

Chinwag!

Welcome to the fifth edition of *Chinwag!*

We're delighted to bring you a lively mix of captivating stories, quirky insights, and the latest updates from the world of workplace learning and employment law—sprinkled with a touch of humour and a bit of wisdom.

Whether you're starting your day over breakfast, commuting to work (or simply wandering around the house if you're working from home), or sharing a chat about *Chinwag!* with friends and family, we've packed in plenty of conversation starters to spark your interest.

So - dive in, have a laugh, discover something new, and enjoy the journey. We're thrilled to have you back! And if you're joining us for the first time - a very warm welcome!

Regards,

Team Serious About Solutions



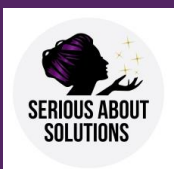
“The path to diversity begins with supporting, mentoring, and sponsoring diverse women and men to become leaders and entrepreneurs.” - **Jacqueline Woodson (Author)**

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Understanding the Rights of Voluntary Workers and the Dangers of Exploitation

Serious About Solutions has prepared a new Fact Sheet (SAS V001) which explores the rights of voluntary workers.

In the last of the three-part series, we explore how we can help exploited voluntary workers.

III. What to do if you suspect voluntary workers are being exploited

If someone suspects that an employer is exploiting voluntary workers in the UK, they can report it to various authorities and organisations that address worker exploitation,



labour rights, and modern slavery. Here are some key avenues for reporting such concerns:

1. Acas (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service)

Acas provides free and confidential advice on workplace rights and can offer guidance if someone believes that volunteers are being

exploited. Though Acas primarily deals with employment rights, they can offer advice on fair treatment and direct individuals to the appropriate authorities.

- **Contact:** Acas helpline – 0300 123 1100
Website: www.acas.org.uk

2. HMRC (Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs)

If exploitation involves issues around unpaid wages or other forms of unlawful compensation, such as failure to pay the National Minimum Wage (in cases where volunteers are effectively employees), a report can be made to HMRC. While voluntary workers are not entitled to wages, if the role resembles paid employment without proper compensation, HMRC can investigate.

- **Contact:** HMRC National Minimum Wage enforcement – 0300 123 1243
Website: www.gov.uk/pay-and-work-rights

3. Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA)

The GLAA investigates reports of worker exploitation, including forced labour, human trafficking, and modern slavery. If someone suspects that volunteers are being coerced, exploited, or forced into work, this authority can investigate.

- **Contact:** GLAA – 0800 432 0804
Website: www.gla.gov.uk

4. Modern Slavery Helpline

If there is concern that voluntary workers are being subjected to modern slavery or human trafficking, the Modern Slavery Helpline provides a confidential service for reporting such concerns. Modern slavery includes situations where individuals are forced to work under threat or coercion, even if they initially agreed to work voluntarily.

- **Contact:** Modern Slavery Helpline – 08000 121 700
Website: www.modernslaveryhelpline.org

5. Charity Commission

If the exploitation involves a registered charity, the **Charity Commission** can investigate concerns about how a charity is being run, including its treatment of

volunteers. The Charity Commission ensures that charities operate within the law and adhere to ethical standards.

- **Contact:** Charity Commission – 0300 066 9197
Website: www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity

6. Citizens Advice

For individuals who are unsure where to turn, **Citizens Advice** can offer free, confidential advice on rights and how to report exploitation. They can guide you through the process of making a complaint and direct you to the appropriate authorities.

- **Contact:** Citizens Advice – 0800 144 8848
Website: www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Summary:

If someone suspects voluntary workers are being exploited, they should report it to the appropriate authority based on the nature of the exploitation. For general labour rights issues, Acas or HMRC can help, while concerns involving modern slavery or human trafficking should be directed to the Modern Slavery Helpline or GLAA. If the exploitation involves a charity, the Charity Commission should be contacted.

Make sure you're amongst the first to see this series, and all our other excellent publications, by [subscribing here](#)

Grit, Guts, and Giggles: The Quirky Tales of Britain's WWII Working Women

During WWII, as men were called up to fight, women across the UK stepped into roles previously considered "men's work" – and some truly memorable stories came out of it!

