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The road to good work

Discussion paper | 2018

The CIPD is the professional body for HR and people development. The not-for-profit organisation champions better work and working lives and has been setting the benchmark for excellence in people and organisation development for more than 100 years. It has more than 145,000 members across the world, provides thought leadership through independent research on the world of work, and offers professional training and accreditation for those working in HR and learning and development.

Discussion paper

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1 Introduction

*'All work should be fair and decent with realistic scope for development and fulfilment.'*¹

Job quality in the UK and how to improve it has long been debated but seldom addressed as a public policy issue. That could be about to change. The CIPD has launched the *UK Working Lives* survey, the first robust measurement of job quality in the UK. After its launch in 2018, the survey will run every year, building a rich data set from its 6,000 respondents on seven aspects of job quality. The findings paint a complex picture of what work looks like in the UK, focusing on pay, health and well-being, the nature of work, and job design.

There have been growing concerns about underlying divides in the labour market over the past decade. These concerns were given added force by the recent spread of some employment practices associated with the rise of the 'gig economy',² which were seen to be undermining the UK's employment rights framework.

In 2016 the Prime Minister initiated an independent review (Taylor 2017), led by Matthew Taylor, on modern working practices, which reported in July 2017. The review contained many specific recommendations that the Government has accepted in principle and is now consulting on how they might be implemented. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) has formally taken responsibility for delivering on the Taylor Review.

Taken together, these recommendations will improve some aspects of job quality for some groups of workers, but they will have no material impact on job quality across the economy. This is because most of the measures will only affect a relatively small proportion of the 20% of the workforce engaged in 'atypical' working practices outside permanent employment.³

However, Taylor went beyond a strict interpretation of his remit and called for policy to address the much wider issue of creating quality jobs for all – his grand aspiration was that policy and practice should ensure that *'all work should be fair and decent with realistic scope for development and fulfilment'* (p. 82). This was not just because it would improve social welfare and ease some of the deep divisions in British society, but because he saw it as central to addressing some of the deep-rooted economic challenges facing the UK.

He argued that better quality jobs would increase participation rates, productivity, and economic performance. In contrast, low-quality jobs either kept people out of the labour market or consigned them to employment that made poor use of their skills and experience, reducing both productivity and well-being. Poor workplace well-being was therefore not only bad for individuals and social welfare in general but imposed major costs on business such as increased absences from work. However, Taylor did not set out in detail how his vision was to be achieved.

From the commission of the Taylor Review, to the Government's commitment to measure job quality in its response, the CIPD has continued to lead the 'good work' agenda, and this policy report is intended as a first contribution to mapping out the road to good work, focusing on policy and practice actions that aim to improve the quality of work for all. In the next section we set out the starting point by looking at some indicators of good work in the UK and how we compare with other major economies.

2 The quality of work today

In this section we review three indicators of work and how it might be changing. First, we look at the structure of employment in the UK and other major European economies over the past 20 years. Second, we look at choice for those in atypical work to see how far they take these jobs out of necessity. Third, we summarise the evidence on the quality of work, drawing on a new and large CIPD survey of employees.

The structure of employment

The popular narrative is that the UK's labour market has moved inexorably towards more 'atypical working' with more poor quality, low-paid and shorter tenure jobs. It has been hollowed out, it is said, with more good-quality jobs matched by many low-paid, poor quality jobs at the bottom, while the mid-wage jobs of the past for skilled manual and clerical workers have shrunk in the face of technology change.

The great symbol of all that is said to be wrong with employment today has been the apparent increase of zero-hours contracts. More recently, the rise of the gig economy, where companies provide digital platforms for the delivery of services, from taxi-driving and delivery to data processing, design, legal and educational services, has caused even more concern.

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Little of this is true. The share of atypical work at around 20% has not changed over the past two decades. Moreover, the share of atypical jobs in the UK is low by international standards, and compares with 23% in Germany, 30% in France, 35% in Italy, and over 40% in Spain. People spend about the same time in a job as they did 20 years ago (Burgess and Rees 1998).⁴ The share of low-paid jobs as defined by the Resolution Foundation (2017) has declined. Moreover, the labour market has not been hollowed out, with the mid-wage jobs of the past replaced by different jobs paying similar wages (Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2013).⁵

Some may argue that the apparent stability is illusory, that the rise of the gig economy and other changes in work now coming through are too new to yet impact on the aggregate numbers. However, the most recent figures suggest that, far from accelerating, the growth of atypical employment has gone into reverse. Over the 12 months from November–January 2018, the economy created over 400,000 jobs, and all of them were for full-time and permanent employees – self-employment and temporary work both contracted. The share of zero-hours jobs has stabilised. If this is the start of a revolution in the nature of employment, it is a very odd one.

A crucial confusion is that some have assumed that new forms of atypical work are replacing full-time, permanent and regular jobs. Instead, the composition of atypical working is changing. For example, the share of the workforce working as self-employed has gone up and the share of the workforce in temporary jobs has gone down. And self-employment is changing, with more people working as freelancers or as part of the gig economy (CIPD 2018c).⁶ Uber's self-employed mini-cab drivers may be replacing other self-employed mini-cab drivers, but they are not reducing employment.

