

# IAB UPDATE

## A message from Malcolm Trotter, IAB Chief Executive



SUMMER MAY BE on the wane here in the UK, but the economy is growing more consistently along with business confidence, as reported on in an item on Page 8.

Also in this issue we focus on pensions auto enrolment (AE), with a related item regarding professional indemnity insurance for bookkeepers and accounting professionals supporting clients with their administration and compliance with AE requirements. I am conscious that it may appear to some that we are overplaying AE by frequently and consistently reporting on it and regularly providing AE information and various CPD events, etc, for IAB members. However, we anticipated two years ago that increasingly, as more and more micro and small businesses reach their AE 'Staging' dates, their trusted external or employed bookkeepers (particularly those

who operate the Payroll for employers) would be looked to to assist those firms to meet their AE obligations (other than providing financial advice regarding pensions). Judging by the take-up of recent IAB webinars about AE, there is now a rapidly growing interest and need among members to get to grips with AE and how best to support and meet the needs of their clients in this regard.

Don't miss the reminder regarding the upcoming IAB Seminars for Members, which afford great opportunities for your career development (see page 7).

Finally, look out for your 2015 Membership Renewal letter which should be with you in early October. I look forward to your continued involvement in the Association – perhaps you might be a candidate for IAB Council (see below)?

With all good wishes,

**Malcolm Trotter, IAB Chief Executive**

## Do you have what it takes to become a Council Member?

THE IAB IS PLEASED to announce there is a new, more supportive process for those professional members who may be thinking about joining the IAB Council. The new informative process will be applied for those seeking to stand at the Council Elections at the AGM in June 2015. Under the new application process, members will be invited to attend a meeting with an Appointments Committee, where they will be able to quiz current members of Council and the IAB Executive about what is like to be a Council member and what the role entails. We would encourage you to read the information below from current Council members on how they have gained in confidence and knowledge through being on the Council.

### Quentin Pain, FIAB, joined IAB Council in April 2013:

I applied to join the Council because I knew it would help me see the issues faced by those who help my core market more clearly, which would benefit everyone, not just me. The most worthwhile thing about being a member of the Council is



finding out at first-hand how an organisation owned and run by its members, for the good of its members, operates from a corporate point of view. And I have to add how wonderfully friendly the whole experience has been. I highly recommend becoming a Council member. It will certainly open your horizons and expand your business experience.

### Lyn Eames, FIAB, joined IAB Council in 2009:

I applied as I felt IAB was unique – it is both a fully recognised and regulated awarding organisation providing a good range of bookkeeping qualifications and also a professional body for bookkeepers. My contact with the staff at the IAB also influenced my desire to take on a more



active role, as they seemed dedicated and personable. As a member of Council I felt I was able to continue to show my support and commitment to the organisation's success.

Council members also sit on the specialist sub-committees that meet periodically and report back to Council on key areas of strategic importance to the IAB. I am a member of



the Awarding Organisation Strategy Group, which ensures full and effective compliance with regulatory conditions, and I am also a member of the Finance and Audit Committee. Everyone working for and connected with the IAB has the professionalism of bookkeepers always in mind – we all support, promote and develop this collective vision of the IAB.



### Jila White, MIAB, AIAAP, joined IAB Council in 2011:

I made a point of going to as many of the seminars the IAB organised as I could to build my knowledge and confidence, and it was at one of those in 2010 that it was announced they were looking for candidates for IAB Council. Some of the IAB staff there said that I should put myself forward. I was apprehensive at first, but the staff encouraged me and I'm so pleased I did.

It is also good for clients to know you are a Council member, as it gives them confidence in you and your practice. But you shouldn't go into it for personal gain; you should have a real 'what can I do for the IAB' attitude, and you have to have a real passion for the IAB. That should be the motivation.

The IAB is committed to equal opportunities and diversity and welcomes all applications. If you are interested in applying or would like further information about the new process please contact Kelly Lant on [kellyl@iab.org.uk](mailto:kellyl@iab.org.uk) or 01732 897756



## The Word from Sarah



# Scarcity versus abundance

Sarah Palmer explains her business philosophy and why it's better to share

During a seminar Mark and I held last week, one of the delegates asked why I was so willing to share our 'trade secrets'. It's well known that there is little information available to individuals wanting to start their own bookkeeping business and I know from my own experience that those in business were not willing to share the do's and don'ts of their success in attracting clients. I suppose the real question being asked was: "Why do you want to help the competition?" This is a very poignant question and one which I had asked myself before joining the Pure Bookkeeping Team.

