



The State of  
**Employee  
Benefits**

# Hello!


Firstly, thank you for taking the time to download and read *The State of Employee Benefits 2024 and Beyond* report. Whether you're using it for inspiration, setting goals or benchmarking what you're already doing, we hope you find it useful.

There is a continued focus in 2024 on creating a holistic strategy which includes topics like sustainability, wellbeing, and hybrid working models. Although not new, these are big topics for most companies, therefore important priorities.

The trickle-down effect of making mindful choices creates a positive impact. A well-considered ESG (environmental, social and governance) policy improves how your employees and customers feel about and interact with your business. Therefore, having sustainable practices will no doubt translate to a more sustainable business.

Our Avantus team will be covering more about these subjects on our blog. So, make sure to keep an eye out if you have a keen interest!

Back to the here and now though, this guide covers the hot topics for HR teams and how you can optimise your practices for the greater good.



# Contents

## Chapter 1 - HR specifics: you make the difference!

- 1.1 Making your life easier with artificial intelligence 2
- 1.2 Company culture and its role in talent management 3
- 1.3 Your talent management challenges, solved? 5
- 1.4 Devising a growth mindset 7
- 1.5 Your remote, hybrid and flexible working strategy 9
- 1.6 Creating a communication strategy for your employee benefits 10

## Chapter 2 - Employee wellbeing

- 2.1 Stress and employee burnout 12
- 2.2 Financial education 13
- 2.3 Support during tough times 14

## Chapter 3 - Holistic care

- 3.1 Encouraging a healthy work-life balance 16
- 3.2 Supporting employees with disabilities or who are neurodiverse 17
- 3.3 Catering for a multigenerational workforce 18
- 3.4 Supporting employees through the menopause 19
- 3.5 NEW: Creating a period positive workplace 20

Finally, if you have any questions, feedback, or you would like to discuss how Avantus Employee Benefits could help you and your company, my team and I will be delighted to hear from you.



Philip Curtis  
CEO, Avantus





# Chapter 1 - HR specifics: you make the difference!

Ultimately, the HR team is paramount to the success of employee benefits. The process is down to you. From selecting what's on offer and your suppliers to the platform that houses it all.

While individual departments influence employee morale, your team lays the blueprint for what's on offer. Put like this, it is a HUGE responsibility to shoulder. So, a helping hand can go a long way. This chapter covers the specifics for HR and people management. We examine the big topics of now:

- 1.1 Making your life easier with artificial intelligence
- 1.2 Company culture and its role in talent management
- 1.3 Your talent management challenges, solved?
- 1.4 Devising a growth mindset
- 1.5 Your remote, hybrid and flexible working strategy
- 1.6 Creating a communication strategy for your employee benefits



## 1.1

### Making your life easier with artificial intelligence

Talking about artificial intelligence (AI) before 2023 felt a little... science fiction for most businesses. But the reality is, in HR it looks like sophisticated analysis tools that help save time. That could be whittling down to the most suitable candidates or identifying the most and least used employee benefits.

But it doesn't stop there! We previously found that you could reduce time spent on admin by up to 12% when you automate certain processes.

You'll no doubt hear a lot more chatter about all things AI, machine learning and big data in years to come. Making sure that you get things right from the moment you implement them goes a long way to proving their return.

You can find out more about how artificial intelligence can make your life easier below:

## 1.2

### Company culture and its role in talent management

It's all over LinkedIn as well as the top recruitment sites. But how important is company culture in job adverts, or is it just a buzzword?

It's paramount to emphasise to leadership that company culture isn't a benefit, it's directly linked to business growth and performance. For example, working in a respectful environment shouldn't be a "nice to have" but a given if you want to retain your valuable team. A progressive company culture is the cornerstone of business success.



How does company culture influence talent management?

The way your company behaves – consciously or not – impacts your employee, supplier, and customer sentiment. Taking a stance and acting on important topics like sustainability, equality, diversity (to name a few areas) helps people perceive themselves as a good fit with you, and vice versa.





## 1.3

### Your talent management challenges, solved?

Naturally, we looked at talent retention challenges, as well as the employee benefits that high quality candidates, and your existing teams, value the most.

We know the pandemic made a huge impact on employee engagement. Companies who continue to embrace hybrid and remote working tend to fair better in terms of retaining and attracting new talent.

