

REWARD STRATEGY

INCORPORATING PAYROLL WORLD

Issue 222

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How key workers are keeping the nation paid

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40 YEARS OF LEADING
THE PROFESSION

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RECOGNITION, FINALLY

In Issue 221, my leader focussed on the ghost town my office had become like many others, that we would likely be in lockdown soon and how vital payrollers would be during this time.

At the time of writing I am in my makeshift home office. Tomorrow (May 1) marks my sixth week in isolation and it doesn't look like the restrictions will be lifted anytime soon.

COVID-19 has quite literally taken over the world, the sweeping pandemic is affecting all of us. A few of us may have been furloughed, many have taken pay cuts, and there are some, sadly, in affected sectors who've been made redundant.

One profession that definitely isn't furloughed and is working to the max, is payroll. Now classed by the government as key workers, the function is finally being recognised as crucial.

This magazine explores just how the profession is keeping the nation paid (p14), how payroll managers feel to finally be heard (p21) and the ways in which you can reward, motivate and ensure your employees are keeping well while working from home (p6, p10, p28).

Prior to lockdown, I shared the fact I'd been working on a piece on promoting the profile of payroll. We will still publish the feature later this year, but there were some comments I wanted to share now.

Wendy Drinkwater, who is head of payroll at ITV, has been in payroll for 40 years and is due to retire this May. Reflecting on her time in the profession, she said: "In my first job as a young and naive assistant in the wages department, I thought I was very important because I paid people - cash, in a brown packet, via a hatch in a wooden door. As it turned out, our team sat homeless, somewhere between accounts and personnel, whichever drew the shortest straw.

"Today, as I look forward to my early retirement, I'm so proud of my profession. We've arrived and we're staying. We don't do failure, do we payroll? It's been an absolute blast."

I hope no one reading this, or their loved ones, has been affected by the virus, but it's likely that some of you may have. On behalf of *Reward Strategy*, I wish you the best of health during the crisis and beyond.

Stay safe.



Amber-Ainsley Pritchard

“We don’t do failure,
do we payroll?”

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reward-strategy.com



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— webinars —

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How to stay educated and informed during the pandemic



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With COVID-19 forcing us into isolation, it's never been more prevalent to keep abreast of news and build knowledge. Reward Strategy is delivering monthly webinars to ensure you stay up-to-date

TOPIC

MONTH

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FRIENDS IN BENEFITS

A podcast from
REWARD
STRATEGY



Hosted by
Amber-Ainsley Pritchard
Editor, Reward Strategy



Featuring
Megan O'Shaughnessy
Head of Consumer Reward, BT

Reward Strategy has created its first ever podcast series

Friends in Benefits is hosted by Reward Strategy's Editor Amber-Ainsley Pritchard and each episode will feature a guest from the pay and reward world.

The first episode featured Megan O'Shaughnessy, Head of Consumer Reward at BT, and our next episode, with Dommy Szymanska, Pay & Reward Manager for Europe at Stella McCartney, will be live soon.

SUBSCRIBE TO FRIENDS IN BENEFITS ON APPLE PODCASTS OR SPOTIFY

“NEVER LET A GOOD CRISIS GO TO WASTE”

Microsoft’s Tim Robertson explains how to reward during a lockdown and how the pandemic could change strategies for the future



Tim Robertson
Microsoft

“Your employees
will not forget
how they
were treated”



In these unprecedented times, during COVID-19, the role of the reward professional has required somewhat of a pivot away from the usual attraction and retention challenges (though these still apply in some industries).

We are now looking at other areas, such as re-writing policies, the implications of offering employees emergency loans, wellbeing champions and understanding the furlough rules. This is all in addition to our usual regulatory work. For those of us in global companies, this includes things like: how long can an employee work in a foreign country (if they're stuck) and where does the duty of care lay? How to create a shadow offering for an employee starting a new role that can now not transfer internally across countries?

For a lot of us, the strategic work around reward has given way to a lot of operational and reactive work. Below is a, certainly not complete, list of some of the key considerations for the reward expert at this time:

Policy: Ask yourself: Do you have a comprehensive and competitive set of leave and flexible working policies? You need to think about employees who may be in difficult circumstances, have become a caregiver or wish to volunteer.

The reward implications of the policy need careful consideration: Does full pay continue during leave? Do employees continue to accrue bonus?

Culture: More important than the policy, is whether your company has a culture that encourages and supports employees working flexibly and supports those in hardship.

You may find gaps in your policies during a crisis, but organisations with a strong, supportive culture will look to close those where practical.

Communication: You may not feel your company is currently in the middle of a "war for talent", with more pressing

and urgent priorities than attraction and retention, but your talented employees and customers will not forget how they were treated at this time.

Handle communication and the delivery of any difficult news sensitively, and over-communicate when providing them available benefits and resources.

It's also important to note that good communication should be part of everyday life, not only when we are in crisis mode.

Winston Churchill once said "never let a good crisis go to waste", and the reward professional should not let this opportunity slip. Permanently embed some solid communication channels now.

Performance management: Objectives and priorities may have shifted, so ensure that is reflected in how performance is managed.

This doesn't mean employees shouldn't be performance-managed appropriately, but where the impact of such objectives directly affect a reward (pay increase or bonus), adjustments should be considered.

Employee lifecycle: You need to consider individual employees who are at different stages of their life.

The experience for new employees will be challenging - in terms of receiving equipment and meeting their colleagues. It's important to communicate openly and honestly with them: set reasonable expectations about their on-boarding experience, priorities and the level of support they may receive.

For those employees nearing retirement, the stock market volatility may be causing them concern, so reach out to your pension provider or broker for further guidance and share this with them.

You may also have employees who are leaving the company. This means you need to consider things such as the return of equipment, including a company car - which may not be possible at this time.

You could also have employees wishing

to rescind their resignation if their new company is struggling, so be prepared for such scenarios.

Beyond the lockdown

As sure as we can be that many of the practices highlighted above will revert back to normal once the pandemic is over, we can be equally as sure that the world will look different.

There are three areas of reward that may look a little different post-lockdown, some of these trends are already occurring, but they may now pick up speed:

Medical/risk plans: Those companies that offer a strong and competitive suite of supportive policies (i.e. leave), and medical and risk plans, will be those that emerge in the strongest position post-lockdown.

COVID-19 has seen more of us consider our own health and wellbeing and that of our family, so improved medical and risk plans will make companies more attractive in the future.

Benefits that rely on physical infrastructure: There will be an increased focus on intangible benefits, such as virtual GPs and online wellbeing courses. Those companies that offered onsite gyms, nurseries and subsidised cafeterias, will now have to think about the delivery of such benefit programmes and whether they simply provide cash or reimbursements.

Wellbeing: For companies that viewed a wellbeing strategy as something nice to have, or as a way of mitigating insurance premiums, they will now realise it is something they need to have. A wellbeing strategy will become what it should have always been: a key part of the duty of care an employer must show to their employees.

