



As we move out of January and into the lighter, longer days ahead, many organisations are taking stock of their **recruitment and employment strategies** for the year ahead. It's a natural moment to reflect not only on the roles that need filling but also on how staff can be retained and the progression opportunities people may be hoping for in the year ahead.

One practical change employers should be preparing for is the suite of employment and pay updates coming into effect from April. From 1 April 2026, the National Living Wage and National Minimum Wage rates will increase. At the same time, statutory payments such as Statutory Sick Pay and family-related leave pay will rise, raising the floor for pay support across your workforce.

These changes have real implications for recruitment and retention and require thoughtful planning to ensure organisations are prepared and able to navigate any challenges. With recruitment pressures still high, competitive pay is just one way to attract talent. Building a strategy that reflects not only skills and capacity but also **wellbeing, fairness, and inclusivity** will make a meaningful difference to both attraction and retention in 2026 and beyond.

## Random Acts of Kindness Day: Boosting Culture and Engagement

Employee engagement, culture, and wellbeing are key drivers of retention and attraction. One simple but powerful way to reinforce these values is through initiatives like Random Acts of Kindness Day.



Many of our clients are already planning thoughtful gestures for the day, from sharing notes of appreciation and recognising colleagues' contributions to small acts that brighten someone's day. While these might seem small, they have a big impact on team morale, connection, and overall workplace culture.

Acts of kindness are not just about the moment; they help create a culture where people feel seen, valued, and supported, which in turn strengthens engagement and loyalty. When staff experience recognition and care alongside fair pay and meaningful progression opportunities, organisations are better placed to retain talent, reduce turnover, and attract new people who want to be part of a positive, inclusive workplace.

Encouraging teams to take part in small acts of kindness can also spark ideas for wider wellbeing initiatives, creating momentum that lasts far beyond the day itself. It's a practical, human-centred way to build the culture and engagement strategies that complement recruitment and employment planning for the year ahead.



## Looking Ahead: Celebrating and Supporting Teams in February and March

Over the next four weeks, there are a number of important events and awareness days that can offer meaningful opportunities for teams to connect, reflect, and engage with wider social and cultural conversations.

Taking the time to acknowledge and mark these occasions is more than just a calendar note, it can help strengthen workplace culture, foster inclusion, and demonstrate your commitment to corporate responsibility.

## Ramadan – 17th February to 18th March

Recognise colleagues who are observing. *Suggestion: Offer flexible breaks and*

*be mindful when scheduling meetings.*

### **Holi – 4th March**

Celebrate community and creativity. *Suggestion: Highlight the festival's cultural significance within your team.*

### **Hola Mohalla – 4th–6th March**

A time of faith and tradition for Sikh colleagues. *Suggestion: Encourage learning about the festival amongst the team.*

### **Eid – 19th/20th March**

Celebrate togetherness and reflection. *Suggestion: Recognise the day in internal communications and with individuals.*

### **World Wildlife Day – 3rd March**

Raise awareness of the environment. *Suggestion: Organise a small team challenge to support local wildlife.*

### **International Women's Day – 8th March**

Celebrate achievements and equality. *Suggestion: Highlight women's contributions in your team.*

### **Children's Mental Health Week – 9th–15th February**

Focus on wellbeing and open conversations. *Suggestion: Share resources with your wider community.*

### **Young Carers Action Day – 11th March**

Highlight the challenges young carers face. *Suggestion: Consider supporting charities that work with young carers.*

**73% of employees consider a company's commitment to social and environmental responsibility when deciding where to work. Engaging in these initiatives also drives significantly higher employee engagement and loyalty, which correlates with improved retention and reduced turnover costs.**

### **Zero Discrimination Day – 1st March 2026**

Zero Discrimination Day is an annual United Nations-backed observance that celebrates everyone's right to live with dignity, free from unfair treatment or bias. In the workplace, it's essential that people feel **safe, respected, and able to bring their whole selves to work.**



For employers, this day is an important opportunity to reflect on the part we play in **preventing discrimination and building inclusive, supportive cultures.**

Taking practical steps to promote equality, awareness, and fairness benefits not only individuals but also team morale, engagement, and retention.