I run my own bookkeeping business, Women Who Count, and my vision is to empower clients around their finances I am passionate and committed in achieving this but I can't serve all the local businesses in Tonbridge, let alone Kent or the UK. So I believe that if I can help other bookkeepers to empower their own clients around their finances and by doing so increase their own self-belief and earnings which, on a larger



scale, will contribute to the economy, then this is a truly great opportunity to share and is completely congruent with my own ethics.

I read recently that there were some 488,000 new businesses started in 2011, all of which will need a bookkeeper at some level. I don't take the view that we should hold all this information to ourselves or who views others as competition who might 'steal' my clients. I hold the view of abundance: that there is more than enough work to go round, and I've never known a great bookkeeper to be short of work.

All of us at Pure Bookkeeping share the view that if we can help you on your journey, then your clients, and in turn all of us, as a community, benefit.

If you want to help on your journey, then why not take the first step and attend one of our upcoming 'Seven Secrets to Growing your Bookkeeping Business' webinars. You can book online at [www.purebookkeeping.co.uk/seminars](http://www.purebookkeeping.co.uk/seminars)

Use the special offer code 'IABWEBINAR' for your £50 discount. And don't forget that the webinar counts as three hours towards your CPD requirement.

Love to know your thoughts!

**Sarah Palmer, Pure Bookkeeping**

## IAB CONTACT DETAILS

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# Update: Professional Indemnity Insurance

THE IAB IS PLEASED to advise members that, following discussions with the four professional indemnity providers the IAB are working with, they will be covered for their administrative involvement in setting up, processing, settling payments and any other task that will be required to ensure compliance for employer pension schemes under the new Auto Enrolment schemes.

This is on the basis that the member is not providing any advice as regards to the most suitable pension products or investment funds. Investment advice is excluded from the policy.

Please find below some useful advice from Belmont International Limited on the importance of having professional indemnity insurance in place, along with information from Hensure Business Insurance following a review of their rating structure.

## Hensure Business Insurance

Hensure Business Insurance is pleased to announce that the underwriters behind its online scheme have recently carried out a review of their rating structure and have reduced their minimum premiums in a number of areas.

It is now possible to buy professional indemnity insurance for some of the lower indemnity limits at the following premiums, subject to qualifying criteria.

Limit of Indemnity	Price
£50,000	£67.40 inc taxes and fees
£100,000	£78.00 inc taxes and fees
£250,000	£88.60 inc taxes and fees
£500,000	£109.80 inc taxes and fees
£1 million	£131.00 inc taxes and fees

Our scheme rates for Public Liability have also been reduced, with minimum premiums starting from £22.50 plus Insurance Premium Tax at 6%.

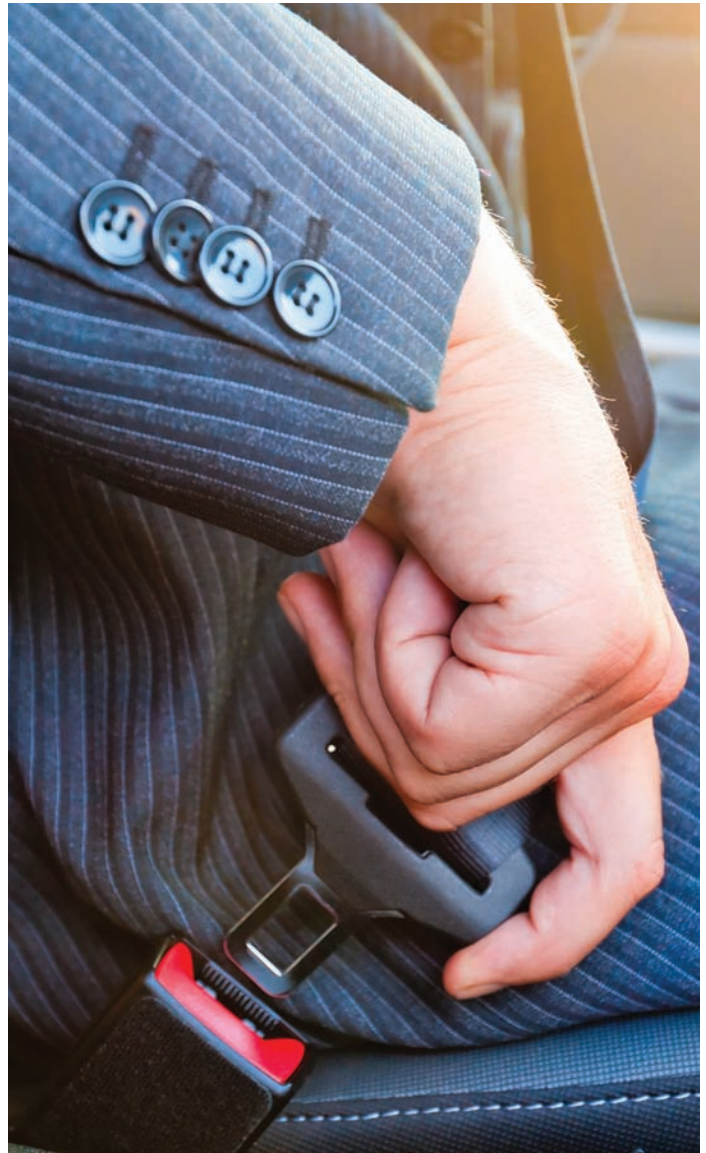
We are also pleased to announce that R K Henshall and Co Ltd, our parent company, has recently been awarded Chartered Broker Status. Chartered status is an exclusive title awarded only to firms that meet rigorous criteria relating to professionalism and capability. All Chartered Insurance Brokers commit to the Chartered Insurance Institute's Code of Ethics, reinforcing the highest standards of professional practice in their business dealings

