



C4HR NEWSLETTER



The National Minimum Wage

The National Minimum Wage outlines the minimum pay per hour almost all workers are entitled to by law. It makes no difference how small or big the employer is, they still have to pay the minimum wage. It is designed to ensure employees are not paid an unacceptably low level in a bid to reduce employers exploiting workers.

The minimum wage depends on the worker's age and if they're an apprentice. If you are over school leaving age then you are entitled to the minimum wage.

These are as follows:

- The current rate for school leavers under 18 is £3.87 per hour.
- If you are aged between 18 & 20 then the current rate is £5.30 per hour.
- If you are aged 21 and over then the current rate is £6.70 per hour.
- Apprentices aged 16 to 18 and those aged 19 or over who are in their first year are entitled to a minimum wage of £3.30 per hour. All other apprentices are entitled to the National Minimum Wage for their age.

Inside this Issue

The National Minimum Wage

Are Your HR Policies Meeting The Grade

Managing Absence

The HR Support Line

Client Testimonials

The following types of workers are not entitled to the minimum wage:

- Self-employed people running their own business
- Company Directors
- Volunteers or voluntary workers
- Workers on a government employment programme, eg the Work Programme
- Family members of the employer living in the employer's home
- Non-family members living in the employer's home who share in the work and leisure activities, are treated as one of the family and aren't charged for meals or accommodation, eg au pairs.
- Workers younger than the school leaving age
- Higher and further education students on a work placement up to 1 year
- Workers on government pre-apprenticeships schemes
- People on the following European Union programmes:
- People working on a Jobcentre Plus Work trial for 6 weeks
- Members of the Armed Forces
- Share fishermen
- Prisoners
- People living and working in a religious community



It is a criminal offence for employers not to pay someone the National Minimum Wage (if entitled) or to falsify payment records. Employers who discover they've paid a worker below the minimum wage must pay any arrears immediately. HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) officers have the right to carry out checks at any time and ask to see payment records. They can also investigate employers, following a worker's complaint to them. If HMRC finds that an employer hasn't been paying the correct rates, any arrears have to be paid back immediately. There will also be a penalty and offenders might be named by the government. It is the employer's responsibility to keep records proving that they are paying the minimum wage – most employers use their payroll records as proof. All records have to be kept for 3 years.

Workers who think their pay is below the minimum wage rate should talk to their employer first. If this doesn't solve the problem then they can ask the employer in writing to see their payment records. The worker can take someone with them and make copies of the records. If an employer owes the workers any arrears they have to pay these. If the employer refuses payment then HMRC can step in and enforce a notice for the arrears plus a penalty for not paying the minimum wage. HMRC can take them to court on behalf of the worker if the employer still refuses to pay.

If you are an employer and are unsure if your pay levels are acceptable within the National Minimum Wage then the government website is a useful tool to use. It has a quick calculator online so you can check you are paying within the law. Alternatively, please feel free to contact a member of our team to discuss further, we are happy to advise.

Are your HR Policies meeting the grade?

We rigorously test, question, & research our prospective new employees during the recruitment process to ensure we have the best person for the job, but has it ever crossed your mind that prospective employees are doing the same about your company? Are your HR Policies meeting the grade?

At a time when skilled labour is at a premium, employers are often having to jump through hoops to attract candidates, whilst candidates can afford to be choosy. But do you know what would make your business an 'Employer of Choice'? Are your business offerings enough to both retain and attract skilled staff? Information about businesses are readily accessible to candidates looking for employment, and they will use it. Internet research into your business can quickly tell a candidate all they need to know about whether they feel they would like to work for you. First impressions count, and if your website isn't clear about your people policies then you could be one quick click away from losing their interest.

At C4HR we believe your HR Policies play an important part in 'selling' your business to prospective and existing employees. It's not just about your turnover, your profits, your performance bonuses and your commission levels – it's also about your holiday entitlements, your family-friendly policies, and your ability to offer a flexible approach to ensure the work-life balance is just right. Businesses failing to recognise this will soon find retentions levels reaching concerning levels fast, employees that are demotivated and left feeling undervalued, and open vacancies with slim pickings from applicants. It is therefore important for employers to stay abreast of changes to working practices and update their HR Policies & Procedures accordingly. Within the HR field this is even more important for ensuring your business is complying to employment legislation and thus removing any risk of attracting fines or penalties, and even tribunal proceedings from employees.

