

Chinwag!

Welcome to the second edition of **Chinwag!** - a fresh blend of intriguing stories, quirky insights, and the latest news from the world of workplace learning and employment law - all delivered with a touch of humour and a dash of wisdom.

Whether you're starting your day with a well needed breakfast, commuting to work (including taking the stairs for those of you who work from home) or sharing your thoughts about **Chinwag!** with friends and family, we have a range of conversation starters to ignite your experience.

So, dive in, have a laugh, learn something new, and enjoy the journey. We're thrilled to have you with us again! And for the newbies – an extra warm welcome is extended to you.

Regards,

Team Serious About Solutions

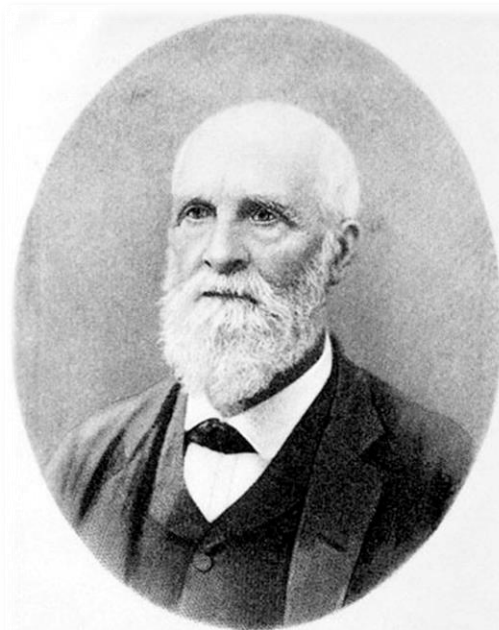


Image: Courtesy of The Historic New Orleans Collection
Alfred Mercier. Goupil and Company (Publisher)

"What we learn with pleasure we never forget." - Alfred Mercier

Edition 2

17 September 2024

Table of contents

1. News & Views - The Latest in Workplace Learning and Employment Law
2. Curious Cases - Quirky Legal Stories and Unusual Workplace Scenarios
3. Expert Insights - Advice and Commentary from Industry Professionals
4. The Lighter Side - Humour, Fun Facts, and Workplace Antics
5. In the Know - Key Developments and Trends to Watch
6. Reader's Corner - Questions, Feedback, and Community Spotlights

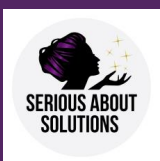




Image by PublicDomainPictures from Pixabay - chains-19176_1280

Understanding the Rights of Voluntary Workers and the Dangers of Exploitation

Voluntary work plays a crucial role in many sectors, from charity organisations to trade unions to community initiatives. People volunteer their time, skills, and effort to causes they believe in, often without expecting financial compensation. However, while volunteering can be immensely rewarding, it can also expose individuals to situations where they may be at risk of exploitation, especially when the line between voluntary work and employment becomes blurred. A lack of understanding about their rights can leave voluntary workers vulnerable to unfair treatment, unreasonable demands, or even more severe forms of abuse.

Serious About Solutions has prepared a new Fact Sheet (SAS V001) which explores the rights of voluntary workers. Through this comprehensive overview, we aim to empower voluntary workers with the knowledge they need to contribute safely and ethically to causes they care about, while helping organisations understand their responsibilities in maintaining fair practices.

In our next 3 editions of *Chinwag!* we will be summarising:

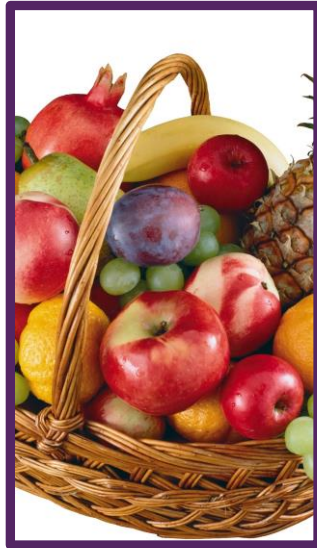
- **Part I: What is Voluntary Work?**
We will define what constitutes voluntary work, how it differs from paid employment, and the legal framework governing volunteers in the UK.
- **Part II: The Rights and Protections for Voluntary Workers**
This section will explain what protections and entitlements volunteers have, and how organisations should ethically manage volunteers to avoid exploitation.
- **Part III: Identifying and Addressing Exploitation**
Finally, we will discuss the signs of exploitation in voluntary roles, the legal distinctions between voluntary work and forced labour, and how individuals can report concerns and protect themselves from abuse.

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

Curious Cases

A Bit Fruity!!

We've all worked with colleagues who have needed to take some time off for convalescing of some sort. And whether it's a social committee or Reliable Rita in Reprographics – there is always someone to pick up the mantle, to organise a collection for a get-well card and gift to cheer- up a poorly colleague.