## Why you need professional indemnity insurance

All IAB members will provide professional advice to clients; in doing so they expose themselves to the risk that the advice given is not correct and in turn they can then be sued in relation to that advice or worse than that even if you believe the advice you gave was correct, the client continues to pursue you because it didn't achieve what they expected.

A PII policy is a cost effective way for you to cover yourself against these potential risks and will protect you both in respect of the cost of defending a claim and also in respect of any compensation that may be awarded. An IAB member's reputation is what they trade on, so it is very important that any unwarranted claims are defended & that any legitimate claim is dealt with quickly and sensitively to protect the relationship with their client as far as possible.

Professional Indemnity will also compensate the member's clients for any financial loss they incurred and also cover the cost of legal fees to defend the member against any claim made against them. Unlike other forms of commercial insurance professional indemnity policies only provide cover while the policy is in force as they are arranged on what is called a "claims made basis" so it is critical that once a policy is arranged it remains in force to be sure that all advice given is covered. If you change providers it is important that the new provider is assuming cover for past advice.



## Peace of mind

Although the risk of a claim against IAB members is very low we have seen claims against members that have run to excess of £100,000 so a policy can not only protect your reputation by defending claims where you may have not done anything wrong, but also ensure the survival of your business by taking away the problem from you. Knowing the insurer's lawyers are dealing with the matter and if they find an error or omission had occurred in the work carried out they will negotiate the settlement of the claim with your client.

The priority is that if you have an incident that could give rise to a claim, don't try and deal with it yourself; involve the insurer at an early stage. The insurers can act at this point to either rebuff the claim strongly or if there is an error they can start negotiations particularly if it involves the HMRC where they can agree a settlement at an early stage.

*Belmont International Limited is an approved provider to the IAB and has provided the IAB members Professional Indemnity Scheme for many years. Now around 200 members use the policy which is arranged exclusively with Hiscox Insurance.*



## IAB Chief Executive's warning over plans to give HMRC access to bank accounts



PROPOSALS TO ALLOW HMRC to collect unpaid tax direct from bank accounts could have serious repercussions for businesses of all sizes, the IAB has warned. IAB Chief Executive Malcolm Trotter said his members' experiences of dealing with HMRC left him with grave concerns over the organisation's consultation on Direct Recovery of Debts (DRD), a policy which, if it comes into force, would give it powers to recover tax and tax credit debts directly from debtors' bank accounts.

At the moment, HMRC cannot recover debts from bank accounts without first obtaining a court judgement.

The Revenue argues that direct access will be quicker, will help level the playing field between those who pay what they owe and those who do not, and help ensure compliant businesses do not face unfair competition from those who try to gain an advantage by not paying tax.

"While we can see the attractiveness as regards increasing revenue received by HMRC, until it reduces its apparent error rate to next to nothing we cannot support

this proposal," said Trotter. "The vast majority of IAB members would argue that they regularly find errors in the calculation of personal tax codes, tax computations and bills issued by HMRC, coupled with long administrative delays in getting things put right."

The HMRC proposals are that Direct Recovery of Debts would be used where there were established debts of at least £1,000, which could be made up of a number of smaller debts, and would only be used where HMRC had already made a number of attempts to contact the debtor to arrange payment, at least four times and typically nine times.

DRD would apply to debtors' bank and building society accounts, including ISAs. The new powers would also apply to joint accounts.

"We're not the only ones with doubts," added Trotter. "Other independent professional bodies such as the ICAEW report numerous cases of HMRC chasing debts which are not due.

"Any bookkeeper or accountant has a tale to tell about inaccurate information held by HMRC about their clients. If DRD is adopted, it could be a recipe for disaster for businesses of all sizes."

