**Making People Count: a workforce bulletin**

**November 2024**

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# Learning and Development

## Can the Government close the skills gap?

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** Training company O’Reilly have been surveying 500 employers, all with more than 250 staff about training and found that there was a mixed reaction to the Government’s new quango Skills England. 16% were not confident at all that it would make any impact; 12% were not confident; with 39% being “somewhat confident.” 49% thought that digital, on-the-job learning was more important than higher education. More than a quarter (26%) had increased their spending on apprenticeship schemes by between 21% and 40% with 24% increasing spending by 41-60%. Skills priorities for employers included AI and machine learning (61%); cybersecurity (48%); data analysis (48%); cloud computing (43%); and programming (32%).

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/skills-initiatives-oreilly/>

# People Management

## Inclusion and motivation

**Source:** Personnel Review

**In a nutshell:** In this study Arash Mashhady, from Griffith University in Australia, examined the effects of inclusion (or lack thereof) on 407 healthcare workers in the EU. Mashhady found a positive relationship between perceived inclusion and intrinsic motivation; both of which were, in turn, significant predictor of work engagement.

You can read the abstract of this article at

<https://doi.org/10.1108/JHOM-05-2024-0184>

## Servant leadership and super performance

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

**In a nutshell:** In this study Hamna Asghar, from Bahria University in Pakistan, led a team of researchers studying 312 pairs of managers and followers in Karachi. They found that employees’ performance was affected by servant leadership and “felt obligation,” towards their managers. Servant leadership created a sense of obligation among employees, which, in turn, led to better performance. This relationship was not contingent on any “performance pressure,” on the employees.

You can read the abstract of this article at

<https://doi.org/10.1108/JHOM-02-2024-0042>

## Getting the best from the healthcare workforce

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

**In a nutshell:** Employees can be a bit like lemons – in need of a few sweeteners, liable to dry up if pressed too often, and becoming bitter left to their own devices. Getting lemonade out of them is a mystical art, one which a team of researchers, led by Eli Ayawo Atatsi from Ho Technical University in Ghana, attempted to get to grips with in this study. They studied 637 workers and found that good organizational leadership directly improved psychological ownership, workplace innovation, and employee performance. Organizational leadership created psychological ownership, which led to more workplace innovation. This, in turn, led to better performance.

You can read the abstract of this article at

<https://doi.org/10.1108/JHOM-03-2024-0126>

## Do mergers make a difference?

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

**In a nutshell:** In this study a team of researchers, led by James Beveridge, from Imperial College London, studied the effects of eight acute-hospital-Trust mergers which took place between 2011 and 2015. They found “little evidence that mergers contribute to quality improvements other than some limited increases in the proportion of patients waiting a maximum of 18 weeks from referral to treatment. We postulate that financial incentives and political influence could have biased management effort towards waiting time measures.”

You can read the abstract of this article at

<https://doi.org/10.1108/JHOM-09-2023-0268>

## Humble leaders and successful followers

**Source:** Journal of Vocational Behaviour

**In a nutshell:** One of the many disadvantages of democracy – as opposed to aristocracy – is that anyone sufficiently egotistical and deluded as to consider that they are the best person to run the country should be automatically disbarred from doing so. Far better to let the twin lotteries of fate and heredity choose people at random from the landed gentry. In this study Jie Zhong, from Tsinghua University in China, led a team of researchers studying the links between humble leaders and their followers’ success. They found that followers who were highly narcissistic, or who were members of groups which saw a small distance between the powerful and the rest were more likely to regard humble leaders as competent allowing them to experience enhanced career satisfaction and “engage in more proactive career behaviour.”