But whilst considering whether or not the recipient is going to enjoy the gift, how many of us know that what can seem like an innocuous offering, could in fact be precarious in law?

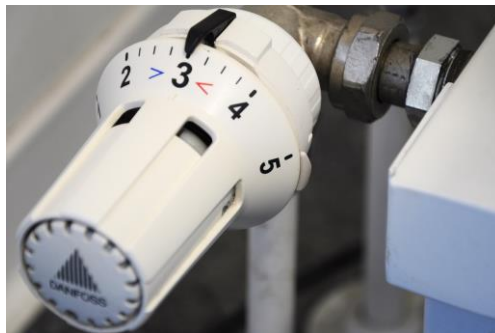
If an employer gives an employee a fruit basket or gifts them any unusual food, it could be considered a taxable benefit under **Pineapple Tax (Unusual Fringe Benefit Taxation)**. This extends to strange items like pineapples or other exotic foods, which are subject to benefit-in-kind taxation.

Due to globalization, exotic fruits are no longer as unusual as they once were in the UK. None the less, the Pineapple Tax – which is unlikely to be acted upon – still stands.

If you are aware of any unusual 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.

A Delicate Matter

In this week's edition of our community advice section, we assist Mary – whose grandson is uncomfortable starting work early.



"Hi SAS,

My grandson graduated last year and secured a job in project management at a public sector organisation. Although he enjoys the flexibility of flexible working hours, he's uncomfortable starting early because an older female colleague uses the cyclists' shower facilities, washes her underwear by hand, and hangs it to dry on the radiator near his workstation every day.

Since no one else has mentioned it, my grandson feels hesitant to raise the issue, fearing he might be ridiculed. Could this situation be considered sexual harassment?"

- Mary, Chislehurst

Serious About Solutions say:

"Hi Mary,

The situation described, although uncomfortable and inappropriate in a professional setting, may not strictly meet the legal definition of sexual harassment. Sexual

harassment generally refers to unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature that creates a hostile or intimidating work environment, which can include verbal, non-verbal, or physical actions. In this case, the issue seems more related to inappropriate workplace behaviour or a lack of boundaries, rather than any sexual intent. Coincidentally, the 'burden of proof' in workplace sexual harassment will shift to the employer from October 2024.

That said, your grandson's discomfort is entirely valid, and the behaviour is unprofessional. He might consider addressing it through a different approach, such as speaking to his manager, the HR department, or even discussing it directly with the colleague in a respectful manner. Often, issues like this can be resolved without the need for formal complaints if handled tactfully. However, if the behaviour continues or worsens, he should feel comfortable raising it through the appropriate channels – which include possibly raising a grievance.

You could also ask your health and safety officer to conduct an inspection of the area as placing wet articles on the radiator might be against the manufacturer's recommendations.

It's important that the workplace remains a comfortable environment for everyone, and addressing unprofessional conduct, regardless of context, is key to upholding that standard."

Useful resources for this case study:

- Legislation
 - Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Organisation policies
 - Health and safety (Duty of care)
 - Grievance
- Line manager and/or Human Resources (Personnel)

Expert Insights

Job Interview Cheat Sheet

Our guest contributor this week is Lukas J.M. Stangl – who has produced a very handy guide for job interviews. www.lukasstangl.com . Thank you Lukas!

Are you looking to gain real-world interview experience and boost your confidence? **Serious About Solutions** is excited to offer **practical job interview sessions** tailored to help you excel in your next interview.

Whether you're a recent graduate, changing careers, or just want to brush up on your skills, we provide:

- **Mock interviews** with personalised feedback
- **Interview technique coaching** to help you stay calm and composed
- Insights into **common interview questions** and best practices
- Real-time **tips and tricks** to tackle tough interview scenarios

Join us and get the hands-on experience you need to land your dream job!

Don't miss this opportunity to turn your interview anxiety into interview success!

Email us at info@seriousaboutsolutions.com

JOB INTERVIEW CHEAT SHEET



1

What is your biggest weakness?

Tip: Choose a weakness that isn't critical to the role and show how you're addressing it.

Answer: Honestly describe a real weakness and discuss the steps you are taking to improve.

2

Why do you want to work here?

Tip: Align your answer with the company's values and mission.

Answer: Explain why you admire the company and how your skills and goals align with the job.

3

Describe managing multiple tasks. How do you handle it?

Tip: Highlight your time management and organizational skills.

Answer: Discuss your approach to prioritizing tasks, delegating, and managing your time effectively.

4

Tell me a bit about your background.

Tip: Focus on skills and experiences that are relevant to the role.

Answer: Share a brief story showing how you got started, where you are now, and why this role is the next logical step.

