

Written by 5 June 2023

Business News Wales

Welcome to our round up of the latest business news for our clients. Please contact us if you want to talk about how these updates affect your business. We are here to support you!

Flexible working will become the “default” for employees

Last week Amazon announced that, for warehouse workers, it is to offer parents term-time only contracts. The new contracts would guarantee those who care for school-age children, including guardians, six weeks of holiday in the summer and two weeks over the Easter and Christmas breaks. Employees will be entitled to all full-time benefits.

Following a recent UK Government consultation, flexible working will become the default for millions of employees who will be able to request flexible working from day one of their employment.



Flexible working doesn't just mean a combination of working from home and in the office – it can mean employees making use of job-sharing, flexitime, and working compressed, annualised, or staggered hours.

The new measures will give employees greater access to flexibility over where, when, and how they work, and the government hopes this will lead to happier, more productive staff. Flexible working has been found to help employees balance their work and home life, especially supporting those who have commitments or responsibilities such as caring for children or vulnerable people.

The consultation on flexible working has ended and the government response to the consultation confirms intention to introduce changes to the right to request flexible working legislation. This right currently supports all employees with 26 weeks continuous service to make applications to change their work location, working hours, and/or working pattern.

The response states that the government will take forward the following measures to:

- make the right to request flexible working a day one right;
- introduce a new requirement for employees to consult with the employee when they intend to reject their flexible working request;
- allow 2 statutory requests in any 12-month period (rather than the current one);
- require a decision period of 2 months in respect of a statutory flexible working request (rather than the current three); and
- remove the existing requirement that the employee must explain what effect, if any, the change applied for would have on the employer and how that effect might be dealt with.

The response also commits to:

- developing guidance to raise awareness and understanding of how to make and administer temporary requests for flexible working; and
- launching a call for evidence to better understand how informal flexible working operates in practice.

It also includes a summary of the responses received from individuals and stakeholders.

See: [Making flexible working the default - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/making-flexible-working-the-default)

Remaining resilient with high inflation

The British Retail Consortium (BRC), the trade association for UK retail businesses, research shows that shop price annual inflation accelerated to 9.0% at the start of May, up slightly from 8.8% in April. This is above the 3-month average rate of 8.9%. This brings shop price growth to a new high, although it is now beginning to fall.

Source: [Food inflation eased in May \(brc.org.uk\)](https://www.brc.org.uk/news/food-inflation-eased-in-may)

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) April report shows that food and non-alcoholic beverage prices saw a monthly increase of 1.4% compared with a rise of 1.5% in the equivalent time period last year and an annual rise of 19.1% in April 2023 compared with an annual rise of 19.2% in March 2023. ONS modelling suggests that the annual rate for this category in April 2023 is the second highest seen for over 45 years, when the rate in August 1977 was estimated to be 21.9%.

Source: [Consumer price inflation, UK - Office for National Statistics](#)

Will this pattern continue?

Conditions are likely to remain challenging for many businesses and individuals alike. So now is a good time to focus on resilience.

Resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress — such as business, workplace, and financial stressors. It means "bouncing back" from difficult experiences.

So, what actions can you take now to remain resilient?

Here are a few suggestions to help you think about your business:

- Review your Budgets and set realistic and achievable targets for the rest of 2023.
- Be careful with 'can't pay' customers and get rid of 'won't pay' customers.
- Review your debtors list and chase up overdue invoices (if appropriate).
- Offer existing debtors extended payment terms and/or discounts (if applicable).
- Make sure your terms of business contain explicit payment terms.
- Assign responsibility to one individual for invoicing and collections.
- Put extra effort into making sure your relationships with your better customers are solid.
- Review your list of products and services and eliminate those that are unprofitable or not core products/services.

The important thing to remember in uncertain economic times is that the vast majority of people will not lose their jobs, the majority of businesses won't fail, and eventually, we'll recover. (NatWest Bank, Key economic predictions for 2023).

