**Making People Count: a workforce bulletin**

**July 2024**

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# Learning and Development

## Is Britain a third-division country when it comes to technology?

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** It might be hard to imagine looking up and down most British high streets – the denizens of which look as though they might need a lie down in a darkened room after tying up their shoelaces – but when it comes to running around, cycling, and kicking and throwing balls around, the UK punches well above its weight. It’s equally hard to imagine that we *wouldn’t* be technologically savvy, given the amount of time most people spend staring at screens but [new research from Coursera](https://www.coursera.org/skills-reports/global) puts the UK at no more than third division when it comes to “technology and business-skill proficiency.” The online learning platforms analysed data from 109 countries and ranked the UK 45th in the world – sandwiched between Honduras and Hungary. This is an improvement on 2023 when we were 64th, but comparable countries in the EU did much better. Switzerland came top, followed by Japan in second, with Germany third, France fifth, Sweden sixth, and Spain seventh. The US did even worse though, coming in at 69th. Coursera found there had been a 961% increase in AI upskilling in the UK in the last year. Bioinformatics and epidemiology were the top two skills UK learners were interested in, outwith AI.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/uk-below-honduras-in-tech-and-business-skill-ranking/>

## Is the skills gap getting wider?

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** Skills change all the time and people can struggle to keep up. The [National Foundation for Educational Research](https://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/rethinking-skills-gaps-and-solutions/) has been looking into this issue, comparing the essential employment skills (EES) people possess and what is actually needed to do their job. They concluded that up to seven million people in England may lack the skills they need to do their job by 2035 – up from an estimated 3.7 million in 2023. The NFER estimated that almost 90% of the 2.2 million jobs that will be created between now and 2035 will be in professional occupations, such as science or engineering. They found that nearly one in five workers in managerial jobs, professional jobs, and associate professional occupations had substantial EES deficiencies. However, workers in skilled trades, customer services, and admin were more likely to have underused skills which they had developed in previous roles, or outside work.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/new-policies-needed-if-uk-is-to-close-gap-in-essential-employment-skills/>

## Are overseas doctors being inducted well enough?

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** Giving a distinctly two-star review to NHS inductions are overseas doctors, or at least the 737 surveyed by the Medical Protection Society. More than half said that their induction was inadequate or inappropriate and many felt anxious about starting their clinical duties. 38% said they had been given insufficient time shadowing other doctors, and 45% said their induction training had not included training on cultural differences and acceptability in the UK. Nearly two-thirds were worried about legal issues arising. It is estimated that by 2036 almost a third of doctors will be from overseas and in 2022 52% of doctors joining the workforce had come from abroad. NHS England, the GMC, the British Medical Association and the Medical Protection Society have developed guidance on induction for foreign doctors which you can find [here](https://www.e-lfh.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Welcoming-and-Valuing-International-Medical-Graduates-A-guide-to-induction-for-IMGs-WEB.pdf).

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/overseas-doctors-nhs-induction-mps-survey/>

## What makes a coach a good fit?

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

**In a nutshell:** Brian Clough famously only lasted [44 days as manager of Leeds](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Damned_United) United; not helped perhaps by his opening exhortation to the players to throw all their medals in the bin because they’d won them by cheating. But what makes for a good relationship between coach and coached? That was something a team of researchers, led by Lara Solms from the University of Amsterdam, attempted to find out in this article. The researchers studied 184 pairs of coaches and coached taking part in a workplace coaching programme in healthcare. The best partnerships came when coaches met the individual needs of those they coached. This led to a good perception of the working alliance between coach and coached, improved goal attainment and increased satisfaction with the coach. Seeing the coach as similar to oneself led to a good perception of the working alliance but lower coaching satisfaction. Ratings of the working alliance – by both coaches and coached – led to increased coaching satisfaction, but not goal attainment.