5

What motivates you to keep pushing forward?

Tip: Show your drive and determination.

Answer: Provide an example of a time you stayed motivated and achieved your goals despite challenges.

6

How do you handle criticism or negative feedback?

Tip: Demonstrate your ability to grow from feedback.

Answer: Share a story where you received constructive criticism, how you handled it, and the improvements you made as a result.

7

What interests you about this job?

Tip: Research the company and role thoroughly.

Answer: Talk about specific aspects of the company and role that excite you and how your skills align with the job.

8

Describe a time you failed. How did you bounce back?

Tip: Show resilience and a growth mindset.

Answer: Share a story of a setback, how you recovered, and what you learned from the experience.

9

How do you inspire others to achieve their best?

Tip: Highlight your leadership and motivational skills.

Answer: Provide an example of when you were positive, persistent, and persuasive in motivating others.

10

Describe a situation where you adapted to change.

Tip: Show adaptability and enthusiasm for change.

Answer: Discuss a significant change you faced, how you adapted quickly, and the positive outcomes.

11

How do you prioritize work with multiple deadlines?

Tip: Focus on your ability to manage time and stress.

Answer: Explain your process for prioritizing tasks and meeting deadlines efficiently.

12

What questions do you have for me?

Tip: Ask insightful questions that show your interest and preparation.

Answer: Inquire about the company's future goals, the team you'll be working with, or the challenges of the role.

Get free PDFs of all my cheat sheets at lukasstangl.com



Follow **Lukas J.M. Stangl**

The Lighter Side

Sign Here, Please: Navigating UK Employment Contracts Without Losing Your Sanity

Ah, the wonderful world of UK employment contracts—a delightful blend of legal jargon and paperwork that could make even the most thrilling job feel like you're signing up for a new cell phone plan. But don't worry! We're here to explain it all with a bit of humour to make it bearable (or at least less soul-crushing).



The "You're Hired!" Document

So, you've landed a job! Congrats! Now comes the contract. This is the "promise" between you and your employer where you both solemnly agree that you'll exchange your precious time and skills for the reward of money (and maybe the occasional office biscuit).

Important bit: An employment contract starts the moment you say, "Yes, I'll take the job!" So even before you've signed anything, legally you're in deep! It's like accidentally agreeing to marry someone just by showing up to a date.

Written Contract? Eventually...

You're thinking, "Surely they'll give me a big, fancy document to sign straight away, right?" Not so fast. Under UK law, employers must give you a written statement of particulars within two months. Yep, TWO MONTHS. So, by the time you finally get this contract, you might have already discovered that Keith in accounts never stops talking about his cats.

But don't worry—this is when you'll get the nitty-gritty details like how much you'll earn, when you'll get paid, and (the real kicker) what you'll have to wear on Casual Fridays.

Terms & Conditions Apply (No, Really)

Contracts in the UK have both express and implied terms. Think of express terms as the ones you actually get to see and negotiate. Like your salary or whether you're allowed to work from home in your PJs.

Implied terms, however, are the sneaky little ones nobody tells you about but are still legally binding. For example, you are implied to not steal the office printer, and your employer is implied to pay you on time. (Yes, apparently, they need to be told this.)

Termination (Not a Schwarzenegger Movie)

Both you and your employer have the right to end the contract, but there's a catch. They can't just hand you a cardboard box and tell you to leave unless they've got a pretty solid reason—or at least a good impression of it. You, on the other hand, can also leave, but you'll need to give proper notice. Sorry, no ghosting allowed.

Garden Leave—A Lovely Name for "Stay Away"

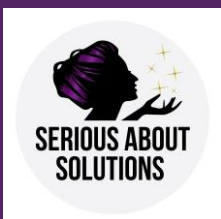
If you hand in your resignation or are on the way out, you might be placed on garden leave. It sounds lovely, doesn't it? You get to stay away from the office, and you're still technically employed. Sadly, no one's handing you a shovel and directing you to the roses—it just means you can't start working for anyone else until your contract is officially done. So, you're basically stuck in employment purgatory.

Wrapping Up with Redundancy (No, You're Not Special)

In case your role is deemed unnecessary, the dreaded "R" word appears: redundancy. Yes, they're legally telling you you're no longer useful. Ouch. But hey, there's a silver lining! You might get a redundancy payout, which is kind of like a breakup gift. "Sorry, it's not you, it's us. Here's some cash to soften the blow."

In summary, the UK's employment contract laws are like a strange dance: a little bit of legal mumbo-jumbo here, a dash of implied rules there, and a sprinkling of forms for good measure. It's not exactly a rom-com, but it's got plenty of drama and some surprising twists! So, next time you sign a contract, don't forget: you're entering a legally binding relationship with an employer—and probably one with more paperwork than your actual love life.

