**Making People Count: a workforce bulletin**

**March 2024**

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# Apprenticeship

## Spreading apprentices from Cornwall to Cumbria

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** As someone who’s worked with a succession of fantastic apprentices it’s easy to think they have something to offer, and in this article Jo Faragher explores some of the ins and outs. Low morale and issues with retention are hampering performance in local government so offering new and existing employees a viable career path can help them feel valued and more loyal. Leicestershire County Council set up a working group looking at how to make the most of their apprenticeship-levy funding. The council currently runs 68 different apprenticeship standards and has around 150 people going through their apprenticeship. Some are studying to become public-health practitioners via a Level Six apprenticeship, “which will create a much-needed pipeline of future leaders for Health Trusts in the local authority.” Luton Borough Council’s recruitment team works closely with local schools and colleges to promote a range of entry paths into the council and goes to local careers fairs to advertise this. Tips for making the most of the apprentice levy include:

* Work closely with schools, colleges and universities to make them aware of the opportunities available
* Promote apprenticeships internally for upskilling or retraining existing employees, or to prepare staff for leadership and management positions
* Think about the application experience – apprentices will use this to gauge whether you offer a work culture they will thrive in
* Support apprentices to balance work and study by offering compassion, and encourage cohorts to support one another

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/public-sector-apprenticeships/>

# Learning and Development

## Information governance again? Hang out the bunting!

**Source:** Sustainability

**In a nutshell:** Guaranteed to make watching paint dry feel like front-row tickets to see the Rolling Stones at Wembley, annual information-governance training usually takes the shape of a quick gallop through reams of 10-point Arial before some frantic guesswork when it comes to the test at the end. In this article Ching-Yeh Tsai and Der-Chiang Li from National Cheng Kung University in Taiwan studied 380 workers from 26 companies taking part in “corporate educational technology learning.” They found that the workers had three “orientations,” to the learning: learning, proving themselves, and avoiding getting into trouble. The first two orientations positively affected learning outcomes “by mediating self-regulated learning and learning satisfaction,” whereas doing the courses to keep out of trouble led to worse learning outcomes as people were less able to regulate their learning and gained less learning satisfaction.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/16/4/1679>

# People Management

## Death – the one SMART goal we’ll all achieve (eventually)

**Source:** Journal of Management Studies

**In a nutshell:** Rather like going to London on an Avanti train death is the one destination we can all be confident we’ll arrive at, even if it might be on a rail-replacement coach via Porthmadog, Wick, and Penzance. Let’s just hope that when we finally arrive the catering offer is better than Euston Station’s. In this study Chidiebere Ogbonnaya, from the University of Kent, led a team of researchers investigating the effect of “mortality cues,” on healthcare leaders. They found that for leaders high in psychological capital thoughts of death increased “leader expediency,” – “the use of unethical practices to expedite work for self-serving purposes.” However, for leaders who were higher in psychological capital thoughts of death increased “servant leadership behaviour.”

You can read the abstract of this article at

<https://doi.org/10.1111/joms.13051>

## Corporate social responsibility and thriving at work

**Source:** Sustainability

**In a nutshell:** In this study Xue Han, from Renmin University of China in Beijing, led a team of researchers studying the links between corporate social responsibility (CSR) and employees’ thriving at work. They found that employers’ perceived CSR helped workers to build a good social exchange with their company, which, in turn, contributed to “enhanced thriving at work.” These relationships were stronger for workers with higher “trait gratitude.”

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/16/3/1095>

## When it pays to be humble

**Source:** Human Resource Management

**In a nutshell:** Humble leadership – seeing oneself accurately, admitting to one’s mistakes, and appreciating others’ strengths – can bring all sorts of benefits to an organization but, almost by definition, tends to be in rather short supply. In this study Elsa T. Chan, from the University of Sussex, led a team of researchers investigating humble leadership. They studied 610 leaders across 18 industries and 21 different job functions. They found that humble leaders were more likely to mentor people which gave them social status within the organization, something which ultimately led to them being seen as more promotable.