You can read the abstract of this article at

<https://doi.org/10.1111/joop.12523>

# People Management

## How to keep hold of the deskless worker

**Source:** In this article the team from [WorkBuzz](https://www.google.com/aclk?sa=l&ai=DChcSEwisnNvn2Y-HAxWpjlAGHaFNDEcYABAAGgJkZw&ase=2&gclid=Cj0KCQjws560BhCuARIsAHMqE0G9_V2mKcDtKIBRzglwP751eRiv_f_arZveOmI3-LPa7xW0MRHCOxoaAvETEALw_wcB&sig=AOD64_2l2ia7VR2KJfkhcLECcD1Hsj01ag&q&nis=4&adurl&ved=2ahUKEwijztXn2Y-HAxW0UkEAHY-LDn8Q0Qx6BAgGEAE) describe ways in which employers can motivate and retain the people who – quite literally in some cases – keep the roof and lights on. Deskless organizations (or departments) can struggle with skill shortages and find it difficult to match the working conditions of their office-based peers. Most deskless workers don’t have the flexibility to work remotely and need a different level of visibility and connection to their organizations to feel valued and engaged. A strong Employee Value Proposition is essential, encapsulating the unique benefits an organization offers to its employees in return for their skills and loyalty. It goes beyond traditional perks, embracing the organization’s culture, purpose, and commitment to employee growth and development. “By proactively soliciting and responding to employee feedback, organizations can ensure that their EVP resonates with the workforce, fosters trust and engagement, and drives continuous improvement in the employee experience.” However, 43% of deskless workers feel undervalued by their employer; and more than 35% believe that their contributions go unrecognised. 74% are dissatisfied with the lack of flexibility and training on offer, and 54% are ready to leave.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/struggling-to-retain-and-attract-your-deskless-workforce-the-key-could-be-in-your-evp/>

## What makes a happy nurse?

**Source:** Nurse Education in Practice

**In a nutshell:** Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory sounds a little like a [Krautrock](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Krautrock) band John Peel might have slipped in between The Wedding Present and The Fall. In fact it’s the idea that job satisfaction is made up of both “hygiene” factors – pay, conditions, whether you like your colleagues etc – and the intrinsic interest and satisfaction of the job itself. In this study Florence Mei Fung Wong, from the Tung Wah College School of Nursing in Hong Kong, examined job satisfaction in four junior and four senior nurses using Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory as a framework. She found four main themes conducive to job satisfaction (or lack thereof) which were:

* A supportive working environment
* Autonomy in practice
* Professional training for competence enhancement
* Heavy workload and not enough staff

You can read the abstract of this article at

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nepr.2024.104018>

## Does HR training make a difference?

**Source:** Creativity and Innovation Management

**In a nutshell:** In this study Vui-Yee Koon from Sunway University in Malaysia, and Yulita (no second name, like Morrissey or Madonna) from Universiti Malaysia Terengganu attempted to find out. They studied 192 people, from 45 teams and found that “team-level perceived high-quality HR training,” led employees to think their managers were more innovative, which, in turn, led to employees thriving more at work.

You can read the abstract of this article at

<https://doi.org/10.1111/caim.12619>

## Why it’s a good idea to let the office idiot have their say

**Source:** Journal of Organizational Behaviour

**In a nutshell:** When it comes to meetings some people are like peacocks. They might not be the brightest, but they like to make a lot of noise, disturb everyone, and show off a bit. Others are like voles and prefer to keep as low a profile as possible in case anyone notices them and, if not polishing them off, at least gives them some work to do.\* In this study Dan Ni, from Sun Yat-Sen University in China, led a team of researches investigating employees’ “voice,” (i.e. speaking up) behaviour. They found that when underachievers’ voice quality was higher the fact that their opinions were listened to and taken seriously made people feel supervisors were listening to everyone and improved the whole teams’ ability to speak up.

You can read the abstract of this article at

<https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2814>

\*Voles may think they’re hidden but sadly they both have no bladder control and urine which looks luminous in ultraviolet light, which their principal predators – owls, buzzards et cetera – see in. One hopes the same dynamic doesn’t apply in meetings.