If you have any queries or need advice about employment contracts, get in touch with us at info@seriousaboutsolutions.com.



Equalities Wordsearch

Time for a bit of fun. See how many words you can find that are associated with *Equalities*.

Answersheet on the last page.

All Things Being Equal

E	G	E	N	D	E	R	E	S	E	X	T	N	S
H	D	I	V	E	R	S	I	T	Y	N	P	O	N
A	E	I	F	E	I	L	E	B	E	I	E	I	E
R	T	A	S	I	D	G	I	M	I	E	R	T	T
A	N	O	M	A	R	R	I	A	G	E	C	A	N
S	T	R	R	N	B	R	F	A	I	R	E	S	E
S	Y	A	P	U	T	I	S	R	H	A	P	I	G
M	P	S	E	E	E	L	L	A	N	C	T	M	R
E	M	E	D	I	T	N	I	I	A	E	I	I	E
N	L	A	U	Q	E	R	M	V	T	R	O	T	V
T	T	C	E	R	I	D	N	I	I	Y	N	C	I
N	O	I	T	A	N	I	M	I	R	C	S	I	D
L	A	D	J	U	S	T	M	E	N	T	S	V	N
N	P	A	R	T	N	E	R	S	H	I	P	I	S

DETRIMENT
EQUAL
DIVERGENT
PAY
INDIRECT
PARTNERSHIP
FAIR
DISABILITY
ADJUSTMENTS
PERCEPTION
DISCRIMINATION
VICTIMISATION
HARASSMENT
BELIEF
GENDER
MARRIAGE
DIVERSITY
NEURO
SEX
CIVIL
RACE

Play this puzzle online at: <https://thewordsearch.com/puzzle/7484769/>

Talking Points in the World of Work

In the Know

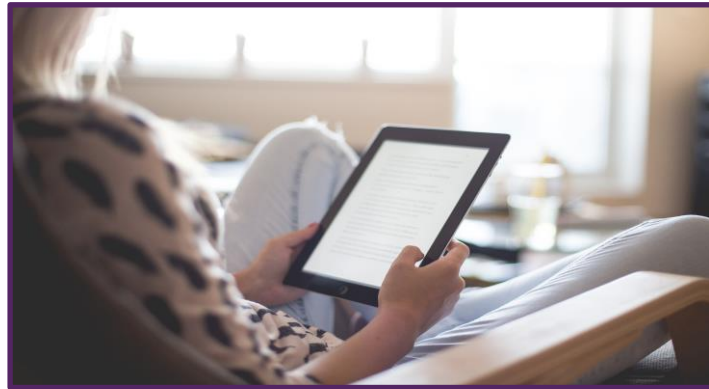
This week:

UK employment law saw significant developments in early September 2024, driven by both ongoing legislative changes and emerging case law.

- **Sexual Harassment:** Employers must now take active steps to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace, with new laws coming into effect in October 2024. This marks a shift from merely reacting to harassment claims towards proactive prevention. Failure to meet these requirements could lead to increased penalties for employers.
- **National Minimum Wage (NMW):** A notable change expected by October 2024 is the expansion of the NMW to all workers aged 18 and over, eliminating age-based pay bands. This reflects the Labour government's efforts to establish a genuine living wage for all workers.
- **Employment Status:** The government is also exploring the removal of the distinction between "workers" and "employees," potentially extending more rights to those traditionally classified as "workers." This would impact a significant portion of the workforce, enhancing protections like unfair dismissal claims.

- **Equal Pay and Positive Discrimination:** Recent case law addressed equal pay in the private sector and controversial rulings on positive discrimination, where the Employment Tribunal ruled that a police force's promotion of an ethnic minority employee without open competition was unlawful.
- **Flexible Working:** The Labour government is pushing for flexible working to become the default for employees, moving beyond current rights to request flexible work arrangements from day one.
- These updates indicate a broader focus on worker rights, especially concerning harassment, pay equity, and employment status, aligning with the Labour government's manifesto commitments.

(Sources: Bowcock & Pursaill Solicitors, Reed Smith LLP, New Dawn Resources)



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**
 - **27 September 2024**
[Macmillan Coffee Morning](#)
 - **13 – 14 November 2024**
[The British Business Show 2024](#)
- **September is:**
 - *East and South East Asian Heritage Month*
 - *World Alzheimers Month*
 - *15 Sept – 15 Oct is Latin American Month*

Contact us

Serious About Solutions

Suite 18423
PO Box 6943
London
W1A 6US

Tel: +44 7480 687 458

Office: +44 8533 3538

Email:

info@seriousaboutsolutions.com

Website:

<https://www.seriousaboutsolutions.com/>

*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 of **Chinwag!***

This page is blank