You can read the abstract of this article at

<https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.22208>

## Diversity, anxiety and dialling in

**Source:** Journal of Organizational Behaviour

**In a nutshell:** Making everyone feel welcome can have all sorts of benefits though, and in this study Christina N. Lacerenza, from the University of Colarodo Boulder, examined how diversity climate affected women told to work at home during the Pandemic. They found that women reported significant increases in anxiety and turnover intentions over lockdown. Women working in organizations with a poor diversity climate showed symptoms that increased to severe levels of anxiety, whereas women working in an organization with a good diversity climate “did not experience as drastic an increase in anxiety.”

You can read the abstract of this article at

<https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2768>

## Do office tyrants come up with the goods?

**Source:** Creativity and Innovation Management

**In a nutshell:** Having committed the cardinal sins of not capitalizing their title and using a sans-serif font it’s tempting to take everything published in *Creativity and Innovation Management* with a pinch of (low-sodium) salt. One shouldn’t rush to judgement though, and in this interesting study Ci-Rong Li, from Jilin University in China, led a team of researchers investigating the links between office tyrants, centralized decision-making, and creative behaviour. The researchers studied 200 workers and found that – when they experienced abusive supervision – they reacted with either anger or anxiety. Anger reduced creativity but anxiety actually increased it. When the organization had a highly-centralized decision-making process which precluded creativity employees were much less likely to be creative when faced with an office tyrant, and were much more likely to feel anger.

You can read the abstract of this article at

<https://doi.org/10.1111/caim.12593>

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## Remotely disengaging

**Source:** Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology

**In a nutshell:** Some employees are like Mercury, staying close to their organization’s source of light and energy, and prepared to put up with any amount of heat to stay in touch with it; others are like the [Kuiper Belt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kuiper_belt) – distant, cold, slow-moving, and resolutely unaffected by events at the centre. In this study Marie-Colombe Afota, from the University of Montreal in Canada, led a team of researchers studying the effect of remote-working on high-intensity telecommuters. Could they still stay connected to the organization once they were working from home, or would they drift off to the edges of the system? 716 workers took part in the study and the researchers found that new high-intensity telecommuters experienced declines in “work belongingness,” over time which, in turn, led to decreased perceptions that their work was meaningful, and increased emotional exhaustion. This process was actually more severe in those who had started remote working with a higher affective commitment to their colleagues.

You can read the abstract of this article at

<https://doi.org/10.1111/joop.12494>

## Digital transformation and transformational leadership

**Source:** Sustainability

**In a nutshell:** People like the idea of transforming things – so much easier to wave a magic wand than experience the stalactite-like process by which real change actually occurs – and in this study Levent Gun, from Gebze Technical University in Turkey, led a team of researchers studying 305 managers in manufacturing. They found that transformational leadership and employee self-efficacy were both positively related to digital transformation. Digital transformation was, in turn, associated with operational and financial performance, a relationship strengthened by “environmental uncertainty.”

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/16/3/1200>

## Can workplace spirituality pay off on the home front?

**Source:** Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology

**In a nutshell:** Workface spirituality doesn’t have to be a feeling that “God’s in his heaven – all’s right with the world,” when your boss brings in some chocolate fudge cake or [Beckettian despair](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_Beckett) when you’re faced with the annual statistics return. As defined by Yuanyuan Liu, from Beijing Institute of Technology, who led the team of researchers in this study it refers to “meaningful work, sense of community, and alignment with the organization that individuals develop in their work.” The researchers studied the links between workplace spirituality and family life and found that “workplace spirituality can positively predict work-family enrichment.” However, this relationship was weaker for those people who preferred a strong demarcation between work and home. The effect of workplace spirituality on problem-solving was found to strengthen the link between workplace spirituality and work-family enrichment.

You can read the abstract of this article at

<https://doi.org/10.1111/joop.12495>

## When culture trumps branding

**Source:** Sustainability

**In a nutshell:** In this study Jongchul Park and Jooyoung Kim, from Korea National Sport University, studied 248 people working for “public sports organizations.” They found that organizational management culture had a significant positive effect on work engagement, but that there was no significant relationship between internal communication and work engagement. Organizational management culture reduced turnover intention, whereas internal communication increased it. Organizational management culture improved work engagement, which, in turn, reduced turnover intention.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/16/3/1342>

