REWARD STRATEGY
INCORPORATING PAYROLL WORLD
Issue 221

AGILITY IN A TIME OF CRISIS

How pay and reward managers are ensuring business continuity

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PAYROLLS AND A PANDEMIC

Amber-Ainsley Pritchard

> "Payroll professionals will remain focussed on keeping us financially stable"

At the time of writing this, I am one of the last few individuals in my office. It's likely I will pack up my computer tonight and begin working from home tomorrow.

I'm not sure how it is in other parts of the UK, but day by day the hustle and bustle of London is starting to slow down.

COVID-19 has been in the news for a couple of months, but I'm not sure we - as a nation - realised how much of a real life nightmare it would become.

It's likely we'll follow suit of Italy soon and be on lockdown.

This is just the beginning and there's no doubt it will have an impact on each and every one of our lives; whether that be big or small, we are yet to know.

One thing we can rely on, is that payroll professionals will remain focussed on keeping us financially stable.

I initially wrote a cover feature for this issue on raising the importance of payroll, but given the fact COVID-19 has been declared as a pandemic, I decided to change this to focus on the ways pay and reward managers are ensuring business continuity to make sure we are paid in the coming months. It may not be what I originally intended on writing, but it definitely highlights how vital these professionals are to our workforce.

Because of the spread of the illness we have also taken the decision to postpone our upcoming events, the Payroll & Reward Conference and The Reward 300 Gala Dinner & Awards. The events were due to take place on June 3 and 4, but they will now take place during National Payroll Week - the week commencing September 7 (see p24-25).

We have also brought the date of the Autumn Update and The Rewards forward by one day, from November 11 to November 10, to help support other organisations that have had to rearrange their events because of COVID-19.

I hope that the world regains its health and I see you all before our first event in September, but in the meantime it's crucial we stay safe and support each other.

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ARE WE MEETING EXPECTATIONS?

In the first article of a two-part series, Rosemary Lemon asks if reward managers are fulfilling working millennials' needs

Rosemary Lemon
Hays

"No longer is the phrase 'a career for life' acknowledged"

Generation Y, better known as millennials, were born between 1981 and 1995. As they grew up, there was increasing speculation about what they would expect from the workplace.

These young people, the youngest of them in their twenties, have grown up with the internet, social media and email, that connects people instantly and allows them to see news unfold live as it happens. Technology like mobile phones and laptops facilitate their connectivity anywhere.

Cheaper travel has become the norm, enabling them to experience other countries and cultures more easily and become global citizens. At the same time, the environment in which they live and work has become tougher – more competition for jobs, higher cost of housing, more financial debt.

Studies and surveys have been carried out on what millennials would want in their working lives and how companies could attract and retain this new influx of talent.

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

I am mum to a millennial son, who has now been in the workplace for three years, and I had the pleasure of meeting him and his friends for a chat over dinner.

They are very perceptive and quick to tell me that I am not really speaking to a representative group – they have all been to university and have professional jobs – a fact I acknowledge. Charlie is a civil servant, Ash works in digital marketing, Amy is doing a masters degree while working for an non-governmental organisation (NGO), Harry works in fraud risk and financial crime for a bank, Mimi is a freelance film editor and John is an auditor for one of the big four consultancy firms.

I asked them what attracted them to the companies they are working for:

Learning and development

For those of them who work for large global companies, it was the exposure to early opportunities that played an important part in choosing their job. They had started work in an established graduate scheme, offering them structured learning in an area that allowed them to use their degree or skill set, had clarity of pay progression and the potential to work overseas.

For those who worked in smaller companies, the draw was their vocational passion or the specialist work that aligned with their interests. In addition, flat hierarchies, no bureaucracy, a casual dress code and reasonable hours (defined as less than 12-hour days) were also welcomed.

For all of them, personal and professional development was important. The ability to move around departments, the chance to be promoted and recognised without having to wait for a vacancy to occur and the opportunity to study in order to progress, were given as examples.

A career for, a couple of years

Most of them did not see themselves staying long-term in their current companies, a fact they considered normal at the start of working life. No longer is the phrase 'a career for life' acknowledged, the millennials said two to four years felt a reasonable time to stay in one workplace - unless interesting internal opportunities for progression occurred.

We talked about whether moving meant keeping the same type of role, but changing companies or having a 'portfolio career', for example, meant pursuing a new career path, taking a break, or setting up on their own. The answers were mixed.

The need to keep progressing was important - a change in role, but linked to their qualifications and experience.

Retention

What could companies do to retain millennial's talent?

Sabbaticals were said to be a good benefit, but in order to qualify for one you had to work for too many years. One company offered a six to twelve-month sabbatical after 10 years' service and this was felt to be far too long a timeframe and not enough to retain anyone.

Flexible working was viewed very positively with home working, condensed hours (possibly leading to a four-day week), a plus. However, hot desking had mixed reviews. In fact, it was suggested that hot desking created an unhealthy culture of its own, with a race to be first into the office to get a desk and the inconvenience of not having a working space to call your own.

Once again, personal development was very important and the opportunity to have short-term placements within a company to experience different areas, greater use of job shadowing and a career mentor from a different department, would be welcome.

Social events to help meet people from across the different disciplines would also be good.

Finally, a company-negotiated discount on travel and holidays would be appreciated.

None of the above actually requires a big budget, it just requires an organisation thinking a bit differently. Reward professionals - take note. ■

Rosemary Lemon, group head of reward, Hays

To find out how to engage millennials as ambassadors and become a more attractive workplace to younger generations, read the second article of this series in Issue 222.

THE GRATITUDE REVOLUTION

Ahead of World Health Day, Hazel Robinson conveys a strong but simple message about how you can better your workforce's wellbeing

Hazel Robinson
Brunel University London

> "The key to boosting mental health resilience is the sense of belonging"

When I started in HR, or personnel as it was back then, we had no idea how impactful our journey was going to be on the wellbeing of people - not only in the workplace but every single day.

The label of HR certainly misleads that we continue to count the beans (or is that beings?), as over the last decade the mental wellbeing revolution, led for employers and employees by the mere mortals in HR and reward teams, has taken shape and direction.

From the first day you walk through an employer's door for your interview, to the day you sail joyfully and fulfilled to retirement, we are working behind the scenes to ensure you have support for your positive mental wellbeing.

What does mental wellbeing look like?

If we could see it, it would be so much easier to describe, but we cannot. The World Health Organisation defines mental health as 'not just the absence of mental disorder. It is defined as a state of wellbeing in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community'. They go on to outline that 'good mental health is related to mental and psychological wellbeing'. This is a critical point, mental and psychological wellbeing encompasses everything we bring to our place of work, our holistic being.

This takes our journey as practitioners in the art of wellbeing into the hitherto unchartered territory of acknowledging that everything about a person's success is dependent on how they feel.

Culture of recognition

It is our time to lead by example and challenge employees and managers to do more for each other in the mental wellbeing game with a new phase, the gratitude revolution.

By revolution we are not talking about overthrowing governments, but taking the good that comes with revolutions, a new and ideally better way of life – to create a work environment that helps people feel great.

I often ask, in workshops, whether any one has said thanks today – the result is normally have a few timid hands raised. However, when I follow it up with who would have liked to hear thanks today, I see a whole lot more hands and some embarrassed laughter at the inequality of giving and receiving. And yet, we are missing the trick of just how good it is to give a little recognition for our own mental and emotional wellbeing.

As evidenced by the Mental Health Foundation, 'doing good does you good'. It provides the opportunity for employees to be recognised, encourages a more positive, productive and effective climate, and creates the culture where people are eager to go that extra mile.

The gratitude revolution enables us to create the environment for colleagues and managers to, themselves, feel really great as they have the opportunity to give recognition.

The key to boosting mental health resilience, in the workplace, is the sense of belonging that can come with having good work recognised.

Being part of a work environment where recognition exists can benefit our own wellbeing and that of our colleagues working with us.

I'm occasionally asked 'how can we create a culture of recognition?' and I feel the answer starts with each of us. Even if you are the first within your team to recognise a colleague or a team member, you won't be the last and you'll feel the benefit too – overall a positive impact for all involved.

How to show recognition

Technology firm Justworks outline an 'easy' five step process to set up an employee recognition programme:

1. Identify why you want to implement a programme;
2. Determine the eligibility requirements for your reward;
3. Decide how you will select your candidates;
4. Select your award;
5. Announce the programme and get it started.

As a management-led programme, this works fine – but why on earth should managers have all the fun?

Enabling recognition to be peer-initiated shares the good feeling about saying thanks, as much as hearing thanks.

At Brunel University London, we have two different programmes for peer recognition: Appreciation and Recognition.

• **Appreciation** is an opportunity for employees to say 'thank you' to a colleague.

