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# HR News



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**Our Christmas Edition!**



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# One more won't hurt - it's Christmas!

It's that time of year when we all get a little more sociable. And this year we have a lot of making up to do! But when it comes to work and alcohol, the two don't always mix - especially the next day.

Whether your people are working in the office or from home, a hangover isn't the key to productivity. If you notice a hungover employee slacking off, you need to meet with them to explain that it isn't acceptable, and they need to get on with the job.

If your employee comes to work still drunk, this is another matter altogether. If it's a case of being unprofessional, then you may consider sending them home with a verbal warning. However, if it is also dangerous (if they operate machinery, for example) it may be appropriate to suspend them, after an investigation.

Remember, while they're at work, your employees are under your duty of care so you must make sure they don't try to drive home if they're over the limit!







# Latest HR News

## Who's the talk of the office this week?

Back in October, Boris Johnson told us we needed to get back into the office, or risk being gossiped about.

Two months on, has this changed the way your people are working? It feels as though the evidence for a more flexible approach to where we work from is overwhelmingly good, with hybrid workers being more productive and more motivated.

## Can you withhold sick pay for unvaccinated workers?

In short, no. Since the government has stressed that Covid vaccinations are not compulsory, withholding SSP from unvaccinated employees could be an unlawful deduction of wages, and, much like a no-jab, no job policy, it could land you in hot water as an employer.

Withholding SSP should be reserved for cases where you can prove that an employee was not really sick, or where they have failed to notify you of their absence.

46% of workers still don't have access to any form of flexible working in their current role. The new campaign, Flex from 1st, aims to make it a right to request flexible working from day 1, for everyone.

Starting salaries hit a record high in September, thanks to fewer available candidates, and an increase in competition to hire top talent.

## The end of furlough wasn't the catastrophe we were told to expect!

This is great news - the end of the furlough scheme hasn't brought on the mass redundancies that we were warned to expect! The BBC reported that many businesses with large numbers of furloughed staff have taken everyone back, and unions haven't heard of major redundancy processes.

Of course, time will tell, but this seems to be a good sign for a swift recovery for many businesses.



## How to prevent a rise in unplanned absence over Christmas

It's likely that you usually see a rise in absence over the Christmas period. Of course, it's winter, so colds and other illnesses are more common and mental health can become worse. But what do you do if you suspect that people are pulling sickies to finish their Christmas shopping, or to sleep off overindulgence?

The first thing you must do is to conduct back to work interviews for every unplanned absence. You'll detect whether your people are lying about their reasons for being off - especially if you know them well. This may be enough in itself to deter some people.

If they're repeat offenders, you can request medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, or even proof of a doctor's appointment, which would have likely been texted to their phone.

Of course, there are other things you can do to help minimise employee absence at Christmas - or any other time of year. It's a big problem for many businesses, so I've written a free guide on "Effective Absence Management" to provide you with practical solution based advice to tackle absence issues in your business.

Visit [bluskyhr.co.uk](http://bluskyhr.co.uk) and download your free copy today!







# Your HR Questions Answered



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## How do I make an employee redundant?

A: You'll need to follow a strict redundancy process, which puts all employees at risk, unless you wish to offer voluntary redundancy. It can be complicated, so seek professional help to get it right.

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## Can I make my employees work longer over Christmas?

A: You can only require your employees to work overtime if their contract of employment allows for it. Otherwise, you can ask them, but they're entitled to decline if they don't want to work additional hours.

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## Can I ask my employees for proof they've had their vaccine?

A: You can, but you must ensure you're clear about your reasons for asking, and that any proof is collected and stored in line with data protection laws.

## LET'S TALK ON THE PHONE

### Set up a 15 minute exploratory call today

If the pandemic taught businesses anything, it is just how important proactive and responsive outsourced HR support is. That's what we do best here at BluSkyHR, offering you, the client:

- A cost-effective solution-based service - saving you money compared to employing a qualified HR Manager.
- Sounding board/peace of mind with our retainer packages - including unlimited calls and emails.
- Independent, impartial Grievance Investigating Officer - external to your organisation.
- Commercial view to your HR problems and not always risk adverse approach - providing you with options to make informed decisions.



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