## Personality, job satisfaction, and retention

**Source:** Personnel Review

**In a nutshell:** Walk into any bookshop – particularly one with a lively passing trade from commuters – and you’ll see a whole shelf full of books promising to make you a happier, more positive, and more dynamic person. Something of a triumph of hope over optimism perhaps – if they were that effective there wouldn’t be quite such a large market for them. Whether personality is improvable or immutable is a moot point but in this study Ruigang Wu, from Huazhong University of Science and Technology in China, led a team of researchers investigating the links between personality, job satisfaction, and turnover. They found that agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness were positively related to job satisfaction, whereas extraversion and neuroticism were linked to lower job satisfaction. The effect of personality traits on job satisfaction was stronger for “former employees,” than for current ones and personality traits were significantly linked to employee turnover behaviour. Each one-point increase in levels of neuroticism raised the chance of an employee becoming a former employee by 0.6%.

You can read the abstract of this article at

<https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-04-2023-0309>

## Coming to terms with digital transformation

**Source:** Sustainability

**In a nutshell:** At a soft-play venue near us you have to order your snacks and drinks using an app. You can spend five minutes trying to download it and another ten working out how it works only to discover your modest request for a black coffee (look I’m making it easy for you, you don’t even have to worry about milk) and a toasted teacake has disappeared into the catering equivalent of Dickens’ [Circumlocution Office.](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/circumlocution_office) You don’t have to go too far to experience digital transformation in action and in this study Ibrahim Mutambik and Abdullah Almuqrin, from King Saud University in Saudi Arabia looked into its application to “smart cities.” They found that management support for digital transformation and its perceived advantages had a positive relationship to its acceptance by workers, whereas “process complexity,” and inertia led to less acceptance.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/16/4/1398>

## Servant leadership, creativity, and wellbeing

**Source:** Creativity and Innovation Management

**In a nutshell:** Although Jeeves irons Bertie Wooster’s shirts, runs his baths, and brings him a cup of tea in the morning there’s no denying who’s really in charge of the situation. Servant leadership works on a similar basis, although it would be a brave employee who asked the Chief Exec to bob over to the shops and pick up a Cadbury’s Crème Egg and a pint of semi-skimmed. In this study Wenhao Song, from Shanghai Maritime University, led a team of researchers studying the effect of servant leadership on wellbeing and creativity. They found that servant leadership increased workplace wellbeing which, in turn, increased creativity. “Psychological availability,” moderated the relationship between workplace wellbeing and creativity. However “creative time pressure,” was found to reduce creativity and weakened the link between workplace wellbeing and creativity.

You can read the abstract of this article at

<https://doi.org/10.1111/caim.12595>

## Work social media. What difference does it make?

**Source:** Sustainability

**In a nutshell:** Does anyone remember Yammer? Rather like MySpace, Ask Jeeves, and Yahoo it was the big new thing once before disappearing down the plughole of history quicker than you can say Sinclair C5. All of which goes to show that social networks – unaided by cat videos, school photographs, or alcohol – are built on very shaky foundations indeed. In this study Rundian Shen and Jigan Wang, from Hohai University in China studied the effects of “enterprise social media,” (online work social networks) on employees. They found that it promoted employee creativity, prestige-striving behaviour (aka showing off), and quiescent silence. Prestige-striving behaviour had a positive effect on creativity, whereas quiescent silence reduced it.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/16/4/1675>

## When Red Bull doesn’t give you wings

**Source:** Creativity and Innovation Management

**In a nutshell:** In this study Marine Agogué from HEC Montréal in Canada led a team of researchers studying 69 people. The participants in the study were given a drink before starting work. Half of them were told it was just fruit juice and the other half were told it was fruit juice and Red Bull. The more people believed that Red Bull stimulated creativity – among those told they were consuming it – the *worse* their creative performance was. The researchers speculated that this was because they became complacent after thinking they were consuming Red Bull and thought the caffeine would do the work for them instead of putting their backs into it themselves.