Choice and atypical work

In the current debate, choice is often neglected – those critical of atypical working assume that all people would like a regular, permanent job, but the evidence suggests otherwise. Choice is not fixed and is likely to vary over everyone’s lifetime – what is acceptable to a student may be completely unacceptable to older workers with families to support and both may be different from a worker coming up to retirement.

We have only one statistical measure of choice for atypical work and this shows that just over 30% of temporary workers could not find a permanent job (Office for National Statistics 2018)⁷. This has fallen significantly since 2010 and is close to pre-recession levels. Involuntary working in temporary jobs in the UK as a share of the workforce is about the same as in Germany and much lower than in Sweden, France, Italy or Spain.

For all other forms of atypical work, we must rely on one-off surveys, an extraordinary position given the importance of such work in the policy debate and the fact that nearly seven million people work in these forms of employment if we include zero-hours workers on non-temporary contracts.

The most recent survey on self-employment commissioned by the Department for Business (2016, p. 7) shows 16% said they could not find a job as an employee in the same type of work and in the same area. This is lower than previous surveys by the RSA (2014) and the Resolution Foundation (2014), which covered the recession period, suggesting involuntary working in self-employment has fallen. The CIPD 2017 survey on the gig economy found 14% of gig economy workers were working in this way because they could not get a regular job, but we have no evidence on how this has changed in recent years.

‘Overall, what the available evidence tells us is that the trend over the past decade has been towards less atypical working out of necessity and more out of choice.’

Surveys by the CIPD (2017d, p. 3) and the UKCES (2014) on involuntary working in zero-hours are now a little dated, but in 2013 between 30% and 33% of workers said they were either dissatisfied with having uncertain hours or were working on a zero-hours contract because they could not find a regular job. A more recent TUC survey (2017b) found a higher figure, but the sample is small, and we are cautious about putting too much weight on this finding. It is nonetheless possible that zero-hours work is bucking the trend, though other proxy measures such as discontent with the number of hours of work from the regular ONS survey of zero-hours workers do not seem to have increased.

In the UK, involuntary or atypical working goes up in recessions and falls in recovery periods.⁸ Overall, what the available evidence tells us is that the trend over the past decade has been towards less atypical working out of necessity and more out of choice. This is what we would expect when unemployment falls to low levels and many more regular employee jobs have become available. As far as we are aware, there is little or no direct evidence on how choice about forms of work might change over a person’s lifetime. There is a major evidence gap in this area.

However, even if they are minorities, there are still considerable numbers in self-employment, temporary work, and on zero-hours contracts who would prefer a regular employee job. A good labour market based on maximising good work would want to minimise the incidence of involuntary working and minimise the time people spend in

involuntary working by helping them move to regular employment. Better matching between the form of employment on offer and the form of employment people want should increase both labour market efficiency and social welfare.

However, in some cases we must recognise that promoting choice may not always help us meet wider social and economic objectives. More people choosing labour-only self-employment, for example, is likely to somewhat reduce productivity growth as well as tax revenues (assuming no change in the tax system) while making it more difficult to increase aggregate training effort.

Quality of work

There is a vast amount written on the quality of work, but often studies and surveys use different methodologies and frameworks, so are not comparable. Although Taylor set out a framework within which quality of work might be measured more consistently in the future, the report itself rather surprisingly did not have very much to say about job quality – partly because it would have been a major exercise.

There are also surprisingly few authoritative sources that are both timely and offer consistent data over lengthy periods of time.⁹ One that does is the British Social Attitudes Survey (2016), which shows that between 1989 and 2015 the share of good jobs as defined by the researchers increased, and that it was the young and more surprisingly those described as ‘working class’ who benefited most. The CIPD *Employee Outlook* (2017a) series covers the period from 2009 and found a slight upward trend in job satisfaction through to 2017.

But the BSAS also identified significant groups who lost out, mainly older workers in more routine jobs. The same survey also suggests little overall improvement in job security between 2005 and 2015, with again some groups experiencing a marked decline. There was also an increase in the share reporting stress at work.

So, while the overall position has improved over the past 20 years, there is evidence of greater polarisation between the majority and a significant minority for whom work has become worse. Nor is progress uniform. There are some important indicators where progress appears to have been glacial and others where we have gone backwards. Saying things are not as bad as some people think or that work is no worse than it was 20 years ago is hardly a ringing endorsement of the current situation.

Fortunately, we have some new evidence on the quality of work in Britain in the form of the *CIPD UK Working Lives* survey. The survey of over 6,000 UK workers is the most robust measure of UK job quality ever produced and will run yearly, looking at seven dimensions of job quality. The full report and findings are now publicly available, so they will not be the focus of this report. The next sub-section sets out some key findings and how they fit into our big-picture analysis of how the labour market is changing.

The CIPD’s UK Working Lives survey

The CIPD worked with YouGov to survey over 6,000 employees, looking at different aspects of working lives – one of the biggest quality of work surveys of recent years. As you would expect, quality of work is complex and nuanced – there are few jobs that are perfect in all respects, some jobs are always going to be more limited in some areas than others, and sometimes trade-offs are made. For example, some jobs may not be very secure but offer great opportunities for advancement and creativity at work, while others that are very secure may also be dull and repetitive. Many of the trade-offs between security and flexibility are felt especially acutely in some forms of atypical working.