• **Recognition** enables employees to nominate colleagues for going beyond their day-to-day work. In the event the nomination meets the eligibility noted above, the colleague will be rewarded with a £25 voucher.

And just to be fair to the managers, we also have a Manager Recognition Scheme, enabling nominations of employees for an award of between £500 and £5,000.

How to adopt the gratitude revolution

Recognition is easy, it starts by leading by example. You can initiate a recognition programme from providing thank you cards to elaborate portals, depending on the size and nature of your workplace.

It's pretty simple really – create the environment to enable recognition, encourage the culture and watch the results blossom. Yes, that does sound too good to be true and it certainly is not that easy, but it starts with an easy step every employer can make – say 'thanks'. ■

Hazel Robinson, associate director of HR, Brunel University London

THE REWARD 300 GALA DINNER & AWARDS

Last year marked the 10th anniversary on The Reward 300, so we celebrated this special occasion by evolving the recognition element to award the leading light from each of the index's sections.

We will continue this new tradition in 2020, by holding The Reward 300 Gala Dinner & Awards, sponsored by Cintra HR & Payroll Services and JGA Recruitment, at the Chelsea Harbour Hotel, London.

Given the outbreak of COVID-19, we have moved these events to take place during National Payroll Week - the week commencing September 7 - instead of early June.

The gala dinner will take place the first evening of the Payroll & Reward Conference, sponsored by Ceridian, Cintra HR & Payroll Services, Frontier Software, SD Worx and the CIPP, at the same venue.

The Reward 300

The Reward 300 2020, sponsored by Cintra HR & Payroll Services and JGA Recruitment, is an index of the industry's most important influencers and decision-makers.

The recognition programme began as the Payroll Top 50 in 2009, but has expanded over the years to better reflect the range of leading lights in payroll, HR, employee benefits, workplace pensions and the associated sectors:

- 100 Payroll Leaders, including 25 Global Specialists, *sponsored by Cintra HR & Payroll*
- 50 Reward Industry Luminaries
- 50 Leaders within Knowledge and Professional Services
- 25 Pension Professionals
- 25 HR Leaders, *sponsored by JGA Recruitment*
- 25 Employee Benefits Experts
- 25 Employment Lawyers

The Reward 300 Awards

Winners of The Reward 300 Awards will be revealed following the public release of The Reward 300 index, the night of the gala dinner.

The individual awards are for those who have gone above and beyond to help their peers, employees or employers, and have also advocated for the promotion of their profession in a way which educates and urges action to recognise the importance of their role.

Nominations for The Reward 300 2020 closed in March and the editorial team, in conjunction with a board of trusted advisors, have since carried out a consultation process and finalised the index.

Individuals who have successfully been included will be notified under embargo in April. In this email they will be asked if they would like to put themselves forward for the individual award relating to their profession. If so, they will be asked to write a 150-word nomination including three reasons as to why they are deserving.

A shortlist of these nominations will then be collated and judged by the editorial team and board of trusted advisors.

The shortlist be published online in May and the winners will be revealed on the night, followed by an online and print feature in *Reward Strategy*.

Current members of The Reward 300

For those members of The Reward 300 2019, *Reward Strategy* is offering a special discounted ticket, to those who have not yet booked, which will allow them entry to the two-day conference and The Reward 300 Gala Dinner & Awards, for £300 - which is less than half price.

To buy tickets, call 020 7940 4832 or visit the *Reward Strategy* website. ■

The Reward 300 2020 benefits

Benefits for The Reward 300 2020 will activate when individuals receive their embargo email; other than the final three benefits which will activate the evening of the gala dinner. As well as the below benefits, members of the index are automatically entered for a special award at The Rewards on November 10 2020, in London.

Individuals part of the Payroll Leaders, Reward Industry Luminaries, Pension Professionals, HR Leaders, Employee Benefits Experts and Employment Lawyers sections, will be entitled to:

- Complimentary *Reward Strategy* magazine membership, including print and online access
- A complimentary ticket to one of our conferences*
- 30% off all *Reward Strategy* conference passes and memberships for yourself and colleagues
- The opportunity to influence your profession and set the agenda, through first refusal speaking opportunities at events, becoming an editorial advisor and a judge at The Rewards
- Receive a Reward 300 pin badge and social media badge for CVs and email signatures
- Become part of a private LinkedIn group for current Reward 300 members only
- Invites to Reward 300-only socials

Individuals part of the Knowledge and Professional Services index, will be entitled to:

- Complimentary *Reward Strategy* magazine membership, including print and online access
- 30% off all *Reward Strategy* conference passes and memberships for yourself and colleagues
- Receive a Reward 300 pin badge and social media badge for CVs and email signatures
- Become part of a private LinkedIn group for current Reward 300 members only
- Invites to Reward 300-only socials

**Benefit from the complimentary ticket by booking at least eight weeks before the event.*

MEET THE NEXT GENERATION

Liam Gill is the face of payroll at Booking.com. Find out why he won a Next Generation Award at The Rewards 2019

"There's no pointing fingers and no blame games"

With aims to constantly develop their skills and ensure every employee knows what to do if something isn't right on payday, Liam Gill is an ambassador for payroll within his team at Booking.com.

Gill won the Next Generation Award - Over 5,000 staff at The Rewards in 2019. This accolade rewards an apprentice in the pay profession that is committed to promoting the importance of their work with impact, purpose and with people at the heart of the future.

Amber-Ainsley Pritchard met with the senior international payroll specialist, at the Booking.com offices in Manchester, to discuss how he became the face of payroll, how he finally got his teeth stuck into the role and how he thinks the profession can better prove its value to others.

ALP: Can you tell me how you came to be in the world of payroll?

LG: "It was that old cliché where people fall into payroll. I had just finished my studies and saw a job advertisement at an exam board - they were taking on more people for the summer and needed someone in payroll. I didn't know what payroll was, but as soon as I started I hit the ground running. I loved it."

ALP: What was your view of payroll before you started working in it?

LG: "I had absolutely no idea, because I'd literally come straight from studying. I didn't have any kind of knowledge about tax and salaries. It was all really new to me, but it was something I could get stuck into. I really enjoy it."

ALP: What does your job at Booking.com entail?

LG: "I'm one of two specialists that process the payroll, and everything and anything needed for payroll, for the transport arm of the organisation. "Our team of three, which includes the payroll manager, serves about 3,000 employees."

ALP: Where does payroll sit at Booking.com?

LG: "Currently we are sat within HR and I think that's the way it's always going to be. We have a great relationship with HR too, we have a good dialogue - there's no pointing fingers and no blame games. We are lucky in that sense."

ALP: Do you feel payroll is valued at the company?

LG: "I would say it is. We have a good reputation within the business and one of the good things about the company is that our payroll department reaches out to the employees through drop-in sessions. We sit with them and speak to them about any queries they may have.

"I have worked in companies before where employees don't see the payroll department and the payroll department don't see employees, but it's a really important relationship that's needed.

"In terms of value, I think it's hard because at a lot of companies payroll is just an end product - people getting paid. Payroll are just expected to get it right all the time, but when something does go wrong - it's the only time someone comes to see you. There needs to be some way for payroll to open up and prove its value."

ALP: So, how can payroll better prove its value and show that it's a fulfilling career and one to aspire to?

LG: "People don't really know much about payroll or how to get into it. They don't know what skills they'd build if they worked in payroll, but I think the introduction of the payroll apprenticeship is helping to educate people about this and realise there is a path into payroll as a career.

"Payrollers need to try and keep in touch with the business and make sure they are out and about speaking to as many other functions, and employees, as they can to help build awareness and help

others understand the value payroll can offer. Payroll has so much intelligence that could be utilised.

"There's a bigger motion, a bigger demand for payroll to be heard."

ALP: Does payroll have board level buy-in at Booking.com?
LG: "The payroll manager is at the forefront of anything regarding intergration, so she will get a say in that. In terms of the highest executive decisions, they will be cascaded down by the HR director."

ALP: Should payroll have a seat at the board, for example a payroll partner?
LG: "Yes. There is so much information that comes in and out of payroll.

"In businesses people are the most valuable resource and financially, they are one of the best controls you can have - you know how many employees there are and what they are paid. There is a lot to develop there and I don't think, from the outside in, there's visibility of what can be achieved from the payroll department."

ALP: Congratulations on winning the Next Generation Award - Over 5,000 staff at The Rewards last year! How did that make you feel?
LG: "I was absolutely ecstatic to be honest, I have been in payroll for nearly six years so I'm probably not classed as a payroll baby, but from the way I have worked in payroll I am. I have always worked fixed-term contracts and spent most of my time implementing new software.

"I was always joining somewhere to hit the ground running; there was never any time for progression or time for me to develop in my role and get my feet under the table and really sink my teeth in.

