



# PEOPLE matter



## It's kicking off for employers

Love or hate football one thing is for sure 'World Cup Fever' is likely to spread fast this summer. Starting on 11th June, this could bring a whole host of potential problems for employers. Businesses cannot ignore the fact that employees will want to watch certain matches so, they should plan now to minimise absences and ensure they have sufficient resource to operate during this period. If an employee requires time off to watch games this can be processed as a normal holiday request in line with your holiday rules, if the request is rejected you need to show a genuine business reason why. However, if possible, a flexible approach can be beneficial to all. By providing flexible working solutions, employers may be able to keep productivity up and manage the time off sensibly. Here are The HR Dept's top tips.

- Establish a consistent approach which is fair to all staff including those who have no interest in football.
- Inform staff that they should take time off as part of their annual leave.
- Decide ahead of the games how many staff you can have absent at any one time.
- Decide how time off will be granted, for example on a 'first come' basis.
- Consider a temporary flexi-time policy during this period or allowing additional time off which could be made up later.
- Staff will want to keep up-to-date via the Internet, so employers should have a clear IT policy covering Internet usage and communicate this to staff.

## Full-time fathers

After the changes to paternity legislation, new research reveals that the number of UK dads staying at home to care for young children has risen 10 times in as many years. A new study from Aviva reveals that an increasing number of men are taking hold of the apron strings while their partner goes out to work, often simply because the woman earns more than her 'significant other'. One in six couples (16%) with dependent children say that the main wage earner is female. Compared to only 60,000 men who took on the role of the primary parent 10 years ago, now more than 600,000 UK men – or 6% of men with dependent children – regularly look after their children while their wife or girlfriend works, signifying a ten-fold increase.



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People Matter is a regular bulletin for business owner/managers who want the staff, but don't want the hassle of dealing with all the red tape that comes with them.

If this was forwarded to you, and you'd like to receive more bulletins on getting more from your team, please email with 'People Yes' in the subject line. If you no longer wish to receive bulletins from us, please email with 'People No' in the subject line.

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# Client survey

The importance of customer feedback is never underestimated by The HR Dept and naturally we want to ensure we are providing a quality, cost effective and efficient service to our customers because we love it when you then tell someone else about our service. Every year The HR Dept sends a short satisfaction survey to the clients it has done business with in the year. This year we have seen incredibly positive results and the first thing to say is thank you to everyone who took the time to respond. The HR Dept's most popular services were the telephone advice line with legal indemnity cover, attendance at disciplinary hearings and providing up to date and tailored contracts of employment and staff handbooks. Year on year the satisfaction level has increased

to an average of 93%, which is remarkable and makes us beam with pride. Not resting on our laurels we are keen to increase our service levels further and naturally always welcome constructive feedback. HR Dept Managing Director Sue Tumelty commented "As local and personal businesses operating across the UK we are grateful to everyone who contributed to the results, it is wonderful that the level of service we are providing continues to improve but without our customers feedback this could not have happened and we would be unable to improve". Highlighted in the survey this year were employer's concerns about sickness absence issues. With the Government introducing 'Fit Notes' to replace 'Sick Notes', many employers were concerned



about an employer's duty to make adjustments to the workplace in order for someone deemed then fit enough to work but not carry out all of their normal duties. There have been recent rulings on workers being able to take holiday whilst on sick leave, being able to reclaim holiday if they fall sick whilst on holiday and workers off on long term sick leave carrying holiday over into a new holiday year; this isn't unsurprising. In the last six months we have seen an increase in calls to our advice line on sickness absence issues and more requests for managing

sickness absence training. We were pleased to see that it was commented that our monthly newsletter provided employers with useful and timely information, which we will of course continue to do so. As we look forward further into 2010 it seems that the Equality Bill, a piece of legislation to bring all discrimination and equality law under one bill is set to dominate the headlines and naturally we will keep you informed at each step of the way. We love feedback; we know it is how a business grows so even outside of the survey we want your views. Thank you once again.

## Bribery Act

Allegations of bribery and corruption can be incredibly damaging for any size of business and the one of the biggest shake ups in commercial law in many years will see the introduction in October 2010 of The Bribery Act. Pushed through in the last days of Parliament, the Bribery Act is set to put much more heavy scrutiny in all organisations on the prevention, handling and outcome of bribery and corruption allegations. In terms of what it means for businesses, the biggest single effect is that it will be a criminal offence and hefty fine when there is failure by an organisation to prevent a bribe being paid for or on its behalf, however it will be a defence if the organisation has adequate procedures in place to prevent bribery. It is therefore prudent that all



businesses have in place adequate procedures designed to prevent employees acting on behalf of the company from committing bribery offences. Naturally it seems common sense that this type of activity should be prevented but now there will be a much greater focus and punishment where there are no procedures in place. Questions have naturally been raised as to what will be viewed as a "bribe" and the worries this could cause and as more information is released we will naturally keep you up to date. Customers on The HR Dept advice line will have their handbooks updated to ensure the right procedures are in place and as a business you are covered under all your obligations of the Act as it comes in force.

## THE INDICATOR

Employment and litigation issues

### STATUTORY PAY (rates are reviewed each April)

**Maternity/Adoption pay** – SMP/SAP is paid for 39 weeks. Pay rate for first 6 weeks of SMP: 90% of the employee's average weekly earnings. SMP remaining weeks/SAP: £124.88 or 90% of average weekly earnings, whichever is less.

**Sick pay** – £79.15 a week

### REDUNDANCY PAY (next review February 2011)

**Pay rate** – 0.5 weeks pay for each year of service for employees aged under 22 (a weeks pay is calculated at £380 or the weekly amount if it is less). 1 weeks pay for each year of service for employees between the ages of 22 and 40. 1.5 weeks pay for each year of service for employees aged 41 and older.

### NATIONAL MINIMUM WAGE (reviewed each October)

**Hourly pay rate** – £5.80 workers aged 22 and older, £4.83 workers aged 18 to 21, £3.57 workers aged 16 to 17.