In fact, [NASDAQ reported:](#)

//

Firms that had adopted remote working before the pandemic were already benefiting from this decision. They've been able to withstand the challenges of the last year without major business interruptions and have access to a global and diverse talent pool that wasn't accessible to firms that were strictly tied to in-office work culture.

//





But what do employees really want? Our blogs in 2022 consistently found [these benefits came top for retaining and attracting talent](#) alike:

- 1 Flexible working (whether that's hybrid, remote, or alternative hours)
- 2 Supporting training and development
- 3 Regular salary reviews, with attainable targets

As you'll know, it's rarely as cut and dry as this. Process, budget, forecasting all play into these decisions. You can read more about these in depth below:



## 1.4

### Devising a growth mindset: up-skilling, re-skilling, training and development

We've touched upon how helping to identify and support long-term goals of your employees can help improve talent retention, so let's delve deeper into why this is beneficial for everyone.

If your company has not previously had provisions for learning and development, it can seem like a lot of research before you even start to gauge interest and intention.



Hypothetically speaking, you may have employees who have put themselves forward for a management level promotion but lack the experience necessary. You know deep down they will do a good job, but you also don't know if there is enough support to help nurture them to achieve their best. So, what can you do?

There are several ways you can support this employee's needs, suiting a range of budgets available:

- Apprenticeships
- Higher education
- Mentoring (both internal and external programmes)
- eLearning

It's also important to find out what you can claim back as a business, as this understandably makes the proposition more attractive to those in control of allocating budgets.





## 1.5

### How to manage the logistics behind flexible, hybrid and remote working

After the 2020 lockdown forced what was arguably the worlds' largest test of remote working capabilities, more companies are offering a range of flexible options for their teams going forward. Not only does it help cut emissions and costs from commuting, but some would say it has increased productivity and reduced absences.

Flexible working – whether that's hours, location, or days – frequently comes top as the most coveted employee benefit too. For what it's worth, it is technically a free benefit! So, it is a win for both your annual budgets, employee spending and happiness.

There are some areas you'll want to consider managing to maximise its success. Overcoming organisational silos – and in some cases, preplanning to make sure they don't become an issue in the first place, is vital.

## 1.6

### Creating an effective communications strategy

You'd be surprised by the number of companies who don't regularly share details of their employee benefits with their staff. [Canada Life](#) found that as many as 34% of employees want to hear more about what's on offer for them.

Our top tips for devising an effective communications strategy include:

- 1 Set aside the time each month to create a simple monthly newsletter.
- 2 Make sure every newsletter includes how to access the employee benefits portal (and encourage them to bookmark the link!).
- 3 Running out of ideas on what to talk about? Feature a spotlight section focusing on a product each month.
- 4 Encourage employees to familiarise themselves with their pension scheme, and other related products on offer!
- 5 Include regular features about financial wellbeing in a non-judgemental tone – now more than ever, many are worrying about making ends meet and a lot of people don't know what services their employee benefits have that could help with debt, savvy swaps, and the like.
- 6 Shout about your mental health provisions – around [1 in 4 are affected by low mood, anxiety and other conditions every year in England](#).
- 7 Praise: celebrate your employees who have been nominated for the rewards and recognition schemes and encourage others to put their co-workers forward (and themselves!)
- 8 Don't forget to ask for feedback!

Although an eight-point list may feel like a lot, it need not take up a lot of your time. Employee Benefits portals worth their salt should come with built-in communications tools, enabling you to easily create and send on-brand newsletters.



# Chapter 2:

## Employee wellbeing

Employee benefits have focussed on health insurance, company cars, and gym memberships. As you'll likely know, from your own experience, this general approach is no longer enough.

A single factor which has changed in the last 2 years especially is the perception of mental health. The stigma around depression, anxiety, and stress is lessening. More companies are becoming savvy about mental health and how it affects their bottom line.

Another area that is an emerging trend, is financial wellbeing. It's almost a cultural thing, for those in the UK especially, to not talk about money. It makes people uncomfortable, both the haves and have-nots. But financial education, knowledge and advice is the key to feeling empowered and less stressed about your finances.