"Since I have come into this company, in August 2018, I have begun my payroll apprenticeship - January 2019 - and I've been able to put some of my character into the role and develop.

Liam Gill: THE CV

Senior international payroll specialist
Booking.com
August 2018 - present

Payroll specialist (interim)
BUPA
April 2018

Payroll specialist
Gazprom Marketing & Trading
Sept 2017 - Jan 2018

Payroll assistant
ITV
Oct 15 - Sept 17

> "I've been able to put some of my character into the role and develop"

"I brought my friend with me to The Rewards. I told her I didn't think I was going to win but when my name was called out I was ecstatic, I couldn't believe it. It was absolutely amazing."

ALP: Part of the criteria for winning was to prove you are committed to promoting the importance of the profession. Can you explain how you are doing that?

LG: "At Booking.com we currently have 72 nationalities within the business, because we are dealing with phone calls from all around the world.

"We actually relocate a lot people to work for us in the UK too, so it's important these employees know how to get a National Insurance number, what they are going to get paid, when they are going to get paid and how.

"If I were in their shoes, going to work in another country, and I didn't really know what I was getting paid and was feeling homesick, I wouldn't want to stay.

"For me, that's been one of my biggest drivers since I've been here. I have been given the responsibility of helping new starters get everything set up to join the payroll. That's a big thing that I have been doing to promote payroll."

ALP: That's great. It shows how payroll can be strategic and look after employee wellbeing too. Would you agree?

LG: "Yes. I have worked in businesses where payroll doesn't answer the phone to employees. How can payroll promote themselves if people can't contact them about their pay?

"It's very rare you are going to get 100 percent accurate payroll every time, so employees need to know who you are if something goes wrong.

"To me, it's important that as soon as a new joiner starts they meet you and you let them know if anything ever goes wrong you'll try to fix it to the best of your ability. That's why I introduced drop-in sessions when I started - to let people know who we - payroll - are.

"When I first started, I was getting people who had started with the company in 2016 sitting down with me and saying 'please can you just talk me through my payslip? I don't really know what's going on here'. It's a great feeling once you've helped that person, and they say 'okay I know what's going on now'.

"All I really want is for everyone in the business to be able to get their payslip, know what they've been paid and if it's not right, know that payroll will fix it there and then. That's what's really important to me."

ALP: What would you say is your future in payroll?

LG: "For now, I'm stationary. I'm happy with how things are going - getting new opportunities to learn new things.

"I think you've just got to keep on soaking it up, so to speak. Keep continuously developing yourself. I have always been really interested in continuous improvement and legislation, so I always try and steer towards that. If a new challenge comes up, I tend to go for it." ■

Amber-Ainsley Pritchard, editor, Reward Strategy

You can find out how to attract and retain the next generation of payrollers at the Payroll & Reward Conference, in London this September, see p24-25.

AGILITY IN A TIME OF CRISIS

Amber-Ainsley Pritchard asks pay and reward managers how they are ensuring business continuity – and paying staff as they work from home

Amber-Ainsley Pritchard
Reward Strategy

The new illness coronavirus (COVID-19) has been declared as a pandemic and the risk of economic standstill across the UK, and the world, is surging each day.

In the UK, offices are closing and possibly borders soon, but employees are still working - whether that be from home or not. Therefore, people still need to be paid.

Reward Strategy asked pay and reward managers how they are reacting to and preparing for COVID-19.

Most of the organisations we spoke to were able to work from home with ease, but this was not the case for everyone.

Michelle Sutton, head of compensation and reward at SUEZ Recycling and Recovery UK, said all employees that are in support functions are now working from home.

She added: "Our employees are required to carry out a risk assessment of their area at home, and to have a sensible approach to working from home. We understand not all employees are familiar with this, so we expect they may be less productive initially - but this will improve as they familiarise themselves with accessing data and settle into a working routine.

"Who knows, it may even prove to be a more productive way of working longer term and once we've proven it works well, a better work/life balance could be the end result and that's something we all aim for.

"It would be great if we could find some positive outcomes to COVID-19."

Steve Collins, payroll and reward manager at BP, said employees are now working from home and the company will review this policy on April 15.

Similarly, Maria McGoldrick, EMEA payroll manger at Aveda, said the company is able to work from home with no impact to their service. She said: "We have voice over internet protocol (VOIP), phones and company mobiles. As a global company, we regularly use Skype for meetings and the majority of our payroll is cloud based, so there is no impact."

One fast food retailer told *Reward Strategy* how they are ensuring their workforce is safe and healthy. It said that anyone working for them in an office that does not yet have the IT equipment to work from home, is being treated as a priority.

They said employee safety is a high priority and any employee that travels for long periods on public transport to work, has underlying health issues or lives with anyone with underlying health issues, have been told to work from home.

At the time of writing, the fast food retailer's payroll team was testing working from home for one day to understand what the pain points are and what structures need to be put in place.

The team has already completed a check testing BACS from home, but have said their contingency plan will be to come into the office if BACS files are sent and fail.

A payroll specialist with less flexibility is Dorota Luniak from NewDay, she said: "I'm not sure what's worse - the virus or working from home for companies that don't allow such things.

"I find the current times extremely stressful when my employer who normally bans us from working at home is suddenly requiring everyone to do so."

At the time of commenting, Luniak was due to complete payroll the following day but could not access her work's VPN. She travelled to London in hope to find an internet cafe where she could connect properly, because her workplace would still not let her enter the premises to complete payroll.

Luniak said: "The company doesn't even take into account the extra stress they are causing me. I think I prefer the virus.

"My biggest worry, at the moment, is that I won't be able to work for the time the office is closed and I will be perceived as a bad employee."

Statutory Sick Pay

Prior to the budget, delivered on March 11 by chancellor of the exchequer Rishi Sunak, Prime Minister Boris Johnson set out a package to widen the scope of Statutory Sick Pay (SSP).

Johnson announced SSP would be paid from the first day of sickness absence, rather than the fourth day, for people who have COVID-19 or have to self-isolate.

As part of the budget, the government responded to COVID-19 by setting out a further package to widen the scope of SSP.

The government will temporarily extend SSP to cover:

- Individuals who are unable to work because they have been advised to self-isolate;
- People caring for those within the same household who display COVID-19 symptoms and have been told to self-isolate.

Reward Strategy wanted to find out if the updated SSP rules were introducing any new challenges for payroll managers.

Luckily Aveda are not impacted as they offer sick pay from day one, but other organisations were having more difficulty.

Collins said BP were dealing with the updated SSP rules by using a tracker outside of their current systems.

He said the tracker will ensure all cases of self-isolation are captured and full contractual pay will be paid to those individuals for that period.

Sutton said the SSP legislation is tricky and constantly changing, but payroll professionals will do their utmost to get it right: "The legislation needs to be clearer and cover all scenarios to help us get pay right first time and to prevent further confusion.

"We believe this legislation will be available for eight months, so it's expected to end on 12 November 2020. We'll have to keep on top of this change too."

The fast food retailer agreed with Sutton and said the government did not help payroll by changing how SSP is calculated.

Working at a large organisation, Sutton added that SUEZ won't be able to claim any SSP costs back: "Therefore we may want to treat all illness relating to COVID-19 the same, and pay a day's rate of SSP from day one. We will do this by paying a company sick rather than SSP, until the employee qualifies for SSP.

"We've also created three absence schemes relating to COVID-19 and report on the absence rates daily:

- Sickness absence - precautionary self-isolation - COVID-19
- Sickness absence - COVID-19
- Workplace absence - COVID-19 - self-isolation and working from home.

"On top of these challenges, payroll teams are all working hard - this month - to get the UK paid as accurately as possible and on time."

Priorities

Reward Strategy asked pay and reward managers what their priorities were given the current climate.

Answers expected ranged from a focus on employee health, keeping up to date with SSP policy and the budget outcomes.

> "The company doesn't take into account the extra stress they are causing. I think I prefer the virus"

All organisations said the health and welfare of their employees was paramount, but running payroll and paying employees was the top priority.

McGoldrick said Aveda is prioritising contingency planning in the case their payroll provider or team becomes ill. She said: "We are also looking at the budgetary changes, as well as all the new legislation that comes into effect from April 6 i.e. average holiday pay and National Minimum Wage changes."

Sutton is also spending time reacting to changes announced in the budget, but said SUEZ are prioritising sickness absence and keeping in touch with teams - ensuring they are able to pay their workforce accurately an on time - despite their payroll, pension, HR systems and payroll teams all working remotely.

However, the payroll profession is worried about what will happen if payroll is not completed on time.

The fast food retailer queried if HMRC or the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will give the payroll profession any breathing space on missing deadlines or payments.