When was the last time you reviewed your employee handbook? Are you applying your Performance Appraisal procedures thoroughly? Are your Paternity Policies supporting your employees to the level they need? Is your Disciplinary Procedure being applied consistently and fairly? Do your work patterns/shifts comply to legislative requirements within the Working Time Directive? And are you dealing with Grievances in a consistent and acceptable manner?

If you are reading that basic list of questions and thinking "I have no idea" then we would suggest you work quick to get a handle on your people policies. C4HR can offer you expert HR advice to support you in this area. We have experienced and qualified HR professionals specialising in this field. In no time at all we can review your current HR Policies and identify areas for improvement as well as strategies to implement changes in an efficient and effective manner.

FREE HR CONSULTATION

**30 MINUTES FREE HR
CONSULTATIONS AVAILABLE**

**CONTACT C4HR FOR MORE
DETAILS**

Managing Absence

With the celebration of Autumn Equinox it is a clear sign that summer virtually is over (did we have one?) as the evenings are starting to draw in. People have already begun reaching for the thermostat and being tempted to turn the dial on their central heating, and some have already booked their appointment at their local Health Centre for the winter flu jab. If you are running a business you have probably already started to debate the inevitable spike in employee absence once the cold weather sets in, and maybe even started thinking about how best to combat the strains this puts on the rest of your employees. Managing absence pro-actively is possible with the right solutions in place.



A recent survey revealed that 71% of small businesses suffer a spike in sickness absence in the run of winter; with common ailments such as coughs, colds and winter flu taking their toll on staff numbers. Whilst 2013 saw 131 million days lost due to sickness absences in the UK, down from 178 million days in 1993. But there is a positive message for employers – the CIPD Annual Survey Report on Absence Management in October 2014 shows a fluctuating downward trend in absence levels across all business areas, apart from manufacturing and production which have stayed largely the same. However, the level of absences, as you would expect, vary between organisations within public sector organisations having the highest average absence rates.

Staying at home becomes more alluring to employees at this time of year so it's a time when all businesses need to ensure they have clear absence management strategies to mitigate the effects of poor attendance. Whilst the cost of absence is hard to estimate and can depend on the size of the employer, the median cost of workplace absence of those surveyed who had financial records was £609 per employee per year. So if nothing else, having good absence procedures in place can be a boost to the bottom line. Accurate monitoring and recording of when absences occur at individual, team and organisational level is essential. This should help identify any difficulties and allow you to benchmark your absence levels against other organisations.

Sickness Absence Policies & Procedures exist in business to provide a fair and consistent approach to the management of sickness absence in the workplace. With the latest introduction of the Fit for Work Scheme which recently went live across England & Wales this month, we hope that businesses take advantage of the benefits this can offer, mainly to small & medium businesses, in managing absence and their employees to return to work.

Client Testimonials

We pride ourselves on offering the highest quality HR service. Our clients have benefited from a range of services that we offer. The Testimonials below speak for themselves!



"As a small but growing company 'employing' staff felt like a daunting and nerve-racking process. Having C4HR to guide us through the process, providing the information and advice that we needed, gave us the confidence to move forward into an exciting growth time of our business."



"C4HR have made the process of growing my company stress free by working with me to recruit staff based on my needs. They created the job advert, distributed it, shortlisted, led the interviewing process, contacted unsuccessful candidate and took care of all the paperwork. The staff recruited are still with me and are growing with the company. Great experience"



"As a single handed small business owner work can sometimes feel like a lonely place, with few friends. C4HR provided that proverbial arm around my shoulder with comprehensive, personal, supportive advice during a very testing period and ensured the outcome was fair for all concerned"

C4HR Support

At C4HR we recognise that people want information delivered to them easily and instantly. That's why we have developed our very own App! Packed with information and news from the world of HR. Search for C4HR in your App Store and download the FREE C4HR App.



WIN £25 worth of M&S Vouchers

To win £25 worth of M&S Vouchers just download the C4HR App and complete the C4HR Quiz*.

The winner will be chosen from the people that get 100% Correct Answers. Answers and the Winner will be posted on the website and the App on the 27th November 2015.