

2020 has been a year like no other. We will remember it for endless, often last-minute changes in government policy in response to COVID-19 and navigating our clients through the multitude of immediate and difficult issues arising both at the individual country level and globally across multiple jurisdictions.

From government financial support measures, return to work/working at home, overseas remote working, cybersecurity and privacy risks, and health and safety issues, we have worked closely with each client to support their own unique circumstances, as well as spot trends and share common learnings. We have also issued our multijurisdictional guides, the most recent of which is on [vaccinations](#).

Broader Shifts

We have also been alive to broader more fundamental changes taking place in the world of work, where we are seeing a shift in the relationship between employer and employee. We asked you earlier in the year what your top three HR priorities were post-pandemic. Employee engagement, mental health and wellbeing, and inclusion and diversity were some of your big concerns.

How companies traverse these issues in managing their people forms part of the [Environmental, Social, Governance \(ESG\)](#) framework that has gained much traction in 2020 and will shape the business landscape in the years to come.

We round up these issues and more with some insights and recordings from our 2020 programme. We will build on these with an exciting programme for 2021, which will see the launch of a new podcast series “Taking the Lead”, a Global Employers’ Playbook, an app for French law developments and an upgraded Global Edge with enhanced functionalities.



Big Themes

Lockdowns Herald a New Era of Working

With flexible and remote working likely to stay post-pandemic, how will employers address the multitude of issues arising from a potentially fragmented workforce whose expectations of their employer are changing or have changed?



Worth a Listen

We explored flexible working as part of a wider approach to increasing employee engagement and diversity and inclusion, and creating team cultures when working remotely either fully or partially in [The Future of Flexible Working in the UK](#) and [Changing Behaviours for the Future Workplace](#).

Our “Remote but Not Distant” webinar series with ADP and IBM, delved into the practical, legal and strategic issues related to a remote workforce, including [employee engagement and wellbeing](#), [managing performance](#), [appraisals](#), [pay and use of HR tech](#) and the changing expectations of the workforce in a remote working context. In [Managing Working Parents: Tricky Practical Issues](#) we went into the employment law implications.



Worth a Read

- [Post-lockdown Flexible Working, Six-part Blog \(UK\)](#). Sign up to [Employment Law Worldview](#).
- [Important New Developments in Remote Working Rules in Russia](#)
- [Spain's New Decree on Remote Working](#)

Mental Health

Extended periods of working at home, in possibly less than ideal circumstances, whether balancing caring responsibilities or not having the right space, and against the backdrop of high anxiety over loved ones or job security, has wreaked havoc on employees' mental health.

With levels of wellbeing firmly linked to employees' motivation, engagement and productivity, there is real impetus for employers to address the mental health impacts arising from the pandemic.



Worth a Listen

Little did we know, when we focused on the link between happiness and productivity with an in-person event, “Happiness – The Ultimate People KPI” in January, that mental health would be a priority issue going into 2021. [Employees' Mental Health in Lockdown – And Beyond](#) covers the issues, and the slides can be found here.

We also covered the practical implications of [managing sickness absence](#) in our employment law webinar.

Inclusion and Diversity

We have all experienced the same pandemic but it has not affected us all equally.

Ensuring that we are not set back on issues, such as gender and racial equality, is another priority and one where companies are being actively assessed under the ESG lens. For example, two-thirds of UK fund managers are reducing investments in companies that fail on diversity and inclusion scores according to Edelman's recent [Investor Trust Barometer Special Report](#).



Worth a Watch

Making progress on any issue starts with data. While metrics around gender are easier to obtain and benchmark, the collection, categorisation and processing of data around race has been much trickier. The UN Global Compact has released a six-part series, [Black Lives Matter & Business](#), with industry experts and CEOs sharing insights on how to take practical steps to address racial equality in the workplace, in particular with recruitment, retention and progression issues.

ESG

Want to know more about ESG and how it relates to HR?

Listen here: [Building Back Better: Putting ESG on the Boardroom Agenda](#)

Read more here: [ESG and the Role of HR](#), [People at the Centre: Driving the Value of Human Resources with Purpose](#)

Be Prepared

Brexit

Irrespective of the negotiation outcome, businesses must do all they can to prepare themselves for Brexit.



Catch Up

- [Brexit Stocktake – Where Are We? How Did We Get Here? What Happens Next?](#)
- Are You Ready for the UK's New Points-based Immigration System? [Recording](#) and [Slides](#)
- [The Impact of Brexit on Business Travel and Immigration Between the UK and the EU](#)
- [The UK's New Points-based Immigration System: Home Office Immigration Rules Are Published](#)
- [Why Data May Prove One of the Hardest Parts of Brexit](#)

Read more on the [Brexit hub](#)



Worth a Read

- [EU Settlement Schemes FAQs](#)
- [Brexit Immigration Support](#)

IR35

After being delayed for a year, the off-payroll working rules are finally coming into force in April 2021.



Catch Up

- [Off-payroll Working \(IR35\) in the Private Sector: Preparing for April 2021 – Are You Ready?](#)

New in 2021

Keep an eye out for:

- **Taking the Lead podcast** – Where business leaders share how they are tackling the difficult issues facing their businesses. Our first interview is with Rajiv Sharma, CEO of Coats, who shares his insights on leading its global workforce through the pandemic.
- **Global Edge and Global Employers' Playbook** – Global Edge in 2021 will have much improved functionality, interface and content. Global Employers' Playbook is our brand new compliance tool to help employers build their ESG profile in relation to their workplace policies and practices.
- **Actualité en Droit Social** – Our French team is releasing an app! It is part of the specialist employment law expertise we have to keep you abreast of key French labour law developments, which as we know can get knotty. It will be available for download on Apple in January 2021.

