

## **Retention and Benefits**

Salary and bonus structure are important, but to be competitive in securing talent, considering additional benefits. In general, employers who offer enhanced benefits to their employees will generally attract more people to work for their organisation. There are many challenges for companies who are trying to recruit for current vacancies, and to retain the employees they have. Companies can put in place a range of benefits that will support the retention of employees, and enhance the company as an employer of choice. This factsheet details the various benefits and incentive schemes currently in operation within many companies that the team at the HR Suite deal with.

A survey carried out by Qualtrics and Sigmar Recruitment show that the most significant benefits to employees are:

- Private Health Insurance
- Paid Sick Days
- Educational support
- Flexible Time

It is important to note that employees have different needs depending on their age, lifestyle etc. For example, some employees value additional paid time off rather than a simple salary increase or bonus. Many companies now focus on an integrated reward package in addition to compensation to ensure the Company is the most popular for job seekers and candidates of different age groups.

Matching benefits to the individual require good leadership and relationship skills from the managers in the organisation. Working with their teams, and ensuring open communication will support the managers in securing that information to assist the organisation in identifying potential benefits that will support retention in the organisation.

### **EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE POLICY:**

Access to study is seen as a great benefit. An educational assistance program is designed to encourage employees to pursue additional qualifications relevant to their present position or future career in a company. This shows that the Company encourages and supports on-going training and updating in a range of areas that are job specific. It is advised that a policy be drafted where prior written approval by submitting an application form to their Manager. If a course is considered to be directly relevant to the employee's work, the Company can arrange financial assistance to cover the cost of tuition fees, examination fees and books up to a maximum amount per year.

Common assistance is outlined below:

- The Company will pay 50% of the fees upfront with the balance payable once the individual receives a distinction or minimum overall score of 85%.
- All fees paid are subject to the below policy in regards to termination of employment.
- If there are no formal examinations, the balance is paid when it is established that the employee attended at least 90% of the course lectures/tutorials.
- All assistance is subject to provision of relevant receipt(s) and/or invoices.

It is advised that Companies have clauses within policies to ensure that the amounts of assistance paid is reimbursed back to the Company on the termination of employees.

### **HEALTH INSURANCE:**

#### **Private Medical Insurance**

Private medical insurance is discounted by the main health providers in Ireland – VHI, Laya, Aviva etc. This benefit is cost saving to employees with families and can make or break an offer of employment.

### **Confidential Employee Assistance Programme**

To help support employees The HR Suite have a confidential Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) available for you as an employer to offer to your Company. This service is delivered by an independent, provider of employee support services. Their staff are specialists in fields such as well-being, family matters, relationship issues, debt management, consumer rights, and much more. The EAP is paid for by the Company as a support service for employees, so that it's free of charge for them to use. It's available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year and is accessible by phone, email and online.

The EAP can provide your employees with practical information, fact sheets and packs, resource information on support services in your local area and even short-term face to face or telephone counselling to help get them back on track. The comprehensive EAP website offers extensive resources including articles, interactive tools and regular online seminars. The EAP is designed to help employees with a wide range of work, family and personal issues. Confidentiality is the foundation of the service and Workplace Options is bound by professional standards regarding confidentiality and the disclosure of details of individuals who have contacted them.

The EAP also provides Manager Assist for anyone in a management, team leader or supervisory role to provide information and support on any subject which is impacting upon you, an individual or your team. Manager Assist can be used as a sounding board for talking through concerns you have about an individual, or for guidance on people management issues.

The EAP service is based on number of employees therefore if you would like a quote, please contact the office.

### **Life Assurance Cover**

The inclusion of a Life Assurance Scheme is also another benefits that can be deemed as attractive for job seekers. Different insurance providers of such services will have different terms and conditions for example for employees with less than 2 years' service, the cover requires medical confirmation from the employee and permission to contact their doctor.

### **VDU SCREENING:**

Employees have the right to an eye and eyesight test before taking up work if it is habitual work with a VDU as well as at regular intervals thereafter.

As part of its commitment to the wellbeing of continual users of Visual Display Units, the Company may offer access to specific VDU eye screening. Every employee who habitually uses a VDU as a significant part of normal work has a right to opt for an appropriate eye test and an eyesight test which must be made available and paid for by the employer.

A doctor or optometrist can carry this out. It may also be carried out by a person (including a nurse) trained to use a vision-screening machine. The person operating the machine must know when to refer employees who do not pass the eyesight tests at the screening level to a doctor or optometrist. Many companies liaise with an Optician in sourcing the best discounts to offer this VDU screening in house.

At consultancy group Accenture, they offer employees a number of wellness benefits including free health assessments and provide a contribution towards eyesight testing and toward the cost of lenses.