Take the example of the "Lumber Jills," the women of the Women's Timber Corps, who were tasked managing timber effort. Many of Marjorie Fitch, took by men. At just 17, managing the coal fires going, often for conditions. This glamorous, but stride, often by the end of each determination



machinery running and spirits high among her peers.

with felling trees and production for the war these women, including on roles traditionally held Marjorie was a stoker, furnaces and keeping the long hours and in grueling tough, dirty work wasn't Marjorie took it in her covered head to toe in soot shift. Her resilience and helped keep vital

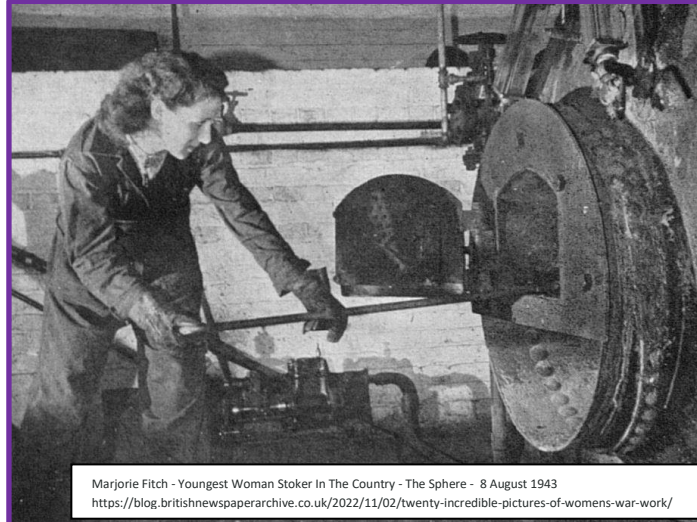
Then there were the "Land Girls" of the Women's Land Army, many of whom had never set foot on a farm. One new Land Girl arrived at a farm and was asked to milk a cow—only to accidentally try from the wrong end! Stories like these added a cheerful spirit to wartime work and endeared the Land Girls to the farmers they assisted.

Perhaps the quirkiest tales come from the munitions factories, where women handled explosives to produce ammunition. Known as the "Canary Girls" due to the yellow hue TNT would leave on their skin, these women embraced their new look as a badge of honour, even though it was an occupational hazard!

Curious
Cases

Through grit and good humour, women like Marjorie not only broke down barriers but brought a bit of levity to the workplace, helping to keep Britain's spirits high. Their bravery, camaraderie, and quirks continue to inspire us today.

If you are aware of any fascinating workplace stories or unusual traditions, laws or bylaws which could impact on the workplace, share it with us at info@seriousaboutsolutions.com and we'll have a *Chinwag!* about it.



Marjorie Fitch - Youngest Woman Stoker In The Country - The Sphere - 8 August 1943
<https://blog.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/2022/11/02/twenty-incredible-pictures-of-womens-war-work/>

Managing Pressure Without the Blame Game!

In this week's edition of our community advice section, we assist Carlos with his excessive workload.

Dear SAS,

I work in a fast-paced marketing team where we are constantly under pressure to deliver results. Lately, I've been struggling with my manager's expectations. They expect me to handle multiple projects simultaneously, and when one project faces a delay, it feels like I'm being blamed for the entire team's setbacks. I understand that mistakes happen, but the way my manager reacts makes me feel as though I'm not capable of performing my job. It's creating a lot of stress, and I'm starting to dread coming into work. How can I handle this situation without feeling overwhelmed or discouraged?



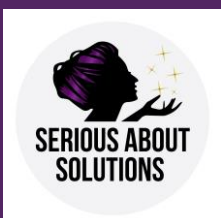
Serious About Solutions say:

"Hi Carlos

First, we want to reassure you that you're not alone. Many people feel the

pressure of juggling multiple tasks, especially when high expectations are placed on them. It's tough when your efforts seem unrecognised, and the blame is shifted onto you without considering the bigger picture. Here are a few steps you can take to regain control of the situation:

1. **Clarify Expectations:** *Have an open conversation with your manager. Ask for clarity on priorities and deadlines, especially when juggling multiple projects. It's important to understand what your manager deems most important, so you can better allocate your time and resources.*
2. **Track Your Progress:** *Keep a detailed record of your projects, milestones, and deadlines. This will help you monitor your workload and provide evidence of*



your work. When things go wrong, you'll have a record of the efforts you've made, which can help in discussions about what went wrong and how to prevent it in the future.