HMRC or DWP have not yet issued any guidance on this issue, but they have announced measures to ensure businesses and self-employed individuals in financial distress, and with outstanding tax liabilities, receive support with their tax affairs.

HMRC has set up a dedicated COVID-19 helpline to help those in need, and they may be able to agree a bespoke Time to Pay arrangement.

Time to Pay was successfully used in response to flooding and the financial crisis, giving businesses a time-limited deferral period on HMRC liabilities owed and a pre-agreed time period to pay these back.

These tailored arrangements will give a business the time it needs to pay HMRC to support their recovery, while operating through any temporary financial challenges that occur.

To ensure ongoing support, HMRC have made a further 2,000 experienced call handlers available to support firms when needed.

HMRC will also waive late payment penalties and interest where a business experiences administrative difficulties contacting HMRC or paying taxes due to COVID-19.

Further SSP guidance

Several measures that will affect payroll and reward managers were announced in the budget, but the item of most importance in relation to the pandemic is SSP.

As part of the budget, the government published guidance to employers, advising them to use their discretion not to require a GP 'fit note' for COVID-19 related absences.

The government also announced that itself and the NHS will bring forward a temporary alternative to the 'fit note' in the coming weeks which can be used for the duration of the COVID-19 outbreak. This system will enable people who are advised to self-isolate to obtain a notification via NHS111 which they can use as evidence for absence from work, where necessary. This notification would meet employers' need for evidence, whilst taking pressure away from GPs.

A set of measures have also been shared to provide support to businesses during this temporary period, by either reducing their costs or bridging cashflow problems arising from the outbreak, and to protect people's jobs.

The government said it will support small and medium-sized businesses, and employers, to cope with the extra costs of paying COVID-19 related SSP by refunding eligible SSP costs. At the time of writing, the eligibility criteria for the scheme is as follows:

- This refund will be limited to two weeks per employee;
- Employers with fewer than 250 employees will be eligible. The size of an employer will be determined by the number of people they employed as of February 28 2020;
- Employers will be able to reclaim expenditure for any employee who has claimed SSP (according to the new eligibility criteria) as a result of COVID-19;
- Employers should maintain records of staff absences, but should not require employees to provide a GP fit note;
- The eligible period for the scheme will commence from the day on which the regulations extending SSP to self-isolators come into force;
- While existing systems are not designed to facilitate such employer refunds for SSP, the government will work with employers over the coming months to set up a repayment mechanism for employers as soon as possible.

“The legislation needs to be clearer to help us get pay right first time”

The government said the best system of financial support for self-employed individuals and employees below the Lower Earnings Limit, who are ineligible for SSP, is the welfare system - in particular the Employment and Support Allowance and Universal Credit.

To support these individuals further, the budget announced support making quicker and easier to receive benefits:

- 'New style' Employment and Support Allowance will be payable for people directly affected by COVID-19 or self-isolating according to government advice for from the first day of sickness, rather than the eighth day;
- People will be able to claim Universal Credit and access advance payments where they are directly affected by COVID-19 (or self-isolating), without the current requirement to attend a jobcentre;
- For the duration of the outbreak, the requirements of the minimum income floor in Universal Credit will be temporarily relaxed for those directly affected by COVID-19 or self-isolating according to government advice for duration of the outbreak, ensuring self-employed claimants will be compensated for losses in income.

How to help employees

Reward Strategy's sister publication *Credit Strategy*, which has a broad footfall in financial services, has shared information on measures brought in by banks in response to COVID-19.

It is vital this information is shared by the pay and reward functions, to ensure employees are aware of the financial support available to them outside of the workplace.

At the time of writing, *Credit Strategy* reported: The Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) has confirmed it will allow the deferral of mortgage and loan repayments for up to three months, while customers may also be offered the chance to close fixed savings accounts to access cash with no early closure charge.

It will also offer refunds on credit card cash advance fees, temporary increased credit card limits and increased cash withdrawal limits of up to £500.

RBS said the measures are not a blanket provision and they will be offered to customers in financial difficulty on a case-by case basis.

"We understand that there may be circumstances where a personal customer may fall into financial difficulty as a result of the impacts of coronavirus, for instance, loss of income," a spokeswoman for RBS said. "We will look to understand each customer's situation on a case-by-case basis and can offer a number of options to help them manage their finances. We would encourage any customer experiencing financial difficulty to get in touch with us."

Santander, meanwhile, told *Credit Strategy* it has a team of experts on hand to support customers affected by COVID-19.

It said support for customers includes the option to defer or reduce repayments that are due and, like RBS, would be offered on a case-by-case basis.

Barclays confirmed that it would be following suit, removing penalty charges for customers to access their fixed savings accounts early and allowing temporary increases on credit card limits.

Challenger bank, Monzo, said it would be providing its customers with loans extra time to make repayments and set up repayment plans.

It also said it had set up teams specialising in vulnerability and bereavement who can provide customers with additional support and signposting to organisations offering free, independent and impartial advice.

The government has since announced that all mortgage lenders will provide a three-month mortgage holiday for customers that need them.

What else to think about

Further items that were announced as part of the budget, affecting pay and reward managers, are as follows:

National Living Wage

The government announced a new, ambitious target for the National Living Wage (NLW) to reach two-thirds of median earnings and be extended to workers aged 21 and over by 2024, provided economic conditions allow. Based on the latest OBR forecast, this means the NLW is expected to be over £10.50 in 2024.

This builds on the 6.2 percent increase of the NLW to £8.72 an hour that takes effect from this April, meaning the government is on track to meet its current target of 60 percent of median earnings by 2020.

> "Payroll teams are working hard to get the UK paid accurately"

The government said it is committed to reducing taxes on peoples' wages. The budget confirmed a tax cut for 31 million working people with the increase in the National Insurance contributions (NICs) thresholds for employees and the self-employed, saving the typical employee around £104 and a typical self-employed person around £78 in 2020-21.

Taken together with increases to the NLW and to the Personal Allowance, an employee working full-time on the NLW anywhere in the UK will be over £5,200 better off compared to April 2010.

Employment allowance

The government wants to ensure that the UK continues to be attractive to investment and remains a dynamic environment to start and grow a business.

To cut the cost of taking on staff, the government is increasing the NICs Employment Allowance to £4,000, benefiting 510,000 businesses.

Carers' leave

The government will shortly consult on the design of Carers' Leave: a new in-work entitlement for employees with unpaid caring responsibilities, such as for a family member or dependents. This will support hardworking people to balance their caring responsibilities with work, particularly women who disproportionately undertake unpaid caring activities.

Neonatal leave and pay

The budget announced a new entitlement to neonatal leave and pay for employees whose babies spend an extended period of time in neonatal care.

Employed parents whose babies spend an 'extended period' in neonatal care will be entitled to paid leave of up to 12 weeks.

Tax-Free Childcare

The government is announcing a service improvement that will make Tax-Free Childcare (TFC) compatible with school payment agents.

This will allow parents of up to 500,000 school-aged children across the UK to access TFC and use it towards the cost of their wraparound childcare.

Universal credit

The budget confirmed the end of the benefits freeze and continues the rollout of Universal Credit to support the most vulnerable in society, with extra help for parents of sick or premature babies, carers and victims of domestic violence. ■

Amber-Ainsley Pritchard, editor, Reward Strategy

"BUREAUS FACE POSITIVELY UNIQUE CHALLENGES"

Barry Matthews explains his rationale for creating a new organisation to recognise bureaus as a special payroll sub-sector

I've been working with the payroll profession, primarily bureaus in the accountancy sector, for 16 years. In this time, I have developed immense respect for the profession and the payrollers who care passionately about paying the 32 million people working in the UK, accurately and on time. But I have also come to believe that the bureau sector faces challenges which are positively unique and different to those handled by in-house teams.

Last year I hosted a series of Payroll Managers Roundtables in the UK, with the objective of bringing together bureau professionals to share experiences, frustrations and best practice. Using the data gathered from those meetings, I'd like to illustrate why I so strongly believe that, to misquote George Orwell, while all payrollers are equal, some are more equal than others.

Who does what

Research from my meetings found that the median sized bureau generates 5,750 payslips a month. Therefore, I have decided to compare what I believe are the workloads of a median sized bureau and an in-house payroll of a similar size, per month:

	In-house	Bureau
Number of payrolls	Typically, 2 or 3	390
Number of payslips	5,750	5,750
Number of payroll staff	6	6
Period ends	4 or 5	460
Pension portals worked with	2	12+
AE staging dates handled	3 or 4	300+
Client emails received	40	600+

Both teams manage precisely the same payroll legislation on behalf of roughly the same number of employees, yet they operate under starkly different pressures.

The introduction of pension reform began a period of major divergence in the workload between in-house and bureau payroll operations.