It was usually assumed that atypical jobs taken by employees, such as temporary and zero-hours contracts, are also bad jobs. We find a much more mixed picture. People in such jobs have much the same enthusiasm and the same work effort as those in regular employment, confirming previous surveys from the UKCES (2014) and the CIPD (2017d). Temporary and zero-hours contract workers are also less likely to report that their work negatively affects their mental or physical health than workers in permanent jobs.

However, they are more likely to want to leave and would like more hours, again consistent with other survey work and the ONS statistics (2018) on zero-hours working. And they are much less likely to report having opportunities to develop their career and skills.

These results, broadly speaking, apply to other forms of atypical work. A Department for Business, Innovation and Skills survey (2016) also found high levels of satisfaction among the self-employed, while the CIPD survey (2017d) found similar levels of job quality for those who worked in the gig economy compared with those in regular employment, with gig economy workers reporting higher levels of flexibility but lower levels of security and more dissatisfaction on hours.

While atypical workers have important concerns about security and uncertainty, this is to some extent an unavoidable aspect of many of these jobs. However, even this is not universal – the survey found that the self-employed on average felt more secure than those in regular work. Part of the current debate is how that risk might be mitigated or compensated for, so that more risk falls on the employer and less on the individual. Fair risk-sharing in employment is a good principle to follow but may be difficult to implement in practice. Some of the proposals to compensate for or reduce individual risk in zero-hours contracts look to us to be unworkable, with potentially undesirable consequences for both employers and individuals that choose to work in this way.

What seems to matter much more than contract type is what sort of job you do. There is a consistent pattern of higher job quality for high-skilled jobs such as managers and professionals and lower job quality for mid- to low-skill jobs held by manual, clerical, sales, hospitality, and care workers. This is not universal, as some high-skill jobs bring their own pressures – for example, many managers are struggling with both workload and work-life balance – but it is nonetheless a broad finding that the less skilled the work, the lower the job quality associated with it.

In many ways this is simply stating the obvious – as we said at the start of this section, some jobs are going to be more limited on job quality by their nature than others. However, there are very few jobs where job quality cannot be improved in some respect. Moreover, we find the difference persists even for aspects of job quality that cannot be plausibly linked to the nature of the job – for example, we find that manual workers have less voice and social support from managers and colleagues. In that sense we have a two-tier workforce when it comes to some aspects of job quality.

A third big finding is that workplace physical and mental well-being matters more than anything else when it comes to key outcomes, such as job satisfaction and day-to-day enthusiasm for the job. In that sense, it is at the heart of job quality. And the most effective way of improving health and well-being at work is to improve social relationships and support from line managers and colleagues. More surprisingly, we find that improving voice and job autonomy, while positive, are much less effective. This finding is encouraging, as improving line management relationships and a more supportive work environment is much less likely to be limited by the nature of the job. And it is something that applies across all skill levels, as in some areas we find middle managers reporting worse outcomes than either more senior managers or manual workers.

3 Why we need a quality of work strategy

At the start of this policy report we noted the arguments set out in the Taylor Review for why a quality of work strategy would help meet some key economic and social challenges. However, it is important not to give the impression that quality of work is a silver bullet, the long-lost solution to deep-seated problems. What a well-thought-out quality of work strategy can do is over time complement and extend the reach and effectiveness of other policy levers and help organisations achieve wider goals.

Productivity

The global slump in productivity post-2008 hit the UK especially hard, with productivity growth since then close to zero. Recent figures and forecasts may, at last, herald some recovery, but few think we will return to pre-crash growth rates anytime soon. Some of the slowdown is tied to the financial nature of the crash, and in the case of the UK the uncertainty created by Brexit. Both have held back business investment. These factors will, however, eventually work themselves out.

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But there also seem to be underlying structural issues that were slowing productivity before the crash which have caused a fall in the rate of innovation. The OECD (2017) think that one reason is that many organisations have not followed the early adopters of the new digital technologies and many of those that have are struggling to get significant productivity gains.

This is partly because the changes required can be daunting, and in an age of macro-economic uncertainty and public austerity, it is not surprising many organisations stick with the tried and tested. But it is also likely that longer-term issues such as management and workforce quality, the underutilisation of skills, and the way new technologies are deployed as well as the way workforces use new technology are coming home to roost.

There is also a yawning gap between how productivity is perceived by managers and employees in the workplace and by economists and policy-makers. The latter think in terms of GDP per hour worked, but most managers conflate productivity with general measures of business performance and tend to overstate their relative performance (CIPD, 2015). If most managers think they do better than the average, many will think productivity is someone else’s problem. Similarly, there is evidence that most workers equate productivity with working harder and, while receptive to new technology, do not think it will result in better wages or improved working conditions (The Smith Institute, 2016).

There are two important ways in which a quality of work strategy can help address some of these challenges. First, it can help address some of the underlying workplace issues that have contributed to the slowdown in the rate of innovation. Second, while efforts to equip managers with the right measures and tools to give them a better idea of actual productivity performance in their organisation must continue, a complementary focus on work quality could be even more effective as more organisations will already be comfortable with both the concept and the practice.

There is a significant body of evidence that suggests greater uptake of progressive people management (high-performance working) practices that increase employee participation and involvement in decision-making can both enhance job quality and boost firm performance. For example, the presence of these practices is positively associated with profits, sales and profitability, while employees report higher job satisfaction, motivation, involvement and commitment and greater opportunities for innovation and creativity, alongside lower staff turnover (Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2012).