You can read the abstract of this article at

<https://doi.org/10.1111/caim.12597>

# Recruitment

## Vacancies continue to fall

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** Job-search engine Adzuna have been examining the UK jobs market and found that the total number of advertised vacancies fell 6.95% in December, down to 929,138. Vacancies are expected to decrease again in January. The last time job vacancies fell this much was in June 2020, as businesses struggled to get to grips with the aftermath of the Pandemic. There are now 1.68 jobseekers per vacancy, up from 1.45 in May and June 2023. Average advertised salaries rose to £37,577 but just over half (50.2%) of adverts did not include information about pay. Teaching was the only sector with a rise in vacancies and had the shortest time to fill roles. The biggest falls in vacancies were in retail (-17.94%); manufacturing (-17.05%); hospitality and catering (-14.13%); and trade and construction (-13.56%). Social work jobs showed the steepest increase in advertised salaries and Cambridge, Oxford, and Reading were the best cities to look for jobs in.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/jobs-vacancies-january-salaries/>

## Tracing the geography of sickness

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** Also examining the labour market was the Resolution Foundation who examined regional variations in real-terms pay and sickness rates. The UK is the only country in the G7 in which overall employment levels have still not returned to pre-Pandemic levels. However, many traditionally low-employment areas of the country such as Tees Valley and Durham (+1.6%) and West Central Scotland (+1.5%) have experienced positive employment growth. However, economic inactivity due to ill health has increased from 5.1% in the year up to March 2020, to 5.8% in the year to September 2023 and places with already high rates of sickness-related absence such as Merseyside (+1.6%); Tees Valley and Durham (+1.5%); and West Wales (+1.5%) experienced more than twice the national increase.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/uk-long-term-sickness-by-geography-resolution-foundation/>

## Could you afford to accept this job?

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** I can still remember my first day as a trainee accountant. It poured down on the way to work, my new shoes rubbed, and my new coat turned out to be more “[Man at C&A](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C%26A#In_popular_culture),” than “[Man from ACCA](https://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en.html).” Things went rapidly downhill from there, but at least I could afford to get there in the first place. New research from The Prince’s Trust shows that not everyone is in such a fortunate position. They surveyed more than 2,000 16- to 25-year-olds and found that 5% had turned down a job because they could not afford the upfront costs needed to start work, such as transport, uniforms, or rent. This rose to 10% among those not in education, employment, or training and to 9% among those from poorer socio-economic backgrounds. 24% said they could not afford to study towards the qualification they needed for the job they wanted, rising to 34% among those from a poorer background, and 33% among NEETs.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/youth-index-2024-young-people-turning-down-jobs/>

## Could you afford to accept this job? Part II

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** Parents’ pressure group Pregnant Then Screwed have been asking mums and dads all about the cost of childcare. They found that one in five parents with a child under five had had to withdraw money from their pension pot to cover the cost of childcare and 45.9% had had to raid their savings to cover nursery or childminders’ fees. Half of single parents had had to borrow money for childcare and a third of all mothers had been unable to return to work full time due to the cost of childcare. 53% of parents with a child under five spent more than a quarter of their household income on childcare, up 16% from last year. A third said their childcare provider had a waiting list of more than nine months, and only 13% said that they had had no problems finding childcare locally.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/cost-of-childcare-survey/>

## Work experience still a Catch-22 for youngsters

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** With nothing but moving plants pointlessly around a garden centre and folding sheets in a hospital laundry behind me in the way of paid work, applying for graduate jobs when I left university required the massaging of sundry incompetently-executed and chaotic extra-curricular responsibilities in a fashion that would have made even Donald Trump blush. The Catch-22 of not being able to get a job due to lack of work experience is still very much alive and recent research by Virgin Media O2 has found that three-quarters of young adults have been rejected from an entry-level job because they do not have enough work experience. 74% of 25 to 34-year-olds had seen their application for an entry-level role rejected because they lacked experience, whilst 37% said they had felt underqualified when applying for such jobs. 1,012 people took part in the survey and 77% of them said it was important to have work experience when applying for an entry-level job; 28% said it was nearly impossible to get such a job without prior experience. 72% said it was harder to find entry-level jobs these days and 64% said that the criteria for entry-level jobs were “much more stringent,” compared to when they started working.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/lack-of-work-experience-entry-level-jobs/>

## When high-fliers won’t come back to the roost

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** My experience of high performance consists mostly of a passable impersonation of Mr Bean as I suffer an attack of vertigo sticking the Christmas streamers up in the front room. Those with tip-top talent can often be in a position to call the shots though and it seems many of them aren’t too happy about being ordered back into the office. Global consultancy Gartner have been asking people all about it and found that employees’ “intent-to-stay,” fell by 8% with strict return-to-office mandates. However, among higher-performing staff intent to stay fell by 16% when they were told to come back to the office and among women and Millennials intent-to-stay fell by 10% and 11% respectively. High performers – found Gartner – often react to stricter attendance rules as a signal that their organization doesn’t trust them with the autonomy to make the best choices about how they get their work done. Compared to Generation Z workers Millennials were more likely to be cheesed off with stricter attendance rules. The were more likely to have arranged their life around working from home and older Millennials were more likely to have caring responsibilities.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/return-to-office-hybrid-work-women-millennials/>

