



# SOLVE IT HR MATTERS



## Inside this edition

Latest news

Improving your employees' mental health

Employee sick days are at the highest rate in a decade

Reflecting on the hottest HR topics of 2023



## Have you created a plan to improve your employees' mental health?

### Now is the time and we're here to help...

Improving your employees' mental health is no longer a warm sentiment, it's business critical.

And that's because mental health affects one in six British workers. It's the leading cause of sickness absence. And it's costing UK employers between £33 billion and £44 billion a year.

The Government has recognised this and commissioned an independent review called "Thriving at Work" to address the issue.

As a result, Lord Dennis Stevenson and Paul Farmer, Chief Executive of Mind created the Thriving at Work Mental Health Standards which sets out six mental health core standards for employers, drawn from best practice and available evidence.

It's a substantial report. Which is why, for your benefit, we have summarised core standard one for you, as we feel that this will provide you with a great starting point to improve your employees' mental health.



### Core standard one: Create a mental health at work plan

Produce, implement and communicate a mental health at work plan that encourages and promotes good mental health of all staff and an open organisational culture.

You can read the full report here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/thriving-at-work-a-review-of-mental-health-and-employers>

What's your business plan to improve employee mental health in 2024? I have written a guide which you can read on my website:

<https://hrsolveit.co.uk/articles/>

Need more help, then give me a call.



## LATEST NEWS

### Will AI steal jobs? Almost half of your people may think so

That's right, a massive 49% of employees are worried that AI will take their job – and there's been an enormous 294% increase in searches for "Will AI take my job?".

With more and more businesses adopting the use of AI to simplify processes, to automate tasks and to increase productivity, how do you reassure your staff that their roles are safe?

It all comes down to open and honest communication. Let your people know what you're using AI for, how it works and any plans you have for it going forward. Tell them that your adoption of AI is to help make their jobs easier rather than to take them completely.

AI can be a fantastic tool for businesses, but it's not sophisticated enough to take away roles from real people right now. It lacks the human element that you need and your customers value.

If you're not already using AI to boost your businesses, it's a good time to start. Involve your employees with the process and demonstrate how it can take away some of the more monotonous tasks, leaving them to focus on creativity and the things that only they can do.

### Employee sick days are at the highest rate in a decade

Employees in the UK took an average of 7.8 days in the last year, which is the highest number in more than a decade. Pre-pandemic the average was 5.8 days, so you can see this is a big leap. But the question is why?

Experts have suggested it's a combination of stress, post-pandemic challenges and, of course, the cost-of-living crisis. The most common cause for short-term absence is minor illnesses, closely followed by poor mental health, although those suffering with mental health issues are more likely to give a different excuse for absence, for fear of judgement.

This brings about the question of how you can help reduce unplanned absence in your business. Start by keeping lines of communication open, making sure your managers can spot the first signs of declining mental health and being aware of how much pressure you're placing on employees.

**80% of UK firms have changed their offices to accommodate hybrid working. Many have downsized, moved out of city centres or created co-working spaces instead. 73% have cut costs thanks to hybrid work too.**

## Reflecting on the hottest HR topics of 2023

**As we look back on 2023, it's clear that the world of HR has seen some sizzling trends that have reshaped the workplace. Here's a glance at the hottest topics that have defined the year for us and will continue to impact businesses like yours.**

### AI: your HR ally

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has firmly established itself as a valuable HR ally. Whether it's streamlining your hiring process, predicting employee turnover or offering personalised training plans, AI has transformed HR operations. Embracing AI can boost your HR efficiency and help you make better data-driven decisions.

### Flexible working

2023 has been the year of the to and fro of flexible working. It's a trend that gained momentum during the pandemic and continues to be a major talking point. With employees seeking a balance between remote work and in-office collaboration, implementing a successful hybrid work model has been key. Finding the right rhythm can be a challenge, but it's essential to meet the needs and preferences of your people for a better business all round.

### The cost of living

The ever-increasing cost of living hasn't gone unnoticed by your employees. We've taken a proactive approach to address these concerns. Balancing cost-saving strategies while maintaining employee morale has been a delicate task. Successfully navigating these financial waters requires a strategic approach to ensure the financial wellbeing of your people.

### Prioritising wellbeing

Employee wellbeing is a fundamental aspect of HR today. It's about creating a workplace culture that cares for both the mental and physical health of your employees. Wellbeing programs, from stress management to mental health support, have become integral to creating a happier, healthier and more productive workforce.

### Diversity, inclusion, and equality

Diversity is the spice of the modern workplace. This year, HR has continued to champion diversity, inclusion and equality. Nurturing an environment where every individual feels heard, valued and offered equal opportunities has become a top priority. Inclusivity is not just a goal; it's a powerful driver of innovation and success.

2023 has been a year of transformation and adaptation in HR. From embracing AI to navigating flexible working models and addressing the cost of living, these trends continue to shape the way we manage and support our employees today.

**Have you also placed a focus on these things this year? If you need a hand with any of this, get in touch.**



### If I contact my staff outside of working hours, do they have to respond?

Unless your employee's contract specifically states they must be available outside of their usual working hours, no. To help maintain a happy business culture with minimal stress, you should aim to contact your team only within their working hours.



### The Christmas party was a disaster, what do I do?

If there was an incident that caused the problem, it's important to tackle it immediately. Speak to the individuals involved to investigate. Consider a team building activity if it's had an impact on relationships. If you need help, get in touch.



### How can I make managing my HR admin easier?

Use HR software to reduce the time you spend on HR admin and the stress it can cause. There is a lot of software available, but I can recommend the most suitable for your business – get in touch.



## Let's get 2024 off to a great start



### How I can help you?

**Retainer Services** - cost-effective HR support and advice so you don't need to worry, from just £195 + VAT per month.

**Pay as you go** - flexible hourly support when you need it - £80 + VAT per hour.

**Project support** - bespoke support on a wide range of HR issues.

Whether you are a business owners or an HR departments that struggling with internal resources or expertise, I can help you

Book a no-obligation call to see how I can support you.



**YOUR HR EXPERT**