[Talk to us about your business, we have many clients who have changed the way they do things and some really innovative stories to share with you!](#)

Are you claiming a tax refund for all your work expenses?

HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) is reminding employed workers that they can claim a refund on work-related expenses directly through GOV.UK.

Workers can claim for work-related expenses including:

- uniforms and work clothing;
- buying work-related equipment;
- professional fees, union memberships, and subscriptions; and

- using their own vehicle for work travel (excluding journeys from home to work).

See: [Claim tax relief for your job expenses: Overview - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-tax-relief-for-your-job-expenses)

Seafood sector jobs to be added to the Shortage Occupation List

From the summer, share fishermen, trawler skippers, and experienced deckhands on large fishing vessels will gain from lower fees and salary requirements. This is to ensure that the fishing sector can continue to access the people it needs at a reduced cost.

Inclusion on the Short Occupation List (SOL) means jobs qualify at a 20% lower salary threshold (£20,960 instead of £26,200). Applicants also pay lower fees (£479 for a 3-year visa instead of £625). The broader English language requirements of the Skilled Worker route also apply to the SOL.

To be included on the Shortage Occupation List, a role must not only be skilled and in shortage, it must also be sensible to include it on the list in the context of alternative solutions to tackling the shortage, other than through immigration. It is not the purpose of the immigration system to provide a source of workers at pay and conditions which are not attractive to resident workers.

The changes are set to be implemented ahead of the summer fishing season.

See: [Seafood sector jobs to be added to the Shortage Occupation List - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/seafood-sector-jobs-to-be-added-to-the-shortage-occupation-list)

Health and Safety for new and temporary workers

With summer arriving and the subsequent increase in seasonal work, workers are as likely to have an accident in the first six months at a workplace as during the whole of the rest of their working life.

The extra risk arises due to:

- lack of experience of working in a new industry or workplace;
- lack of familiarity with the job and the work environment;
- reluctance to raise concerns (or not knowing how to); and
- eagerness to impress workmates and managers.

This means workers new to a site:

- may not recognise hazards as a potential source of danger;
- may not understand 'obvious' rules for use of equipment;
- may be unfamiliar with site layout - especially where site hazards may change from day to day; or

- may ignore warning signs and rules, or cut corners.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) have produced guidance on protecting new workers.

See: [HSE: Diversity in the workplace - New to the job](#)

Are you ready for the summer weather?

Thinking ahead and preparing for what the weather may bring can make a real difference. There are some simple steps you can take to stay safe and healthy at this time of year – from preparing your home or business to taking care of yourself, your family, and neighbours.

The Met Office provide up-to-date, expert seasonal advice from carefully selected organisations to help you prepare for and respond to the weather, to stay safe and protect yourself, your homes, and businesses.

See: [WeatherReady - Met Office](#)

National Minimum Wage 2023 rate reminder for employers: Summer Staff

All workers are legally entitled to be paid the National Minimum Wage (NMW). This includes temporary seasonal staff, who often work short-term contracts in bars, hotels, shops, and warehouses over the summer.

The National Minimum Wage hourly rates from 1 April 2023 are:

- £10.42 – age 23 or over (National Living Wage),
- £10.18 – age 21 to 22,
- £7.49 – age 18 to 20,
- £5.28 – age under 18, and
- £5.28 – apprentice.

If you need help on paying temporary staff please contact us, alternatively you can contact ACAS via their helpline if you need employment law or workplace advice.

ACAS is an independent public body that receives funding from the government. They provide free and impartial advice to employers, employees, and their representatives on:

- employment rights,
- best practice and policies, and
- resolving workplace conflict.

See: [Contact us | Acas](#)

HMRC issues scam warning to tax credits claimants

Tax credit claimants should be on their guard against fraudsters, as HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) warns of the latest tactics being employed by scammers.

HMRC has issued a new alert, providing details of a number of new scams reported that aim to trick people into handing over money or personal information. Criminals use deadlines – like the tax credits renewal deadline on 31 July – to target their victims and the department is warning around 1.5 million tax credits customers to be alert to scams that mimic government communications to make them appear genuine.