3. **Set Boundaries:** *Let your manager know what's realistically achievable. If you're feeling overloaded, it's okay to ask for support or to communicate when you need an extension or a reduction in tasks. Healthy boundaries can prevent burnout and help manage expectations.*
4. **Communicate Proactively:** *If delays are inevitable, don't wait for your manager to find out. Be proactive in providing updates and communicating any challenges you're facing. This shows initiative and ensures your manager is aware of potential issues before they escalate.*
5. **Take Care of Yourself:** *It's crucial to manage your stress. Make sure you're taking regular breaks, staying organised, and finding ways to recharge outside of work. Your well-being is essential to your long-term success.*

If your manager continues to focus solely on blame, consider having a candid conversation about how this is affecting your productivity and morale. A healthy, supportive work environment encourages growth, not fear of failure.

Remember, you're doing your best, and you deserve to work in an environment where your contributions are recognised and valued. Keep advocating for yourself.

Useful resources for this case study:

- Legislation
 - Health and Safety at Work Act (Duty of Care)
- Organisation policies
 - Key Performance Indicators/Appraisal/Performance Management
 - Annual leave
- Trade union or staff representative
- Employee Assistance Programme
- Line manager and/or HR

The Rise of 'Contemplation Time' at Work: Why Mindfulness Breaks are Taking Hold in the Workplace

More companies are embracing contemplation time—often called mindfulness breaks, quiet time, or meditation sessions—as part of a healthy workplace. A few minutes of focused breathing, meditation, or quiet reflection can do wonders for both employee well-being and productivity. Here's why mindfulness breaks are becoming a staple in modern work culture.



1. Supporting Mental Health

With mental health awareness on the rise, employers are recognising the benefits of building stress-management practices into the workday. Short breaks dedicated to mindfulness or reflection help employees manage anxiety, reduce stress, and recharge mentally. In turn, employees can approach their work with more clarity and calm.

2. Boosting Productivity

Research shows that mindfulness practices can enhance focus, creativity, and decision-making. When employees juggle multiple tasks in a world of digital distractions, a few moments of contemplation can help reset the mind and restore concentration, improving performance over time.

3. Combating Burnout

As burnout rates climb, companies are implementing contemplation time to prevent employee fatigue. Mindfulness and meditation breaks lower stress levels, reduce mental exhaustion, and promote a more sustainable work-life balance. When employees feel refreshed, they're more likely to thrive in their roles.

4. Adapting to Hybrid Work

The shift towards remote and hybrid work has prompted employers to prioritise mental well-being even more. Many companies now offer virtual mindfulness sessions



or promote meditation apps like Headspace or Calm, making mental wellness accessible to employees working from home or in the office.

5. Building Positive Culture

Regular mindfulness breaks foster a supportive workplace culture. By offering time for quiet reflection, organisations signal that they value well-being as much as productivity. This approach can make employees feel more appreciated, boost morale, and contribute to a positive, engaged work environment.

To support these practices, some companies are setting up quiet rooms, offering guided meditation sessions, or even dedicating a few moments in meetings to silent contemplation. Contemplation time is quickly becoming a staple in today's workforce, as organisations focus on creating a more resilient, healthy, and productive workplace.

Incorporating mindfulness may just be the key to unlocking a more balanced and inspired workday for everyone.

If you have queries about this or any other workplace matter – email us at:

info@seriousaboutsolutions.com

Time for Tea!

One humorous story from the UK world of work concerns the peculiar practice of "tea breaks" in British factories.

During the early 20th century, many factories officially discouraged workers from taking tea breaks to maximize productivity. However, workers found ingenious ways to sneak in their teatime, often hiding unlikely places, such as under machines or in storage closets, to enjoy a quick even fashioned of old keep their tea



breaks to maximize productivity. However, workers found ingenious ways to sneak in their teatime, often hiding unlikely places, such as under machines or in storage closets, to enjoy a quick even fashioned of old keep their tea

In an interesting twist, some factories eventually embraced the tea break, realising that productivity often improved when workers had a quick rest and refreshment. By the mid-20th century, tea breaks became so embedded in British work culture that they were often formalised in schedules, with workers gathering for tea and biscuits each day.