## In-year filing penalties start this month

IN-YEAR FILING PENALTIES for tax year 2014-15 could arise if you fail to file your clients' Full Payment Submissions on time or you fail to send HMRC the expected number of returns.

If your client companies have 50 or more employees or pension recipients, penalties will apply from 6 October 2014. To avoid these penalties, you should make sure all your real time returns are fully up-to-date by 5 October 2014 and ensure that in future your returns are sent on time and are complete. However, no penalty will arise for the first month in each tax year where there is a filing failure. Details of how filing penalties will operate can be found at [www.gov.co.uk/what-happens-if-you-dont-report-payroll-information-on-time](http://www.gov.co.uk/what-happens-if-you-dont-report-payroll-information-on-time)

If you are charged a filing penalty, you will be notified by post accordingly. The penalty notice will include information on how to appeal if you think it is incorrect or that you had a reasonable excuse for the delay. The quickest way is to appeal online, by selecting the 'Appeal a Penalty' link from your PAYE online

account when you have received a penalty notice. This will not only allow appeals to be submitted electronically – in some cases HMRC will also be able to accept and settle the appeal automatically.

### Smaller companies

For companies with 49 or fewer employees or pension recipients filing penalties will apply from 6 March 2015. To avoid these penalties, you should make sure all your real time returns are fully up-to-date by 5 March 2015 and ensure that in future your returns are sent on time and are complete.

You may be charged a penalty for not sending your FPS on time or failing to send the expected number of returns between 6 March 2015 and 5 April 2015. Please note that as part of the phased introduction of the new filing penalty regime these companies do not qualify for the unpenalised failure for the tax year 2014-15.



## Firms disappearing from the high street

THE DECLINE IN the number of accountancy firms is accelerating, says the latest research from LDF, a leading finance provider.

Latest figures show that there are now just 6,962 accountancy firms registered in the UK (in 2013), a 4% drop on the previous year when there were 7,239.

There is a worry that although there has been a sustained downward trend since the credit crunch, the latest figures shows firm closures appear to be picking

up speed again. LDF's Peter Alderson said one of the key reasons is that the impact of new rules loosening the requirements for businesses to carry out an audit is starting to filter through, adding the financial pressures that many, particularly smaller, firms were already feeling. He went on: "Audit is a core revenue stream for many accountancy businesses, so any drop-off in this type of work is going to have a significant impact on profitability."

The research found that firms with between two and six principals have seen the biggest decline, with a total of 2,997 registered firms in 2013 compared with 3,264 in 2012.

However, the number of firms with 7-10 principals has actually increased to 202, up from 191 the previous year.

# Automatic enrolment and what bookkeepers need to know

BOOKKEEPERS HAVE BEEN urged to get to grips with automatic enrolment as thousands of small and micro employers will be looking to them for help.

By August this year, more than 21,000 employers had automatically enrolled more than 4 million staff into a workplace pension, but even bigger numbers are still to come.

More than 1 million small and micro employers with between one and 50 staff will need to implement automatic enrolment and many of them will be relying on bookkeepers for help.

Recent research by the Pensions Regulator shows 58% of small employers and 74% of micro employers will turn to their bookkeeper for help. Many of these employers will not have pensions experience or in-house know how.

## Knowing the numbers

The Pensions Regulator recently published its staging profile which shows the numbers of employers reaching their staging date in the coming months. The staging date is a date set in law and is when an employer's duty comes into effect (see <http://www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk/docs/automatic-enrolment-employer-staging-forecast.pdf>).

This should not be used by employers themselves, but is a resource for the pensions industry, including bookkeepers and other advisers, so that they can prepare for the numbers of employers seeking services and advice.

## What bookkeepers should tell their clients

Whether bookkeepers choose to offer a comprehensive automatic enrolment service or whether they want to simply offer initial guidance, bookkeepers should ensure they can inform their clients about automatic enrolment. They should also tell clients exactly what services they will be offering (see <http://www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk/professionals/help-clients-prepare-for-auto-enrolment.aspx>).

Bookkeepers should make their clients aware that the Pensions Regulator is responsible for ensuring employer compliance with automatic enrolment and that the regulator's website should be the first port of call for information (see <http://www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk/index.aspx>).

The Pensions Regulator has published an Essential Guide to Automatic Enrolment, which will help you and your clients to understand their responsibilities (see <http://www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk/employers/the-essential-guide-to-automatic-enrolment.aspx>).

## Automatic enrolment is a legal duty

All employers, no matter how large or small, have a legal duty to automatically enrol eligible staff into a workplace pension and they must do so by a



deadline that is specific to them. Bookkeepers should make sure their clients know that failure to comply could lead to financial penalties.