Financial, social, physical and mental wellbeing are all linked, so an employer should show it cares by introducing a strategy that covers all of these pillars. ■

Tim Robertson, UK compensation and benefits leader, Microsoft

MILLENNIALS WANT YOU TO CHANGE

In the second article of a two-part series, Rosemary Lemon finds out what millennials find attractive in a potential employer



Rosemary Lemon
Hays

“There is
‘entrenchment’ in
the way things
are done”



All millennials are now of working age and I have been curious to learn what the youngest of them think, now they have experienced a few years of working life.

In the first part of this series, I spoke to my son and his friends (all working millennials) about what they want from an employer and how companies could attract and retain their demographic.

Some of the key elements that attracted them to organisations were: the ability to learn new skills, move around different departments and try new roles, flexible working and sabbaticals.

Below are the other factors that would draw them in to work for a company.

Purpose

Millennials want to work at a company where they believe in the products or services, they also want to be ambassadors of an organisation that has a social purpose - something more than a tick-box exercise.

One comment made by the group was that they didn't want to be "tarnished" by the company's approach and values.

Finance

Living in London felt necessary for work, but made property purchase much harder. It was something considered hard to do without parental help or considering a help-to-buy scheme.

Work insecurity and the uncertainty of interest rates were also concerns.

While desirable, the millennials said buying a house was not always considered a mark of success and that career was more important. However, companies could do more to help in this area. They suggested a company equivalent scheme to the government's help-to-buy plan, with a loan conditional upon continued employment, or the option of paying into a housing contribution scheme instead of, or as

well as, into a pension plan. Discounted, or even free, company-provided accommodation was also discussed.

Education

Speaking about finances, I asked the group if student debt worried them. They said it did not and that they saw paying the loan back as more of a graduate tax than anything. However, the important point this part of the discussion raised was whether going to university in the first place was right for everyone.

It was thought that employers placed too much importance on having a degree and that could lead to the exclusion of good candidates.

The group said employers often ask candidates if they have a degree as a way of filtering them and that employers struggle to rank possible employees if they have not been to university - even though many jobs do not need degree.

Diversity

Thoughts around the recruitment issue led to further conversations around gender parity and diversity.

I asked the group what actions they thought companies should take to help close their gender pay gap and foster diversity and inclusion.

Social inequality and recruitment processes were seen as key areas of focus, if companies wanted to eliminate the gender pay gap and have true diversity and inclusion. They said:

- Companies should actively seek out minority groups when recruiting;
- Companies should not always stipulate a degree is necessary when it isn't;
- Job adverts must change. They tend to mirror the previous role holder and there is "entrenchment" in the way things are done;
- Companies need to ask themselves if they want to recruit for a set job, or whether they want skills and passion;
- Interview questions should change. There might be two candidates with

the same ability, but if only one has been to university, they may have a better understanding of how to answer questions and "score points";

- Care should be taken as to where jobs are advertised and the wording used;
- Interview panels should be mixed in gender and ethnicity;
- Both maternity and paternity leave and pay should be equal;
- Companies should stop the generalisation that age/experience and ability automatically go together.

I then asked if their generation would act differently if they were in charge. Their answer was troubling: "Companies can stifle people and force them into the same mould as they move through the organisation. If this happens, our generation will act no differently from the way things are done now."

My thoughts

I was seriously impressed with these young people; they were articulate and perceptive, showed a real awareness and mature understanding of working life issues and offered practical solutions. Companies should take note of their views.

Rather than try to shape our new employees into our traditional business mould, we should listen more closely to their opinions and follow some of their advice.

Going forward, reverse mentoring should play a strong role in helping us to attract and retain talent, think differently about issues, ensure we are diverse and inclusive and ultimately, sustainable.

I would like to thank my group of millennials for shedding light on what they look for in an employer, they are a credit to their generation and I wish them every success in their working lives - I hope they will help to change things for the better. ■

Rosemary Lemon, group head of reward, Hays

ARE WE WORKING OR SURVIVING FROM HOME?

Megan O'Shaughnessy talks about how to cope with working from home and how BT is supporting workers



Megan O'Shaughnessy
BT

"I'm trying not to put too much pressure on myself"



C OVID-19 has changed our lives, there's no doubt about that. Some of us are sat at home working from the kitchen table, others are furloughed, and then there are the key workers who are still having to go and do critical work in this scary and uncertain environment.

I am so incredibly grateful for my job. Whilst it's not ideal that I have to work from home for the foreseeable future, I keep telling myself: at least I can work. However, there is a unique challenge in the way which we have had to adapt to not only working from home, but also introducing a whole new routine to working from home so quickly.

A lot of people will be trying to homeschool children whilst ensuring they don't miss an important call, but this can be particularly difficult for single parents and parents who have children of varying ages.

How BT is supporting workers

We are lucky enough to work for an organisation that is extremely important to the nation during these times, and we know it's not easy for workers to still be using transport and juggling the work/life balance.

At BT, we have tried to ensure that all of our colleagues feel supported through the pandemic regardless of their role and situation. We understand that people may need to flex their home working hours to provide childcare.

We also have many resources available to help workers through this time. We have seen a big jump in our learning resources being utilised and as we get used to our new normal, we must try to see the positives that can be gained from such a time.

Will key workers be remunerated?

One certain positive we will see post-pandemic, is a far greater appreciation for our nation's key workers. Whether they be carers, store workers, customer

service representatives, banking clerks or delivery operatives – we know that they are working hard to ensure we can stay at home.

Once life returns to normal (which it will), it will be interesting to see whether remuneration for these groups is brought to the forefront when pay reviews are taking place in the coming years.

This brings me onto another group of key workers, whose status and voice will no longer be able to be ignored following the pandemic, payroll.

As an ex-payroller myself, I have never understood why the profession isn't given the kudos it deserves. Paying individuals with different pay terms, tax situations and absence needs is no mean feat, but month in, month out payrollers are left thankless.

When you look at the business as usual of a payroller, coupled with working from home (which is not commonplace in the profession) and having to navigate the new world of furlough, payroll has never been more important.

These people are having to work immensely hard to make sure everyone can still pay their bills, whilst having to cope with their own challenging working environment.

For younger payroll colleagues, this is an even more daunting time. Remember your first payroll job? What tasks you did day in, day out? No, me neither. What I do remember is the people I worked with and the collective spirit we had when we were up against deadlines.

The sense of community in the workplace is being tested right now, particularly if you have had new joiners. How strange must it be to join a new organisation from your own home?

There are of course ways to stay in touch and we should be utilising these to the fullest, not just for meetings but for impromptu socials too. A quick face-to-face five

minute chat over coffee goes a long way right now.

Take a break

"Let us rise up and be thankful, for if we didn't learn a lot at least we learned a little, and if we didn't learn a little, at least we didn't get sick, and if we got sick, at least we didn't die; so, let us all be thankful."

I saw this quote and it really struck a chord with me. We are all trying to do our best in such uncertain times, every day, but we must start by doing best for ourselves first.

As I mentioned earlier, I am very grateful to be able to work from home and to be healthy, but I'm trying not to put too much pressure on myself. These are unprecedented times, where we are being asked to show forbearance, so let us not forget to show ourselves the same kindness.

If we get two things done on our to do list today, then that's an achievement even if it wouldn't be considered so in "normal" times.