This quirky dedication to tea became a defining aspect of British workplace culture and remains a beloved tradition in many offices and workplaces across the UK.

The
Lighter
Side

Talking Points in the World of Work

This week:

The important topics are making headlines are:

1. **New Employment Laws:** Significant changes to UK employment law took effect in October 2024, including the Worker Protection (Amendment of the Equality Act 2010). This law imposes a duty on employers to take preventive measures against sexual harassment in the workplace, requiring them to implement training and clear reporting mechanisms ([HR Pulse](#)).
2. Additionally, the Employment Rights Bill introduces day-one rights against unfair dismissal, banning exploitative zero-hours contracts, and granting flexible working as a default right ([GOV.UK](#)).
3. **Addressing Economic Inactivity:** The UK government is focusing on tackling economic inactivity, which is at a concerning level due to long-term sickness, particularly post-pandemic. The Labour Market Advisory Board has been established to explore innovative approaches to increase employment and address the root causes of inactivity ([GOV.UK](#)).

The Work and Pensions Secretary has highlighted the importance of improving health services and support systems to help more people return to work ([GOV.UK](#)).

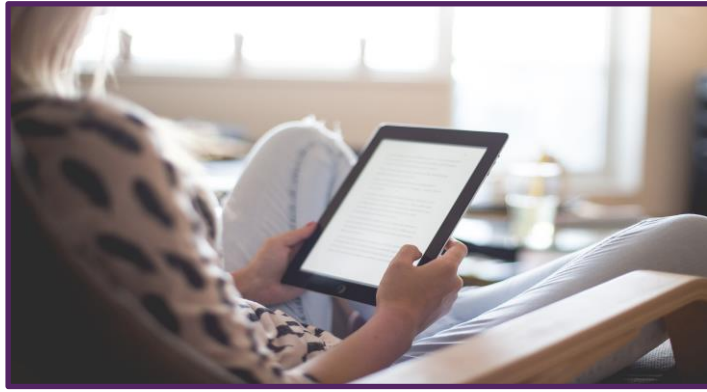
4. **Tipping Act Implementation:** The recently enacted Tipping Act mandates that employers must distribute all tips fairly among workers without unauthorized deductions. Employers must have a clear written policy on tip allocation, enhancing transparency for employees ([HR Pulse](#)).
5. **Cost of Hybrid Work:** As businesses navigate the new landscape of hybrid work, costs associated with commuting and working in the office have been highlighted. Hybrid workers report spending significantly more on office days compared to working from home, underscoring the ongoing debate about the viability and sustainability of hybrid work models ([GOV.UK](#)).

These developments reflect a broader trend towards enhancing worker rights and addressing long-standing issues within the labour market, signalling a pivotal shift in the UK's approach to work.

Employers are advised to review their policies and processes to ensure compliance with these changes.

For more details, you can check out additional resources on the changes to employment laws and economic initiatives or contact ***Serious About Solutions***.

Readers Corner



In our Readers' Corner you get a chance to let us have your questions, feedback, diary dates and Community Spotlights.

- **Questions**
Let us have your questions about the world of work and we will publish our expert advice in our *Chinwag!* newsletter
- **Feedback**
Tell us what you think about our website, publications and services
- **Diary Dates**
 - **13 – 14 November 2024**
[The British Business Show 2024](#)
 - **November is:**
 - **Islamophobia Awareness Month**
 - **Transgender Awareness Month**
 - **UK Disability History Month (14 Nov – 13 Dec)**
 - Purple Tuesday (12th Nov)
 - International Men's Day (19th Nov)
 - White Ribbon Day/UN Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (25th Nov)

Thanks for taking the time to read this edition of *Chinwag!*

We really need your feedback so that we can continue to make improvements to our publications and services.

Share this newsletter with anyone you think might be interested in what we do here at *Serious About Solutions*.

Don't forget to [join our mailing list](#). See you in the next edition.

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