Clients should know their staging date (see <http://www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk/docs/automatic-enrolment-six-month-leaflet.pdf>). These can be found by using the Regulator's staging date tool. Bookkeepers can also do this on their client's behalf (see <http://www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk/employers/tools/staging-date.aspx>).

Staging dates are set based on information held by HMRC (in April 2012). Bookkeepers should ensure their clients know their staging date is not based on their current headcount.

## Nominate a contact

Employers must nominate a contact so that the Regulator can write to and email the person who will manage or implement automatic enrolment. The employer should identify the most senior person within the business as the primary contact. They should then decide who else needs to know about automatic enrolment on regular basis and nominate them as a secondary contact. This may be another member of staff, payroll provider or indeed their bookkeeper (see <https://forms.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk/workplacepensionsreform/nominate.aspx>).

## Warning: leave plenty of time

The handy timeline planner on the Regulator's website shows what needs to be done and when. While the size of the business and the level of pensions experience will decide how long an employer will need to implement automatic enrolment, clients should err on the side of caution and leave more time, rather than less. The regulator recommends employers leave around 12 months to prepare. Leaving enough time will help avoid

complications and the risk of non-compliance (see <http://www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk/employers/planning-for-automatic-enrolment.aspx>).

## Six-month checklist

Bookkeepers can also access the six-month checklist on the Regulator's website to ensure their clients are on track.

Six months before their staging date employers should have their provider and payroll plans in place. With thousands of employers all seeking services, it makes sense to start looking early. The experience of other employers also shows it is also imperative to test systems to avoid stressful, last-minute glitches and the risk of non-compliance (see <http://www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk/docs/automatic-enrolment-six-month-leaflet.pdf>).

## Employers must assess all staff

Employers will need to understand how to assess their workers for automatic enrolment. They are likely to look to their bookkeeper to help them complete the task – or to establish whether the payroll and pension provider can offer assistance or do this for them. Employers must also communicate to their workers about how automatic enrolment will affect them as individuals.

## Registration: a declaration of compliance

Five months after their staging date, employers must show they have complied with their automatic enrolment duties by completing a declaration of compliance (registration) with the Pensions Regulator. This is a statutory duty and each employer has a specific date by which to have to do this. If they fail to meet this deadline they could be liable for a £400 fine.

## Useful links

Help your clients prepare for auto enrolment: <http://www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk/professionals/help-clients-prepare-for-auto-enrolment.aspx>

Essential guide to auto enrolment:

<http://www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk/employers/the-essential-guide-to-automatic-enrolment.aspx>

Staging date tool:

<http://www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk/employers/tools/staging-date.aspx>

Nominate a contact:

<https://forms.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk/workplacepensionsreform/nominate.aspx>

Timeline planner:

<http://www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk/employers/planning-for-automatic-enrolment.aspx>

Six-month checklist:

<http://www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk/docs/automatic-enrolment-six-month-leaflet.pdf>

# Quarter 2 insolvency statistics revealed

JULY 29TH 2014 SAW THE latest official insolvency statistics from The Insolvency Service for Quarter 2, 2014. Below is a breakdown of the figures for both corporate and personal statistics

**Corporate statistics overview**

The number of companies entering Creditors' Voluntary Liquidation has decreased for a fourth consecutive quarter, with the latest figures showing a -18.1% figure compared with the same quarter as last year. Compulsory Liquidations have also decreased this quarter which has remained in line with their decline since mid-2012 with the only exception being Quarter 4 of 2013.

The two business rescue processes – Company Voluntary Arrangement and Company Administration – have also seen declining figures. The number of companies entering Company Administration was 34.9% lower this quarter compared to Quarter 2, 2013.

This was the lowest quarterly figure since Q1 2005. Company Voluntary Arrangements also fell by 11.3%. The corporate insolvency rate ending Quarter 2, 2014 was at its lowest level since data has been available to calculate the rate in 1984. Changes in company liquidation rates are related to economic conditions, for example in periods of economic growth, liquidation rates tend to decrease which is what is reflected in Quarter 2, 2014's statistics.

R3 Vice-President Phillip Sykes says: "Other than an improving economy, not much has changed to have a big impact on insolvency numbers. Some sectors,

like the legal sector have encountered regulatory challenges, which has led to higher insolvency numbers there, but for everyone else the past few years have been the same story: low interest rates and lenient lenders."

