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Single Equality Bill

The new Equality Act is due to come into force next year. It aims to simplify the current position by placing all existing legislation on age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation within a single act, standardising definitions and simplifying exceptions. It will create a new Equality Duty on public bodies, replacing the current ones for race, disability and gender, and will require more transparency at work by banning secrecy clauses relating to pay.

The Act will also extend Positive Action. So, if you have **two equally qualified** candidates, you will be able to take account of under representation of disadvantaged groups in your decision.

The public sector will have to review how their policies, programmes and services affect different groups in the community, and must ensure that employees, volunteers, and contractors, all comply with the duty.

Private companies will need to make sure that HR practices and recruitment processes are robust, transparent, comprehensive, and follow the law.

Though the Act is unlikely to come into force for a year, why not look

at your systems now, see how they reflect the new Act and start planning the things you need to do. Our starter questions are:-

i. Are your recruitment process and pay and reward schemes, transparent, well documented and non-discriminatory? If not plan to change them.

ii. Do you monitor equality internally, locally, regionally, and nationally? If not start, if yes, make sure you include all strands.

iii. Are your staff trained, not just in respect of race, disability and gender, but also age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, and gender reassignment? They need to understand their rights and responsibilities in employment AND in service delivery as well.

iv. Do you have a single equality action plan to monitor and review your procedures?

Pet&r has a lot of experience in the equality field, delivering training course to both public and private sector clients, as well as helping people develop the correct policies and procedures. So if you need help with any of the areas within the new Act, get in touch.

Why not start with our tailored one hour executive briefing for your top team or Board?

Business & Climate Change

The world's climate is changing. These changes are likely to lead to the UK having hotter, drier summers, milder, wetter winters, rising sea levels and more extreme weather events like storms and flooding.

Reducing your businesses impact on the environment and thereby slowing these changes down, can

save you money by reducing the cost of disposing of waste and reducing fuel and transport costs and could increase customer perception and willingness to use your products and services.

To help you in this **Pet&r** has written the Practical Simplicity Guide to Environmental Responsibility for Small Business which is available as a pdf download from the Resources section of our website.

However, reducing your businesses impact on the environment is only half the story. The climate is changing now and the effects are being felt now so we need to adapt to the problems as well as try and reduce them.

Increases in temperature mean ventilation and air conditioning systems as well as basic building design need to be factored in when building new premises or re-furbishing old. You also need to take into consideration location when choosing premises, picking one in a flood risk area or on the coast is probably not a long term investment and will incur high insurance premiums.

Also your supply chain may be affected by buckled tracks, melting tarmac and fog so look more locally for suppliers. Look at the possibility of your own power supply to reduce the effect of downed power lines or grid overload, and changing processes to reduce water consumption which may be restricted. Consider changing shift times so people aren't working in the hottest part of the day or offer home working.

For more information and advice on coping with climate change visit the UK Climate Impact Programme at www.ukcip.co.uk.

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Case Study – Atlas Washrooms

Last year, Atlas Washroom Services Ltd of West Auckland who produce washroom cubicles, vanity units and ducting systems, were applying for registration with the Contractors Health & Safety Assessment Scheme (CHAS). Recently added to this is the Environmental Questionnaire.

Atlas asked **Pet&r** to help them develop an Environmental Policy and Statement appropriate to their business as well as help them fill in the required section on the CHAS application form.

The project started with a visit to the factory to see the processes involved and talk to staff to gain information on the environmental activities already in place and identify areas for improvement etc.

The tour brought up some interesting features that the owners had instigated as cost saving measures, but were also environmentally responsible. These included the use of a glue spray cabinet to reduce glue wastage and fumes, a wood burner which burnt off cuts to heat the factory building thereby saving on waste disposal and energy costs, computerised cutting machines to reduce wastage and re-using packaging materials, resulting in a two thirds drop in waste production.

They also used sat nav and route planning to reduce transport costs, were looking at upgrading their transport fleet and investigating potential own energy generation.

We were able to develop a simple 2 page Environmental Policy, specific to Atlas, which was practical and one they could confidently promote. We also gave them an Environmental Statement and some action points to complete in the next 12 months to increase their environmental responsibility. We will go back and review the policy in a year and see how they are getting on.

If you need help with your Environmental Policy contact Lynne at lynne@petandr.co.uk.

Change Leadership

It has been a difficult 12 months for many people - forcing managers to make some very difficult decisions. We drew on our own experience and skills to offer clients a range of support.

One client has just completed a redundancy process, ending with his own departure from the company he served for many years. We helped him to plan his journey into self-employment, by sharing our own 'lessons learned' and offering him some key questions to ask to get his business started

We helped another company decide how to use psychometric tests and coaching so managers could assess their own interests, competencies, talents, and skills, in case of closure..

We also worked with a company in the aftermath of redundancies, helping managers plan how to tackle their key issues:-

- Ensuring people with new roles get training to work safely
- Finding and filling the gaps created when people leave and duties get re-allocated
- Continuing to meet core targets and responsibilities
- Recognising the impact of the changes on morale
- Offering more visible support and reinforcing positives
- Identifying the people more resistant to change and planning how to support them over the coming months
- Improving communication
- Catching up on outstanding jobs that got lost in the rush
- Looking after their own needs as survivors

Managers now have a clearer view of what they need to focus on to achieve this and perhaps most importantly, have greater awareness that they themselves were affected by the changes and need to support one another going forward.

New Legislation

From 6th April you no longer have to register factories, offices or shops in which employees work with the relevant Health & Safety Authority so factory employers do not have to complete the E9 form and office and shop employers don't need to complete the OSR1 form.

The qualifying exemption for notifying the Environment Agency when hazardous waste is produced on the premises has been raised from 200kg to 500kg per annum.

From 1st April the empty property business rate relief threshold was raised to £15,000 rateable value, below which rates will not have to be paid if the property is empty.

Courses and Services offered

HR Consultancy, Research, Advice & Guidance; Recruitment and Selection Testing; Policy & Strategy Development; Management Coaching & Mentoring; IIP Support & Corporate Action Planning.

Leadership, Management, & Supervisory Development; Customer Care & Interpersonal Skills; Equality & Diversity Training; Conflict Resolution, Harassment & Bullying.

Work Team Health Checks and Repair Clinics, Recruitment Training, Interviewing and Selection Testing, Mental Toughness Assessment.

Public Consultation, Social Research, & Event Management. Sustainable Development and Sustainable Lifestyle Training, Volunteer Development, Retained Advisory Service.

For a practical, focused and cost effective approach to a wide range of HR issues leading to real and sustainable change in workplace culture.

If you would like to know more about our work, please visit the web-site or contact us.