Technology

We share Taylor's view that technology can and should be used progressively to enhance work quality – indeed, it may be hard to secure significant improvements in some areas without some additional investment. Some forms of flexible working, such as working occasionally at home, have been boosted by the development of relatively cheap, secure and reliable technological links between home and office.

However, technologies can also go in the opposite direction, increasing control and reducing autonomy and discretion at work, with the risk of 'deskilling' certain jobs and increasing the pace of work for others. People sometimes refer to the 'always on' society, where employees can be contacted online at any time or feel obligated to check emails outside working hours. New technology has also enabled the development of new forms of working that raise important issues about fairness and the worker–employer relationship, such as the 'gig economy', which formed the major focus of the Taylor Review.

The advent and introduction of new technologies almost always eliminate some jobs and, for some of those who lose out, their employment prospects are too often bleak. However it is important to note that technologies can also boost employment and skills, and debate is wide-ranging about how this trend will continue moving forward. One thing is clear that improving how we handle the disruptive impacts of new technologies on workforces in the future, at both workplace level and through public policy initiatives, presents a key challenge.

'The advent and introduction of new technologies almost always eliminate some jobs and, for some of those who lose out, their employment prospects are too often bleak.'

But new technologies almost always eliminate some jobs and, for some of those who lose out, their employment prospects are too often bleak. Improving how we handle the disruptive impacts of new technologies on workforces in the future at both workplace level and through public policy initiatives is a key challenge.

As we noted above, a quality of work strategy can help address the slowdown in workplace technological innovation by promoting the positive side of new technologies in helping employees do their jobs better without working harder. But it can also make work better for employees by making jobs more interesting and challenging, allowing people to learn new skills and thereby progress, and opening up more flexible options for how work is organised. The CIPD is commissioning a major survey of employers on why and how they are using new technologies and what complementary changes are required in the workforce to gain new insights in this area.

Low pay and wage inequality

As we noted in the introduction, the share of low-pay jobs in the UK is falling. The latest estimates from the Resolution Foundation (2017) show that the share of low-paid workers had dropped to 19% in April 2016 from previous highs of 23% and is projected to fall to just

over 16% by 2020 – a share last seen in the late 1970s and early 1980s¹⁰. Income inequality has also fallen in recent years, driven by greater equality in the bottom half of the labour market, though it is still high by OECD standards. Much of this progression can be attributed to recent substantial increases in the National Minimum Wage (NMW), which so far does not appear to have had significant adverse labour market impacts on workers in minimum wage jobs or the low-pay industries. However, continuing to increase the NMW at a similar rate in the future would be very risky, not least because of the impact on differentials in low-pay industries, and we are probably close to the limit of what can be achieved through increasing wage floors alone. To make further sustainable progress, much more must be done to improve progression for low-wage workers and address productivity across the low-wage industries. And as the *UK Working Lives* survey (2018e) shows, on many dimensions it is people in less-well-paid lower-skill jobs who tend to have the worst job quality outcomes, and this cannot be adequately explained simply by the nature of the work they do.

A quality of work strategy therefore needs to prioritise improving the lot of workers in the bottom half of the labour market. That does not mean that we should ignore ways of improving work quality for those in the top half of the labour market – the mantra of fair and decent jobs for all holds as true for those in higher-skill work. But in terms of areas with the biggest potential for improvement, it lies with lower-skill workers.

Inclusion

An equally acute challenge is how to make work more inclusive, reduce discrimination and create more opportunities for people in under-represented or disadvantaged groups in the labour market. Research shows that people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds still face significant employment pay penalties in the labour market (Trades Union Congress (TUC) 2017a), women face ongoing and systemic discrimination from many employers in relation to their pregnancy and maternity rights (Department for Business Innovation and Skills; Equality and Human Rights Commission 2015), and far too few people with disabilities can access and stay in work. For example, the Government's *Improving Lives* Green Paper (2016) showed that just 8% of employers had recruited someone with a disability over the previous 12 months. There are many other groups with protected characteristics that still face outdated attitudes and outright discrimination in the workplace, despite the introduction of equality legislation.

4 Creating a good work strategy

Good work at the heart of the industrial strategy

In this section we set out the most effective way a good work strategy should be developed as an integral part of the Government's industrial strategy, building on and strengthening existing policy levers and good business practice and, where appropriate, suggesting how these levers might be improved and new targeted initiatives introduced.

The high-road industrial strategy

The industrial strategy commits the UK to a 'high road' identified 15 years ago by Michael Porter (2003), which emphasised the importance of government setting an overarching policy consensus on the direction of travel for the economy to help underpin reform in the public sector and to encourage more companies in the private sector to choose to '*upgrade their strategies and invest in the business environment*'. Successive UK governments have failed to do this, meaning there has been confusion and often tension in policy-making over whether the UK does in fact take a 'high road' or 'low road' model of competitive advantage.

The ‘high road’ refers to a model where skilled workers deliver sophisticated, high-specification goods and services that are sold because of their quality rather than their price, and where firms come to the UK because this is our model. The alternative is a ‘low road’ model of competitive advantage, wherein a disposable workforce produces relatively standardised goods and services that are primarily sold based on low price, and where firms come to the UK because it is a cheap place to do business. The low road is not compatible with a credible commitment to improve the quality of work for all.