**Personal Statistics Overview**

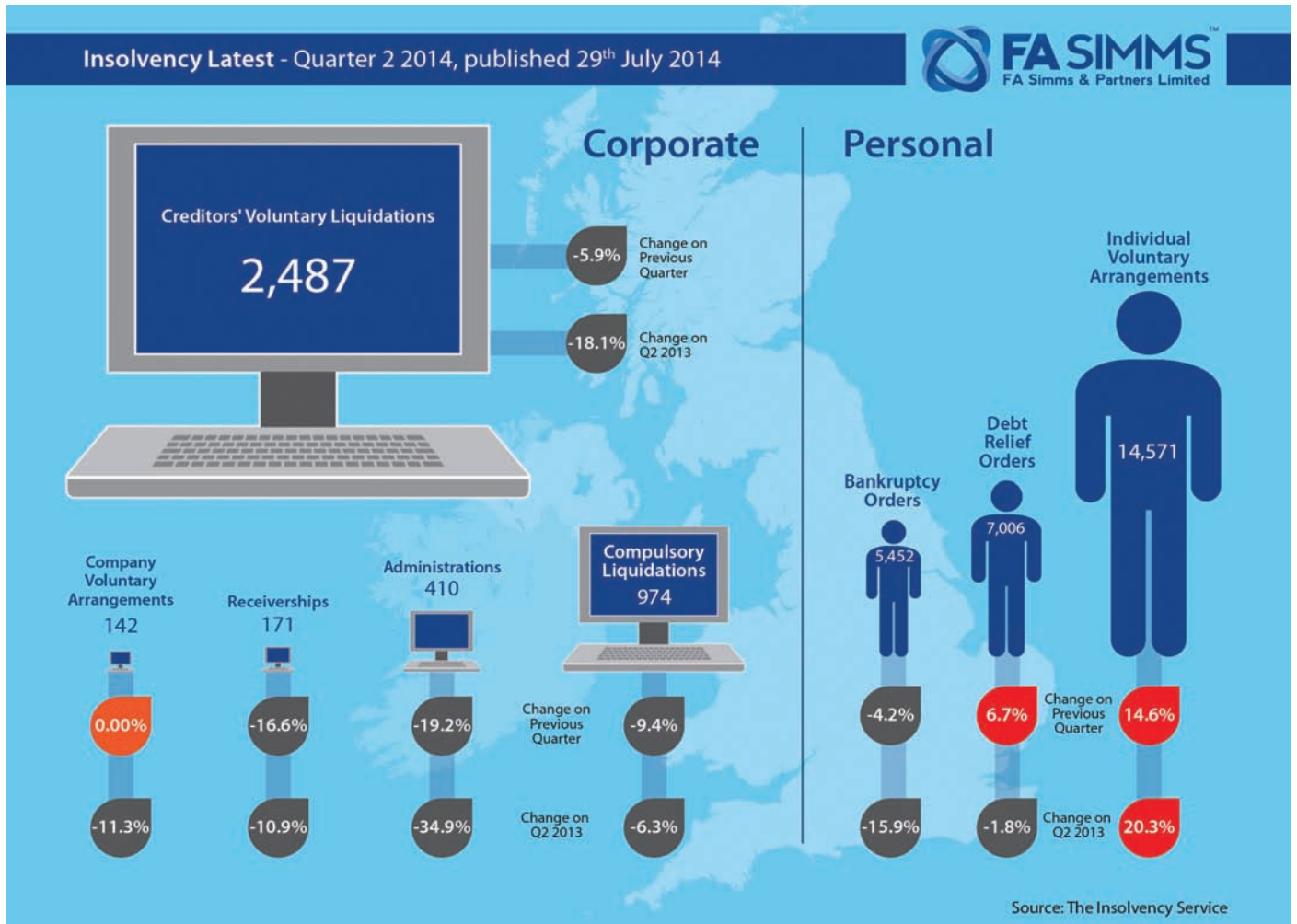
The number of people who became insolvent increased in Quarter 2 by 5.1% totalling 27,029 across England & Wales. This increase was predominantly driven by a 20.2% rise in the number of Individual Voluntary Arrangements compared with 2013. IVAs now make up over half of all individual insolvencies with both Bankruptcies and Debt Relief Orders slowly decreasing in figures.

There were 14,571 IVAs registered in Quarter 2, 2014, the highest level since their introduction in 1987.

Sykes says: "Individual Voluntary Arrangements (IVAs) are now at a record high. IVAs have become much easier to access recently. Our members have seen IVAs set up for as low as a few thousand pounds with surplus income well under £200. These IVAs wouldn't have been considered a few years ago and people might have used debt management plans or informal arrangements instead."

**Need advice?**

If we can be any help with regards to the corporate or personal insolvency topic please contact us via the free advice line we provide to all IAB members: 0845 026 2600 or email enquiries@fasimms.com.





# Latest advice for financial professionals at IAB/IFA seminars

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN tax and the money laundering regulations and their impact on businesses are among the subjects of two autumn seminars being hosted jointly by the IAB and the Institute of Financial Accountants (IFA).