**FLU VACCINATIONS:**

Some Companies offer voluntary flu vaccinations in an attempt to ensure the promotion of health and wellbeing in the workplace at all times. This is a large benefit to those who work in large ventilated workplaces as flu can spread quickly amongst work colleagues. This benefit is most apparent in health industries such as those who work in hospitals etc.

Each flu season employees across the country either call in sick which results in a loss of productivity, or worse, show up sick and pass the sickness on to other employees in the workplace. An ever-increasing number of companies are realising that providing their employees with the flu vaccine is good business. This initiative helps keep employees' healthy which results in a reduction in the number of sick days lost over the autumn and winter months.

Vaccination programmes can be sourced through local providers or alternatively larger companies such as Healthwatch.ie.

**SICK LEAVE:**

Many companies introduce a sick pay scheme that is issued for certified absence only.

Payment of wages and salaries during absence through illness or injury should be strictly based on the rules outlined in the Company policy as there is often for abuse of the sick leave policy.

The sick pay scheme should run from January 1st to December 31st every year. Below is an example from an accountancy client and a solicitor's firm who offer sick pay as a benefit.

<b>Length of Service</b>	<b>Sick Pay</b>
Service up to 1 yr.	Unpaid
Over 1 yr. - 2 yrs.	1-week full pay
Over 2 yrs. - 10 yrs.	2 weeks' full pay
Over 10 years	4 weeks' full pay

The following are some rules that may apply to the Scheme:

- A doctor's medical certificate is required for any absence due to illness or injury specifying the nature of the illness from the 3rd day of absence.
- If no certificate is produced prior to the taking of any leave over and above 2 days, sickness salary in relation to any such leave will not be discharged.
- Staff members are expected prior to the end of each and any day's absence due to sickness to personally phone the office and speak to the Office Manager to update the office of their status.
- You must submit a Certificate weekly thereafter in respect of any continuing absence are required to maintain contact with the company.
- It is your responsibility to claim social welfare and you must submit the social welfare cheques to the company when you receive them. If you fail to do so, you will be excluded from further benefit in the scheme and the monies owed to the company must be repaid in full.
- The sick pay scheme will not cover absences relating to traffic accidents, substance abuse, sporting accidents, injuries occurred in another employment or while carrying out work elsewhere (e.g., family farm, home DIY etc.)

Each company will generally have the same rules attached to the sick pay scheme to formalise it as much as feasibly possible.

#### **FLEXIBLE WORKING:**

The modern-day worker looks for companies that not only offer a good compensation package but one that can provide flexibility in line with a work life balance.

Many Companies consider suitable flexible working patterns for their organisation which appeal to a broad range of employees. Options can include personalised hours, home-working, job sharing, self-rostering, shift working and term-time working.

These options would be specific to business requirements i.e., if a role requires the employee to be on site to meet clients that drop in rather than scheduled meetings then term time working or part time working may not be feasible.

Diageo and Microsoft offer flexible working hours, with many employees working from home one day per week. The Companies also have family days where staff can bring their kids to an event on site. Microsoft often facilitate an Easter egg hunt, or Santa at Christmas time to promote families in the workplace and their embracing of the same via work practices.

#### **MONETARY BENEFITS:**

##### **Bonus**

Bonuses are one of the main perks of working for Intel in Ireland, with an annual performance bonus, a quarterly profit bonus and a factory excellence bonus on offer to employees. The annual performance bonus programme, which is based on the company's annual performance, add to each employee's cash compensation, while the factory excellence bonus rewards factory employees for operational excellence and meeting desired business goals. The quarterly profit bonus directly connects Intel employees to the quarterly profits of the company. Through this bonus, Intel shares its profits with employees by paying a cash bonus four times a year.

This option may not be a feasible option for many companies however bonus incentives based on both individual and company performance are the way forward for many companies where competition for good staff is stiff. If this is an option it is advised that there is a strict performance management system in place with SMART goals and targets.

##### **Share Options**

Intel runs a stock programme, whereby most employees have the opportunity to own company stock, and a stock purchase plan which allows them to buy shares at a discount through payroll deductions. Employees can allocate between two and five per cent of their eligible pay to the programme. Stock is then purchased at 85 per cent of the market price.

#### **OTHER BENEFITS:**

##### **Technology Perks**

It's commonly known that perks are a hallmark of working for technology companies. Technology perks can include laptops for use outside of work, mobile phone benefits, tablets, Sat Navigation Systems etc.

##### **Dry Cleaning Drop & Collect Facilities**

Many Companies offer dry cleaning services for organisations that have employees who are client facing i.e., accountants, sales representatives etc. The Companies arrange for a local or regional dry-cleaning drop and collect facility every two weeks or as much as you deem necessary.