Make sure your colleagues know that they can reach out to you for help or guidance if they are struggling, let them know that it's okay to take a break when needed and most of all, thank them for what they are doing – no matter how big or small.

We don't know what the world will look like after COVID-19, but we do know that if we can, as a workforce, adapt to this so quickly – we can pretty much do anything!

Stay safe. ■

Megan O'Shaughnessy, head of reward - consumer, BT

O'Shaughnessy was recently a guest on Reward Strategy's new podcast series "Friends in Benefits".

She spoke about menopause policies and long service rewards, so listen now by searching Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or head over to: reward-strategy.com

THE REWARDS — DECADE EDITION —

08.12.2020 | Hilton London Bankside

This year marks a decade of The Rewards, and *Reward Strategy* will take this opportunity to celebrate the work of both key workers and employers during COVID-19.

The Rewards 2020 are now open for entries and will culminate in a prestigious black-tie dinner and ceremony at the London Hilton Bankside, on December 8.

During the day of the awards, at the same venue, the Reward & Payroll Summit will take place (find out more on p33).

This year we have a total of 24 categories at The Rewards, including staples such as Best Business Award, Customer Service Award and Payroll & HR Provider Award.

We also have a selection of categories that were created in partnership with *Reward Strategy's* Editorial Advisory Board last year, to reflect and better serve the current needs of the profession:

- Best Reward Strategy
- Diversity & Inclusion Award
- Wellbeing Provision Award

- Innovation Award
- "Ready to Retire" Award
- Next Generation Award

New for 2020

Most importantly, this year *Reward Strategy* has introduced a Crisis Management Award.

This award will celebrate a team that has proactively and efficiently dealt with the COVID-19 outbreak, including examples of the support offered to employees and frontline staff.

However, the Crisis Management Award is not the only opportunity to illustrate hard work carried out during the pandemic. Many of the categories on offer can be used to show evidence of this, from Best Reward Strategy to the Wellbeing Provision Award and Employee Benefits Provider Award.

How to enter

In these uncertain times, the employers, teams and individuals doing an exemplary job should not be forgotten, they deserve public recognition this year more than any other.

Enter the most prestigious awards

ceremony on the calendars of reward, payroll, HR, employee benefits and pension professionals, now by completing a simple 500-word submission online.

Visit *Reward Strategy's* website to enter, submissions are complimentary before August 28. The final entry deadline is September 4.

Once the award entries have been reviewed, the shortlist will be announced with the winners being revealed on the night.

Previous winners include those from, booking.com, Channel 4, ASOS and the Bank of England.

Past attendees of The Rewards, sponsored by Cintra HR & Payroll Services, have said that the event "enhances morale" and is "great public recognition of success for a team and organisation". ■

Amber-Ainsley Pritchard, editor, Reward Strategy

If you are interested in sponsoring the event, or booking a place at the awards, please view the website or send an email to enquiries@shardfinancialmedia.com

The Rewards categories

Best Business Award
Best Employer Award
Best Leader Award
Best Manager Award
Best Reward Strategy
Crisis Management Award
Customer Service Award
Diversity & Inclusion Award
Employee Benefits Provider Award
Global Payroll Award
In-house Team Award
Innovation Award
Next Generation Award
Payments Provider Award
Payroll & HR Provider Award
Payroll & HR Software Product
Public Sector Team Award
“Ready to Retire” Award
Rising Star Award
Service Provider Team Award
Specialist Payroll & HR Provider Award
Technology Award
Wellbeing Provision Award
Workplace Pension Provider Award

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Amber-Ainsley Pritchard asks key workers
how they are keeping the nation paid



Amber-Ainsley Pritchard
Reward Strategy

Despite constant changes in legislation, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, payroll professionals are keeping the nation paid.

With various measures introduced by the government, to help both employers and employees, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) and updated statutory sick pay (SSP), the payroll profession has been working around the clock to ensure pay is processed correctly.

The CJRS, announced to preserve jobs, involves the government paying 80 percent of furloughed workers' wages up to £2,500 per month.

Companies can claim back these wages through the scheme after they have paid employees.

At the time of writing, the Treasury announced more than 500,000 claims had been made through the scheme to the value of £4.5bn.

At a similar time to when the scheme was announced, the government said only the children of key workers could be sent to school. It explained that key workers are those that work for the emergency services, health sector, supermarkets, the transport service and so on.

The government also included a group of key workers under the title "utilities, communication and financial services", yet there was no mention of payroll specifically. Therefore, the Chartered Institute of Payroll Professionals (CIPP) reached out to government and had it confirm that payroll professionals are, indeed, key workers.

Payrolling in a pandemic

Reward Strategy wanted to find out

how payrollers were coping with processing payroll, dealing with new and updated legislation, and claiming for furloughed employees.

Aaron Mudd, European pay and benefits manager for Lush, said: "All shop staff have been furloughed, but those still working have been kept at 100 percent of their salary.

"We feel that with the government subsidies, it isn't fair to pay people still working less than 100 percent."

Jim Woodlingfield, payroll and pensions manager at education and training group NCG, said: "As a public sector organisation, with grant funding, we have been able to take a measured approach to furlough and payments. Our chief executive was very clear that any absences would be on full pay, which has been a great comfort to colleagues.

"Our finance and HR teams are working with operational managers to identify which staff are not covered by existing grant funding and working out where furlough arrangements would be appropriate."

The payroll professionals said that keeping on top of legislation changes has been a challenge, but the profession is used to working in an agile way.

As for the updated SSP legislation - from a day four to day one right, for those who have COVID-19, are self-isolating or caring for someone with the virus - both Mudd and Jamie Flarry, employee accounting manager for Champneys, said this change has been easy to manage, despite it being a manual job.

However some payrollers have been luckier than others, in the sense that they work at an organisation where no one has been furloughed or had to take a pay cut.

Olga Maruda, European payroll

manager at People Against Dirty, said her team are in a very advantageous position, because the company produces cleaning products.

She said: "We have not had to adjust our workforce. Our sick policy covers full pay from day one for all European countries, so there has been very little impact on payroll. However, we have increased the salary of any worker that is required to come into the office or factory. We are adding 10 percent of core hours to all those employees' pay."

Also in a unique position, working for one of the emergency services, is John Stonestreet, head of payroll and pensions at Essex and Kent Police.

He said: "The show definitely has to go on. Our software providers have implemented the relevant changes to SSP, but as a public sector organisation we do not foresee any cuts to pay or furloughing any workers."

In terms of how the government has been handling the updates during the pandemic, Julie Ball, payroll and pensions manager at Loughborough University, said: "HMRC have responded amazingly to the situation and have totally stepped up to the mark."

The furlough claims process

HMRC launched the online service allowing businesses to make CJRS claims on April 20.

With the typical and most likely payday being at the end of the month, the launch of the service gave employers three days to process claims and have the money in their account by the April payday.

Reward Strategy asked payrollers how complicated the claims process was.

Nevila Gruda, financial controller at hair salon group Daniel Galvin, said it

“I think this has been the biggest struggle we have ever seen”

was more stressful to manually calculate 80 percent of variable salaries before claiming, than the claim itself, especially because she had to process the first three weeks in March as normal pay and last nine days as furlough.