Typical scam examples include:

- emails or texts claiming an individual's details aren't up to date and that they risk losing out on payments that are due to them;
- emails or texts claiming that a direct debit payment hasn't 'gone through';
- phone calls threatening arrest if people don't immediately pay fake tax owed;
- claims that the victim's national insurance number has been used in fraud; and
- emails or texts offering spurious tax rebates or bogus grants or support.

See: [HMRC issues scam warning to tax credits customers - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/hmrc-issues-scams-warning-to-tax-credits-customers)

New workers' rights for parents and carers

Parents and carers are to be given new protections at work, covering leave entitlement and redundancy rules as three Government backed Private Members Bills received royal assent last week.

This wave of new workers' rights has been welcomed by charities and parties across parliament.

When in force, these new laws aim to increase workforce participation, protect vulnerable workers, and level the playing field by ensuring unscrupulous businesses don't have a competitive advantage and delivering on our priority to grow the economy.

Parents and carers will benefit from the following new protections once in force:

- Up to 12 weeks of paid neonatal care leave for employed parents whose children are admitted to neonatal care, so that they can spend more time with their baby at what is a hugely stressful time. This is in addition to other leave and pay entitlements such as maternity and paternity.
- Redundancy protection for pregnant women and new parents with the extension of existing redundancy protections to cover pregnancy and a period of time after parents return to work.

- A new entitlement for unpaid carers to a week of flexible unpaid leave a year, for employees who are caring for a dependant with a long-term care need. This will enable carers to better balance their caring and work responsibilities, supporting them to remain in employment.

See: [Workers' rights wins for parents and carers - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/workers-rights-wins-for-parents-and-carers)

Abandoning retained EU red tape on wine announced

The government has stated that wine producers and importers will be freed from unnecessary red tape due to proposed changes to retained EU laws on the production and marketing of wine, providing a boost to the wine industry.

The changes will allow wine makers the freedom to pick from a wider range of vines, including more disease resistant varieties, and overturn the restrictions which currently prevent the wine industry from producing new blends. Bottlers will also be able to turn imported wine into sparkling wine.

Changes will also include removing certain packaging requirements – such as ending the mandatory requirement that certain sparkling wines must have foil caps and mushroom stoppers.

Domestic wine makers will also be free to show a variety and vintage of any wine without having to go through the previously EU-mandated applications processes.

The package of reforms follows engagement with the sector and are made possible by powers under the Retained EU Law Bill which are being used to remove any constraints from the economy whilst ensuring standards are not compromised.

See: [Scrapping retained EU red tape on wine to unlock £180 million - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/scrapping-retained-eu-red-tape-on-wine-to-unlock-180-million)

Out of Work Peer Mentoring Service

Are you an employer who needs staff and is willing to train and support people who are returning to work? Then read on!

The Out-of-Work Service provides mentoring and employability support to people who are in recovery from substance misuse and/or mental ill-health. Employers can benefit from three months of advice and support from peer mentors if they employ someone referred by the service.

The main goal of the service is to help people to obtain and stay in work. To achieve this, the service works with employers who want to offer opportunities to people in recovery – training, placements, skills development, but most of all jobs.

The service is delivered by Case UK in Cwm Taf, Platform in Gwent and by a third sector consortium, Cyfle Cymru, in North Wales, Dyfed, Powys, Western Bay and Cardiff and Vale.

The service is delivered mainly by experienced peer mentors – people with the lived experience of recovery. They have been through it and know the difficulties. Peer mentors also understand how work and recovery interact and can offer support and advice to employers. They can explain how employment patterns and policies impact on recovery, and how people in recovery can be loyal, productive employees.

The service enrolls people aged 16 and older, with a range of qualifications and skills, with many having been out of work for 12 months or longer; some may never have been able to get or hold a job. The service helps them to prepare for work through suitable activities. Others only need a minimum of encouragement and will be ready to work.