The quality of work strategy therefore needs to be embedded within the Government’s industrial strategy. As we have argued, encouraging better work quality will reinforce efforts to improve workplace productivity, which must remain the central aim of the industrial strategy. Moreover, many of the policy levers that are integral to the industrial strategy are also those that can improve work quality through a strong focus on the workplace and successful engagement with employers and other stakeholders at both the sectoral and organisational levels.

Management matters

There is strong evidence to suggest that improving management capability in particular should be a key objective of a good work strategy. Management matters both for organisational performance and the performance of individuals and their experience of work. A recent review of the evidence (Bevan et al 2018) shows there to be a link between the quality of management and productivity – a point reflected in a speech (2017) by Andy Haldane, Chief Economist at the Bank of England, which pointed out that significant returns could be achieved by closing the gap between best managerial practice and the rest. This could be especially critical in some family-owned firms, where on average productivity performance is weaker than in comparable non-family-owned enterprises.

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A BIS research paper (2012) showed that high-performance working practices have also been shown to have a positive impact on productivity through the introduction of measures that promote better workforce engagement and use of skills. And the introduction of these measures critically depends on management capability and knowledge – managers cannot implement something they are unaware of and many SMEs appear to be unaware of the concept and the potential benefits.

Influential government-commissioned reviews of the health of the working-age population (Black 2008) and employee engagement (Clarke and MacLeod 2009) also contain a significant weight of research highlighting the importance of good quality leadership and people management and development practices, flexible working and employee voice to employee engagement and well-being, as well as links to positive business outcomes. Other research indicates that the uptake of such progressive workplace practices is important in helping to increase social inclusion (Social Mobility Commission 2016) and are key to the UK meeting the challenges it faces because of its ageing workforce (Department for Work and Pensions; Government Social Research 2017).

Management matters for the performance and well-being of workers, with the role of line managers especially important. Significant previous research suggests that the line manager is key to job quality. Line manager behaviour is central to the development of positive employment relationships based on trust and mutual respect (CIPD 2018d),

managing and preventing conflict and stress (Health and Safety Executive 2007), and in supporting people's development and progression (Crawshaw and Game 2015).

Faced with the demands of improving work quality, however, it is likely that most managers will be faced with several choices of what works and what is most likely to deliver. That judgement will always vary with the workplace across different sectors and will be shaped by external factors such as market competitiveness and internal constraints such as whether a high-quality business strategy has been adopted and whether a training culture exists.

But the *UK Working Lives* survey (2018e), summarised earlier, suggests that on average the strongest link – the biggest bangs for the buck – on better worker performance and engagement may lie in improving physical and mental well-being. It is, however, very important that this is seen as part of a broader approach to improving work quality – for example, it is hard to imagine that this could be delivered without improvements in worker voice. Better physical and mental well-being will require action across several fronts well beyond specific workplace health policies.

Evidencing why improving management capability in the UK is important is relatively straightforward; however, identifying the means to actually do this is much harder. Nonetheless, there are measures that could be adopted as part of a high-road industrial strategy that over time could create the marginal gains in management capability that would improve both job quality and organisation performance.

These measures will also help ensure that policies, which historically have had more of a supply-side focus – such as expanding the number of apprenticeships – also create demand for more and better trained skilled workers. We set out below how these different components of the industrial strategy can help deliver good work.

Sector deals

We have strongly welcomed the Government's commitment to support 'sector deals' between the Government, employers and others across a wide range of industries, and not just the high-tech sectors. It is especially important that these deals be encouraged in low-pay industries and sectors such as retail, hospitality and social care, as these industries account for a very large number of jobs, many of which, while valuable in their own right, are lower skill and lower pay. And, as our research has shown, it is in such jobs where some of the biggest opportunities to improve job quality are. Improving pay, progression and productivity across these sectors would make a major contribution to improving job quality across the economy.

From this approach, we would like to see all sector deals develop proposals for employers and government that would improve the quality of work in their sector, taking account of different circumstances and context. Individual sectors can lead action across both large employers and SMEs through the supply chain to improve the quality of leadership and management and increase investment in skills. The extent and nature of the challenge will also vary depending on the composition of the workforce.

Engaging with employers and stakeholders

The quality of work strategy (and the industrial strategy more broadly) can only work if enough businesses engage. Recent governments have already taken steps to improve the quality of UK management and work through collaborations with businesses, employers' groups and professional institutes. For example, the Engage for Success movement, which was initiated under the last Labour Government and supported by the Coalition Government between 2010 and 2015, continues to highlight the management drivers

of a more engaged, satisfied and healthy workforce. More recently, the Government has invested £13 million to establish the Be the Business initiative, which aims to inform, educate and collaborate with businesses to increase the number of well-run UK organisations. An important part of its work is to address the information gap on productivity we highlighted earlier in this report.

These are all welcome steps, but past governments have traditionally been reluctant to develop more ambitious policies in this area, with policy-makers arguing, first, that improving the quality of leadership and people management and development is primarily down to employers and, second, that devising the right policy interventions to improve workplace practices is difficult.