Taking place in Bristol and London, the seminars will feature experts from both HMRC and the National Crime Agency, and speakers will also offer practical advice on starting up and developing a practice and succession planning, along with the latest on automatic enrolment.

"Tax and money laundering regulations are complex but vitally important to understand for bookkeepers, accountants and business owners," said Malcolm Trotter, Chief Executive of the IAB. "Our autumn seminars are an excellent opportunity to hear directly from HMRC and the National Crime Agency about

these issues and to have any questions answered. Pensions auto-enrolment is another area causing concern for businesses, but there is plenty of support out there for those going through the process, as our seminars will highlight."

The Bristol event is on Thursday, November 6, at the Mercure Bristol Holland House Hotel and Spa, while the London seminar is on Tuesday, November 25, at the Grand Connaught Rooms, Great Queen Street, Holborn.

Both take place from 9.30am to 4pm and cost £80 + VAT for IAB members or £90 + VAT for non-members.

For more information or to book your place, contact Kelly Pike or Kelly Lant at the IAB on 01732 897750, or email either [kellyp@iab.org.uk](mailto:kellyp@iab.org.uk) or [kellyl@iab.org.uk](mailto:kellyl@iab.org.uk).

## Offshore evaders face criminalisation



A new criminal offence for failing to declare taxable offshore income and gains was set out in an HMRC consultation paper, launched in mid-August.

HMRC appears to be targeting those who move their assets from one offshore centre which has tightened its tax information sharing laws to another which hasn't.

The 20-year rule limiting how far back HMRC can look at a taxpayer's affairs could also be suspended.

The majority of offshore cases will continue to be dealt with through a civil approach. The penalties will change. For example, anyone seeking to evade inheritance tax by hiding assets offshore will be liable for penalties of up to 200% of the tax.

The Finance Secretary to the Treasury, David Gauke, said: "The minority who use offshore secrecy to evade UK tax are making a big mistake. There is nothing wrong with holding assets offshore but investors must pay the tax they owe here."

He went to reveal some 56,000 people have already told HMRC about what they owe offshore.

Lawyers Pinsent Mason said that HMRC intends to introduce the new criminal offence as a 'strict liability' offence, which means there doesn't have to be any evidence that the individual intended to evade tax – the individual can be convicted even though they:

- Failed to understand tax law.
- Were poorly advised by a friend or acquaintance.
- Genuinely forgot to report a relevant gain.

HMRC wants the offence to come with a penalty of unlimited fines and up to six months in prison that could be imposed at a magistrates' court. This, says Pinsent Masons, represents a slightly more measured approach than the original proposals for an offence, which suggested the potential for much longer prison terms. There is also the suggestion of a defence of reasonable care for individuals who have followed professional tax advice.

## Do you have a mobile phone addiction?

Students are putting their academic studies at risk by spending up to 10 hours a day on their mobiles, says new research from the US.

Baylor University's James Roberts explained that as cellphone (mobile to you and me) functions increase, addictions to this seemingly indispensable piece of technology become an increasingly realistic possibility.

His study noted that 60% of college students admit they may be addicted to their phones and some indicated they get agitated when it is not in sight.

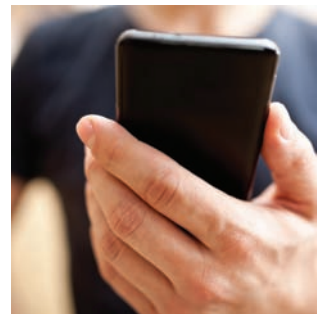
Roberts was worried that mobiles may wind up being an escape mechanism from their classrooms. For some, phones in class may also provide a way to cheat.

Excessive phone use can cause conflict inside and outside the classroom, says Roberts.

He also discovered women spend more time on their phones than their male colleagues.

His research even breaks down what students do most on their phone. Texting takes an average of 94.6 minutes a day. Next comes emails at 48.5 minutes. Checking Facebook takes 38.5 minutes and surfing the internet another 34.4 minutes. Finally, there is listening to your iPod – that's another 26.9 minutes.

The report is called 'The Invisible Addiction – Cellphone Activities and Addiction among Male and Female College Students'.



## You can't ask that!

Did you know that there are some questions you should never ask, or be asked, at an interview? Here are five that reed.co.uk suggested were no-nos:

- Are you from the UK/is English your first language? Although, by law, employers do have to check that applicants are eligible to work in the UK.
- Are you married? Any questions about marital status, children and future family plans should not be asked at an interview.
- How old are you?
- How many sick days did you take in you last period of employment?
- Do you have any criminal convictions?

## Give us a smile

The photographs you use on social media could be the key to your future prospects.