## Hotline, Chinese whispers or howling into the void?

**Source:** Journal of Health Organization and Management

**In a nutshell:** In this study Adrian Wilkinson from Griffith University in Australia led a team of researchers investigating the issue of “voice,” in a “hospital setting.” They found that although there was a “plethora,” of formal voice structures in the hospital they were not always visible or accessible to staff, leading to confusion about how to speak up to about which issues. However, the researchers also found that “other avenues which were not designated voice platforms were used by employees to get their voices heard.

You can read the abstract of this article at

<https://doi.org/10.1108/JHOM-06-2023-0168>

# Recruitment

## Budge up for Grandad

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** IThe Centre for Ageing Better has called on the political parties to commit to improving opportunities for workers between 50 and 64, suggesting that doing so would net the government an extra £1.6bn a year in tax and national-insurance revenue. The Centre for Ageing Better has outlined six steps the parties could take to support 500,000 more older workers into employment. These are:

* Raise the level of employment support for those between 50 and 64 to that of people in their 40s
* Increase investment in employment support for people in their 50s and 60s with targeted support for anyone over 50 who is out of work
* Expand mid-life review pilots, and create more opportunities for people to upskill, reskill and develop
* Review the Department of Work and Pensions’ approach to employment and benefits to all people in their 60s
* Consult on the introduction of paid carers’ leave and strengthen the recent legislation on unpaid carers’ leave
* Deliver a government-backed awareness and information campaign to champion employing workers in their 50s and 60s

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/older-workforce-commitment-centre-for-ageing-better/>

## Will Labour inherit a booming jobs market?

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** Just as one government inherits – and sometimes takes the blame for – its predecessor’s mistakes, so it can end up taking credit for beneficent trends started (deliberately or otherwise) under the previous regime. An analysis of May’s job market by KPMG and the Recruitment Employment Confederation has found renewed optimism over the state of the country’s labour market, although permanent staff appointments continued to fall. However, the decline was modest, and the smallest since March 2023. Typical starting pay for new recruits rose again in May, reflecting the competitive market for talent and April’s increase in the minimum wage. The strongest vacancy growth was in engineering with retail, secretarial, and clerical posts all showing drops in demand. And for public-sector workers demand continued to fall for both permanent and temporary staff. However, the TUC was gloomier about the economy pointing to the fact that unemployment levels increased by 178,000 across England between October-December 2023 and January-March 2024. North-West England saw the biggest increase in unemployment, followed by the West Midlands and London.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/optimism-over-labour-market-despite-slow-demand-for-skills/>

## Is AI really coming for our jobs?

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** Some think AI might be after our jobs, but a new report by “global provider of technology and talent solutions,” Nash Squared casts doubt on this. They interviewed 322 “tech leaders,” from all over the world, including 182 from the UK. 74% said that their workers were using AI to some extent, but 99% said that it wasn’t replacing jobs. About half (51%) said they were using generative AI as a “personal productivity tool to support existing jobs, to make them more effective.” One in 20 organizations had appointed a chief AI officer, although most had simply added AI to the responsibilities of their IT supremo. 55% had yet to find a clear business case for AI beyond using it as a personal productivity tool, and 27% “were struggling with budgetary constraints.”

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/genai-jobs-generative-ai-nash-squared/>

## Who speaks up in Teams meetings?

**Source:** Journal of Vocational Behaviour

**In a nutshell:** Invisibility is often the superpower people opt for when pressed to choose. It can be achieved in Teams meetings by switching your camera off and putting yourself on mute, leaving yourself free to do the online grocery shop until the dread moment when someone pipes up “so, John, what do you think about the new corporate strategy?” In this study a team of researchers, led by Liana M. Kreamer from Florida Institute of Technology, studied 291 people working for a global technology company. They found that women participated more in the chat, whereas men participated more verbally. Men in higher-level jobs spoke more often than women in lower levels and women in senior positions used chat most frequently. Women were more likely to use emojis, whereas men were more likely to send attachments in the chat. More senior employees sent more text-based messages in the chat. People at lower levels with higher levels of psychological safety were more likely to contribute more in the chat.

