

Employee Benefits & Schemes

We have a range of employee benefits and schemes:

Pension

The local government pension scheme (LGPS) is a defined benefit scheme and offers a range of retirement benefits, these include:

- the ability to take your pension early (from age 55 though benefits may be reduced)
- the ability to convert part of your pension into a tax free cash lump sum
- the opportunity to make additional contributions
- ill health retirement
- financial support for your dependants should anything happen to you (there is a lump sum of 3 years pay made to your estate in the event of a death in service)
- flexibility to pay less into the scheme through the 50/50 section (when paying half the contributions you build up half the benefit)

It is also a very secure pension as the benefits it offers are set out in law.

Work life balance

Combining the demands of your work and personal life can be a real challenge. We have a number of benefits to help employees achieve this important balance:

- Above average holiday entitlement, starting at 23.5 days and increasing to a maximum of 31.5 days based on grade and 5 years service
- Flexi-time - a flexible working scheme (where applicable to the post) which enables employees to manage for example, domestic commitments or health appointments, or accrue time to take up to 1.5 days flexi leave to be taken each period (subject to service requirements)
- Enhanced maternity leave scheme (minimum 12 months service)
- Childcare Vouchers – following government changes this only operates for employees who were in the scheme by 4 October 2018. The government

alternative now offered is: 'Tax-free Childcare' <https://www.gov.uk/tax-free-childcare>

Dependant upon service demands, occasional home working can also be requested. This is an area we plan to review in 2019/20 and expect further updates to be announced.

Health & Wellbeing

Leading a healthy lifestyle is something we all strive to achieve and can have a considerable impact on how we feel and what we are able to do. We encourage all employees to lead a healthy lifestyle and support this with the following:

- Free flu vaccinations – we have been running this successful programme for a number of years. Details are usually published each autumn.
- An excellent occupational sick pay scheme
- HealthCare Cash Plans – employees can choose between Paycare or BHSF. These schemes enable the recovery of some costs encountered for managing health e.g. dentistry or chiropractic treatment
- Information and independent and confidential counselling service via referral through HR Services
- Cycle to Work Scheme – This is one of the few salary sacrifice schemes available where employees can choose a bicycle of their choice to cycle to work with. Options for purchasing the bike are available at the end of an extended period.

Learning & Development

- Employee Review – Everyone within the organisation makes a real contribution towards our business plan through often varied, interesting and challenging work which is discussed in this process. Regular meetings and development needs form part of these discussions to enable achievement of objectives.
- Professional fees – One professional fee is paid where there is participation in a professional institution and it's relevant to the post.
- Training and Development opportunities – these are promoted to all our employees to aid progression and achieving new skills. While we target these learning opportunities at specific needs, learning is a life constant and new skills can be achieved through a variety of different formats, hence, you may find yourself attending a short course, working through an on-line course subject, reading a book, attending a corporate planned course or as a new employee learning through a structured induction programme on the job.

Discounts & Savings

We have also formed partnerships where money can be regularly saved:

- Arriva – Do you take the bus to work? Discounted passes can be bought by our employees.
- ENJOY card – This was developed by our own officers working with the Stafford Town Centre Partnership. Shopping, cultural or eating out offers are usually available but they do change so you can either register for regular emails through the website (<http://stafford-towncentre.co.uk/enjoy-card-discounts.htm>), follow twitter, or keep an eye on the website itself.

From time to time, by working with local suppliers other local promotions are available. Employees are made aware of these offers through local communications like the 'Weekly News'.