



# information sheet

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## Well-Being Strategies for Christmas and New Year

This information sheet seeks to present strategies for legal practitioners to ensure their well-being over what can be an extremely challenging time of year for many. Christmas and New Year is a time that is mostly associated with eating, drinking and making merry. However, it is also a period that can be intensely isolating for some, and deeply stressful in terms of e.g. looming lists of tight deadlines. The post-New Year glow can also be challenging, including 'blue Monday'. Blue Monday is the third Monday in January, and as it is near solstice, it is a time of extremely short days, long nights and so it is important to be prepared for this.

### Background

For many lawyers, this is a time of year in which to 'front-load' your efforts to ensure that cases have progressed appropriately with a long list of deadlines to be met before the festive period starts. This year may be particularly difficult, with the impending Immigration Health Surcharge rise, which many clients may want to avoid by submitting applications soon; and the new [UK Visa and Citizenship Application Services \(UKVCAS\) managed by Sopra Steria, who are not yet running smoothly and creating a great deal of anxiety and uncertainty amongst clients and immigration practitioners.](#)

This is also a time in which people can feel at their loneliest, for example because they are estranged from their families, or cannot take time off work to visit their families. Some of our clients who cannot travel, because their applications are pending, because they have refugee status, or because they have no status at all, may also make us feel guilty for being able to have a merry time with our own families and friends.

Alongside this, for those who are affected by Seasonal Affective Disorder ('SAD'), this time of year, near the Winter Solstice, will prove to be a deeply challenging time.

This is therefore a time to ensure that the multiple pressures of work, the demands placed on people to attend work socials and the demands of family are not becoming too much. There is a great benefit to employers in ensuring that these pressures do not become too much for employees too. Aside from the many benefits that accrue

from having a happy, balanced and fulfilled workforce, it is important to combat the culture of 'presenteeism'. In short, workers who have long burned out, and continue to come to work, despite feeling chronic stress will not perform to the best of their abilities. However, some simple strategies can help to alleviate the more pernicious effects of stress in the workplace.

## Strategies

It is the cliché that people use this time of year to over-indulge in rich foods, thus making resolutions to improve their physical fitness in the New Year. However, well-being is not a purely physical concern. For all of the reasons above, at this time of year, it is terribly important to think about our mental well-being, and remember the impact of social interactions in ensuring our mental well-being.

There are many ways to ensure that well-being is promoted within the workplace. Whether this is done through formalised systems, such as setting an hour aside in part of the workplace for 'tea and chat' to help build bonds of solidarity, or through informal methods such as regular breaks for employees. Ultimately, the failure to promote well-being in workplaces will end up costing employers money in lost productivity.

Therefore, alongside any resolutions that are made to do with your physical fitness, we urge you to make a resolution that you will also take an hour out to build bonds and reaffirm community based solutions within your workplace.

Alongside this, employers can also take very simple steps to support staff such as through providing SAD lamps for those who are affected by SAD, by providing time for regular breaks away from desks and screens and/or through building work community groups to support one another.

## Resources

During this challenging period, there are also many resources that can help those in need. Some of these resources include:

- [LawCare](#) Ltd run a support line for lawyers, which runs from 10am-4pm on weekends and Bank Holidays, or 9am-7:30pm on all other days. Their helpline number is 0800 279 6888
- The Bar Council runs a "Wellbeing at the Bar" programme to help barristers with their wellbeing.
- [Samaritans](#) run a helpline and offer many resources for wellbeing, including in tackling loneliness over the Christmas period. Their helpline is open 24 hours, and you can call them on 116 123 or email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)
- Mind also run a helpline and offer a host of wellbeing resources. Their Christmas opening hours are available on their [website](#).
- The Devon and Somerset Law Society have published an [article](#) on ways to reach out to those in need over Christmas.