Bureaus handled waves of client staging dates during the phased introduction of auto-enrolment. During a typical month, a bureau would deal with up to 100 employer staging dates, each involving the associated rigmarole of establishing scheme types, contribution percentages, handling employee communications and so on.

The median sized bureau must also hit 460 deadlines every month, each involving RTI submissions, pension uploads and the dissemination of reports to hundreds of employers and payslips to employees.

Then there is the communication congestion which every bureau has to juggle. I recognise that in-house payrolls will have to deal with information coming from multiple sources containing starters, leavers, salary changes etc, but, substantially, it's coming from people within their own organisation.

The situation at a bureau could hardly be more different - they are dealing with hundreds of individual enterprises and, often, several people at each one.

Why this matters

I must stress that I am not downplaying the value or importance of an in-house payroll team. However, I believe that payroll professionals working in a bureau environment operate under incomparably different pressures and that they ought to be recognised as a special sector within the payroll industry. It is to that end that I am working with a number of major bureaus to establish an entirely new organisation in the payroll profession to represent them.

Our purpose is not to fragment the voice of payroll, but to augment it with extra vigour and purpose. ■

Barry Matthews, bureau strategy partner, Paycircle

Barry Matthews, Paycircle

"While all payrollers are equal, some are more equal than others"

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CPD CERTIFIED The CPD Certification Service

DAY 1

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	The payroll update		
16:10	**Breakout session 1** Reward and benefits in the workplace	**Breakout session 2** Holiday Pay: What's happening?	**Breakout session 3** Optimisation and global management
18:30	THE REWARD 300 GALA DINNER & AWARDS		

DAY 2

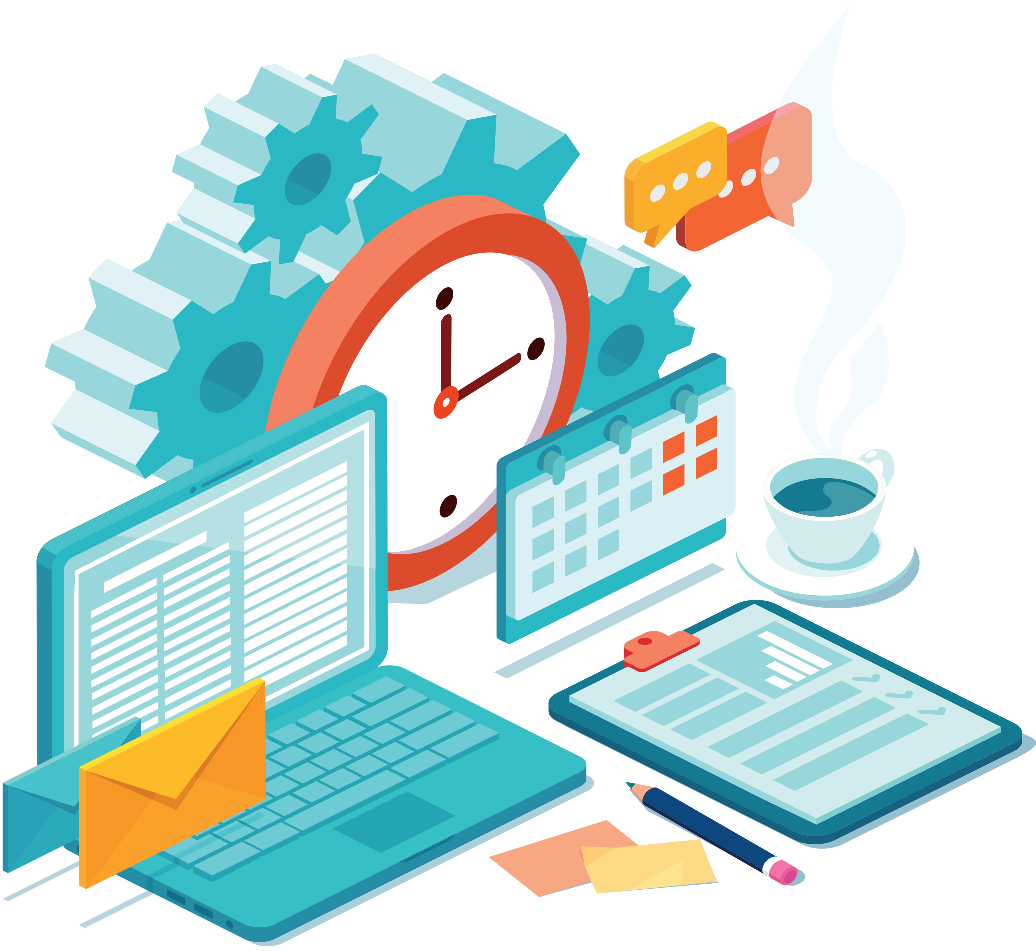
08:00	*Registration, coffee and croissants*		
09:10	Keynote speaker		
09:45	Employment law		
10:30	*Tea and coffee served*		
11:00	**Breakout session 1** Optimisation and global management	**Breakout session 2** International Payroll and HR update	**Breakout session 3** Plan, process, manage, report
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, Britian'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*		

HOW I PREPARED FOR IR35 IN 2016

Sean Brosnan explains how he implemented the off-payroll working rules in the public sector, at London Metropolitan University

Sean Brosnan
London Metropolitan University

"I had senior management buy-in - a major battle won"



It does not seem more than three years since I undertook the major project of implementing IR35 in the public sector, but here we are with the private sector joining us this April.

When I became a payroll manager in 1989, one of the first areas I got my head around was determining employment status. From then on, wherever I was, I made it my responsibility for the decisions regarding employment status - which is, potentially, one of the most complex areas of the payroll activity.

Starting point

In November 2016, I undertook a scoping exercise to see how many individuals could be affected by the changes taking place some five months later. I liaised with our accounts payable section who were responsible for paying our self-employed/partnerships/sole trader/limited companies by invoice - and who I would have had sign off for payment.

It took quite a while to determine who the potential individuals could be - I went back one year for all payments made that could be affected by the change, in the end we had about 300.

Senior support

In January 2017, I wrote a short paper for the executive staff drawing their attention to what was happening and highlighting the numbers of the individuals potentially affected, the problems that could occur and how I was going to manage it.

I was fortunate that they gave me their full support. We knew we would have retainment and recruitment issues, especially in our information systems department, so I was taking 100 percent ownership. It was made quite clear to me that the university needed to be seen to be adhering to the changes fully, and that my decision would be final.

This was excellent news as I had senior management buy-in. I had their total support - a major battle won.

Preparation

At the same time I wrote to the executive staff, I wrote to all the individuals who could be affected. I advised them of the changes coming into force and asked them if they knew that they were going to be engaged by us from April 2017, they contact their line manager so an employment status assessment could be made in order to determine how they were going to be paid.

I began making assessments in partnership with the line managers for those roles that were the same within the organisation. This then made determining status easier and gave me an opportunity of doing some housekeeping with those individuals who were previously deemed self-employed, but were now going to be employees. Whilst they were not - strictly speaking - viewed as an intermediary, I took the opportunity to change their employment status. This meant there could be three outcomes: inside scope, outside scope or employee.

I drafted new procedures and held a number of presentations to all the stakeholders within the university, including senior staff, budget managers, administrators, finance and HR, to explain the changes and how we were going to assess individuals.

The assessments took place with line managers. I never involved the individual as it was too emotive of an issue, I simply did not trust what they would say.

To make a decision, I used the Check Employee Status Tool (CEST) and requested a brief of what the individual was doing from the line manager asking the usual criteria: integration, control, rate of pay, substitute and use of facilities.

However, the CEST tool was not ready until very close to April 6 2017 and it was then changed on a near daily basis to the point that I did not use it anymore - it was not user-friendly. But, in a short period of time, I found out that the number of individuals we were engaging outside of scope was a very small number - they were either inside scope or an employee.

During this process, I also liaised with the agencies that we engaged with - making it abundantly clear that I was responsible for making the decision on the status of the individual.

Today

We have made some changes to our payroll system to accommodate the new title of 'off-payroll worker', we pay the VAT where applicable and have informed our colleagues in finance.

Every year I also review who is classed as inside scope, to see if their status has changed and inevitably there are a few.

It's been three years since IR35 was implemented in the public sector and no agency staff have been deemed outside of scope at the university.

Here are my key points for those now preparing for IR35 in the private sector:

- **Executive paper**: Promote awareness and get support;
- **Ownership:** Decide who will take responsibility and lead the project;
- **Scope:** Identify the individuals and the possible affects on the business;
- **Communication:** Write to all the stakeholders who might be affected and have procedures in place;
- **Assess:** Use role assessments, keep paperwork, an audit trail. The line manager has to be involved, not necessarily the supplier;
- I**dentify risks and costs:** Assess the increase in payroll costs, problems with retainment, recruitment and projects delays;
- **Review:** Check and determine possible status changes each year.