In this chapter, we share key articles to help you improve your employees' wellbeing:

- 2.1 Stress and employee burnout
- 2.2 Financial education
- 2.3 Support during tough times





## 2.1

### Stress and employee burnout

According to [Westfield Health](#), nearly half of the UK workers they surveyed (46%) reported that they felt close to burnout. Another study by [Arctic Coffee](#) found that 42% of their respondents said they were more exhausted this year than ever before. And on top of that, [only 3 in 5 workers took their full holiday allowance](#) in 2021. What is going on?!

No one needs reminding of the stress and anxiety the cost-of-living crisis or the pandemic is still causing around the world. No one needs to speculate on why that is. But what is important, is that as employers', we put parameters in place to help our teams stay healthy and manage stress.

There are several quick wins to consider:

- Introducing and explaining mental health days: what they are, when and how to take them
- Reminding teams to use their holiday allowance!
- Reviewing your company's wellbeing culture

Read more on helping stress and employee burnout:

## 2.2

### Financial education: from dealing with debt to becoming savvy with savings

Anecdotally, there are a lot of things we say we don't learn in school. Personal finances and understanding things like pensions and tax are big ones. And, if we're left to learn only from our parents, it's fair to say the playing field isn't level.

And with the current cost-of-living crisis, sadly that is projected to get worse. Furthermore, MAPS say that 80% of employees take their money stress to work, which may impact their performance.

Did you know that most employee benefits packages will have financial advice or financial wellbeing education as standard? If yours has this provision, it's a fantastic service to shout about. Including these kinds of resources in your regular communications can raise awareness of their existence. And with [problem debt being a leading cause of suicide in the UK](#), it could save lives.

Read more on the financial wellbeing of your employees:

## 2.3

### Support through tough times

Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP) are fantastic yet often under-utilised resources. They are a great starting point for unpicking and directing stress management to the best support available for the circumstance.

Most employee benefits programmes will have provision for EAP, covering employees of all levels in your company. They're another service you should regularly be raising awareness of; whether that's in your newsletters, in 1:1 meetings, return to work discussions or posters in private places.

Typically, the employee, their partners, and their dependents over 16 years old living at the same address will be covered. EAPs usually cover support for:

- Family and relationships
- Bereavement
- Mental health
- Domestic violence
- Carers: children, dependents, elderly
- Healthcare diagnoses
- Bullying and harassment
- Money management and debt advice
- Legal rights





# Chapter 3:

## Holistic care

Healthcare is still very much the cornerstone of employee benefits. That could be access to private medical care, treatments, or enhanced insurances. Regardless of your provision, it's important to make sure you consider who and what is included.

Caring for your employees isn't just about traditional enhanced healthcare. It's creating an environment in which your teams feel supported, regardless of what's going on. Supporting disabilities, life stages, diagnoses, and the day-to-day... Your care packages don't need to stop with insurances. Other ways and policies you can support you team with are:

- Wellbeing and mental health days
- Support through fertility treatments, loss, and enhanced parental leave.
- Taking the time to understand, educate, and support your teams with chronic conditions.
- Or even something as simple as discounts that can help lighten the mental load of running a household.

In this chapter, we cover:

- 3.1 Encouraging a healthy work-life balance
- 3.2 Supporting employees with disabilities or who are neurodiverse
- 3.3 Catering for a multigenerational workforce
- 3.4 Supporting employees through the menopause
- 3.5 NEW: Creating a period positive workplace



## 3.1

### Encouraging a healthy work-life balance

We are passionate believers that employee benefits core role is to support life outside of work. That's right, team building trips and beers on a Friday are culture and not benefits! But what do we mean by supporting life outside of work?

This could look like:

- 1 Saving money on essentials, like the food shop and clothes
- 2 Dental and health cash plans; especially if you're struggling to find an NHS dentist
- 3 Flexibility on working hours, location
- 4 Financial education to help decode the jargon around pensions, savings, and consolidating debts
- 5 Mental health support
- 6 Phone and internet plans



## 3.2

### Supporting employees with disabilities or who are neurodiverse

The UK government reported 4.8 million people with disabilities were employed at the end of Q1 in 2022. And yet many companies still don't feel confident making sure they are confident to cater for employees with disabilities.

While some provisions may be more obvious than others (for example, step-free access, wider doors, and gangways), for those with chronic or invisible disabilities, it may require a little more forward planning and thought.