You can read the abstract of this article at

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2024.104060>

## Learning, justice, and silence

**Source:** Journal of Nursing Management

**In a nutshell:** In an ideal world employees would behave more like Maria, from the [Sound of Music](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Sound_of_Music_(film)#Plot), rather than Baron von Trapp although it might be advisable to add a sick bowl alongside the rehydration-station for the more cynically-minded among us. In this study Reza Nemati-Vakilabad, from Ardabil University of Medical Sciences in Iran, led a team of researchers studying 319 healthcare professionals from five hospitals. They found that there was a strong positive correlation between organizational learning and organizational justice and “a significant negative correlation between organizational learning and silence.” Organizational justice was found to reduce silence making employees keener to have their voices heard when it came to suggesting improvements. The researchers concluded that “encouraging nurses to share their opinions and concerns reduces silence and improves working conditions, morale, and patient care.”

You can read the abstract of this article at

<https://doi.org/10.1155/2024/7267388>

## When mobility trumps ability

**Source:** Personnel Review

**In a nutshell:** It’s far from inconceivable that a talented advertising copywriter who insisted on staying in the Outer Hebrides might do less well in their career than a mediocre estate agent prepared to sleep six to a room in Putney. In this study Daniel Tyskbo, from Halmstad University in Sweden, investigated the part mobility plays in talent management. He found that “mobility plays a significant role in how employees are assigned talent status, and that mobility manifests and impacts talent designation through two types – geographical and lateral mobility. Mobility is not determined based on abilities and competencies, but rather on an employee’s overall personal situation, including age, family status and relationship status. Two main practices emerged through which these determinants were decided: direct questioning and guesswork. The consequences that follow are that individuals are left with little room to influence their own talent situation, and that there is a risk of discriminatory and exclusionary consequences arising.”

You can read the abstract of this article at

<https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/pr-09-2023-0783/full/html#:~:text=and%20lateral%20mobility.-,Mobility%20is%20not%20determined%20based%20on%20abilities%20and%20competencies%2C%20but,decided%3A%20direct%20questioning%20and%20guesswork>.

## Discrimination and disintegration

**Source:** Human Resource Management

**In a nutshell:** Having moved seamlessly from callow youth to bitter old curmudgeon with not much in between I’ve now reached the point where I will need to accost youngsters and get them to explain virtual reality, apps, and QR codes to me. Thank goodness for apprentices. Age discrimination is but a performance appraisal/court case away and in this study Grant M. Brady, from California State University East Bay, led a team of researchers examining its effects. They found that age discrimination had a negative effect on perceived work ability, which, in turn affected wellbeing, performance, and motivation.

You can read the abstract of this article at

<https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.22260>

# Recruitment

## Pay rises stay steady

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** Incomes Data Research has found that median pay rises in the UK remained at 4% for the three months ending in August, although nearly a quarter (24%) of deals included wage increases of 5% or more. Just over half (51%) of deals included pay rises of between 4 and 4.99%. However the median pay deal in the private sector fell from 4.4% to 4.1% over the period, compared to 4.5% in the public sector. The figures cover 740,000 workers and are based on 39 pay deals struck between the 1st June and the 31st of August.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/pay-rises-remain-at-4/>

## Vacancies fall again

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** KPMG and the Recruitment and Employment Confederation surveyed employers’ hiring intentions before the budget and found that there had been a downturn in the number of new vacancies, and that pay growth for permanent, salaried staff had “eased again.” The fall was the 11th successive monthly drop with the overall number of vacancies being 857,000 – some 140,000 fewer than a year ago. However, vacancy numbers were still 61,000 higher than just before the start of the Pandemic. Both private- and public-sector vacancies fell with the public-sector experiencing the larger fall. The steepest fall in vacancies was for shop workers with the largest increase in vacancies being in nursing and medical care.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/september-saw-sharp-decline-in-number-of-vacancies/>