For more ideas on how to champion equality and inclusion in your organisation and to explore **how to promote Zero Discrimination Day**, Health Assured offers practical insights and tips.

👉 [Zero Discrimination Day – Health Assured](#)



**Non-Smoking Awareness Day on March 11th** offers an important opportunity to highlight the health benefits of quitting smoking and the positive impact it can have on both employees and workplaces.

Smoking remains a leading cause of preventable illness, and supporting staff to make informed choices is part of creating a healthy, safe, and supportive work environment.

Employers have both a **responsibility and an opportunity** to approach this topic thoughtfully and sensitively. Promoting awareness without judgement, and offering support and resources, can go a long way.

Many employers also run successful **cessation programmes**. These initiatives not only help individuals take steps towards better health but also have measurable workplace benefits.

Research shows that **people who smoke take almost three extra sick days per year on average compared with non-smokers** and have a **31% higher risk of sickness absence**, a pattern linked to improved attendance when people quit smoking.

One helpful resource for employers is the British Safety Council's guide, **Unlocking Healthier Workplaces: a guide to supporting your staff in quitting smoking and vaping**, which outlines practical ways organisations can support quit-smoking and quit-vaping efforts and create positive, supportive environments for change.

👉 [Unlocking Healthier Workplaces guide – British Safety Council](#)

## Navigating the CQC regulations: Building confidence in what you will need to evidence

On Wednesday 25 February 2026, 10:00AM to 11:00AM, Skills for Care and The Outstanding Society are hosting a webinar designed to support care managers and leaders in understanding CQC regulations and building confidence in what they will need to evidence.



Regulatory compliance doesn't have to be daunting. Linking the CQC Fundamental Standards to everyday care provides a clear framework to deliver high-quality, safe services. This session will share practical strategies and real-world examples to help you approach inspections with confidence and ensure your evidence is well-organised, meaningful, and easy to demonstrate. This webinar will give your team the guidance and confidence to meet CQC requirements with assurance.

👉 Register here: [Navigating the CQC regulations: Building confidence in what you will need to evidence](#)



## Let's Talk About Menopause at Work

Menopause is a natural stage of life that can bring a range of physical, emotional, and cognitive changes. Yet, it's often a topic that goes unspoken in the workplace, leaving many employees feeling unsupported or unsure how to navigate its impact on their work.

In fact, research shows that around **two thirds (67%) of women aged 40–60** who experience menopausal symptoms say the transition has had a mostly **negative effect** on their work, and more than half have found themselves unable to go into work at some point because of symptoms.

On Tuesday 24th February 2026 at 10:00AM, ACAS are hosting a webinar to explore how workplaces can better understand, support, and empower

employees experiencing menopause. The session will cover practical strategies, adjustments, and approaches that help staff feel valued, seen and supported. Supporting employees through life transitions is not just good for wellbeing, it also strengthens teams, improves retention and enhances overall workplace culture.

👉 Register here: [Let's Talk About Menopause at Work](#)

### **We'd love to hear from you:**

With the **April 2026 employment and pay updates** approaching, how are you feeling about the impact on your organisation?

### **Thought for the month:**

The upcoming changes to employment law from April are more than just legislation; they present a meaningful opportunity to re-examine how your organisation balances operational costs with the goal of attracting, supporting, and retaining the talent that drives your success.

Rising costs are a reality for many businesses, but they don't have to mean compromising on the experience of your people. Creative, thoughtful approaches to recruitment strategies and employee engagement are vital now more than ever.

April isn't far away, and taking time now to reflect on key questions can help leaders plan with intention rather than simply react to change. How can you ensure recruitment and retention strategies aren't just about filling roles, but about building long-term engagement, trust, and loyalty — fostering an environment where individuals are empowered to grow alongside your organisation?

We believe that finding the right people is only part of the picture. When we work alongside organisations, our focus is on building strategies that align recruitment with values, support long-term engagement, and ensure an organisation is well-positioned to attract, retain, and nurture the talent that will drive lasting success.

### **Further reading/watching:**

👉 [Flexible working requests: A case study and the law](#)

👉 [35 Ideas for Workplace Wellbeing Initiatives](#)

### **Not sure what's working — or not — in your hiring strategy?**

Book a free consultation with our team and discover smarter ways to attract and retain top talent.

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.*



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