Both views have some truth in them. Individual organisations and professional and employer bodies such as the CBI, the CIPD, the EEF, the FSB and the BCC must continue to lead and take responsibility for investing in and improving management practice. These organisations can, together, through their communication channels, events, training programmes and professional qualifications, support improvements in management quality. Bodies such as Acas are developing strong roles in advising on progressive workplace change, including recently a set of tools to help managers and trade unions improve workplace productivity. Trade unions have been strong advocates of employer voice and many have invested in the training and further education of their members through the TUC Education Service.

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We think it is time for the Government to take a stronger lead in bringing these different organisations together on a regular basis to help develop a modern, effective and sustainable quality of work strategy based on what works. Even the agreement of key joint messages and cross-body working on new initiatives could significantly amplify the impact of individual organisations. The Government has already made one welcome initiative to promote employer–trade-union–government working by convening the CBI–TUC summit to advance investment in workplace training. It has also set up a cross-government Flexible Working Task Group co-chaired by the CIPD and involving other key stakeholders including the CBI, the FSB, and the TUC that is designed to help increase the provision and uptake of flexible working practices.

However, improved government engagement with employer bodies, professional institutes and the trade unions, while important, will only impact a relatively small proportion of employers overall. Most of the UK’s 1.3 million firms that employ people (Department for Business Innovation and Skills; National Statistics 2015) are not members of professional bodies, business networks or supply chains, and history tells us that too many employers left to their own devices don’t have the capacity or ambition to raise their management game.

Business support services for small firms

One of the major challenges in increasing the amount of good work in the economy is improving the people management capability of small and medium-sized firms, responsible for about 60% of private sector employment (Department for Business Innovation and Skills; National Statistics 2015). However, this is not easy to achieve because too often firms of this size don’t have the knowledge, resources or time to improve their people management capability.

Most owner-managers of small firms have little if any experience of managing people and will have little expertise to draw on. Small firms are less likely to have formal HR policies in place and will typically only employ an HR professional once they employ between 80 and 100 employees (CIPD 2017b).

Evidence suggests this matters. For example, a recent report by the Equality and Human Rights Commission found small employers had more negative attitudes towards pregnancy and maternity rights (2018). SME firms are far more likely overall to face a claim at employment tribunal than larger organisations (Acas, 2008). Analysis by the Bank of England also suggests the UK is unlikely to tackle its productivity challenge unless more is done to help small firms, as there is a larger, longer tail of small firms with low or even negative levels of productivity growth.

To explore how to improve small firm people management capability, the CIPD, in association with JP Morgan Chase Foundation, designed and implemented an HR business support service in three pilot schemes in Hackney, east London, Stoke on Trent and Glasgow. The pilots, which ran between July 2015 and September 2016, were positively evaluated, highlighting the value of this type of support to small firms (2017b). The evaluation found that the level of HR support small firms require is typically very basic, showing the often very low level of people management capability that exists among owner-managers. Nonetheless, the results suggest that ‘getting the people management basics right’ is highly valued and provides a key foundation for further development (and greater confidence). For example, owner-managers surveyed were more likely to report their organisation is better or much better than similar firms in their sector on measures of workplace relations, labour productivity and financial performance after using the People Skills service than they were prior to using it. These benefits also came through in the in-depth qualitative interviews with owner-managers.

However, the existing quality of support for small firms is inadequate. A BEIS Select Committee report (2017) on industrial strategy highlighted significant shortcomings in the available support for SMEs at a local level. It noted that the *‘Growth Hub network, which provides a gateway and advice service to many businesses seeking support is providing a patchy service’* and that *‘there is a need to set a clear national direction and provide stronger support’* (p. 42).

The CIPD believes there is a strong case to improve the quality of advice and support available to small firms at a local level, particularly to help them improve their people management capability. Rolling out a People Skills type support service across all the Local Enterprise Partnerships in England would take an investment of £13 million a year, including evaluation costs, which we believe is extremely good value for money given its potential in helping to boost SME people management capability, job quality and productivity growth.

Corporate governance

Another means of helping improve the quality of work and sustainable business performance is through encouraging a much greater focus by organisations on the workforce in their approach to corporate governance.

Numerous examples of corporate governance disasters suggest organisations will not perform over the long term unless decisions taken at board and executive management level are informed by an in-depth understanding of the value of the workforce and the risks associated with poor management of people.

For example, Sports Direct's reputation and share price have suffered as a result of poor management of its temporary workforce (Business, Innovation and Skills Committee, 2016), while the BP Deepwater Horizon disaster was partly down to people management failings and inadequate training for key personnel (National Academy of Engineering; National Research Council, 2010). There are many other examples of corporate governance scandals, including various banking scandals, patient care failings in the NHS and phone hacking in the media sector, where a failure to develop or live up to organisational values and poor leadership and people management have been the root causes.

People are at the very heart of every business and an increasing proportion of value in organisations is represented by intangible assets such as human capital: the skills, knowledge and motivation of the workforce (CIPD 2015a). However, research (CIPD [2016]) and (PLSA [2015]) shows that the quantity and quality of human capital management (HCM) reporting and analysis, both in terms of information that is used to inform management decision-making and the information that is reported externally, is typically inadequate. For example, CIPD research has shown that investors are increasingly interested in workforce insights, particularly concepts such as 'management quality' (2017c, p. 10). However, such information is difficult if not impossible to understand in contemporary corporate disclosures.