She said: “The process on the portal was straightforward and we did not have any issues. We started early and finished early the day it launched, so we took the rest of the day off once it was done.”

Flarry agreed that the process was straightforward: “I was surprised how easy it was to do. I had a mix payrolls, some with over 100 employees and some with less, but both were relatively simple.

“The only thing was, for those with under 100 employees it was tedious to manually key all the data in, but once I knew the format it took me less than two hours to get everything done.”

Mudd also found the process of manually entering data for payrolls with less than 100 people an issue: “When time is so crucial, you wonder why HMRC couldn’t allow uploads of any number of people. We had a payroll of 32 to do and it was soul-destroying. I feel really sorry for those payrollers with 99 people furloughed.

“In all the years I have been in payroll, I think this has been the biggest struggle we have ever seen, but as always our profession gets on and delivers.”

Processing pay cuts

Although none of the organisations *Reward Strategy* spoke to had reduced staff salaries, many employers have been in the news for “imposing” pay cuts.

Reward Strategy wondered how easy it is to slash pay, from both a technical and legal point of view.

When asked how difficult it is to process pay, if salaries vary from one month to another, Mudd said: “It’s not as bad as you think. Luckily, we can import

masses of data in one go, that is following a lot of data manipulation with the help of experienced payrollers.

“Like all of our furlough calculations I have been doing in excel, I just load the data back into our payroll system. It’s actually almost easier to do than a normal payroll, because there are no variable hours - everyone is being paid a set amount of money, so we have actually had a longer lead time for the April payroll than we would normally need.”

However, Lou Gray, payroll manager - operations delivery, at EY, pointed out that the flexibility of being able to change pay comes down to employment law and an employee’s contract.

So, *Reward Strategy* asked Richard Miskella, joint managing partner at global HR law firm Lewis Silkin, if there are any rules around the flexibility employers have in reducing pay.

He said employers can discuss and agree pay reductions with employees, or they can reduce the pay and if an employee does not disagree, continues working or accepts the lesser payment without objecting, they are deemed to have agreed to the change by conduct.

However, Miskella added that an employee can disagree with the pay cut when it is announced, continue working and go ahead with suing the company.

“Please can you help?”

With all that’s going on, it wouldn’t be out of the question to assume employees’ payroll queries have risen.

For most professionals, including Woodlingfield and Mudd, enquiries increased by up to 300 percent when the government announced the ability to furlough staff.

However, not all queries related to the scheme. For Maruda, many emails came from managers wanting to clarify sick pay policies and the

requirements around hiring new temp staff.

Maruda added that many employee queries were for passwords: "It seems employees have more time to stop and think, so we have seen increase in questions around pay components, end of year reporting and taxation reasoning."

As for Stonestreet, many of the queries received were about whether Essex and Kent Police would pay the expenses of employees working from home.

He said: "Our current position is that increased costs from electricity and so on, for working from home, is offset against commuting costs that are no longer being incurred."

Then again, some payrollers' inboxes weren't any fuller than usual.

Ball said the university has robust and dedicated communication channels in place already, so employees are being constantly updated on what is happening.

In a similar manner, but as a reactive approach, Mudd created a frequently asked questions (FAQs) page for all employees to view on furloughing and pay. He also sent out payslips 10 days before the April payday, so employees knew what they would be paid and could reach out with any questions before payday if needed.

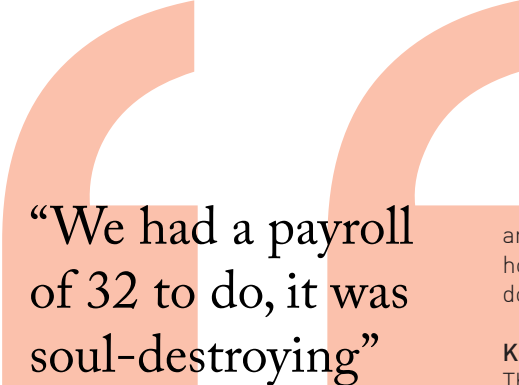
The new normal

It's possible that those working today, will never see anything quite like the COVID-19 pandemic again.

Reward Strategy asked the profession how this crisis may have changed the working world forever.

All payrollers asked agreed that the lockdown has proven how many jobs can be done from home, and that there is now a real business case for more flexible working.

Stonestreet said: "A mixture of home and office working is definitely something



"We had a payroll of 32 to do, it was soul-destroying"

we will review. Work is something you do, not somewhere you go."

Woodlingfield said NCG's chief financial officer is already calculating reduced occupancy costs.

Similarly, Maruda said the savings on rent could result in companies hiring employees from different geographical locations. However, she added that this could result in extra work for pay and reward teams, as not every company has a mobility function.

Mudd said: "I think the pandemic will speed up the mentality that individuals, more so than businesses, have about working from home - with it being a lot better than they originally thought.

"I don't know if it will change a lot at Lush. There is a lot of emphasis about being at work and having that community spirit - I don't think you get the same working from home."

Speaking specifically about payrollers' ability to work from home, which some companies didn't necessarily approve of in the past, such as EY, Gray said the pandemic has proved to the organisation that payroll can be facilitated from home.

Mudd said the Lush team have actually found communication is better now than when they were in the office: "I don't have

any fears about processing payroll at home, we can do everything we normally do at the office."

Key workers

The final question *Reward Strategy* had for the payroll profession, was whether the government's recognition of key workers could result in possible pay reviews.

Gray said: "I think for the high-profile key workers this may evoke change, however we have to bear in mind that the country will be paying for the COVID-19 emergency legislation and finance for many years to come."

Echoing this sentiment, Stonestreet said: "Whether key workers will be able to receive additional remuneration when the crisis is over, depends on the size of the recession.

"I have a feeling that all workers will be paying for the necessary government spend for decades to come."

Whereas, Woodlingfield thinks the pandemic could lead to a change in how key workers are paid and valued: "This is a chance to remake our social and economic relationships into a fairer and more just model."

Whether payroll key workers would be paid more in the future, the profession was unsure whether government recognition would translate into a pay review.

Flarry and Gray agreed that while payroll professionals are key workers, they may not have been viewed that way by everyone.

Gray felt that payroll has not really had its profile raised and was frustrated by the lack of acknowledgment. While Flarry hoped that in time, more employers and employees would come to appreciate the function. ■

Amber-Ainsley Pritchard, editor, *Reward Strategy*

"LUSH UNDERSTANDS THE IMPORTANCE OF PAYROLL"

Aaron Mudd, European pay and benefits manager at Lush, on sociocracy, the pandemic and being recognised by the handmade cosmetics company's founders

In such unusual circumstances, as COVID-19 has the UK on lockdown, *Reward Strategy* continues to profile the professionals now classed as key workers.

Over video call, Amber-Ainsley Pritchard spoke with Aaron Mudd, European pay and benefits manager at Lush, to discuss how he fell into payroll via a nightclub, why the company uses sociocracy to make business decisions and the impact the pandemic could have on the profession.

ALP: How did you come to work in pay and benefits?