One way to make sure your employee package is inclusive is checking your employee benefits. These simple yet often overlooked ideas could go a long way to helping make those living with disabilities or lifelong conditions feel more welcome:

- 1 The conditions and therapies your private healthcare covers
- 2 Whether your mental health provider support more complex conditions
- 3 Are the gyms in your membership package accessible?
- 4 Do you have a policy for mental health days?

You may also want to consider standard equipment around the office, such as adjustable chairs and desks, access to fridges for storing medication, and ensuring computers are compatible with common accessibility software.





### 3.3

## Supporting a multigenerational workforce

As the average age for retirement in the UK increases every year, the potential age span in your workforce could be as much as 40 years or more. It's obvious their priorities and needs will be different. So how do you factor a [multigenerational workforce into your employee benefits?](#)

Consider:

- 1** Making pensions a hot topic!  
Educate your employees about their options, what the key terms mean and empower them to take an interest in their future.
- 2** Upper age limits on your health insurance  
While many insurers will cover up to the age of 80 years old, it generally varies. You may want to consider a provision specialising in policies for those over the age of 50.
- 3** Provisions for parents  
Did you know as many as 25% of mothers are unable to work due to the rising cost of childcare outweighing their earnings? This large chunk of your workforce could be lost. By offering enhanced parental leave, subsidised childcare allowances, and flexible working patterns could help retain your staff, as well as attract talent when recruiting.
- 4** Debt management  
One thing's for sure: debt does not discriminate. Regardless of your age, you can easily fall into hard times. Education about money management and financial wellbeing should be available across the entire workforce.

## 3.4

### Supporting employees through menopause

One of the least talked about life stages is menopause, yet 75% of working women aged 50–64 years will be affected. 1 in 5 women going through menopause will take time off work due to symptoms, with a further 1 in 50 on long-term sick leave. Most importantly, 1 in 4 women will consider leaving the workforce due to menopause.

As a huge life transition, it does not only mean a woman will stop having periods, but it can also change the way she feels about herself, her worth, and impact her mental health. This is on top of the likelihood of the physical symptoms such as mood swings, hot flushes, insomnia, and changes to bone density.

It's important to consider how best to support team members in this life stage – age-regardless – to retain talent.

#### How can you help?

- 1 Make the office a safe space for topics to be discussed without fear of judgement or risk
- 2 Educating managers about how to support their teams
- 3 Empower men to take interest and learn without embarrassment
- 4 Check your healthcare plans
- 5 Offer mental health and wellbeing days

### 3.5

## NEW: creating a period positive workplace

The period positivity movement has grown vastly over the years. From retailers changing dated and shame-inducing 'feminine hygiene' aisle signage to 'period products' to adverts opting to show red on pads rather than unnatural blue dye to illustrate menstrual blood.

These small steps are going a long way to driving out shame and breaking down the taboos of what is a healthy, normal bodily function for most women. Yet, how do we tackle this in the workplace? Is it a simple case of leaving complimentary tampons and pads in the toilets?

No.

TOTM conducted a survey about periods at work and found:

As many as  
**70%**  
of women have been  
caught short at work

**94%**  
said that period pain had  
negatively impacted their  
working day or ability to  
work well



Yes, provisions for free pads and tampons are a good start, but there's more to do. From encouraging an open dialogue about periods, to allowing flexibility around hours and work location, and 'period leave' that doesn't get logged as sick absences (therefore negatively impacting pay). Some women experience such severe pain, just getting to work, let alone being productive is a challenge. You can create a workplace where this common bodily function which can cause a whole host of discomfort and debilitating pain is treated with care, empathy, and above all: respect.

This is something employers should be proud to participate in. If you'd like to find out more about making your [workplace period positive, you can read more about it here.](#)



//

I was paranoid the rest of the day that I would bleed through, I had only just started working there so didn't feel I could ask anyone I was working with if they had a spare and there were none in the toilet to use either.

//



# Summary

There you have it, that's a year of priorities wrapped! We hope you have found this guide to be a useful source of ideas for your 2024 goals and plans. While each of the topics are intended as starting points, it is our hope that they spark processes for making improvements to your workplace.