### **Employee Discounts**

Many large companies have sourced employee discounts for their employees to avail of including but not limited to car insurance, AA membership, driving lessons and health and beauty etc. At consultancy group Accenture, an employee discount programme is in place, offering a range of discounts to workers for shops, events, restaurants and fitness centre memberships.

### **Income Protection Scheme**

Income Protection Cover (up to 2/3 of your salary) in the event of serious illness, subject to terms and conditions.

For example, in the event that something was to happen to an employee during the course of their employment that would render them with a long-term illness or disability, the income protection scheme kicks in after 13 weeks of service and it pays the employee 75% of their salary for as long as the situation exists.

### **Bike to Work Scheme**

The Cycle to Work Scheme (generally known as the Bike to Work Scheme) is a tax incentive scheme to encourage employees to cycle to work. Under the scheme an employer can pay for a new bicycle (pedal or electric & including bicycle accessories) and the employee then repays the cost in regular instalments from their gross salary.

### **TRAVEL:**

#### **Travel Insurance**

This is a large benefit but dependent on the composition of your workplace this may be an interesting benefit for employees. For example, for younger workforces this would be of benefit whereas flexible working may be of more interest to employees with families etc.

#### **Car Parking**

This may seem like a normal benefit but in large cities with parking costs, the threat of clamping and walking distance to work it is an indispensable perk. This is a significant benefit to vehicle users. However, it is important to note that Company is not responsible for any damage to cars or property contained within. It is advisable to ensure that any car registration details are included in a set database to the Intranet on commencement of employment

#### **Tax Saver Commuter Tickets**

TaxSaver incentivises people to use public transport to and from work. As a gesture of goodwill large companies provide staff members with this facility of obtaining tax saver tickets for travel to and from work. The Company can register the Company for TaxSaver on [taxsaver.ie](http://taxsaver.ie). The cost is deducted directly from the individual employee's salary, and the employee gets to save between 29% and 52% on the regular price, depending on ticket type and their tax band.

### **PENSION SCHEME & DISABILITY BENEFIT**

Pensions and corresponding benefits are a significant cost to many companies but they are a benefit that many employees look for in the war for talent. It is important to remember that all employees should have access to a Personal Retirement Savings Account (PRSA) in accordance with Section 121 of the Pensions Amendment Act 2002.

The HR Suite does not provide information for Pensions and Disability Benefits however we do have an insurance company that we refer to should you wish to contact them directly.

As a benefit many Companies offer qualifying employees the option of joining a defined contribution occupational pension scheme and can avail of this option either after 6 months / 12 months or on permanency, depending on the terms of their contract or the Company policy on the same.

Temporary employees can also be provided with access to a Personal Retirement Savings Account (PRSA) in accordance with Section 121 of the Pensions Amendment Act 2002. It is advised that all temporary employees would be eligible to avail of this option immediately on joining the company or at any time during their employment with the company.

This scheme could include Disability Benefit cover which is a long-term income continuance benefit.

Both the pension and the disability benefit elements of the occupational pension scheme are subject to certain terms, conditions and exceptions per insurance brokerage. Full details of the current terms should be provided directly to the eligible employee from your broker after an employee becomes eligible to join.

#### **LEAVE BENEFITS:**

##### **Compassionate Leave**

There is no contractual or statutory entitlement to be paid for absences relating to compassionate leave and any payment of salary during compassionate leave is normally made at the absolute discretion of the Company.

Many Companies offer compassionate leave in the unfortunate event of the death of a family member. This can show the personal and caring side of the business which many employees look for in future employers. Immediate family members can comprise of the following; spouses, civil partners, partners, parents, children, brothers and sisters. In normal circumstances Companies might grant up to three days' compassionate leave to be taken between the date of death and the date of the funeral. Non-immediate family can consist of grandparents, uncles or aunts. For non-immediately family members the Company would normally grant a maximum of one day's annual leave for staff who wish to attend the funeral in these circumstances. Additional time off could be offered via the company policy once authorised in advance with management. It is common practise that if the funeral takes place on a non-working day or during annual leave, time off or payment will not be granted.

##### **Study Leave**

This helps facilitate employee training and development which in turn will be of benefit to your organisation study leave is seen as a great benefit. The majority of companies, if inserting study leave as a policy, will allow for a maximum of 2 days inclusive of study and exam per annum. Employees wishing to avail of the leave must submit their request in advance to their direct manager/HR department. Many employers place a minimum service requirement of 12 months to avail of this type of leave. This allows for adequate time and resources to be given to employees whom intend to stay with the Company in the longer term. It is advised that the study leave is only granted for a course/exam that is relevant to the role being completed in the Company.