For people to get into work, employers are needed who are willing to gain an understanding of recovery and to give people in recovery a chance to work.

Cwm Taf

If you live in Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf or Bridgend please contact Case-UK Ltd: Phone 02921 676213, website [Case-UK | It's Good To Talk](#)

Gwent

If you live in Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Torfaen, Newport or Monmouthshire please contact Platform: Phone 01495 245802, email gwentoows@platform.org website [Platform](#)

Any other areas in Wales

If you live in any other area of Wales, please contact Adferiad: Phone 0300 777 2256, email ask@cyflecymru.com website [Cyfle Cymru](#)

See: [Out of Work Peer Mentoring Service | Business Wales \(gov.wales\)](#)

Rise and Shine – Business Breakfast Networking Event

Venture skills and talent programmes aim to match the ‘right’ people with the ‘right’ roles and the ‘right’ employers, across South East Wales and are inviting businesses to their Rise and Shine: Business Breakfast Networking event.

Learn about their unique recruitment and development programme and see how they can help you recruit the latest talent.

The event will take place on Wednesday 7 June 2023, from 8:30am until 10:30am at Cardiff University’s Sbarc | Spark building.

Speakers will be sharing their valuable insights and how their organisations can help you find the right talent for your business.

See: [Rise and Shine - Business Breakfast Networking Event Tickets, Wed 7 Jun 2023 at 08:30 | Eventbrite](#)

The National Peatland Action Programme

The National Peatland Action Programme is a 5 year plan of peatland restoration in Wales.

Peatlands support a variety of habitats and species; they:

- capture and store carbon,
- regulate greenhouse gases,
- maintain biodiversity, and
- regulate water.

Funded by Welsh Government, this programme was set up to coordinate peatland restoration action in Wales. Peatland restoration delivery grants of between £50,000 - £250,000 are available to reverse habitat loss and improve the condition of Welsh peatlands.

The peatland restoration delivery grant will enable individuals and organisations to deliver peatland restoration projects during Autumn 2023 - January 2025.

See: [Natural Resources Wales / Peatland restoration delivery grant](#)

Wales Coast Path - marketing toolkit for businesses

A free, on-line resource has been designed to help coastal businesses market their business by using the pulling power of the Wales Coast Path. It gives you access to a wide range of material and information in one place.

See: [Wales Coast Path / Business Toolkit](#)

Consultation on developing a modernised food hygiene delivery model in Wales

A consultation has been published seeking stakeholders' views on proposed developments for a modernised food hygiene delivery model (FHDM).

This consultation will be of most interest to:

- Competent Authorities - Local Authorities (LAs),
- food businesses and industry trade bodies,
- third-party assurance organisations for food safety, and
- Professional awarding bodies for environmental health and trading standards professionals.

See: [Consultation on developing a modernised food hygiene delivery model in Wales | Food Standards Agency](#)

The Export Hub free online resources

The Export Hub is a free online resource covering all aspects of exporting. In the Hub you will find information to help you explore overseas markets, find new clients, ensure market compliance, clarify import duties and more.

In addition, you will find:

- Over 190 detailed country profiles,
- 25,000 market reports,
- 12,000 trade shows,
- databases containing more than 1 million importers and suppliers, and
- guidelines, tools and tips, such as checklists for finding counterparts, exporting to emerging markets, and complying with trade regulations.

See: [Welcome to Export Hub! - Export Hub \(gov.wales\)](#)

Try-out Fund – Agriculture

Applications are now open for a new fund where Farming Connect is making £5,000 available for farmers and growers to try-out their ideas and bring them to life.

Farming Connect has developed the Try-out fund to address specific local problems or opportunities with the aim of improving efficiencies and profitability within agricultural businesses whilst protecting the environment.

The deadline is the 12 June 2023.

See: [Try-Out Fund - bringing your idea to life | Farming Connect \(gov.wales\)](#)