AM: "I was thinking about what to do after school and my dad was pushing me into computer science at university, but I didn't want to do that. I decided to get a job and maybe go to university in the future.

"I found a job that I thought was quite interesting and got it, it was doing the admin for a guy that owned a few nightclubs in Bournemouth. The payroll manager asked me to help one day and I really enjoyed the connection payroll had with employees, dealing with their issues and helping them find solutions. That payroll manager was then made redundant and I was asked if I wanted to take over. That's how I fell into payroll, 17 years ago.

"I've been at Lush for close to 10 years now and we have grown quite big in that time.

"I really enjoy what I do, so about five years ago I asked if I could expand my role from the UK into Europe, as well as look at the benefits side of things - they said yes!"

ALP: You work across payroll and benefits, does that mean Lush has a separate reward function?

AM: "No, it all sort of comes to me."

ALP: So what exactly does your job entail and what does your team look like?

AM: "In the UK I have seven in the payroll team, which equates to about five full-

"The UK is more progressive, in terms of being proactive"

***Reward Strategy*, about Lush not having a HR function. Would HR duties come under those in people experience?**

AM: "People experience taps into everything really. In the UK, it's looking at everything from the start of an employee's journey all the way through to the end - making sure it's the best experience possible.

"In other countries they are developing into that role, but they focus more on employee relation issues, such as dealing with grievances and disciplinaries. In the UK it's a bit more progressive, in terms of being proactive and making sure when employees work for Lush, they have a lovely time and when they leave us, they are a customer.

"Other than the people experience team, we have the payroll team and a recruitment team, so if you look at those teams as whole - it's probably considered HR."

ALP: Is there a hierarchy between those teams?

AM: "It's actually quite a flat structure at Lush. I report into one of the board directors and the people experience manager reports into another, but they don't really manage us. There aren't reporting lines as such.

"We have a people circle that comes together and uses sociocracy to make decisions. It's a combined effort and opinion - if there is enough of you thinking the same thing or coming up with the same answer, it's probably the right thing to do."

ALP: Does that mean you hear about issues that may affect payroll as soon as they happen?

AM: "My immediate boss is the finance director and she sits on the board, so as soon as there is a mention of something that might affect payroll, or that I might generally have an opinion on, she is very open and communicates back to me straight away looking for ideas. I am quite lucky in terms of that relationship."

time individuals, and they look after UK manufacturing, head office, digital teams and UK retail.

"I don't manage the day-to-day of Europe on a whole, as each country has its own experts, but I have recently started managing France.

"My role across Europe is to offer support and guidance as we (in the UK) have experienced most of the issues they come across five to 10 years in advance."

ALP: Do you have separate benefits professionals in your team, or does everyone do both?

AM: "Everyone has a combined role on both pay and benefits, but we also have a people experience team who will look after benefits.

"Most countries will have someone running people experience and I will work closely with that person, but if they don't - for example, countries that may only have two or three stores, someone in finance will often be relied on to come up with a benefits package, so I'll step in and help create something in that country."

ALP: You previously wrote an article for

ALP: Does that mean the payroll function feels valued at Lush?

AM: "Oh yes, immensely so. I think that before I joined, they had a year of quite high turnover of payroll staff. There was one month where the whole of our manufacturing site just didn't get paid, there was a temp doing the payroll and they didn't escalate any issues and missed the payment deadline."

"I think it takes something like that to happen to highlight the importance of payroll. When you have 900 people in a factory not being paid, you wonder if they are actually going to turn up for work."

"Lush understands the importance of payroll. The founders always mention the work we are doing, paying people."

ALP: There are many payrollers that feel undervalued at their companies. Do you think COVID-19 will change how the function is portrayed?

AM: "I think the pandemic will emphasise what an essential role to the business payroll is, but the profession's profile has been building for a while. Since things like the auto-enrolment requirements came in, the apprenticeship levy and with constantly changing legislation, more people have recognised payroll and been coming to them for solutions."

"I would say that payroll professionals need to adapt to all the changes that come their way and become leaders on them, speak about the affects they will have on the business and have their voice heard."

ALP: You've been working at Lush for nearly 10 years. How has your role changed as the scope of payroll has widened into reward?

AM: "When I joined my main function was payroll, but Lush was just setting up the first phase of the people experience team. Myself and two others would get together to talk about it. To begin with it focussed mostly on employment law, which I have always enjoyed, but



more HR-style work began to pour in. My role widened to cover HR elements, such as drafting employee contracts, including the wording, amending staff handbooks and looking at pay structures.

"My role has definitely become more strategic, which is great because you can get involved in all sorts of things."

ALP: What does it mean to you to be a Reward 300 member?

AM: "I love being part of the index, it's great to be recognised for your work in the profession."

"I don't think many sectors have anything like this and payroll is normally quite forgotten, so being part of such a prestigious index is great to reflect your contribution to the profession." ■

Amber-Ainsley Pritchard, editor, Reward Strategy

Mudd comments on the measures and affects COVID-19 is having on Lush, as part of the cover feature on pages 14-17



Aaron Mudd: THE CV

European pay and benefits manager

Lush Fresh Handmade Cosmetics
Oct 2015 - present

Payroll manager UK&ROI

Lush Fresh Handmade Cosmetics
Dec 2011 - Sept 2015

Payroll administrator

Clifford Fry & Co
May 2011 - Nov 2011

HR and payroll manager

Foremost Hotel Services
June 2007 - Sept 2011

“OUR VOICE WILL BE STRONGER THAN EVER”

Maria Stark explains how COVID-19 will give payroll the push it needs to be recognised as a crucial business function

After more than 30 years in payroll, I didn't think there was much that could surprise me - let alone destabilise the equilibrium that exists within a monthly payroll cycle.

The steady stream of data input versus output, the standard reporting each month, the annual year-end and legislation updates, the ebb and flow of queries, yet all of this was turned upside down with the pandemic that is sweeping the world.

Previously, the payroll department seemed to be hidden and only noticed when something went wrong, but the tide has been turning. Management are beginning to realise the value-add that payroll could bring, but payroll is still left behind when it comes to information gathering - teams wonder why payroll would need to be involved when a merger is underway or when a new HR and payroll system is being considered...

Since COVID-19 has effected all parts of the business, payroll has been crucial. From working out how furloughed employees can be paid, how and when redundancies need to be processed and vitally, how to carry on paying employees.

Recognition, finally

With the announcement, by the UK government, that payroll professionals are key workers, a spotlight has fallen firmly on my chosen career.

Payroll has been recognised as a fundamental role that will be crucial during the crisis, by ensuring employees continue to be paid, thereby supporting the UK economy.

It should be realised by all those in senior management, that payroll is a critical function. Where would a business be if employees did not get paid on time and accurately?

Payroll is a department that is often underfunded, but over-criticised. I have advocated for payroll to be involved in decision-making for many years and

for teams to be recognised as experts in their own field, as well as extremely knowledgeable in HR and accounting.

The pandemic has promoted the profile of payroll across the globe. The necessity of continuing to pay a workforce on time and accurately has never been more important.

