

The bottom line



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Next month we will be encouraged to embrace a new style of working for the sake of the environment and a more sensible work-life balance.

National Work From Home Day on Friday, May 18, will highlight the advantages to both employers and employees.

It does not come without responsibilities on both sides – whether an employee is home working on a permanent or ad hoc basis.

What are the issues involved? Firstly, employers have a duty to ensure employees' well-being and the company should carry out a risk assessment to identify and minimise any health and safety issues.

For example, someone working long hours on a computer at their kitchen table without adequate rest periods could suffer an injury and you could be held responsible unless you have carried out a proper assessment. If you supply equipment for use at home, it is also your duty to ensure it is safely installed and operated correctly.

If computer-based work is being carried out at home, security is a consideration and it might mean it is inappropriate for employees to use their personal PCs.

Visitors and other people in the home during working hours can potentially lead to breaches of confidentiality. It is vital, therefore, to ensure all home workers are aware of their duty of confidentiality at all times.

You cannot force someone to work from home unless their contract requires it. If, however, you are looking to encourage home working – perhaps to reduce overheads or take on new staff – you should follow a proper negotiation process.

A trial period is recommended as, when contracts are changed, an individual might find it difficult to return to an office. Employees can request the right to work from home and other flexible working options. While employers are under no obligation to agree, there are set ways for responding to applications for flexible working and established criteria relating to the nature of the job – not the individual – for agreeing or declining.

The right to request flexible working extends to parents of young or disabled children and carers. However a good employer should think about extending this right to the entire workforce.

With modern technology, there are few legitimate objections to a request to work from home unless the job requires that the person is based on the premises. Properly managed, a transition to home working can increase productivity, widen the talent pool, help with retention and encourage more mothers to return to work after maternity leave.

However, home workers do need a different approach with regards to performance management and communications.

It is easy for individuals to become isolated when they are not on site unless the situation is properly handled from the outset.

Work placement league table

EVERY month Business publishes a list of employers who are doing the most to help disadvantaged people in Brighton and Hove into gainful employment. The table is compiled by Engage, part of the Business Community Partnership. To get involved contact Claire Mitchell on 01273 774796.

Business / Employer	Engage Organisation(s)	Number of People in Placements	Number of People in Employment
Asda	Business Action on Homelessness	0	1
Aspect Gardens	Careers Development Group	1	0
Brighton and Hove City Council	Brighton and Hove City Council - Work Placements and Apprenticeships	8	0
Future's Training	Careers Development Group	1	0
Impact Initiatives	50+ Training for Work	1	2
Integra Build	Business Action on Homelessness	0	1
Peacehaven Youth Centre	Careers Development Group	1	0
Primark	Working Links in association with Creating Futures	1	0
Sussex Arts Marketing	Careers Development Group	1	0
The Trench Experience	Careers Development Group	1	0

events

WORLD champion hurdler Colin Jackson will present the South East Learning and Skills Awards which take place this week.

The awards, organised by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), celebrate people who have advanced their career prospects through training.

They also reward employers who take a dynamic approach to training and are helping to tackle the skills shortage in the region.

This year, three categories have been added, bringing the total number of awards to 11.

These are the Skills For Life Plus Award, Offenders' Learning And Achievement Award and the Train To Gain Outstanding Learner Award.

Co-hosting the event alongside Colin will be the ITV Meridian news presenter Mary Green. Jackson was a finalist on BBC's Strictly Come Dancing recently but is best known for his sporting achievements.