New research by the University of York found that people will look at a picture of your face on social media and almost immediately judge if you are friendly, trustworthy or competent.

Even though the researchers say it is not clear how accurate these impressions are they can influence subsequent behaviour.

In a world dominated by social media, the importance of a positive first impression cannot be underestimated.

Lead researcher Dr Tom Hartley said that a broadly smiling face is seen as more approachable and trustworthy.



## TDLC gains funding for 24+ Advanced Learning Loans

TDLC, A DISTANCE LEARNING training provider and accredited IAB partner, has gained a £300,000 funding contract with the Skills Funding Agency to deliver the level 3 Bookkeeping qualifications through 24+ Advanced Learning Loans. These are administered by the Student Loan Company.

Carolyn Copleston, Business Development for TDLC, commented: "This is a significant step forward in delivering financial skills in bookkeeping through a more flexible way of funding, with students deferring payment until they start earning."

"Following recent reductions in Skills Funding Agency funding, increasingly access to study bookkeeping skills has been, in the most part, paid for privately by the individual. So the option of a 24+ Advance Learning Loan makes gaining new skills more affordable. Currently, these loans apply to qualifications at levels 3 or 4, but we fully expect that this will be extended to level 2 qualifications by the 2015/16 funding year. This will open up new possibilities for people wishing to develop their careers in bookkeeping."

Mathew Hancock, former Minister of State for Skills and Enterprise and now Minister of State for Business and Enterprise, said: "Advanced Learning Loans enable people to improve their skills. These improved skills will help individuals to be able to improve their



chances of progressing within their chosen career, move into a new career, or get back into work. A well skilled workforce also helps employers compete in a fast moving global economy."

TDLC will provide funding for the 2014/15 funding year; either for the IAB Level 3 Certificate in Manual Bookkeeping or the IAB Level 3 Certificate in Bookkeeping as a first outcome. This will be extended to students wishing to progress to the IAB Level 3 Diploma in Bookkeeping. Courses will be provided

over a maximum ten-month period through a blended learning approach, consisting of online study supported by traditional assessments and regular workshops or seminars. Level 2 qualifications will be introduced to expand the provision when required.

Anyone interested in more information on the possibilities Advanced Learning Loans present for advancing their bookkeeping skills should get in touch with TDLC – contact details are on the IAB website ([http://www.iab.org.uk/users/centre\\_page/811](http://www.iab.org.uk/users/centre_page/811)).

## Business confidence is growing

### Four in five professional services firms plan to recruit additional skilled staff in the next 12 months amid concerns about a shortage of talent

CONFIDENCE AMONG BUSINESSES in the professional services sector is on the rise, according to research conducted by business insurance specialist QBE. Some 81% of businesses surveyed in the sector plan to recruit additional skilled staff in the next 12 months, although over one-third (35%) are concerned about the availability of this talent.

#### Programme of investment

The research, conducted among 400 businesses across the UK in June 2014, found that firms in the sector are feeling more positive now than six months ago and concerns about consumer and business confidence are diminishing. Some 75% of professional services firms plan to invest in more than one operational area in the next 12 months, including in new or additional facilities. This is in line with the national average of 74%. Unease about interest rates, however, has grown substantially over the past six months, with nearly one in five businesses (19%) nationally citing the outlook for interest rates as the single most concerning aspect of the economy.

#### The outlook for risk

In line with businesses throughout the UK, 20% of professional services firms feel that the overall level of risk they are exposed to has increased in the past six months with intensifying competitor activity, market pricing risk and unfavourable trends in input prices named as key areas where business risk has increased in recent months. In addition, over half (56%) of the businesses

surveyed felt they had gained exposure to one or more new areas of risk in the past two years. Concerns about cyber crime have grown, with 37% of professional services firms feeling more exposed now than they were just six months ago.

#### Risk management – a process of continuous improvement

The research also focused on how companies were managing the growing levels of risk they felt they were exposed to. Some 35% of businesses in the sector plan to increase their investment in risk management systems and practices over the next 12 months. The effectiveness of tracking systems to monitor the progress of risk improvements and the demonstration of the return on investment of such interventions were cited as the primary areas for focus.

Matthew Crane, Managing Director UK & Ireland, QBE, said: "Our research has shown that businesses in the professional services sector are facing increased levels of business risk, including many which they are encountering for the first time, such as cyber. A robust and rigorous approach to risk management is essential, so it is reassuring to see from the research that a large proportion of businesses plan to invest in their risk management practices.

"Insurance companies can help in this respect by providing best practice advice, and assistance in evaluating the effectiveness of firms' existing programmes. I would urge all businesses to work with their insurers to get advice and an assessment of their risk management approach, so they can reap the benefits that well-managed risks can deliver."