At the very least, a payroll team can provide a substantial amount of data to aid and guide a business through decision-making. Payroll deserves to have a voice at board level, yet many companies do not even have representation at an executive leadership level.

At this point in time, the future may seem uncertain for many, but I am confident that my profession will bounce back stronger than ever with a voice ready to be heard.

Payroll professionals have shown a sustained determination, ensuring employees are paid while adhering to ever-changing compliance rules, acting as project managers as the world continues to change, dealing with balance sheets and the Treasury, acting as counsellors for concerned team members and employees, in these rough times.

The world will seem very different following the pandemic; the ways of working we have had to adopt may be a permanent change and the voice that payroll has gained will have a strength and purpose never seen before.

I am and always have been in contact with colleagues in countries across the globe, in a professional, personal and advisory position, and the one message that is coming through loud and clear is that payroll now has a voice being heard and this needs to remain the case.

Payroll leaders must take this opportunity to fast-track and sustain the recognition that's been gained as of late. ■

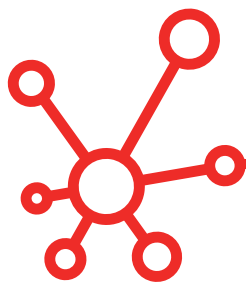
Maria Stark, EMEA payroll manager, AVEVA



Maria Stark, AVEVA

“Payroll is a department that is often underfunded, but over-criticised”

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DURING NATIONAL
PAYROLL WEEK



DAY 1: TUESDAY 8 September

- 10:30 Registration and check-in
- 11:15 1-2-1 payroll surgery sessions with The Payroll Centre's tutors
- 12:00 Lunch served
- 12:45 Conference introduction and welcome
- 13:15 A review of the payroll industry
- 14:00 Payroll in the 20s
- 14:45 Tea and coffee served
- 15:15 COVID-19: What did we learn?
- 16:10 **Breakout session 1**
Reward and benefits in the workplace
- Breakout session 2**
COVID-19: Business continuity
- Breakout session 3**
Optimisation and global management
- 18:30 **THE REWARD 300**
GALA DINNER & AWARDS

DAY 2: WEDNESDAY 9 September

- 08:00 Registration, coffee and croissants
- 09:10 Keynote speaker
- 09:45 Employment law
- 10:30 Tea and coffee served
- 11:00 **Breakout session 1**
Optimisation and global management
- Breakout session 2**
International Payroll and HR update
- Breakout session 3**
Plan, process, manage, report
- 11:50 Pension changes: Pension dashboards explained
- 12:30 Lunch served
- 13:30 **Breakout session 1**
Trends and challenges in payroll
- Breakout session 2**
Brexit, Britain's left the building
- Breakout session 3**
UK devolution in work and payroll
- 14:15 **Breakout session 1**
Policies: Managing staff and leave
- Breakout session 2**
Company transparency
- Breakout session 3**
The payroll professionals roundtable
- 15:00 Tea and coffee served
- 15:15 Me and my team: What's our future?
- 15:45 Conference round up, key learnings and what the future holds
- 16:20 Conference closes



THE
REWARD 300
— GALA DINNER & AWARDS —

8 Sept 2020 | Chelsea Harbour London

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THE WHO, WHAT AND HOW OF FURLOUGHING

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme is now open for claims. The CIPP's Lora Murphy answers the most popular payroll questions on furloughing



Lora Murphy
CIPP

“An employee must not complete any work for the employer”



Over the course of the past month, it has been impossible to complete a sentence without reference to COVID-19.

The pandemic has had a significant impact on the way that people are able to lead their lives, and the UK government has introduced measures to help businesses and individuals through this outbreak.

Many of the measures have had massive implications for payroll departments across the UK.

The chancellor, Rishi Sunak, announced that in scenarios where employees would have otherwise been made redundant due to the crisis, employers could instead place them on furlough under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS).

According to Wikipedia: “furlough – from the Dutch word ‘verlof’, leave of absence – is a temporary leave of employees due to special needs of a company or employer, which may be due to economic conditions at the specific employer or in the economy as a whole.”

Employees placed on furlough are unable to complete any work for the business that had placed them on furlough and the company can claim 80 percent of employee salaries back, to a cap of £2,500 per month.

Guidance for both employers and employees has been published, but both are constantly being updated to maintain pace with the vast number of questions being raised, so it is essential to visit gov.uk on a regular basis, to ensure that you remain as up-to-date as possible.

At the time of writing, our team at the CIPP has put together answers to some of the most frequently asked questions raised by payroll professionals*.

“While an employee is on furlough, the employer cannot claim for SSP”

- Registration Number;
- The claim period (start and end date);
- Amount claimed (per the minimum length of furloughing of three consecutive weeks);
- Bank account number;
- Bank sort code;
- Contact name;
- Contact phone number.

Which types of employees/individuals can employers claim the CJRS for?

Employees on various contracts can be placed on furlough, including those on zero-hour, agency, flexible or temporary contracts. It is also open to both part-time and full-time staff.

Employees cannot claim for themselves, but must allow their employers to claim on their behalf – employers will also be responsible for paying employees.

Employees must have been on PAYE payroll on or before March 19 2020, and have been included on a Real Time Information (RTI) submission to HMRC by that date.

Office holders, company directors, salaried members of Limited Liability Partnerships, agency workers, individuals working for umbrella companies and limb (b) workers, can be claimed for on the proviso that they are paid via PAYE.

If a public sector organisation wants to furlough a contractor, this is allowed but it would need to be agreed with both the contractor’s Personal Service Company (PSC) and the fee-payer, which would normally be the agency responsible for paying the PSC.

What employer on-costs can be claimed?

Employer National Insurance (NI) contributions on the subsidised furlough pay can be claimed.

If the employer wishes to top up employee pay, then the associated additional employer NI contributions cannot be claimed for.

Which employers can claim through the CJRS?

Employers who created and started a PAYE payroll scheme on or before March 19 2020, who are enrolled for PAYE online and have a UK bank account, are eligible for the scheme. The process for enrolling for PAYE online can take up to 10 days.

Businesses, charities, recruitment agencies and public authorities with a UK payroll are all able to apply.

What do you need to claim?

Employers will need:

- Employer PAYE reference number;
- The number of employees being furloughed;
- National Insurance numbers for the employees to furlough;
- Names of the employees to furlough;
- Payroll/works number for the employees to furlough;
- Self-Assessment Unique Taxpayer Reference or Corporation Tax Unique Taxpayer Reference or Company



“File-only agents won’t be authorised to make the claim”

The same is true for employer pension contributions. Employer pension contributions due on the subsidised furlough pay, in line with the minimum automatic enrolment employer contribution of three percent on qualifying earnings, can be reclaimed. Contributions beyond this amount will need to be funded by the employer.

The Apprenticeship Levy should continue to be paid where applicable, as the CJRS will not cover the associated amounts.

Can an employee work while on furlough?

An employee must not complete any work for the employer that has placed them on furlough, including anything that involves providing services or generating revenue for them.

If an employee has multiple employers, they can be furloughed by each. Each job is counted separately and the cap applies to each employer.

Employees can also be furloughed in one job and be receiving the associated payment, but continue to work for another employer and earn their standard wage should the employment contracts permit this.