You can read the abstract of this article at

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2024.104015>

# Wellbeing

## Seizing up but soldiering on

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** Sick leave – and the propensity to take it – can vary with context. Boris Johnson was capable (as he ever was) of running the country almost until he went into intensive care whereas it’s generally considered not a good idea to struggle into a neonatal ward with a dose of the flu. Not everyone gets the choice, of course, and a new poll carried out for the National Accident Helpline has found that 37% of workers say they are working through pain because they cannot take sick leave. 28% said they had worked from home when they should have had a sick day. 26% said they had had computer-vision syndrome whilst a similar percentage said they had taken painkillers to work to help themselves cope. 56% said they had never taken a sickie under false pretences. A fifth of people said they spent more than five hours a day sitting down.

You can read the whole of this article (if you register for an OHW+ account) at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/a-third-work-through-pain-rather-than-take-sick-leave-poll/>

## Moral distress and burnout in Covid

**Source:** Journal of Nursing Management

**In a nutshell:** In this study a team of researchers, led by Jae Jun Lee, from Yonsei University and Severance Hospital in Korea, examined how 307 nurses coped with Covid. They found that the nurses’ moral distress had a significant effect on their turnover intention, a relationship that was mediated by burnout. Positive strategies for coping included: a commitment to minimize transmission risks; adopting a holistic approach amid the challenges posed by the pandemic; voicing concerns for patient safety; engaging in continuous learning; and prioritizing self-care. Negative strategies included: adopting avoidance behaviours; and adopting a passive approach to one’s role. Unfortunately some nurses shifted from positive to negative coping strategies over the course of the Pandemic because of “institutional barriers and challenges.”

You can read the abstract of this article at

<https://doi.org/10.1155/2024/5579322>

## Is it time you had an expat club?

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** New research by Axa has found that 80% of expatriate workers are suffering from at least one mental-health symptom, and almost half are struggling with burnout. 81% admitted to having at least one exit strategy from their current job to help them manage the impact their work was having on their mental health. A third were looking to leave their job to address their mental-health problems and 45% were looking at upskilling options such as training courses to help them do this. 29% said they were dissatisfied with their organization’s psychological-support services and 52% said they would not feel comfortable discussing a mental-health concern with their managers.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/four-in-five-expat-workers-suffering-mental-ill-health/>

## Costa del Sol? No, Costa nappy changing

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** Insurance company Zurich have found that a third of new fathers were forced to take holiday to spend time with their newborn, due to low paternity-leave allowances. Half took the statutory two weeks’ leave but of those who took no time off seven out of 10 said that this was because they couldn’t afford it. 12% had resorted to taking unpaid leave. However, three-quarters said they would like to take up to 12 weeks off work. 15% said they were concerned about taking paternity leave because they thought it would be frowned upon by their boss and 12% thought that taking extended paternity leave could affect their careers.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/paternity-leave-take-holiday/>

## Can we survive the spare-room clearances?

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** In the [Highland Clearances](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Highland_Clearances) blameless peasants who had hitherto been jogging along quite nicely were turfed out of house and home and made to go to unfamiliar, uncomfortable locations to earn their living instead. Whilst being asked to vacate the spare bedroom and go into the office is not quite in the same league of brutality there is plenty of evidence that hybrid working is good for one’s mental and physical health. International Workplace Group have added to the pile with a new study of 1,026 hybrid workers. They found that three-quarters of them had seen a dramatic reduction in their feelings of burnout since starting hybrid working, with a similar proportion saying they felt more productive and motivated in their roles. 79% said they felt less drained; 78% felt less stressed; and 86% said they were now coping better with everyday life. 54% said they had more time for exercise and 68% said they were sleeping better. 85% said they were more satisfied with their jobs. Playing the part of the [Duchess of Sutherland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elizabeth_Leveson-Gower%2C_Duchess_of_Sutherland) are Boots who have recently ordered desk-based workers back to the office, and EY and Slaughter and May who have been using data from office turnstiles to monitor attendance.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/hybrid-workers-study-2024/>

## Are Employee Assistance Programmes the 21st century Cones Hotline?

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** Corporate health and wellbeing company HCML have been investigating and their survey of 200 employers found that 85% of them said that take up of employee assistance programmes was as low as 3-5%. And whilst 79% of employers offered an EAP, 27% of the 503 employees HCML asked had never heard of it. 53% said that their main reason for sickness absence was mental-health problems. The top five areas of health and wellbeing support employees wanted help with were: god nutrition (38%); how to keep active (36%); how to sleep well (36%); how to maintain a positive attitude (35%); and how to manage weight (30%).