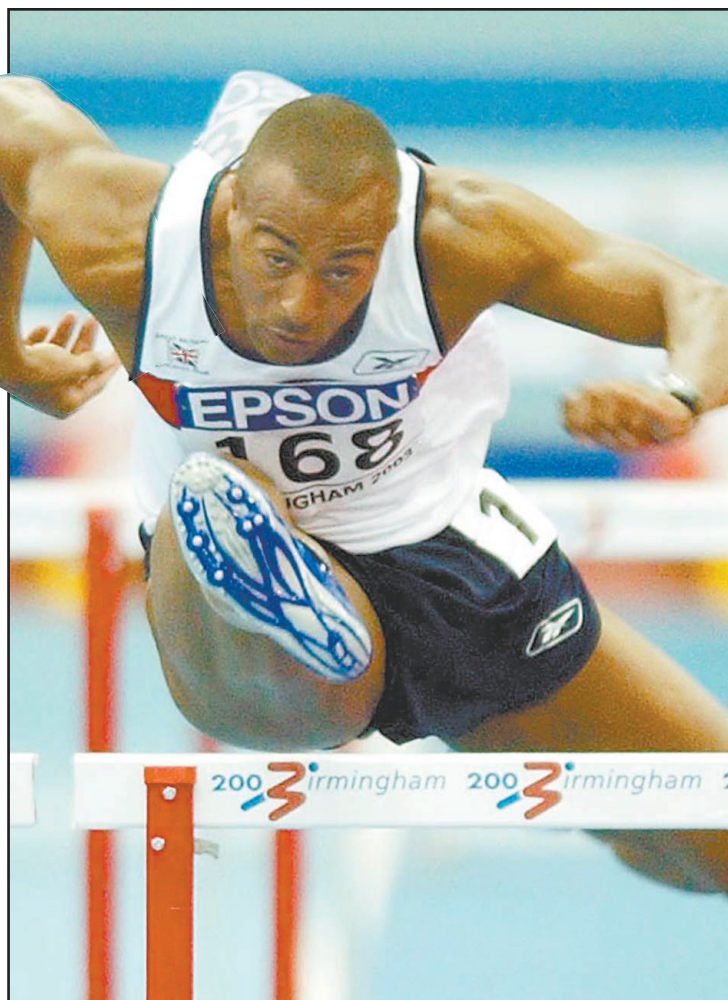
A former world, European and commonwealth 110m hurdles champion, he is one of the most successful British athletes of all time.

Despite retiring from the sport in 2003, he still holds the world record for the indoor 60m hurdles and until 2006, held the outdoor 110m hurdles record which he set at 12.91 seconds 13 years ago.

The awards ceremony is taking place at the Copthorne Effingham Hotel and Resort, Effingham Park, near Gatwick on Thursday.

MARC KOSKA, chief executive of Star Syringe in Pippingford, near Forest Row, will be one of the guest speakers at the launch of this year's Sussex Business Awards (SBAs).

Mr Koska won three gongs at last year's SBAs – business person of the year, innovation in business, and



CHAMPION: Colin Jackson will present the learning and skills awards

international business of the year. He will be joined on stage by Charita Jones, owner of Momma Cherri's restaurant in Little East Street, Brighton, last year's entrepreneur of the year.

She said: "Being named entrepreneur of the year at Sussex

Business Awards 2006/7 has been one of my major highlights since opening the restaurant six years ago. For our hard work to be honoured by other established business people has given us the strength and the inner pride to continue."

Details of categories for the 2007/2008 Awards will be given at the launch event which is free to Sussex-based businesses from all sectors.

Guests will also get the chance to put questions to previous winners and judges.

The launch is at The Grand hotel in Kings Road, Brighton, on Tuesday, May 8, 2007, from 6.30pm. Places are limited. To book, visit

GRAHAM WRIGHT has been appointed senior director of business banking at NatWest for the Brighton, Eastbourne and Hastings area.

Mr Wright, who has worked for the bank for 25 years, will be in charge of 24 business relationship managers working across the patch.

appointments

He said: "I am delighted to be representing NatWest in the small business community and heading up this team of specialist managers."

If you would like your event included on this page, contact James Lancaster at Argus House, Crowhurst Road, Brighton, BN1 8AR, or email james.lancaster@theargus.co.uk

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