As always with these guides, we wouldn't be doing anyone justice if we didn't introduce ways in which Avantus Employee Benefits could help you!

Let us introduce ourselves, for those of you who don't already know us.

We are Avantus Employee Benefits. We started out close to twenty years ago as salary sacrifice specialists, but have expanded our offering, catering to include employee benefits. We serve over 1,100 clients across the length and breadth of the United Kingdom and internationally.





## Making your benefits package easy to understand

Our platforms are easy to use, easy to understand and accessible meaning your employees can log on, as and when they want to.

## We speak your language

You need the system to be personal so as part of our approach we ensure all your communications are written and branded in your language, voice, and style.

## We make sure it's affordable

Your budget will always play a central role, so we've made our packages affordable and there's an option of a fixed monthly price plan if you want it.

## Giving you and your employees more choice

Not everything suits everyone, so we've devised a system which allows your employees to cherry-pick the benefits they want, from core benefits to voluntary and flexible benefits.

## When we say flexible, we really mean it

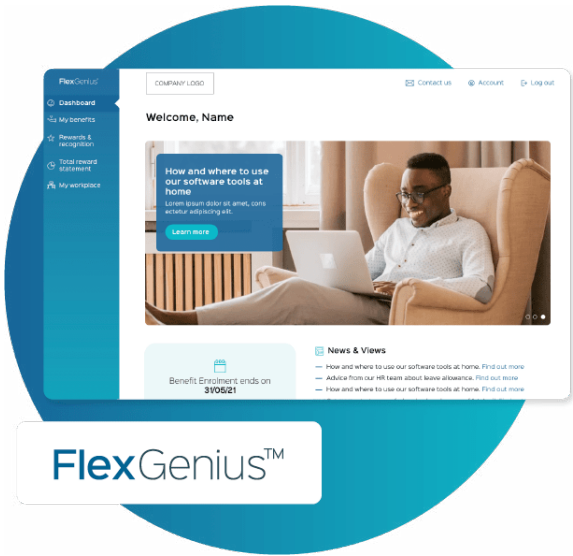
Not everybody can or wants to sign up to things at the same time, so our platforms offer year-round selection for some benefits and multiple sign-up opportunities throughout the year for others.

## We'll be there when you need us

We provide you with full administrative support to make sure the whole process really is hassle free, effective, and easy.



# Our platforms



## FlexGenius

Enhanced communication and publishing tools are at the heart of FlexGenius.

- Built from the ground up to satisfy the most demanding employee.
- Bespoke branding options and targeted-marketing tools combine to give the employee a very personal experience.
- Unlimited flexible benefit choices and the integrated reward and recognition module ensures that FlexGenius delivers an unparalleled proposition.



## perkpal

Stretching the employee's pound, perkpal is packed full of enticing perks and exclusive offers.

- Packed full of enticing perks and exclusive offers.
- Configurable reward and recognition programme.
- A selection of the most popular salary sacrifice schemes.
- perkpal will drive engagement and generate goodwill throughout your organisation.



# 12 Questions to Help you Choose the Right Employee Benefits Platform

If you're considering migrating your employee benefits platform, you'll no doubt have a shopping list of requirements in mind. While those will be unique to your organisation, here are our twelve recommended questions to consider:

- 1 Data security and centralisation – are all benefits and documentation managed in one centralised hub?
- 2 Customisation – is the benefits software customisable with capability to add or remove functionality?
- 3 Branding – is there an option to add corporate branding?
- 4 Intuitive dashboard – is the dashboard easy and intuitive to use and how long will it take to train my team?
- 5 Total rewards & recognition – does the solution include functionality to manage total rewards schemes?
- 6 Employee access – are there different role permissions to ensure employees only access the data relevant to their role?
- 7 Communication – does the solution include a communication hub to encourage employees to actively participate and provide feedback. Does the platform include in-built communication tools to personalise messaging for individual team members and teams?

- 8 Reporting – does the solution allow you to run automated reports and drill down metrics to make data-driven decisions, forecast and measure KPIs?
- 9 Mobile – is the platform accessible to all team members from any device?
- 10 Cost – how much does the initial set-up cost and how much are the ongoing platform fees?
- 11 Deployment – how long does it take to configure and deploy?
- 12 API integration – is API integration with other HR technology easy?