##### **Annual Leave**

The annual leave entitlement and holiday pay for each employee is set out in the contract of employment in accordance with the Organisation of Working Time Act, 1997. Under the legislation, the entitlement for full time employees is 20 days. Employees joining the company after the beginning of the leave year are granted leave on a pro rata basis in their first leave year. As a benefit many companies offer additional annual leave benefits.

Many companies offer annual leave increases in line with service for example:

*The Company, as a gesture of goodwill offer employees 21 days of annual leave. As a gesture of goodwill on behalf of the Company employees will receive a further 1 day of annual leave after every 3 years' service. For example, after 3 years' service you will have 22 days annual leave on a yearly basis and after 6 years of service you will have 23 days annual leave on a yearly basis. This is to a maximum of 4 additional days of annual leave i.e., 25 annual leave days in total.*

This shows that the company has taken reasonable account of the employee's need to reconcile work and family responsibilities and the opportunity for rest and recreation available to the employee.

#### **PATERNITY/MATERNITY LEAVE PAYMENT:**

The Company has no obligation to pay for any part of Paternity/Maternity Leave. However, as an additional benefit many companies pay a top up payment.

Suggestions of payments are as below:

- will pay the first three days
- a top up payment to meet the normal weekly pay for week one of Paternity Leave.
- a top up payment to meet the normal weekly pay for two weeks of Paternity Leave.

If the Company decided to give a payment associated with Paternity Leave then there would have to be a similar payment for Maternity Leave to avoid a case or query re: equality in the workplace.

#### **WORK RELATED:**

##### **Professional Subscriptions**

For professional organisation the Company can meet the cost of one annual subscription to professional bodies where membership is relevant to the job the employee completes. For example, those in larger property management companies such may offer a subscription to Irish Property Developer Magazine or HR professionals to CIPD on a yearly basis.

##### **Clubs & Societies / Sports & Social Club**

Many companies place a large emphasis on the engagement of employees which in turn ensures compliance with company culture and integrates employees into the work environment. With that in mind, many companies offer a wide range of clubs and societies to promote mental and physical wellbeing via employee engagement. Some companies start Sports and Social Clubs with activities such as team outings, surfing, cookery, golf, sailing, photography, rugby tournaments.

##### **Service Awards**

The purpose of introducing benefits is to ensure that employees are attracted and remain with the Company over other competitors. Long service awards recognise and place value on the contribution made by each employee to the success of the business.

With this in mind, companies have introduced Service Awards to recognise and reward employees who have completed valuable years of service within the Company.

The awards can be as follows higher or lower dependent on what your business decides:

- 3 years' service: A gift to the value of €300
- 5 years' service: A gift to the value of €700
- 10 years' service: A gift to the value of €1,600



Service awards above 10 years could be issued at 5-year intervals and comprise of the 10-year service award and an additional gesture of appreciation.

### **Refer A Friend Programme**

To save on recruitment costs and to promote positive word of mouth advertising many companies offer incentive scheme for referrals. Many Companies regularly advertise open positions and for all publicly advertised roles, input from employees to refer a friend should be welcomed and rewarded.

Where an existing employee (who has completed the relevant qualifying period for employee benefits i.e., one year service, or perhaps passed probation) introduces a new employee to the company for one of these publicly advertised roles by directly passing their CV to the relevant person, incentives could be given. This would have to be a standardised policy to ensure it is made available to all employees in a similar manner.

As a token of appreciation to the existing employees the below is often offered via additional payments:

- Once the referred employee has completed 3 months service, a gross payment of €500 will be made to the existing employee who made the referral.
- Once the referred employee has been made permanent, a further gross payment of €500 will be paid to the existing employee who made the referral.

### **SOCIAL CORPORATE CARE:**

#### **Social Responsibility**

There are many ways companies can get behind the causes they care about and make meaningful change in local communities. These incentives boost contributions and encourage employees to exceed their company's philanthropic goals, while giving time/money/publicity to charities/charitable causes.

Matching charity donations is one benefit which has become popular in many industries. If employees raise €50 for a charity close to their heart, then the company would match the €50.

Many Companies participate in charity runs such as the Cork Women's Mini Marathon or the Run in the Dark for charity and ask employees to be involved. Not only does this raise funds for charities but it can improve teamwork and employee engagement. In addition, it can boost public image and be placed on social media outlets. One client recently asked employees to vote on a charity to be the charity of the year for 2016 in the office and all funds raised go to that charity i.e., the Mini Marathon raised €1,500 which was matched by the Company so the charity received €3,000 that year.

Employee giving programs not only boost your public image but can attract future employees who want to work in a charitable environment. These programs come in different shapes and sizes, and reward volunteering as well as monetary contributions.

Staff members should be encouraged throughout the year to engage in charitable events.