

The 'Goodwork Plan' is here: Is it good enough?

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Labelled the biggest revolution in labour law in nearly 50 years, The Good Work Plan was launched on the 6th April 2020, despite the government dealing with the ever deepening Coronavirus crisis.



Here Jonathan Lord, HR expert from the University of Salford Business School, looks at what the impact the plan could have on employers and employees.

The term stems from the independent Taylor Review of Modern Working Practices which was commissioned as a result of major concerns regarding existing employment legislation

So, what are the proposed Good Work Plan changes?

The Taylor review focused on three broad challenges, namely:

- Tackling exploitation and the potential for exploitation at work;
- Increasing clarity in the law and helping people know and exercise their rights; and
- Over the longer term, aligning the incentives driving the nature of the UK labour market with a modern industrial strategy and broader national objectives.

From these target areas the Good Work Plan focused on the following five principles:

1. Satisfaction
2. Fair pay
3. Participation and progression
4. Wellbeing, safety and security
5. Voice and autonomy

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What will be the impact of the Good Work Plan?

The Good Work Plan forces employers to start thinking practically about how it will affect the handling of their workforce with most businesses having to make some changes, particularly those who employ agency staff, staff who work shift patterns and self-employed labour.

Although the plan will provide an increase in protection for workers it still needs to be thought through properly as some of the changes can only be implemented as a 'secondary measure'.

For example, an employment tribunal can award compensation for a failure to provide a statement (a key aspect of the Good Work Plan) only if the worker has brought the written statement claim alongside another successful claim such as for discrimination and failure to pay the national minimum wage.

The Good Work Plan hopes to initiate a change in culture in how employers handle their workforce and deal with workplace issues. Despite some reservations raised by various stakeholders within the employment relationship, it will improve the working lives of millions of workers and as it states in the title, will be a force for 'good'.

How should employers prepare?

Employers should identify who are workers and who are employees. There will be an inevitable increase in protection for workers and the documents for their engagement should continue to be distinct to their employment status, reflecting their different statutory and contractual rights. Although this will always be subject to interpretation at an employment tribunal, determining the status of those who work for the organisation in a clear rationalised manner, can establish a more secure framework for supporting and managing the workforce.

Consultation is a major factor in engendering an informed and engaged workforce, and employers should ensure the current modes of communication remains to be the most appropriate, efficient and legally compliant method. The current coronavirus crisis has forced employers and employees to rethink their communication strategies, employers can use the current situation to revise, implement and test new ways of working to improve the working conditions of their workforce.

The second section of the Good Work Plan focuses on clarity for employers and workers, therefore employers should future proof the current framework used to engage the various types of resource that the organisation requires. This will enable the company to adapt, be able to minimise any negative impact, and take advantage of the positives that more clarity and employee satisfaction can bring.

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