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HCM information is key to businesses identifying which human capital investments will drive long-term value for different stakeholders, including their employees, as well as managing risks to staff and the business linked to the poor management of people.

For example, data on the demographic profile of the workforce at different levels, investment in training and development, staff absence, and well-being, job satisfaction and engagement as well as on recruitment and turnover costs can provide key insights on the quality of people's experience at work and the underlying health of an organisation.

The importance of this type of information was highlighted in the Financial Reporting Council's report on corporate culture (2016), which explored how organisations can create cultures that ensure employees have effective voice and can speak out on their concerns and support sustainable performance.

Insights from this report helped inform the redrafting of the UK Corporate Governance Code to include a greater focus on organisational culture and employee voice, meaning that company boards will need to invest more time and thought on strategic workforce issues than ever before. The consultation on the draft code has recently closed, and providing its provisions are not watered down, the new code should prove a significant step forward in recognising the value of the workforce and the need for employee voice to be heard at board level.

Nonetheless, there is more that could be done by policy-makers to increase transparency over how organisations recruit, manage and develop their employees to support greater investment in people through initiatives to improve the quality of human capital reporting.

For example, the Government could set voluntary human capital reporting standards and work with key stakeholders to encourage more publicly listed companies to provide better information on how they invest in, lead and manage their workforce for the long term. Similar requirements could be made for the reporting of public sector organisations.

Improving access to training, development and lifelong learning

The rapid technological advances affecting the workplace, coupled with our ageing working population, means there is an urgent need to improve opportunities for people to invest in skills and learning at different stages of their working lives. Developing the knowledge and competencies needed to succeed in the labour market begins at school and extends throughout an individual's working life. However, skills policy to date has largely been focused on the education system, rather than the workplace, as it is here where most policy levers arguably lie. Yet, the vast majority of the 2030 workforce are already in work, and will be untouched by the current round of educational reforms. If we are to meet the huge challenges of rapid technological change, an ageing workforce, and increasingly complex organisational structures, the ability to upskill and reskill our workforces needs a much stronger focus.

Despite the importance of upskilling and reskilling, evidence suggests that employers in the UK are training less and investing less in their workforce than they were 20 years ago. There has been a collapse in off-the-job training – which tends to be of a longer duration and of a higher quality than training on the job – which has fallen by almost 20% over the last two decades. And when looking at data on training volume – that is the number of hours of training per week per employee – the picture is even worse, revealing a startling cut of over 40%. And this is backed up when we look at how much employers in the UK are spending on training – with a real terms cut of either 15% or 30% over the last decade depending on the source you use (Green et al 2013).

The Government has recognised the challenge of falling investment in workplace training, and in response launched the apprenticeship levy in 2017 as a means to help tackle the decline. Yet, evidence to date suggests that the levy, with its only focus on apprenticeships, is far too narrow and inflexible a measure to support enhanced employer investment in skills across the economy. Moreover, since its introduction it has failed to boost the number of apprenticeships, with the number of starts falling sharply since its introduction, while CIPD research finds that it is leading to significant rebranding of existing training and in some organisations is resulting in investment being taken away from other forms of training (2018a).

There is significant employer support for the levy to be reframed as a more flexible training levy (CIPD 2018a), which would mean that it would be much more responsive to employers' skills development needs. In addition, the training levy could be reconfigured to cover a much broader range of organisations, as suggested by the IPPR (2017), whereby all businesses with more than 50 employees would contribute, with larger businesses contributing more to the pot. Such a levy would be much more likely to reverse the decline in workplace training in the UK, which was the original stated purpose of the apprenticeship levy.

Many of the policies and levers to raise the demand for, and use of, skills lie outside of traditional skills policy and are dealt with in other areas of this report, and include, for instance, mechanisms to improve leadership and management capability and business support to help firms take the 'high road' to competitiveness. If more businesses chose to adopt a 'high road' model, improving the skills of their workforce will be a critical element of facilitating this.

However, there is still a pressing need to improve the quality and availability of skills and training opportunities. Consequently, longer term, there is a need for policy-makers to consider the education and skills system in the whole, and particularly the significant imbalance in investment between higher education and further and vocational education.

Regulation and enforcement

We endorse the approach set out in the Taylor Review that *‘the best way to achieve better work is not national regulation but responsible corporate governance, good management and strong employment relationships’* (2017, p. 111). The focus of our response is therefore on making sure that both employers and workers know their rights and responsibilities and that there is effective enforcement in the workplace. A strategy designed to boost job quality by encouraging better people management in organisations needs to be underpinned by effective labour market regulation to ensure people’s basic employment rights are protected.

There needs to be an effective balance to ensure that the employment rights framework supports employment growth through providing sufficient flexibility for employers and adequate protections for individuals. Overall, the UK labour market strikes this balance well. The UK has maintained relatively low levels of employment protection since the 1970s. It has also been unusual in applying the same basic protections across different forms of employment, so has avoided creating artificial barriers between full- and part-time work and permanent and temporary work. The latter has been important in discouraging excessive growth in temporary jobs. It is, however, misleading to describe it as ‘deregulated’: in other areas, such as anti-discrimination legislation, minimum wages and pension provision, regulation has increased over time. As we showed earlier, this approach of flexibility, regulation where necessary and targeted intervention has been combined with high levels of regular and permanent employment and relatively high levels of good quality employment.