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/take-up-of-eaps-low-research-2024/>

## Does HR stand for headaches rampant?

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** “Employee experience platform,” CultureAmp found that HR professionals in the UK were struggling with their work-life balance, and felt less equipped than their peers elsewhere to cope with what was asked of them. Compared to HR professionals elsewhere (47%), those in the UK were less likely (36%) to feel able to “balance conflicting needs effectively.” However British HR workers did feel more resilient than the global average (64% vs 45%). Only 41% of UK HR professionals said they were able to switch off effectively from work, compared to a global average of 48%. But 59% of people professionals in the UK *did* say the felt they were making a positive difference in their organization, and 73% said they were supported effectively by their teams.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/uk-hr-professionals-work-life-balance/>

## When Nature’s soft nurse goes AWOL

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** “O sleep, o gentle sleep, Nature’s soft nurse, how have I frighted thee, that thou no more wilt weigh my eyelids down and steep my senses in forgetfulness,” wrote Shakespeare who presumably had plenty of sleepless nights labouring over plots, prose style, and poetry. If there’s one thing guaranteed to keep you lying awake at night worrying it’s medical research on the harmful effects of insomnia; far better (if less honest) perhaps to say “don’t worry, six cups of coffee will see you right until you stop twitching.” In this article Dr Eidn Mahmoudzadeh, a sleep practitioner and NHS GP outlines some of the issues. Recent estimates suggest that sleep deprivation costs the UK £40bn a year in lost productivity and recent research from The Sleep Charity shows that nine in 10 people experience sleep issues at some point. Shift work can cause, or exacerbate, problems leading to workplace errors and accidents and its disruption of people’s body clocks has been linked to cardiovascular diseases, obesity, diabetes, and cancer. Denmark has even paid compensation to women who developed breast cancer after working night shifts. At present occupational health practitioners do not get any sleep training or advice on managing sleep disorders as part of their training but encouraging staff to take breaks can help and a forward-rotating rota of day>late>night>day off is usually better for shift workers.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/staff-sleep-problems-wellbeing/>

## Tackling domestic abuse

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** Researchers from Lancaster University found a 38% increase in domestic abuse when the England team played and West Mercia police report that domestic violence increased by 11% the day after an England match. Signs of domestic abuse can include: unexplained injuries; mood changes; and increased absence. Other potential signs could be a partner stalking someone at their place of work, or waiting outside for them to finish. Ways organisations can help include:

* Creating a confidential and safe space to talk, making sure all conversations are confidential
* Offering training to leaders on how to spot an employee suffering domestic abuse
* Being flexible in allowing people extra time to deal with their circumstances and focus on their wellbeing
* Offering practical support, such as alerting receptionists to the identity of the abuser, offering safe car-parking facilities and making sure they are accompanied to their car
* Providing mental-health support and access to counselling

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/euros-domestic-abuse-support/>

## How big is burnout?

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** A new poll by YouGov for insurer YuLife asked 2,012 employees all about it and found that 77% had experienced more than one symptom of burnout in the last year and that nearly a quarter (24%) of sick leave could be attributed to it. 69% said they felt their employer had a responsibility to support them on their “recovery journey,” but 43% said their workplaces did not even track symptoms and 54% felt their employers did not effectively communicate its risks. Burnout was highest in medical and health services (53%); education (51%); and retail (50%). The most-common symptoms were tiredness (56%); followed by stress (45%); and loss of motivation (44%). When it came to what caused burnout employees blamed high workload (33%); bad management (22%); and poor work-life balance (21%).

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/three-quarters-employees-experiencing-burnout-yulife/>