Sean Brosnan, head of payroll pensions and taxation, London Metropolitan University

Please note, this column was written before the extension of IR35 was postponed to 2021

LABOUR DEMANDS REMAIN STRONG

Charles Cotton finds businesses are investing more in skills and looking to employ more parent-returners

Charles Cotton, *CIPD*

"Employers are looking to hire more mature employees"

Our latest *Labour Market Outlook* report, produced alongside The Adecco Group, shows that most employers are predicting it will be business-as-usual when it comes to recruitment, retention and pay expectations over the next year*.

Consistent with previous reports, the tight labour market is making little difference to people's pay packets, with median basic pay award expectations for the year ahead stuck at two percent. Affordability remains the key factor (30 percent) behind this sluggish growth, which is perhaps not surprising given the UK's persistent weak productivity growth.

Other reasons cited by employers include public sector pay restraint (26 percent) and absorbing labour costs (21 percent), such as the National Living Wage. Employers who can increase pay said they were doing so to match inflation (43 percent) and in response to movement in market rates (35 percent). Other reasons include recruitment and retention pressures (29 percent) and being able to afford a higher wage bill (28 percent).

By sector, public sector employers are predicting lower increases (1.5 percent) than private sector companies (two percent), while SMEs are forecasting bigger pay rises (2.5 percent) in the coming months than larger organisations (two percent).

Widening the pool

On the recruitment front, employers continue having a time filling vacancies. Around two-thirds of employers (64 percent) who have vacancies report that at least some of these are proving hard to fill.

In response to this tough recruitment climate, almost half (47 percent) of organisations report making greater efforts to recruit from the local workforce. A third (36 percent) have widened their search to the local region or across the UK, and around a third (31 percent) are employing temporary workers or those on atypical employment contracts.

It's encouraging to also see a quarter (24 percent) of all employers have increased investment in skills in the last two years to address hard to fill vacancies. One in five (19 percent) have also offered more apprenticeships, rising to 29 percent among public sector employers. Similarly, it's good to see employers are trying to diversify their recruitment, with 13 percent reporting they are looking to hire more mature employees and nine percent more parent-returners.

Overall, the report shows that employer demand for labour remains strong. The net employment score in the public sector – the proportion of employers expecting to increase rather than decrease total staffing levels – increased for the second quarter in a row from +14 to +21.

Given that women already account for around two thirds of the public sector workforce, the increase in hiring by public sector employers is set to further boost the number of women in work.

After more than a decade of contraction, it's good to see the public sector has now turned a corner, at least in the near to medium term. But we should also not forget that the public sector has suffered a net loss of more than 300,000 jobs since 2010. It's therefore important that public sector organisations prioritise managing and developing their workforces, to empower and motivate existing public service employees - not just increase headcount.

Employers have held their nerve so far amidst the political uncertainty of the last few years, but it remains to be seen how they will respond to our post-Brexit trade deals. ■

Charles Cotton, performance and reward adviser, CIPD

**Please note, this column was written before coronavirus was declared as a pandemic*

TPR TO TACKLE TRUSTEE DIVERSITY

The Pensions Watchdog explains its aims to make the pensions profession more inclusive

At The Pensions Regulator (TPR), we are always working hard to ensure trustee boards are made up of the right people, schemes are well governed and savings are safe.

We have launched regulatory initiatives covering fair treatment of scheme contributions compared to dividends paid, length of recovery plans, investment governance and record-keeping.

Although it is early days, the results are very encouraging with a high proportion of lay (non-professional) and professional trustees responding to initial communications saying they benefited from better understanding of our areas of focus. The evidence shows that trustees are responding quickly to our regulatory approach and fighting hard on behalf of their members.

Knowledge and understanding

Further regulatory initiatives are also planned for later in the year, to check trustee knowledge and understanding. Trustees who fail to demonstrate they have the skills will be expected to improve or appoint an independent trustee. Trustees who fail to respond to our initiative can expect us to take action.

These regulatory initiatives will start following the launch of our revised trustee knowledge and understanding code of practice and updated toolkit. The upgrades are to ensure we are being clear about what we expect of trustees and what best practice looks like.

The relaunch of the code and toolkit are in response to the results our *Future of Trusteeship and Governance* consultation. The consultation highlighted support for our view that members should benefit from well-governed pensions and, crucial to that, is the need for trustees to constantly review and develop their knowledge and understanding.

Board diversity

The consultation, which received a record 114 responses, also asked for views on how we can improve trustee board diversity. We believe board diversity is crucial to making good investment decisions and giving good value for members.

Research we have conducted and external academic research all points to the fact that diverse groups achieve better decisions through debate and challenge.

Our own research, on gender, points to a strong correlation between gender diverse trustee boards and those boards which score highest against our measure of quality governance.

Whilst many responding to our consultation were supportive of reporting on diversity, it is clear we have more to do in building a consensus on the way forward, what we mean by diversity and how it should be realised.

We are keen to make a significant change to the current position on diversity and inclusion on trustee boards. So we will take the time to deliver a more substantive and sustainable change.

It's in the interest of members that their scheme is governed by a diverse board and therefore, we will be establishing and leading an industry working group to find ways of supporting schemes to take steps to improve both diversity and inclusivity.

The working group will create clear definitions of what is meant by diversity and inclusion in a pensions context. It will also deliver good and best practice guidance on board composition and how boards can make the most of the pool of potential trustees available to them.

Boosting trustee knowledge and understanding, together with developing ways to make trustee boards more effective - by helping to embed inclusion and diversity - are just some of the ways we are ensuring all savers are saving into well-governed and stable schemes. ■

The Pensions Regulator

The Pensions Regulator

> "We will take the time to deliver a more substantive and sustainable change"

WHY STATE PENSION RULES MUST CHANGE

Former pensions minister Ros Altmann explains why the increase in state pension age is causing significant hardship

Ros Altmann,
Former pensions minister

"A flexible band of pension ages would help meet a social need"

Record numbers of older people are in the labour market these days. As employment levels keep rising, labour force participation rates for the over-60s have increased significantly, partly driven by the controversial increases in women's state pension age. Both men and women's state pension age is now 66.

Many employers are taking advantage of the skills and experience of older workers, but some are not well, others are caring for loved ones and are struggling to soldier on.

The increase in state pension age is causing significant hardship and I believe introducing some flexibility in the state pension system would be helpful. Employers are often faced with difficult choices and having to fire people in these circumstances can be really hard.

Those employers with good staff pension schemes may be able to offer flexible working or early retirement on grounds of ill-health, but if they can't there is inadequate state support.

Many people desperately need to receive payments before they reach the ever-rising age. However, the current state pension system favours those healthy and wealthy enough to wait longer before drawing it, whereas those less well-off receive no recognition in the National Insurance (NI) pension, even if they have paid in for 45 or 50 years.

Even if you are terminally ill, have paid 50 years of NI and have no other pension, you don't get a penny until pension age.

Impacting factors

Unfortunately, there is no recognition of the enormous differences in healthy life expectancy across the country. Depending on where you live or what career you had, there is nearly 20 years difference in healthy life expectancy in the UK.

Average life expectancy may be rising, but forcing everyone to wait longer while there are such significant differences in healthy life expectancy, penalises those in the poorest health, many of whom will die without ever receiving a penny of state pension. Allowing some to receive money sooner would have social advantages.

Possible actions

I have called for more flexibility in state pensions, perhaps introducing a lower age at which some people could start receiving state pension, perhaps under certain conditions, and perhaps even at a reduced level, to recognise individual differences and the needs of carers.

Given the current social care crisis, there is clear social benefit in allowing early access to state pensions for family carers already in their early 60s.

Perhaps people who have paid 45 years of NI could also be allowed their state pension sooner. At the moment you only need 35 years on your NI record for a full pension, but you cannot start receiving any money until you reach the starting age - regardless of how many years contributions you have paid beyond 35.

A flexible band of pension ages would help meet a social need, could recognise individual differences and be a positive step forward for the current inflexible system.

The idea of encouraging later life working is excellent and those older people who still want to work can bring significant benefits to employers. Many firms are taking advantage of the fact employers pay no NI when employing people over state pension age, but not everyone can keep working longer.

Those who want to keep working can, but it is time to recognise the problems of older people who cannot or should not keep working. Allowing them early access to their state pension could be a real benefit to those citizens, as well as taking some pressure off employers who may want to help staff retire if they need to.

