

Welcome to your quarterly HR MATTERS

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Congratulations Lyndsay

Please join us in congratulating our team member Lyndsay, who has recently achieved her CIPD L5 qualification as well as her 2 year work anniversary with Apex.

Lyndsay is a committed and dedicated member of the team, whose values and principles align with the Apex message and shine through day to day with her clients, non clients and colleagues.

May your great work continue to make a positive impact on people and business.



4-day working week UK trial

As some of you may know, we are big advocates for a 4-day working week at Apex. We champion a healthy balance between work and the rest of our life. Last month, what is thought to be the world's biggest pilot scheme into the working pattern involving over 70 companies in the UK was launched. The experiment has been organised by a group campaigning for a shorter working week, with no loss in wages. During this six-month trial, employees will get 100% of pay for 80% of the hours they would usually work, with the aim of being more productive. Academics from Oxford and Cambridge universities, as well experts at Boston College in the US, will manage the experiment in partnership with the think tank Autonomy.

Sam Smith, co-founder of Pressure Drop Brewery in Tottenham, one of the 70+ businesses that is taking part in this trial, said it felt "like a good time" for the firm to be trying different working practices. "The pandemic's made us think a great deal about work and how people organise their lives," he added. "We're doing this to improve the lives of our staff and be part of a progressive change in the world that will improve people's mental health and wellbeing."

The experiment, involving some 3000 UK workers, is part of worldwide initiative and is running alongside similar, smaller trials in Ireland, the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

The researcher admitted the idea might not suit everyone and every profession, such as health care and teaching, where staff could already be over worked and stressed out. But even if workers are just 10% more productive the economics can still stack up, she argued, if it leads to lower sickness rates, fewer staff leaving and making it easier to attract new recruits.

Girling Jones, a small construction recruitment firm in Exeter switched to a four-day week in January, but has also signed up to the trial. The company founder Simon Girling has reported that productivity is up and so are profits; "All our inputs - calls, meetings, interviews, are up... quite simply everyone is doing more in less time," he added. "When we came back from the pandemic, we did a lot of research into it and I couldn't see any downside. I think being part of this 4-day week pilot, there's going to be some really detailed stats on this. I'm not sure it would work across all industries or businesses but it's a really good opportunity for a lot of firms to change how they work and maybe improve."

Many companies around the world have already embraced and adopted a 4-day working week and it is considered the norm for countries such as Germany, Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Iceland, Spain, Scotland, New Zealand, UAE, Japan, Ireland and Belgium. Will the UK be next?

Quotes source: BBC News - June 2022

Top tips on how employers can support their employees during the cost of living crisis

Our daily news feeds are constantly talking about the rise of living costs and how people are struggling to make ends meet. Let's not forget, that these people are not just the unemployed, it is people that are in work also. Therefore, how can employers help and support their employees during this period of crisis?

An easy answer would be for employers to implement pay increases to align with inflation and the rising costs, but organisations are feeling the pinch themselves. Organisational costs have risen significantly and affects them in many ways. The supply chain of many means that when one part of the chain increases their prices this affects the rest of the chain and they are forced to increase prices too, BBC news reported on a story recently where a restaurant in London has seen a £3000 a week increase in the cost of their ingredients for their products they sell to their customers, not to mention those organisations that rely on transportation costs and the effects of the rising costs of fuel. It really puts it in to perspective that our whole economy is feeling the pinch during this period.

So, we go back to our question, how can employers help and support their teams during a period of living cost crisis?

There are some top tips below that may help people in other ways:

- Discreet in work food bank- some people may be feeling it more than others in work, and this may be an opportunity for teams to support each other and donate food items in a discreet way
- Discreet in work clothing exchange – especially for school uniforms or clothes for children to help with the wider families who may be struggling.
- Limit travelling – maybe adapt Working from home to a higher percentage of the week than in the office, prioritise and being smarter with time management. Keeping any meetings in the same geographical areas perhaps.
- Signposting help services – having clear displays of support services available for people to contact, such as debt support, external social services, citizen advice etc
- Flexible hardship loans- organisations may be able to provide a flexible pay back hardship loans to help employees who need immediate help.

- Wellbeing Champion – many organisations already have well-being at the forefront of their minds, because of the pandemic, however many peoples stresses may now be caused by the living crisis, therefore having a go to trusted person to talk to may help to relieve the stress and burden
- Raising awareness of free days out for families or social events that won't be extra costs for people.

Although some of these suggestions may seem embarrassing for the employee, how the employer implements these support strategies and normalises them is important, being discreet about some of these strategies will be key for some employee. There are many other ways organisations can support their employees through challenging periods and the above are just a few. These are low cost- or cost-free suggestions that could make a difference to someone's everyday life.

Creating a culture where people feel supported and valued, not only by the work that they do, but in times of crisis is meaningful to individuals, they are advocates for organisations in which it comes back to a quote by John Maxwell, 'Tend to your people and they will tend to your business.'

HR files and their data retention schedule

Most organisations will process and retain personal HR data. Whether this is setting a new team member up on your payroll, through to their exit interview on retiring or leaving the organisation, and everything in between.

You are required in accordance with data protection legislation to keep a schedule detailing the duration you will retain this information otherwise known as a data retention schedule. This is to ensure you are not keeping information for longer than is necessary and in line with General Data Protection Regulations [GDPR]. This includes both electronic and paper records.

Some retention periods are statutory whilst others are dependent on your business needs. Your organisation must have processes to not only ensure this information is stored securely but when the retention period is due for expiry, an effective process to securely destroy the information is followed.

Dependant on your organisation you may already have a data protection officer in place or someone that takes the lead on looking after data. At Apex we love to support our clients so if you would like to have more information about data protection and your legal obligations or have a specific question regarding data retention, then please contact our DPO Kelly Miller at Kelly.miller@apexhr.co.uk who would be more than happy to help navigate you through what can be a complex area.