‘There needs to be an effective balance to ensure that the employment rights framework supports employment growth through providing sufficient flexibility for employers and adequate protections for individuals.’

Nonetheless, people in atypical employment should have greater clarity over their employment rights and status, which was a key focus of the recent Taylor Review and which the Government is currently consulting on.

Looking further ahead, the CIPD believes it is important that attempts to significantly water down or tighten UK employment regulation because of Brexit or a change of government are resisted if the UK is to remain a flexible and attractive place to do business and provide safe, well-managed workplaces. However, there remains significant scope for improving the quality and impact of the existing regulatory framework affecting UK workplaces.

For example, the CIPD has called for the Government to support a high-profile and targeted ‘Know Your Rights’ campaign with other key stakeholders, including Citizens’ Advice, Acas, employer and professional bodies and trade unions, to ensure there is greater awareness of the existing employment rights framework on the part of both companies and individuals, and that people know how to complain and seek redress if they believe their rights are being abused.

Enforcement

Adequate resources and enhanced co-ordination

Labour market regulation is only of any use if it is underpinned by effective enforcement. It is crucial that the new Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA) is given sufficient resources so it has the scope to meaningfully monitor and proactively enforce compliance with existing employment rights across the economy where there are abuses.

There also needs to be better co-ordination across the three main bodies responsible for labour market enforcement, including the GLAA, HM Revenue and Customs and the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate to ensure that their agencies are sharing information to improve their ability to act against bad employers. We note the strategic priorities of the introductory report of the new director for labour market enforcement to create a single intelligence hub and have strategic oversight of the different enforcement agencies (HM Government 2017). Longer term, there may be a case for the creation of a single labour market inspectorate in the UK to further improve enforcement in the UK.

Enforcement of work-related stress risk assessments

The Health and Safety Executive can also play a stronger role in improving people management practice and job quality, particularly given the evidence in the CIPD's *Working Lives* survey (2018e) that overwork and stress are significant problems for many people.

Under health and safety law,¹¹ all employers have a legal duty to conduct a stress risk assessment to identify and, where necessary, act to prevent and reduce the risk of work-related stress.

The Health and Safety Executive recommends that employers meet this obligation through using its Management Standards, which identify the main causes of stress as demand, control, support, roles, relationships and change, and sets out a step-by-step process for employers on how to act.

However, despite this legal duty to identify and manage work-related stress, forthcoming CIPD research (2018b) finds that many employers are not doing this on a regular basis and the HSE does not currently actively enforce this duty.

The CIPD believes the HSE needs to be given more resources to support its efforts to encourage more employers to meet their legal duty and ultimately to take enforcement action where this does not happen.

More power for employment tribunals

The CIPD believes there is also a significant argument for reinstating the power for employment tribunals to make wider recommendations to employers, for example to improve their people management and development practices. Too many organisations, particularly small firms, fall foul of the law by accident, through ignorance or a lack of management capacity or capability. Giving employment tribunals the power to make such wider recommendations would ensure employers are required to improve their people management capability, which should prevent problems related to unfair or discriminatory treatment, for example, from reoccurring.

Key role for Acas

Acas already works closely with the enforcement bodies and their aim to support good working relations between employers and workers. Nonetheless, the CIPD believes there is a strong case to increase the resources available to Acas, so it can work proactively

with organisations to improve their working practices if they are in danger of falling foul of the law through a lack of resources, ignorance or avoidance. This would also allow GLAA and HSE inspectors to refer organisations to Acas to work with them to improve working practices, which in many cases will provide a more balanced and proportionate enforcement approach than a punitive enforcement approach alone.

5 Endnotes

- ¹ This is the single overriding ambition of the Taylor Review Of Modern Working Practices (2017; p. 6)
- ² Defined as all those who obtain work through a digital platform to deliver services such as taxi-driving, delivery, data processing and other administrative tasks, and services such as design, legal, and educational.
- ³ Defined as all those in self-employment, temporary work, family work, or on government schemes that involved some work in the week of the survey. This gives a figure of 20%. We might add roughly 2 percentage points to allow for all zero-hours workers, who are likely to be on some form of permanent contract.
- ⁴ Research by Simon Burgess suggests there has been no long-term change comparing the 1970s and 1990s.
- ⁵ Examples include managers and associate professionals in low-pay industries such as retail, hospitality and social care.
- ⁶ We use the most common proxy, which is all labour-only self-employed in the top three occupational groups. Freelancers can also be in the gig economy but in practice the overlap does not appear to be great.
- ⁷ The ONS also asks part-time workers a similar question, and in November–January 2018, about 12% said they were in part-time employment because they could not find a full-time job.
- ⁸ This seems to be different in more rigid labour markets in southern Europe, where temporary involuntary working remains high even when unemployment falls.
- ⁹ The latest edition of the authoritative Workplace Employment Relations Survey (WERS) is now seven years old and, sadly, there seem to be no plans to carry out another survey.
- ¹⁰ Low pay is defined as less than two-thirds of the median hourly wage.
- ¹¹ Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1976 and Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

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Incorporated by Royal Charter
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Issued: April 2018 Reference: 7667 © CIPD 2018

