throughout the year on timely HR, Organisational Development and Talent Development topics including those outlined above. To view our 2021 schedule and register for free, visit: www.thinkpeople.co.uk/events