## Employers still facing candidate shortages

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** Even posts where the pay might lead you to expect not much more than functional literacy and a pulse seem to have interviews worthy of *The Apprentice* these days, so it might seem a bit churlish for employers to complain about a shortage of candidates – perhaps interviews for those higher up the hierarchy feature an assault course and a swimsuit round too, who knows? Complain they do though, and a new survey by the Recruitment and Employment Confederation has found that two-thirds of large employers and more than half of medium-sized ones report a shortage of candidates. Small businesses fared even worse, with 81% experiencing difficulties recruiting.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/candidate-shortage-afflicts-two-thirds-of-businesses/>

## Is economic inactivity even bigger than we thought it was?

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** Reports of labour shortages and difficulty finding candidates for posts are hard to square with the fact that it can be standing room only in Costa when those of us in work eventually get a day off. It makes more sense when you realize that – on top of the 4% or so of the population deemed to be unemployed – around one in five working people are “economically inactive.” The figures for economic activity could be even worse than we thought they were as the Office for National Statistics has just revised the way it calculates them. Under the new methodology the percentage of the population deemed to be economically inactive rose from 21.2% between September and November 2023 to 21.9%. Three-quarters of working-age people were in employment and the remaining 3.9% were unemployed.

You can read the whole article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/ons-economic-inactivity-higher-than-previously-thought/>

## Wages outpace inflation - just

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** New figures from the Office for National Statistics show that while pay growth is continuing to outpace inflation its rate of growth is slowing down. From October to December 2023 the annual increase in regular weekly earnings – minus bonuses – was 6.2%, or 1.8% when adjusted for inflation. The wholesale, retail, hotel and restaurants sectors saw the greatest increase in wages (+7.2%), with manufacturing (6.9%) and finance and business (6.7%) also enjoying strong pay growth.

You can read the whole article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/ons-february-2024-labour-market-figures/>

# Wellbeing

## Just one more row on the spreadsheet

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** In this article Rachel Suff argues that employers “must improve support for terminally-ill workers.” Only a third of organizations, for example, have specific provisions in place for workers with a terminal illness such as a policy, guidance, or line-manager training. Colleagues can be afraid to talk about sensitive issues for fear of saying the wrong thing and end up saying nothing at all, which can feel very isolating. Only 43% of organizations manage terminal illness outwith standard sickness-reporting processes. “No one should feel pressured to discuss their health situation if they do not want to. However, they should still be able to access support. The onus is on the organisation to create a compassionate culture where people can talk and seek support if they want to, as well as be able to access information and resources easily. It is important not to make assumptions and to take the lead from the employee in terms of what they would like to share and what support they might need. We should not assume that people with a terminal illness do not want to participate in new work opportunities or join social events. Even if an employee is off sick, they may still want to hear about what it going on in the organisation.” The CIPD has produced new guidance on this topic, which you can find at

<https://www.cipd.org/en/knowledge/guides/terminal-illness>

and you can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/employees-with-terminal-illness-support/>

## When one is not fun

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** Wellbeing initiatives at work tend to focus on the individual rather than the organization as a whole, but is this the right approach? In this article Richard Bedworth – VP of sales at StaySafe – argues that it isn’t and that “organization-level interventions,” can have more impact. These should include flexible working wherever possible, and making sure everyone understands the requirements of their role and has regular meetings with their manager to discuss their performance and growth. And no one should be expected to fill in for long periods because of staff shortages. Richard Bedworth’s five top tips are:

1. **Make processes clear and concise.** “All processes that affect workers should be documented and easily accessible… Removing any blockers and ambiguity makes sure everyone understands both their individual contribution to wider business goals, and the procedures the company has in place.”
2. **Prioritize safety.** “Employees who feel unsafe at work are more likely to experience anxiety and depression, so implementing and clearly communicating safety practices is paramount.”
3. **Be flexible.** “Flexible working is not just about having a hybrid working policy … it is important to give individuals the responsibility for managing their own workload in a way that suits them.”
4. **Offer regular training and development.** “By investing in ongoing education, businesses contribute to a culture where employees thrive and feel supported.”
5. **Engage employees.** “Every employee has different needs and commitments, and although you will never be able to tick every box for every person, providing the space for them to have a say on changes that affect them can boost morale.”

