



**We hope you and your teams are doing well.**

As we approach the end of the year, it feels important to pause and recognise the incredible commitment shown across the health and social care sector.

Every day, we have the privilege of supporting organisations who lead with care, professionalism, and integrity. We see the meaningful difference you make, and at this time of year especially, it's clear how often individuals and teams go above and beyond to ensure the people you support can experience comfort, connection, and the small joys that make this season feel special.

We want to acknowledge the effort, resilience, and heart that underpin the work being done. We feel lucky to be part of this sector and to witness the impact you make.

November brought another round of significant HR news, including further updates to the Employment Rights Bill and confirmation that the National Minimum and National Living Wage will rise from April 2026. You can read more about the government update [here](#).



For business owners, this is an important moment to stay informed. Understanding upcoming changes early can support workforce planning,

budgeting, and recruitment decisions, particularly in sectors already managing tight margins and rising operational costs.

It's also a useful time to revisit the distinction between the National Living Wage, the statutory minimum employers are required to pay, and the Real Living Wage, which is independently calculated based on the cost of living. While many organisations do not adopt the Real Living Wage due to financial pressures or sector constraints, being aware of how the two rates differ can help employers understand market expectations, candidate questions, and wider conversations around pay.

For anyone wanting to explore this further, the [Living Wage Foundation provides a clear explanation of the Real Living Wage and how it is calculated.](#)



Another recent government announcement focuses on changes to how salary-sacrifice pensions will work in the future.

From April 2029, the National Insurance relief applied to pension contributions made through salary sacrifice will be capped at **£2,000 per year**.

While this won't affect everyone, it's an important update for employers to be aware of so you can plan ahead and help your teams understand how their take-home pay and pension savings might be affected over time. Clear communication now can make these changes feel less overwhelming for staff. For anyone wanting a simple, accessible breakdown of what's changing and why, [MoneySavingExpert have put together a useful overview.](#)

**International Volunteer Day** was on 5 December and we saw lots of teams marking it with great initiatives.

Volunteering is such a powerful force for organisations. It can boost employee morale and engagement by giving people a sense of purpose, community and connection beyond their day to day tasks. It also supports wellbeing, strengthens loyalty and helps people feel more aligned with company values. When staff volunteer together, it builds collaboration, trust and shared values that strengthen culture and improve how people feel about their work.



Beyond this, there was a really interesting article published recently on the impact of unused volunteering days. Research suggests that when volunteering days offered by employers are not used, organisations may be missing out on productivity gains worth more than £5,000 per employee each year. The findings offer a fresh reminder that volunteering is not just a feel good activity. It is an investment that benefits employees, communities and organisations as a whole.

[You can read the full article here.](#)



Rowcroft Hospice is offering a free online learning session for health and social care professionals at all levels, focused on recognising dying and building confidence in talking about this, even when there is uncertainty.

Recognising when someone is entering the final phase of life is a tender and important part of providing compassionate, person-centred care. This session explores how to notice and respond to changes in a person's condition, support comfort and dignity, and strengthen the quality of end-of-life experiences.

It's a valuable opportunity for staff to deepen their confidence in communicating with residents, families and colleagues about dying, and in managing these moments with sensitivity and reassurance.

[Learn more here.](#)

## Supporting Employees During SAD Awareness Month

Did you know December marks a peak period for Seasonal Affective Disorder?

Research suggests that around **1 in 20 people in the UK experience SAD**, and many more feel a noticeable seasonal dip in mood and energy as daylight hours shrink and routines shift towards darker mornings and evenings. For some, this is a mild winter slump; for others, SAD is a significant mental-health condition that can affect day-to-day wellbeing and performance at work.



That's why December, recognised as SAD Awareness Month, is a valuable opportunity for employers to raise awareness, share resources and create space for supportive conversations. Understanding the signs and being proactive about workplace wellbeing can make a meaningful difference.

Every organisation has a responsibility to safeguard employee wellbeing. Under UK law, employers must take reasonable steps to support both physical and mental health, and SAD may qualify as a disability if its effects are long-term or recurring. This means that thoughtful, proportionate adjustments may be needed to help staff manage their symptoms. These could include flexible start times, opportunities for natural light exposure, regular breaks outdoors or mindful adjustments to workload during more challenging months.

For anyone wanting to learn more, Croner have produced a clear and practical guide on understanding SAD and supporting employees effectively:


[How to Support Your Employees.](#)



As we move towards Christmas, we want to express our gratitude to everyone we've connected with this year, whether through ongoing partnership, a single conversation, or shared insight along the way.

At Osa, our work has always been about more than recruitment. We're committed to helping create environments where people feel safe, valued, and able to thrive, and that is only possible because of the people and organisations who engage with us with honesty, openness, and trust.

Thank you all, and we wish you, your colleagues, and your communities a merry Christmas and a wonderful new year.

 **We'd love to hear from you:** As we move through December, many teams are marking the season in their own ways, from sharing food to hosting quizzes, jumper days or small gatherings, or simply taking time to pause together before the year closes.

We'd love to hear how your teams are approaching this time of year and how you create space for people to honour the traditions that matter to them.

 **Thought for the month:**

December brings a wide range of cultural and religious observances including Yule, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Christmas, the Winter Solstice and many personal traditions held within families. It is a month that reminds us that inclusion begins with noticing, listening and making space for the traditions that matter to each person, not only the ones we hear about most often.

When we take time to recognise the different ways people celebrate, reflect or simply rest, we help build teams where everyone feels valued and able to belong. Even small moments of acknowledgement can create a workplace that feels more thoughtful, supportive and genuinely connected.

 **Further reading/watching:**

 [Government to fully fund SME apprenticeship training for under 25s from April 2026](#)

 [CIPD: Christmas Party Tips for Employers](#)

**Not sure if your hiring strategy is working?**

Book a free consultation with our team and we will provide a free analysis of the market to help guide you.

Warm wishes for the month ahead.



*Connecting compassionate care providers with skilled professionals to build strong, values-aligned teams that enhance care quality and service outcomes.*



[Our Website](#)

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