Perhaps a 'one nation' government could recognise the individual differences among least advantaged groups by allowing earlier access to their state pension. ■

Ros Altmann, former pensions minister

THE BENEFITS OF PAYROLLING BENEFITS

The new tax year is nearly here, so the CIPP's Lora Murphy reminds you of some payrolling benefits guidance

Lora Murphy, *CIPP*

"There is no requirement to complete P11D forms relating to each employee"

"Payrolling benefits can reduce risk in terms of penalties"

The payrolling of benefits was made available for employers to operate from April 6 2016, and heralded a massive advancement in the way payroll departments would be able to deal with the processing and reporting of benefits. Historically, this was something often viewed as an arduous and time-consuming task.

This was of particular significance for large employers with hundreds or, indeed, thousands of staff members taking advantage of a wide range of benefits. Each of which would need to be considered and reported on, on separate P11D forms for each individual employee. This would often be incorporated as part of the year-end process, which payroll professionals will attest to being one of the busiest, if not, the busiest time of the year, without the additional requirement for work relating to benefits and P11Ds to be completed. It is important to note, however, at this stage that the payrolling of benefits is completely voluntary, and that there is no obligation for employers to start using it.

In brief, the payrolling of benefits involves processing benefits directly through the payroll and collecting tax deductions from employees each pay period, in real time, to be sent directly to HMRC throughout the duration of the tax year, as opposed to waiting until tax year end, and reporting via employee P11D forms.

There are some substantial benefits to payrolling benefits, from both an employee and an employer perspective, and the high uptake of this method of recording benefits clearly demonstrates this.

For employees, there is more transparency, as they will pay tax that considers the benefits they are receiving in the tax year in which they are receiving them. Via the P11D method, the tax generated from various benefits wouldn't be paid immediately and would be delayed and considered in the following tax year's tax code, as calculated by HMRC. This would normally result in a lower tax-free allowance threshold, or a higher K code if applicable, meaning individuals paid higher taxes for benefits that they had received in a previous tax year.

For employers, there is no requirement to complete P11D forms relating to each employee, however the P11D(b) still needs to be submitted correctly and employer's Class 1A National Insurance contributions paid in line with existing deadlines.

The need for P46(car) forms is also removed, so there are substantially diminished administrative burdens placed on payroll departments - particularly at year end, but also throughout the tax year.

Another massive benefit for employers is that there is reduced risk in terms of penalties associated with inaccurate and/or late submissions of P11D forms – the employer must now only focus on the P11D(b).

How to calculate

It would be the responsibility of the company's payroll team to calculate the 'cash equivalent' of any benefits processed through payroll, which would need to be split equally across the tax year. To provide a relatively simple example, we could consider where an employee is provided with a benefit that has a 'cash equivalent' of £500.

The employee is paid via a monthly payroll and receives 12 payments each tax year, therefore the 'cash equivalent' would be divided by 12 meaning an additional £41.67 must be included on their payslip each month, for the sole purpose of collecting tax on that amount. It is not uncommon for payroll teams to use a notional pay element in order to process the figure through payroll.

Further guidance

All benefits currently offered by companies can be payrolled, with two exceptions. Those exceptions are living accommodation and interest-free or low-interest loans, which are subject to the beneficial loan charge. It is essential that these benefits are recorded on a P11D, regardless of whether or not other benefits are processed via payroll.

It seems logical at this point to advise that, once a company opts to payroll one certain benefit or a couple of specific benefits, it is not mandatory to payroll the whole variety of benefits that it makes available to its employees. For example, a company may decide to payroll private health care, but not cars, in which case, there would be no requirement to complete a P11D form for employees who are provided with private health care, but a P11D would need to filled out for any employees who had use of a company car.

Similarly, where an employee has both of the benefits noted in this example, there would be a requirement to document the company car on a P11D but no need to disclose any information relating to private health care, as they already paid tax on that benefit via payroll each pay period. This is to prevent double taxation on any of the benefits provided to members of staff, as it would not be fair if an employee paid tax on a benefit through payroll and also received an adjusted tax code to reflect the benefit the following tax year.

Employers may also choose to payroll benefits for some employees and not others, providing they apply the correct reporting requirements to the method they choose for the correct individuals.

> "It's not uncommon for payroll teams to use a notional pay element to process"

Important dates

There are some key dates associated with the payrolling of benefits which all payroll professionals should familiarise themselves with and consider prior to making the decision to use the method within their companies. The deadline for registering with HMRC to payroll benefits is April 5 before the tax year in which benefits are due to be payrolled, so to payroll benefits for tax year 2020-21, employers would need to register by April 5 2020. Employers can use HMRC's online service to do this.

It is assumed that once a company has opted to payroll benefits in one tax year, they will continue to do so in following tax years. So employers need to notify HMRC only in scenarios where they intend to stop payrolling benefits completely or if they are making any amendments, additions or removals of the benefits that they will be payrolling.

However, once an employer has chosen to payroll benefits in a tax year they must continue to use this method for the remainder of that tax year.

New benefits can only be payrolled from the start of a tax year, but new starters who join an existing benefit scheme already processed through payroll are able to do so. The employer can also process that benefit through payroll for that individual in line with other staff already in receipt of that benefit.

Another key date in the calendar for payrolling benefits is June 1, as this is the date by which employers must provide employees with details relating to all of the benefits they have payrolled, inclusive of: which benefits have been processed through payroll, which benefits have not been processed through payroll (if applicable) and the 'cash equivalent' of each payrolled benefit.

As previously mentioned, the deadlines for submitting the P11D(b) paying any associated Class 1A National Insurance contributions remain unchanged, so it must be sent by July 6 and paid by July 19 if paid by cheque and by July 22 if paid electronically.

Many companies have welcomed the option to payroll benefits as opposed to recording them on P11Ds at tax year end, but there are also others that prefer to proceed in line with previous processes and that is absolutely fine.

Whilst there are substantially less administrative duties for payroll departments at tax year end, there is still the requirement to correctly calculate and process benefits via payroll.

Payrolling benefits is completely voluntary and the most important aspect of processing and recording benefits is that it is done correctly, regardless of the method used to do so.

Lora Murphy, policy and research officer, CIPP

THE RACE FOR TALENT

Michelle Hobson explains why performance-based benefits could be the boost SMEs need

Michelle Hobson, Moorepay

"Pay and financial benefits remain a key hygiene factor"

Despite the uncertainty in the national and global economy, the UK labour market continues to show record levels of employment. When this is coupled with slow – and slowing - wage growth, it is encouraging talent to shop around. There's never been so many of us in work, and yet there are currently five jobs for every jobseeker in the UK.

For small and mid-sized businesses (SMEs) this presents some challenges: How can you grow and compete for this talent when bigger firms are offering higher salaries? How can you retain the talent you do have and avoid all the disruption and knowledge churn that goes with losing key staff?

Last year Moorepay carried out an *Employee Attitudes Survey* to understand how companies are giving their people the benefits they want and what they could offer in a bid to be more attractive.

One key takeaway was the existence of what we called 'the value gap'. Employers think 85 percent of their staff feel valued, yet just 73 percent of employees feel the same. To put that into context, employers are unaware of the potential flight risk of 12-in-every-100 employees.

The most-wanted benefit

Attracting and retaining employees is a complex task and there's rarely a silver bullet. From the transparency and clarity of HR processes and policies to the content of a job, working conditions, the personalities and relationships between colleagues, or the workplace culture, there are many factors affecting the employee offer and how valued we feel.

From our research it's clear that financial benefits offer the greatest disparity in the offerings between SMEs and larger businesses – 20 percent of SME employees said their employer offered financial incentives, compared with 46 percent at larger businesses.

At the same time, it's very important to SME employees - it's their top-ranked benefit. This is a pressure point, but for SMEs with tight budgets and little margin for error when building an employee package, the onus is always on bringing in benefits that 'wash their own face'. For that very reason, performance-related pay is often seen as a benefit that pays for itself - when linked explicitly to revenue and profit growth.

For roles within business development teams, this is often relatively easy to do and indeed whole business models (direct selling firms, recruitment companies etc) are predicated on this approach. But for many firms and many teams this link is much harder to define, and harder still to implement and manage.

An alternative

Employers could consider performance-related leave instead of performance-related pay. While not as common, performance-related leave is rated as an important benefit for their employer to offer by 10 percent of SME employees. And perhaps just as pertinently, flexible/remote working and a four-day week are considered important by 26 and 24 percent of SME employees respectively.

Positioned the right way, performance-related leave may suit employers who are keen to drive productivity and tap into the demand for variable, reduced and/or compressed hours that underpins the desire for these kinds of flexible benefits.

Pay and financial benefits remain a key hygiene factor – they have to be right to prevent dissatisfaction and reduce churn, and they are a potential weak point for SMEs competing against larger firms.

