



HR Broadcast – Personnel Records

When giving advice and talking with clients I often advise, “please keep a record in the employee’s personnel file”. The other day a client responded to me by asking what I meant by a “personnel file” and what should be contained within the “personnel file”. These questions may seem basic but I had to stop and think before I responded.

First of all, a personnel file may be a paper file or it can be electronic. Most people tend to keep a paper file, but for one company where I was engaged to “set-up” an HR Department I used an electronic filing system with all documents being linked through an excel spreadsheet. Some businesses have purchased quite sophisticated HR software which creates electronic filing systems – some of these are very good but can be quite expensive. Whatever the system, each employee should have their own file.

When I audit HR records for clients to check for legal compliance I am looking for the file to demonstrate the employment cycle, therefore I would normally expect to see a front page summary or header sheet showing;

- Personal details; a summary of details such as, name, address, contact details, next of kin details, date of birth, salary details, etc
- Work details; a summary of details such as, N.I., disciplinary record, training record, absence, etc

I would then expect to see documents relating to the following;

- CV and application
- Job offer letter

- References
- Right to work checks
- Induction notes
- Employment contract
- Contract variations
- Completed performance management reviews
- Holiday requests
- Sickness absent records
- Other absences – flexible working requests, requests for sabbaticals, maternity leave, etc
- Grievance & Disciplinary records
- Training records, including all health & safety training
- Etc, etc

Be aware that the file may start to get quite thick!

Data Protection Act

Please be aware that you must constantly review what is in the personnel file as under the DPA act, it must contain information that is relevant, adequate and not excessive. Therefore information should not be kept that is no longer necessary; an example would be disciplinary papers when the expiry date has been reached.