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/why-we-need-to-shift-away-from-individual-level-wellbeing-initiatives/>

## Taking the stigma out of mental health

**Source:** Employee Benefits

**In a nutshell:** In this article Helen Burgess, an employment partner at Gateley Legal, discusses some of the ways in which employers can reduce stigma in the workplace. Mental-health first-aiders can play a huge role in getting workplace conversations started, either privately, or as part of group conversations. More widespread training can give people a holistic understanding of mental health, including common issues, strategies for maintaining good mental health, and how to identify danger signs in themselves or others. Supervisors should be given more in-depth training so they can encourage an open and safe environment for employees to discuss any issues they have with their mental health. “By creating a safe and inclusive environment for people to talk about their mental health and get the support they need, employees are more likely to stay with an employer long term, which improves retention of top talent as well as reducing absenteeism and the costs associated with that, all while creating a healthy work culture, building mental health awareness and demonstrating a commitment to good practice.”

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://employeebenefits.co.uk/helen-burgess-how-to-help-break-mental-health-stigma-in-the-workplace/>

## What makes decent work?

**Source:** Sustainability

**In a nutshell:** In this study Yan Yan, from Shanghai Dianji University, led a team of researchers who asked 869 knowledge workers what they thought made for decent work. They came up with the 5 Ss which were:

* Security
* Support
* Self-value
* Skills
* Self-esteem

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/16/3/1207>

## When even the people in work are sickly

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** With increasing numbers of people not working due to sickness it’s worrying to find that those still in work aren’t exactly in peak physical condition either. Health-plan provider Simplyhealth [sic] have been asking 4,000 workers all about it. 27% had experienced back pain in the past year, with 16% experiencing muscle pain as a result of their work. 40% said not having access to physiotherapy through their employer had contributed to their back issues and 20% said having physiotherapy as a benefit would make them happier and more productive. 68% suffered from “wider health problems,” at work with 25% saying that their employer had not been supportive. Back pain was most common in those working in retail (33%) and healthcare (37%). Healthcare workers were also the most likely to experience migraines (19%) and depression (17%), and they had the highest levels of anxiety (37%) too.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/back-pain-at-work-support-simplyhealth/>

## Taking a sickie. Who, why and when?

**Source:** Employee Benefits

**In a nutshell:** Insurance company MetLife UK have been asking people all about it. 30% said they had either taken a sickie in the past, or would think about taking one. 40% said this was because they felt burnt out. 23% took time off to go to an appointment; 17% did so for childcare issues and 15% to care for a relative\*. 31% took one for a break from work; 13% to avoid an ongoing issue; 8% to miss a deadline or avoid doing a piece of work; and 8% to get out of a meeting or pitch. 45% too up to a week off; 31% took up to three days; and 17% took less than a day.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://employeebenefits.co.uk/30-of-staff-have-or-would-call-in-sick-to-work-despite-feeling-healthy/>

## When the world’s stage is full of cracked actors

**Source:** Employee Benefits

**In a nutshell:** Towergate Health and Protection have been asking 500 HR professionals about wellbeing, and found that 41% expected to see an increase in demand for mental-health support in 2024, with 34% saying they expected to have more requests for financial support. Just over half the HR workers said they would be able to meet this need and said they would increase mental-health support for their workers. 48% said financial health was a priority; 45% said “social health,” was and 42% wanted to prioritize physical health. However, a third said that their focus was on “other areas of the business, not on the health and wellbeing of staff.”

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://employeebenefits.co.uk/41-of-employers-expect-increased-demand-for-mental-health-support/>

## When sleep-lag stops you sparkling

**Source:** Journal of Organizational Behaviour

**In a nutshell:** In this study a team of researchers, led by Jette Völker from the University of Mannheim in Germany, examined the links between sleep lag (the difference between a worker’s preferred waking up time and their actual waking-up time), recovery and feelings of mastery at work. They found that low-mastery experiences – but not relaxation – explained the negative association between interpersonal conflicts and “next-morning vigour.” However mastery experiences produced less vigour the next morning when the gap between when employees actually woke up and when they wanted to wake up was greater.