## The Venn diagram of Victor Meldrew and Yosser Hughes

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** In [*One Foot in the Grave*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/One_Foot_in_the_Grave)grumpy pensioner Victor Meldrew rails against the mystifying idiocies of the modern world. And in *Boys from the Blackstuff* unemployed [Yosser Hughes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yosser_Hughes) tours local businesses imploring them to “gissa job.” Not all older workers are as curmudgeonly as Victor Meldrew (although I’m getting there) but what happens at the intersection of the Victor Meldrew/Yosser Hughes Venn diagram? Totaljobs have been looking into this issue and have found that 57 is the average age in which candidates are deemed “too old,” for job. This represents 4.2 million people and could mean that £138bn is lost in economic output in England and Wales. A third of workers over 50 thought they would struggle to find new roles because of age discrimination; a figure that rose to 37% among women and 48% among Black workers. 59% of HR decision-makers said they made age-related assumptions about applicants and 42% felt under pressure to recruit younger staff. Older workers applying for jobs had faced inappropriate age-related questions (20%); unsuitable questions about their health and physical capabilities (20%); presumptions that they would struggle with new technology (26%) and workplace culture that favoured younger candidates (31%).

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/employers-overlook-millions-due-to-hiring-ageism/>

## Including older workers – Part II

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** “It was a vile evening, the rain was lashing down, it was blowing a gale, when I heard a knock on the door. I opened it. It was the mother-in-law. I took one look at her, standing there drenched and shivering, and said “Elsie. Don’t just stand there in the wet …. go home!”” Not all employers are as brutal (or funny) as Les Dawson but there is still a fair amount of work to do when it comes to recruiting older workers. The Centre for Ageing Better have been looking into it. They found that older workers with long-term health conditions were more likely to be out of work than their younger peers and that more than half (53%) of those who are economically-inactive due to a long-term illness or disability are aged between 50 and 65. Older people in the UK were much more likely to be economically inactive than those in Germany, France, or Italy. The Centre for Ageing Better has called for the Government to expand the Midlife MOT Programme and for JobCentre Plus to improve its 50 PLUS [sic] Champions scheme.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/older-workers-health-conditions/>

## Go hybrid, get graduates

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** My arrival for my first day as a trainee account, sodden with Cardiff rain, feet blistered in new shoes and – most importantly – *not* wearing a camel-coloured trench-coat already portended the ending of what was among the more ignominious of chapters in my vocational history. Who knows what might have happened had I had the option of dialling in from home, nice and warm, and still wearing pyjama bottoms? Even the dry cleaners where I was to deposit my damp suit a few days later seemed like an attractive employment opportunity by that point but new graduates are a little pickier now and a new survey by International Workplace Group has found that 49% of them would not apply for a job that did not offer hybrid working. 54% said that hybrid working was as important as a competitive salary, with the opportunity to do so being equivalent to a 13% pay increase. For graduates the biggest deterrent to being in the office full time was the time and money spent commuting, although 63% said they thought some time in the office was necessary to learn more from senior colleagues.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/graduate-employers-hybrid/>

## Graduate job market gets tighter

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** The Institute of Student Employers has been assessing the state of the graduate job market finding that the average employer now receives 140 applications per graduate job. The most sought-after roles were in digital and IT both of which received 205 applications per vacancy, with finance and professional services attracting 188. Charity and public-sector employees were less competitive; receiving “only,” 74 applications per vacancy. Many employers have also widened their entry criteria with fewer relying on a 2:1 to discriminate between applicants. Graduate vacancies were up 4% year-on-year, compared to a 6% rise last year and employers thought that there would only be a 1% increase next year.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/competition-for-graduate-jobs-ise-2024/>

## The ins and outs of internship

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** Reading the biographies of people who started work in the 60s and 70s it’s amazing how many of them walked into workplaces, were taken a shine to, and then started their rise to glory from there. Nowadays even unpaid work has a queue for it and job search-engine Adzuna has found that internship opportunities in the UK have dropped sharply this year. The number of advertised internships fell by 30% compared to 2022, with only 3,817 opportunities available in October, compared to 5,500 the same time last year. About 60% of interns get a job with their employer, or in the same sector, and research shows that internships can reduce the time it takes to reach a directorship by 34%. However, only 8.7% of UK students do formal work experience, compared to 21.5% in the USA. Separately the Sutton Trust found that of the 10,000 graduates doing internships six months after their graduation, 20% were unpaid.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/uk-internships-decline-in-line-with-vacancies/>