In scenarios where employers are hiring new employees, who are on furlough with a different employer, Statement C should be selected on the starter checklist form to ensure accurate taxation of pay.

Do employees need to be furloughed for a minimum period of time?

The minimum period of furlough is three weeks.

How does furlough interact with sick leave?

If employees are on sick leave or self-isolating for reasons relating to COVID-19, they may be eligible for Statutory Sick Pay (SSP). Employees who cannot attend work, as they are

shielding, as per public health guidance, or where they are required to stay at home with someone who is shielding, are eligible for the furlough scheme.

SSP will be paid to employees from day one of sickness, as opposed to day four, for absences relating to the virus.

Employers with less than 250 employees at 28 February 2020, will be able to claim back up to two weeks’ worth of SSP per eligible employee through the SSP rebate scheme.

The CJRS and SSP rebate schemes can be used for the same employee, but not for the same period of time. While an employee is on furlough, the employer cannot claim for SSP.

Are agents able to reclaim on behalf of their clients through the CJRS?

HMRC guidance has confirmed that agents who are authorised to act on behalf of their clients for PAYE purposes will also be able to make claims through the CJRS for their clients.

File-only agents, however, won’t be authorised to make the claim and the client will be responsible for making the claims themselves.

File-only agents may be asked, by the client, to provide information that they will need in order to make the claim.

The best advice

To reiterate the opening sentiment of this piece, the best advice that anyone can give is to continue to visit the relevant employer guidance pages.

Keep up-to-date with the latest guidance on the workings of the CJRS, by visiting gov.uk ■

Lora Murphy, senior policy liaison officer, CIPP

*These answers were correct at the time of writing, April 15 2020

HOW TO PROTECT SAVERS FROM THE PANDEMIC

The Pensions Regulator shares what it's doing to protect pensions during the crisis and what you can do to help savers

Since the COVID-19 outbreak, The Pensions Regulator (TPR) has released new guidance to protect savers and help trustees, administrators and employers.

Trustees and scheme managers

Trustees will have more time to consider the scheme's and employer's situation. They will be able to decide to delay concluding their valuation and establishing their deficit recovery plan if they need to, by up to three months, and we won't take regulatory action.

We've also advised that defined benefit (DB) trustees should be open to accommodate requests from the employer to reduce or suspend deficit recovery contributions (DRCs), in line with the principles set out in our guidance.

What to tell savers

We want employers to ensure those paying into a workplace pension and those who have a long time to retirement, understand that, historically, financial markets have recovered from shocks. The current volatility might have no impact on their ultimate retirement benefit.

Defined contribution (DC) savers close to, or considering retirement, may have already seen their pension moved into investments less vulnerable to market volatility.

We are doing all we can to support trustees in managing these risks and protect benefits. We're calling on scheme trustees to ensure they follow the right process if asked to make a transfer, ensuring people take appropriate advice from a Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) regulated adviser.

Our position remains that savers with DB pensions should understand it's unlikely that transferring into a different type of arrangement will be in their best long-term interests.

Market volatility and uncertainty over employment may prompt people to look again at their short and long-term household finances.

While worries about immediate priorities are understandable, they should not lead to knee-jerk decisions.

Another area for concern, where employers should step in to make sure their savers are aware, is the possibility of scammers taking advantage of peoples' worries to persuade them into transferring funds into bogus investments.

It's important employers make sure their employees know the dangers of unsolicited investment advice and are not persuaded to follow it.

We've renewed our focus on ensuring savers can spot a scam by encouraging them to visit the FCA's ScamSmart COVID-19 guidance and check its warning list before making hasty decisions.

Automatic enrolment

To ensure savers receive the pensions they are due, we are reminding employers they continue to have automatic enrolment (AE) responsibilities. However, we are weaving in as much flexibility as possible to support employers at this time. Measures include taking a proportionate approach to any enforcement decisions in light of the current pressures. And, while the minimum correct contributions must be made on time, we have written to providers asking them to be as flexible as possible when agreeing contribution payment dates.

The period in which schemes must report payment failures has been extended from 90 days to 150 days, to give trustees and providers more time to work with employers to bring payments up-to-date.

Employers can also access information about the government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, which allows them to claim back minimum AE employer contributions for furloughed staff.

Our guidance and range of measures will be regularly reviewed as we continue to respond to events as they unfold. ■

The Pensions Regulator



The Pensions Regulator

“The period to report payment failures has been extended from 90 days to 150 days”

HOW TO ENGAGE HOMEWORKERS

Ian Hodson explains how to keep employees motivated while in lockdown



Ian Hodson
University of Lincoln

“The best conversations are often those that happen spontaneously”



Only a few months ago, I wrote a piece for *Reward Strategy* on my predictions of future workplace trends. The piece focused on a need for organisations to adapt to more agile ways of working and to overcome any barriers they needed to do so - whether physical, technical or cultural.

Fast-forward to now and that physical barrier has been overcome much quicker than expected. The UK is on lockdown and the majority of the workforce has been forced to work from home.

Now that we have overcome some of the technical and cultural hurdles that came with our new working environment, it's time to reflect on some issues which may have been overlooked.

At the University of Lincoln, we have been looking at ways of ensuring our employees continue to feel engaged, happy and healthy:

Communication

When you aren't in the physical workplace, it can be difficult to stay up-to-date with what's going on and feel like you are part of an organisation. Therefore, we have updated our HR newsletter called "HR Line" and will be sending it out more often.

The newsletter will include changes to our policies, general university news, colleague stories, as well as tips on wellbeing and creating a safe home-working space. We also run a photo competition for a bit of fun with colleagues.

As for meetings, these have taken on a whole new meaning and whether it is a one-to-one or full team briefing, the use of Microsoft Teams or Zoom has seen us adapting to new tools quickly.

The problem with virtual meetings is that it's harder for everyone to have their say. You need to make sure the meetings are chaired and everyone has the chance to talk. That being said, sometimes it's employees' pets or children taking over the meeting.

"Just because you're at home doesn't mean development must go on hold"

My opinion is, don't fight it. Encourage colleagues to introduce their family and pets as part of the calls and this will make for a much more relaxed atmosphere and help colleagues look forward to the calls, not dread them.

Another way to keep meetings full of energy is to introduce a dress code or include some gamification, such as adding a challenge to the start of every session.

Lastly, it's important to remember key dates now more than ever. Get organised for upcoming colleagues' birthdays or work anniversaries.

At the university, we use e-cards to celebrate milestones. Don't underestimate the value a small gesture can make.

Wellbeing

Working from home creates a whole new set of wellbeing challenges.

From loneliness in isolation to stiff necks because of a bad desk set-up, these issues can easily lead to longer term wellbeing issues if not addressed

early. Here are some ideas to tackle them:

Social interaction: Make sure you have social check-ins with employees that are just about recreating the team atmosphere from the office. Think virtual breakfast and lunches or team quizzes and film clubs.

As we get closer to summer, and the fact we may still be isolated, it may also be fun to think about virtual sports or talent shows.