You can read the abstract of this article at

<https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2777>

## Stretcher, defibrillator, employment lawyer

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** Last year a report from the National Guardian’s Office found that workers in ambulance Trusts felt uncomfortable reporting misconduct, leading NHS England to commission an independent review, led by Siobhan Melia, from Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust. Staff told her that they continued to face “harassment, discrimination and bullying,” and that when they report this they are met with scepticism. The report found that many Trusts prioritized operational performance over making sure employees felt comfortable in the workplace. At the same time “staff shortages and limited opportunities for development mean that any work beyond direct clinical care is seen as a luxury or is rushed.” The report found that there was a prevalence of “command and control,” culture in the service, characterized by strict hierarchy and adherence to the rules.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/ambulance-workplace-culture-review/>

## Financial wellbeing – workhouse or penthouse?

**Source:** Employee Benefits

**In a nutshell:** Financial wellbeing is climbing up the agenda and the Reward and Employee Benefits Association (REBA) have been investigating how employers can help. They found the employers expected their workers to face financial risks to do with high childcare costs (64%); rental costs (66%); inflation (75%) and energy prices (77%). 63% saw poor financial literacy as a risk to wellbeing, up from 58% in 2022. However, only 19% planned to offer a pay increase in line with inflation. Things employers planned to concentrate on included: financial education from an independent provider (62%); financial guidance (67%); general advice on finances (56%) and financial planning for retirement (60%). You can read the whole of REBA’s survey [here](https://www.wealthatwork.co.uk/corporate/2023/09/26/financial-wellbeing-research-2023-creating-structured-approach-financial-benefits/).

## We’re not going on a summer holiday

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** According to new research by HR software provider Access People HR – people are taking increasingly small amounts of their annual leave entitlement. Access People HR found that there was a 7.7% fall in annual leave taken between 2022 and 2023. The average worker took 33.9 days off last year (including Bank Holidays), compared to 36.7 days in 2022, and 38 days in 2020. The report also found that leave entitlements had fallen with construction seeing a 6.6% fall and health and social care down 4.3%. Interestingly water, sewage and waste management saw a 3.5% *increase* in annual leave, although ironically they might well be the people least inclined to take a bracing dip in the North Sea, being more aware than most of what might be bobbing up and down in it.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/annual-leave-days-taken-2024/>

## Neurodivergence - when the lip service rubs off

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** Just as Google makes people work 18 hours a day then gives them ping-pong tables, granola and mindfulness classes so many employers pay lip service to neurodivergence while squeezing eighteen people into a broom cupboard, holding four different Teams meetings simultaneously, and expecting minimum-wage fries to come with a side order of smiles and banter. The CIPD and “neuroinclusion training partner,” Uptimize have been asking people all about it. They found that one in five neurodivergent people had experienced harassment or discrimination at work and only half felt it was safe to talk about neurodiversity in their organization. 31% had not told their manager or HR about their neurodivergence and 37% were worried about people’s stereotypical assumptions. 34% said there was too much stigma attached to neurodiversity, and 29% said that “coming out,” as neurodivergent would have an effect on their career. However, 60% of employers said that neuroinclusion was a focus for their business, with 33% including it in their EDI strategy. The [report](https://www.cipd.org/en/knowledge/reports/neuroinclusion-at-work) was based on a survey of 1,003 employers and 1,047 workers, of whom 790 identified as neurodivergent. It sets out seven guiding principles for neuroinclusivity at work:

* Understanding the position the organisation is currently at in its inclusion journey, and committing to a long-term action plan
* Focusing on creating open and supportive cultures where people feel comfortable talking about neurodiversity, and raising awareness among all staff
* Considering neurodiversity in all people management interactions and policies
* Listening to individual employees about what they need to perform at their best at work and ensuring clear access to reasonable adjustments such as quiet zones or headphones
* Embracing flexible working
* Paying attention to wellbeing
* Inviting participation from neurodivergent voices

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/neurodiversity-discrimination-cipd-uptimize-report/>