## When critical thinking keeps people quiet

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

**In a nutshell:** Just as you can delude yourself that you’ve mastered a foreign language until the natives start talking back to you, so it’s easy to imagine you’ve had a good idea at work until your manager points out – sometimes at exhaustive and exhausting length – its manifold shortcomings. At which point it’s a lot easier to assume the default option of staring at your shoelaces and watching the tumbleweed roll across the office carpet when the dread question “what does everyone think?” is mooted. Exploring this issue were a team of researchers, led by Jing Jiang, from Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications. They found that leaders’ critical thinking made their subordinates think that they needed good evidence to back up their suggestions. This raised the quality of their input when the employees thought their voices would be effective, but also increased the amount of silence when employees thought their voices would not be heard.

You can read the abstract of this article at

<https://doi.org/10.1111/joop.12554>

## Using your strengths, thriving at work

**Source:** Journal of Nursing Management

**In a nutshell:** It’s a fair bet that Harry Kane would feel rather less happy about playing for England if Thomas Tuchel decides to stick him in goal for the next match; or that Taylor Swift would be less than enthusiastic in her rendition of *Look What You Made Me Do* if she had to get into a one-man band get-up and play the drums as well. In this study Baouyu Bai and Chengzhi Bai, from Wuhan University in China, studied the link between using one’s strengths and thriving at work in a study of 434 nurses. They found that using one’s strength was positively related to thriving at work, the belief in one’s ability to control one’s stress; and cognitive reappraisal – reinterpreting situations to change their emotional impact. Being able to use one’s strengths led to a better feeling of control over stress and more cognitive reappraisal which, in turn, led to more thriving at work.

You can read the abstract of this article at

[https://doi.org/10.1155/2024/](https://doi.org/10.1155/2024/5509059)

# Wellbeing

## When I said work should be a high point …

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** In this article Kavitha Sivasubramaniam considers how to support employees with alcohol and drug issues. According to [Public Health England](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-harmful-drinking-and-alcohol-dependence) lost productivity due to alcohol use costs the UK economy more than £7bn a year with around 167,000 working years lost to alcohol. ACAS adviser Louise Rudd recommends that employers should regularly check in with workers and ask them how they are doing. “Managers should be properly trained to spot the signs of a potential problem and have the relevant knowledge and resources available to them.” Alcohol-abuse coach Sandra Parker says that “in reality, many people struggling with drug or alcohol dependencies are high-performing, high-functioning staff who are relying on alcohol to destress,” but clues can include erratic performance, changes in people’s behaviour, and seeming more tired than usual. Some people may suffer from low moods and energy whereas others can struggle with a lack of confidence. Addicts can also be harder to work with, need more reassurance, and might be inconsistent with their delivery within a team. Key tips include:

* Have a policy in place to protect the health and safety of employees
* Highlight support within the organization
* Take disciplinary action if necessary – but also offer specialist counselling and rehabilitation
* Examine workloads and stress
* Find out about local NHS and other support services
* Signpost people to confidential sources of support

You can read the whole of this article [here](https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/alcohol-drug-addiction-supporting-employees/)

The Health and Safety Executive has a guide to managing drug and alcohol issues at work [here](https://www.hse.gov.uk/alcoholdrugs/).

## When whistleblowers fear for their wages

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** From [Watergate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Watergate_scandal) to the recent Post-Office scandal wrongdoing often requires someone on the inside to uncover it. Bloomsbury Square Employment Law have been asking people about what might make them engage in whistle-blowing, or indeed stop them. They found that 51% of workers “would not feel safe disclosing illegal activities by their company,” because they feared getting the sack, with 45% citing this as their main concern. 39% feared retaliation or bullying, and 36% worried about breaches of confidentiality. The survey covered 2,000 workers. 33% had doubts that their confidentiality would be protected, and only 18% felt “very confident,” that they would receive protection from retaliation. The survey also found that older workers – aged between 55 and 64 – and women were more likely to report wrongdoing.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/fear-of-job-loss-restricts-whistleblowing/>