Another idea is to create a virtual water cooler. The best conversations are often those that happen spontaneously, so you could try to replicate this with an online message board where colleagues can leave a random thought of the day or a mind-bender puzzle to solve.

Get moving: Physical and mental health go hand in hand, so it's important you are urging employees to get away from their desk and do some physical activity at least once a day.

At the university, we have colleagues recording their workouts to share with the network.

Development: Nothing beats the motivation you feel once you have learnt something new, and just because you are at home does not mean to say that development must go on hold.

At the university, we have rolled out several online learning modules for colleagues to engage with, such as learning a new language.

However, these skills don't have to be work-related. Why not encourage employees to set up an online club or society around something they are passionate about?

So, there you have it. We have got to organisational agile working a lot quicker than expected and now we need to play catch up on some of the engagement aspects that can easily be forgotten about. Good luck and stay safe. ■

**Ian Hodson, head of reward,
University of Lincoln**



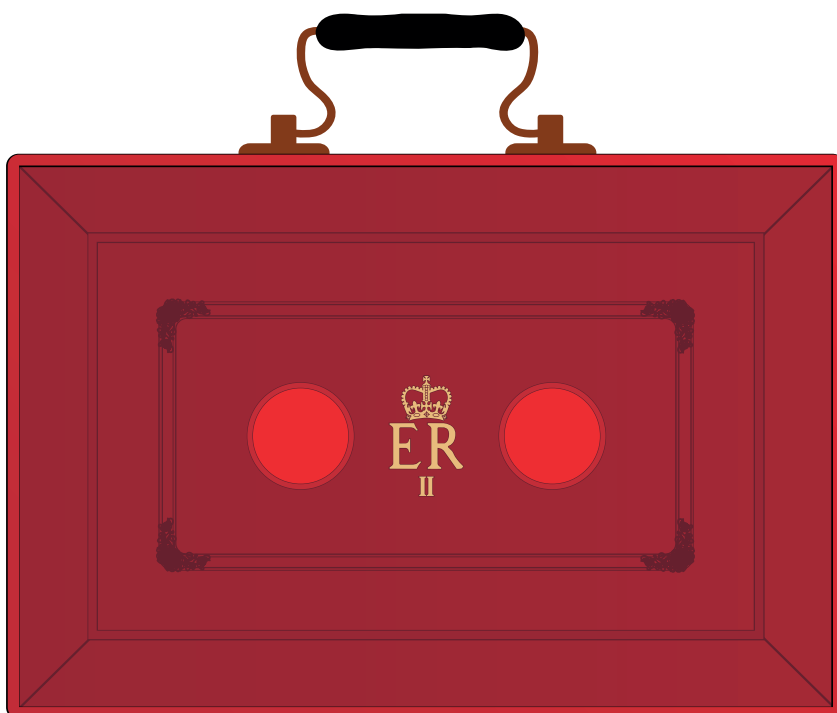
DID YOU FORGET ABOUT THE BUDGET?

Pandemic-related policies took over April, but that doesn't mean you should ignore the updates announced in the budget. Madeleine Mould reports



Madeleine Mould, *Blake Morgan*

“Employers will want to clarify contractual entitlements”



Understandably, the focus of many of government's recent announcements have been COVID-19-related and the March 2020 budget was no different. However, it also contained some key updates on other areas of employment law, set out in brief below.

National Minimum Wage

Following statements made in the Conservative's election campaign, the Low Pay Commission's remit was published alongside the budget asking the Low Pay Commission to make recommendations with the view of reaching a National Living Wage (NLW) equal to two-thirds of median earnings by 2024.

The budget confirmed that the NLW will apply to workers aged 23 and over from April 2021, with an intention to extend this to workers aged 21 and over by 2024. However, on March 31 2020 the Low Pay Commission warned that an "emergency brake" may need to be deployed revising the target timeframes set out above, depending on the extent of the economic impact of the current Coronavirus pandemic and the time required for the economy to recover.

Despite appeals from various sectors to delay the increase to the NLW and National Minimum Wage (NMW) in April 2020, the changes went ahead. The NLW increased by 6.2 percent to £8.72/hour. Changes to the other NMW rates ranged between 4.6 percent and 6.5 percent.

Employment Allowance

From April 6 2020, the Employment Allowance (EA) increased from £3,000 to £4,000. According to the government, this represents a doubling of EA in four years. It is projected to reduce employment costs for around 510,000 businesses, with around 65,000 businesses falling out of paying National Insurance contributions (NICs) entirely.

Unpaid carer's leave

On March 16 2020, the government published its consultation paper regarding its proposals to give employees a week of unpaid leave each year to provide care.

Around half of unpaid carers are also in work, so careful thought relating to the eligibility criteria and evidential requirements will be needed as caring responsibilities arise in the context of a variety of relationships and circumstances. The consultation period ends on August 3 2020.

Neonatal leave and pay

The budget included confirmation about the introduction of a new statutory right to neonatal leave and pay. This would apply to parents of babies admitted to hospital within the first 28 days of their life, provided that the hospital admission lasts for a continuous period of seven days or more. This definition of neonatal care may be extended to cover circumstances where the child is transferred into palliative care or neonatal outreach services, but this remains to be seen.

Qualifying parents will receive one week of neonatal leave and pay for each week that their baby is in neonatal care, up to a maximum of 12 weeks. This would need to be taken within a set period after maternity or paternity leave, probably in continuous blocks of one or more weeks.

It is likely that where leave is taken very shortly after the baby's admission to hospital (e.g. directly after statutory paternity leave), minimal notice will be required. However, longer notice will be required in respect of neonatal leave which commences at a later stage.

From their first day of employment, all employees will have an entitlement to neonatal leave with an entitlement to statutory neonatal pay for those employed continuously for at least 26 weeks and who meet the minimum earnings' thresholds.

Employers will be able to reclaim statutory neonatal pay from HMRC by way of a reduction in their NICs.

The Employment Bill will clarify what kind of relationship the employee is required to have with the child in order to qualify for neonatal leave. It is likely to be limited to the biological parents, the mother's partner if they will be living with the child in an enduring family relationship and the intended parents in a surrogacy arrangement or adoption case, subject to certain conditions.

Employers should give careful consideration to how this new right, when it comes into force, will interact with existing contractual entitlements. For example, under a compassionate leave policy. Employers will want to clarify whether such entitlements are intended to be inclusive of, or in addition to, any statutory right to neonatal leave and pay.

No date has yet been set for the introduction of this new entitlement.

Tax-Free Childcare

The budget also contained a commitment to make "service improvements" to the Tax-Free Childcare (TFC) system, to render it compatible with online school payment providers such as ParentPay. This is designed to increase uptake of the TFC scheme, which is an online system available to working families - with children under the age of 12 - to assist with the costs of childcare.

Under the scheme, the government will contribute £2 for every £8 the family pay in, up to £2,000 per year, per child.

Uptake has been relatively low to date, as the TFC scheme is not compatible with some of the most popular payment systems used by schools.

These improvements will make it easier for parents to use the TFC scheme to pay for wrap-around care provided by schools, which should ease the burden on working parents. ■

*Madeleine Mould, solicitor,
Blake Morgan LLP*

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