While the employment market remains so challenging, picking and implementing the right performance-related benefits could be the boost these businesses need to get–and stay–ahead. ■

Michelle Hobson, HR technology and services director, Moorepay

Please note, this column was written before coronavirus was declared as a pandemic

THE BUTLER BENEFIT

Megan O'Shaughnessy considers if the latest benefit on trend is inclusive and if so, how it should be communicated

Megan O'Shaughnessy, BT

"Employees are a savvy bunch and we mustn't underestimate their knowledge"

Employees are an interesting bunch; some are nervous about making decisions around their benefits while others need no assistance from HR at all and like to make an informed choice based on what they know. I am referring to that annual benefits enrolment window we are currently in on the run up to April.

About 20 years ago, the idea of giving employees the right to pick from a catalogue of benefits was a relatively new idea and something that employers were sceptical about. Fast forward to 2020 and you will be hard-pressed to find a business that doesn't give employees some degree of choice around what benefits they personalise their reward package with.

A more recent adaptation of this is the growth in concierge services being offered by existing and new benefits platform providers. The idea that employees want a VIP service is very real and gives a certain edge to a company offering. By concierge I mean a helpdesk/phonelines that employees can call up or connect with to take the work out of planning days out/events etc. Now, as with most VIP-type offerings, these do not come cheap and can somewhat put off some employees who are living on a precarious income.

The argument

There's an argument that if one is in the position to call a concierge service to obtain front row seats at a sold-out concert, they may already have a PA whose job it is to help with such things. If something like this only appeals to a smaller segment of employees, which surely it does, are employers being inclusive?

I think so - employees are a savvy bunch and we mustn't underestimate their knowledge of being able to find good deals and benefits outside of work.

In fact, when I have run focus groups or surveys, I tend to always find that employees like choice, they like being treated as individuals and having a plethora of options. It is simply expected that employees have a base level of benefits available from their workplace.

So, I think where we can really make a difference to the way employees use and benefit from their benefits, is how we help them choose which they utilise.

Communication

Bringing it back to that enrolment window, you typically have a month to engage with the workforce to get them to make their choices. People are busy, so it's important you provide simple information about the benefits such as how they can enhance their lives, as well as give employees access from anywhere, at any time and ensure you have a quick response tool to answer any questions.

This is what we do at BT, it's easy to do, has a huge impact and it works.

If you want to go the extra mile, there is some technology out there which will help you to pre-empt your employee needs by using algorithms to understand what employees are more likely to engage with. This can be powerful and has grown in popularity in the US, but you don't need to invest money in technology. The information is at your fingertips. For example, take a look at those who have opted into your dental scheme - for those who haven't, why not send them personalised communications letting them know you've noticed they don't have that benefit and tell them a little more about it? It's simple, but effective.

Think ahead and don't do what you've always done. In order to gain better results, you must do things differently. Different doesn't mean a heavy investment in technology, but at looking what you already have in a different way.

So, will the latest benefit on trend – a concierge service – take off? More than likely, but you can get ahead of the curve by simply analysing what you already know about your people. ■

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

REPORT OR BE DAMNED

Are you ready to report your executive pay gap? If not, Madeleine Mould explains what you need to do

Madeleine Mould, *Blake Morgan*

> "Supporting comments in the directors' remuneration report will be critical"

The *Companies (Miscellaneous Reporting) Regulations 2018* came into force on January 1 2019, requiring qualifying UK incorporated companies to include new content in their annual reports.

In addition to placing obligations on quoted companies, some of the new requirements apply to large private companies for the first time. These obligations require regular collation, compilation and reporting of relevant information. Company directors should familiarise themselves with the new requirements and plan ahead to ensure internal procedures are adapted for compliance.

While reporting generally began in 2020 (covering financial periods that started on or after January 1 2019), quoted companies have been required to illustrate the impact of share price increases on executive pay outcomes in any new remuneration policy proposed on or after January 1 2019.

Reporting on executive pay ratios

Quoted companies with more than 250 employees are now required to publish the ratio of the chief executive's (CEO) remuneration to the median, 25th and 75th quartile pay remuneration of their UK employees.

Employees' remuneration is calculated on the basis of full-time equivalent salary and benefit packages, whilst the CEO's remuneration is based on the single total remuneration figure (as published in the directors' remuneration report already).

The pay ratio is to be published in the directors' remuneration report, along with supporting information and an explanation.

The regulations provide three options for calculating the pay ratios, with a preference for collating the data and calculating the ratios from scratch (option A). Option B allows companies to use data from gender pay reporting and option C allows other recent pay data to be used. However, options B and C should only be used where it is not reasonable to use option A. The report must expressly state which option has been used and why.

As this obligation applies in respect of any financial year which started on or after January 1 2019, the first reports will be published throughout 2020.

As with gender pay gap reporting, the obligation to publish executive pay ratios could impact on engaging companies' ability to recruit and retain talent. Adding supporting comments in the directors' remuneration report will be critical in helping to give context to the numbers.

Statement of engagement

All companies with more than 250 UK employees must include a statement in their directors' report summarising how the directors have engaged with employees and taken account of their interests. If the company is a parent company, it is the total number of employees in the group which is relevant. The statement should describe action taken during the financial year to introduce, maintain or develop arrangements aimed at:

- Systematically providing information to employees which is of concern to them as employees, such as a business performance update;
- Consulting employees or their representatives regularly to take account of their views in making decisions likely to affect their interests;
- Encouraging employees' involvement in the company's performance through employee share schemes or other means;
- Achieving a common awareness amongst all employees of financial and economic factors affecting the company's performance.

It should also describe the manner and effect of this engagement on the company's principal decisions taken during the financial year. This pushes qualifying companies to explicitly consider their employees when taking decisions. For many, this will not be new, and the challenge is more likely to lie in evidencing the decision-making processes and methods of engagement in the report.

Section 172 statement

Companies meeting at least two of the below criteria are required to include a statement as part of their strategic report, describing how the directors of the company have had regard to the matters listed in section 172(1)(a) to (f) of the *Companies Act 2006*.

- Turnover of more than £36m;
- Balance sheet total of more than £18m;
- More than 250 employees.

Government guidance states that the section 172 statement must:

- Be made in a separately identifiable section of the company's strategic report;
- Be available on the company's website (or one maintained on its behalf);
- Remain available until the following year's statement is available or, if a subsequent statement is not required, until the end of that financial year.

All directors have a duty to consider the matters in section 172 *Companies Act 2006*, so again this should not have a significant practical impact on decision-making. However, large companies now have to actively demonstrate how they have taken these matters into account.

Further requirements

Additional statements are required from UK incorporated companies meeting certain criteria, covering:

- The corporate governance arrangements applied by the company;
- How directors have engaged with suppliers, customers and others in a business relationship with the company.

It is an offence for company directors knowingly or recklessly to fail to comply with any of the required provisions. ■

Madeleine Mould, solicitor, Blake Morgan LLP

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Website: www.cintra.co.uk
Contact: Geoff Dorward
Target employee range: up to 20,000

Cintra is an award-winning provider of HR and payroll software and solutions. Cintra prides itself on service excellence, built on mutually rewarding relationships. The mission is always to pay employees correctly, on time, every time and ensure the payroll process is 100 percent compliant. Cintra ensures all clients get full access to staff for legislative and system advice and support, as well as quarterly newsletters, a user conference and user forums, alongside a dedicated Business Relationship Manager. Yet, Cintra's approach is always having someone at hand for you when you need it that really makes the difference. Cintra doesn't do voicemail – you will always get to speak to a person who is happy to help.

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Target employee range: 50+

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CGI

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Contact: Clive Fautley

The HR solutions and services provided by CGI are affordable, scalable, secure, flexible and reliable. CGI offers a full range of HR processes using its own comprehensive and established payroll software and those of other major suppliers with whom it has accredited relationships. CGI's solutions can be tailored to fit clients' requirements and are built on the backbone of technologies such as cloud and intelligent automation. Additionally, CGI can blend with multiple HR software solutions which allows CGI to shape and develop services to meet your business needs.

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Target employee range: Unlimited

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INTELLIGO

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Contact: Fiona Cullinane
Target employee range: Unlimited

Intelligo is a leading provider of corporate Human Resource and Payroll Software and Services in the UK and Ireland with clients ranging in size from 300 to 20,000+ employees. Megapay, Intelligo's owned and developed flagship payroll system integrates seamlessly with MegaHR, a web-based enterprise level Human Resource solution. Built on a shared database this allows for accurate sharing of information such as job history, salary history, holiday leave, etc between Payroll and Personnel, ensuring key employee data is entered only once. Megapay and MegaHR are available to purchase as either an On Premises installed solution or on a Software as a Service (SaaS) basis.
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Target employee range: 50+

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Target employee range: Unlimited

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Target employee range: Unlimited

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Target employee range: 1 to 50,000

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Target employee range: All PAYE employers

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Target employee range: Unlimited

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