## A mixed-method exploratory study of weight-based mistreatment at work

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

**In a nutshell:** In this study Grace Lemmon, from DePaul University in Chicago, led a team of researchers studying 1,008 workers in the US. The researchers found that weight-based mistreatment was “all-too common in many forms, including overt and covert aggression, microaggression, incivility, and benevolent, yet disrespectful comments oriented around a person's weight.” 75% of the sample had experience weight-based mistreatment with “a host of harmful consequences ranging from diminished engagement, worsened professional interactions, and a lack of self-care.”

You can read the abstract of this article at

<https://doi.org/10.1111/joop.12550>

## Can line managers tackle presenteeism?

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

**In a nutshell:** The World Health Organization (ever the optimists) define health as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social wellbeing, rather than just the absence of disease.” All well-and-good when you’re trying to screw money out of governments but if we all waited until all these criteria were filled before we pitched up at the office/building site/shop then large swathes of working life would resemble the [*Mary Celeste*](https://doi.org/10.1111/joop.12550)rather than hives of industry. Presenteeism *can* be a problem for both workers and employers though, and in this study a team of researchers, led by Teixiera Dulal-Arthur, from Nottingham University, studied whether training line managers would help reduce it. The researchers studied 7,139 firms in England and found that those who trained their line managers were less likely to report presenteeism.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://doi.org/10.1111/joop.12552>

## Get the leave in for the grieving

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** “Unresting death, a whole day nearer now,” mused Philip Larkin, “waking at four to soundless dark.” Whether death “flashes afresh to hold and horrify,” or comes as a welcome relief its unrelenting march on other people often brings grief in its wake. The new Labour government has promised rights to bereavement leave but whilst some employers have already put in place policies and procedures to support grieving employees they are – for the moment – under no legal obligation to do so other than for grieving parents who have the right to up to two weeks of paid leave. Employees “are entitled to take “reasonable” unpaid time off in relation to the death of a dependant – which includes a child, parent, spouse, civil partner, or someone who lives in the same household – but the exact amount of leave given is at the employer’s discretion.” The psychological effects of bereavement can lead to difficulties in functioning and wellbeing with people either not wanting to work at all, working too much, or being unable to undertake certain tasks. Managers need to take a flexible approach and be prepared for good and bad days including changes in performance, bursting into tears, and unexpected absences. Flexible approaches can include a phased return, or a temporary change in duties. Days of celebration or anniversaries can be particularly hard and “employees should therefore be made aware that any workplace support on offer is continuously available and not just something that is provided at the time of the bereavement.”

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/bereavement-leave-understanding-the-value-of-employer-support/>

## When peeing is a burning issue

**Source:** Journal of Nursing Management

**In a nutshell:** This study Jie Gao, from Shandong University in China, led a team of researchers investigating lower urinary tract symptoms in a study of 6,735 female nurses. 8% had multiple, severe symptoms; 31% had incontinence symptoms; 50% had “urgency-hesitancy,” symptoms; and 11% had nocturia symptoms. Work factors linked to urinary symptoms were: a demanding workload; heightened levels of perceived stress; extended work hours; working night shifts; “infrequent and delayed voiding behaviours,” and restriction of fluid intake.

You can read the abstract of this article at

<https://doi.org/10.1155/2024/7318901>

## Does hybrid working get people on their bike?

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** Cycling to work can have a number of health benefits, not all of them undermined by perineum-perilous potholes, stolen bicycle lights, and puncture-related depression. Active commuting such as cycling can have a number of beneficial effects and has actually increased where people go to work in shared office spaces near home, rather than more central office locations. Commutes to local workspaces are 38% more likely to be by bike or on foot than those to city-centre locations and among the 55 to 64-year-old age bracket active commuting has risen by 109%. More than four-fifths felt that incorporating physical activity into their day improved their mental health, and three-fifths said it made them more productive at work.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/active-commuting-hybrid-working/>