

Staff Benefit Brochure 2014/15

Introduction

As part of communicating it's Total Reward approach to staff, this brochure outlines the range of benefits available to staff. Further information is available on the Council's intranet. Alternatively you can contact Human Resources and Development (HRD) on 020 8424 1110 or ext. 2110 or email staffbenefits@harrow.gov.uk.

A list of key contacts can be found at the end of the brochure. Only available in the internal version of this document.

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Key

- C =** Core Benefits (where you are automatically given the benefit)
- F =** Flexible Benefits (where you can choose your own benefit, some subject to management agreement)
- V =** Voluntary Benefits (where you pay for your own benefit, some subject to management agreement)

Equal Opportunities And Diversity

The Council is committed to achieving equality of opportunity.

The Council believes in the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote equality of opportunity in all that it does. It recognises Harrow's diverse population as a strength and aims to treat all people with dignity and respect, whilst recognising the value of each individual and the positive contribution they make to Harrow's community and workforce.

Harrow Council aims to ensure that the workforce is given the full opportunity to benefit from the services and employment opportunities they provide. No employee or potential employee will be unlawfully discriminated against.

Working Time Arrangements

(F) Flexitime Scheme – Harrow Council offers flexitime for staff graded H11 (G11 from 1 April 2013) and below, which can be adapted to suit you by agreement with your manager and should be based around the Council's standard hours of:

- starting time between 8:00am and 10:00am
- finishing time between 4:00pm and 7:00pm
- Core time between 10:00am and 12:00pm and 2:00pm and 4:00pm
- Lunch break of a minimum of 30 minutes or by agreement, a maximum of two hours, between the hours of 12:00pm and 2:00pm.

(F) Job-share is where two employees share the duties and responsibilities of one full-time post. Job-sharing will be considered for all posts. Job-sharing is an option which may be attractive if you are unable, or do not wish, to work full-time. You will need your manager to agree if you wish to change your working hours to a job-share arrangement.

(F) Compressed week working offers staff the opportunity to work their total number of contracted weekly hours over a shorter period, either 4 days a week or 9 days per fortnight. Again, you will need your manager's agreement to your working hours being modified in this way.

(F) Flexible Working – The statutory right to request flexible working is available if you have 26 weeks continuous employment at the date of your application and are parents of children up to the age of 16, and parents of disabled children up to the age of 18. Employees who are carers of adults, also have this right.

Harrow Council has decided to extend access to Flexible Working to all employees, to open up the opportunity to strike a better balance between

working and personal life. This addresses one of the most commonly raised benefits sought by staff.

The right to request flexible working is a right to make a request, not a right to have flexible working. The legislation provides a number of reasons why a request can be declined, if there is a sound business reason for doing so. Requests made under the legislation will be considered ahead of other requests. As with the current policy, the needs of the service will prevail for all requests.

Time Off

(C) Annual Leave – Full time – With effect from 1 April 2013, basic annual leave for all staff is 24 days, (youth and community workers are entitled to 31 days); which increases by five days after five year's service. Each additional five year's service gains another day of leave, up to a maximum of 35 days annual leave.

The entitlement as expressed applies to five day working patterns. For alternative working patterns an equivalent leave entitlement should be calculated.

(C) Annual Leave – Part time – annual leave is calculated on a pro-rota basis in proportion to the full-time equivalent.

(F) Carry Over Leave of up to 10 days of your annual leave allocation, from one leave year to the next. Leave carried over can be added to the current year's entitlement to be taken within that leave year and/or can be banked for extended leave purposes (up to a maximum of 20 days in total). But you must take the legal minimum number of 28 days leave including Bank Holidays before you can carry over leave.

(V) Buying Leave – this scheme aims to give you more flexibility by giving you the opportunity to buy additional leave or reduce your working hours up to a maximum of 40 days per year. This does not apply to schools staff.

(F) Selling Leave – this scheme allows you to sell leave back to the Council, up to a maximum of 10 days, and within a certain timeframe and subject to you having taken the legal minimum for that year, i.e. 28 days including Bank Holidays.

(F) Special Paid Leave of up to 10 days may be offered in exceptional circumstances, which enables you to have paid time off when you are unable to use annual leave to cover your absence from work. This will need to be agreed with your manager.

(F) Time off for Public Duties – if you are required to undertake jury service or serve on public bodies, you will be given paid time off to attend up to a

stated minimum. This does not include attending court for matters unrelated to work.

(F) Time off for Election Duties – Harrow Council will grant you paid time off to undertake election duties for Harrow Council. If you wish to undertake election duties, you will need to seek permission from your manager before committing to carry out any duties.

(F) Career Break – The purpose of this scheme is to enable employees to take a career break of more than 40 working days and up to two years during which time they remain an employee of the Council. When they return to work they will be guaranteed employment, though not necessarily in the same post. Employees should apply to take a career break through the Council's Career Break Scheme.

(F) One-4-One Volunteering Scheme: This scheme has been developed to encourage employees wishing to volunteer in the community. Employees who join the scheme are entitled to volunteer within working hours for up to 36 hours a year. Eligibility is based on demonstrating that volunteering is also undertaken outside of working hours to the same level or more. Permission is required from the line manager before joining the scheme. Any volunteering during working hours is agreed at the discretion of the line manager.

(F) Employer Supported Policing BoroughBeat Scheme – The Council supports this scheme which allows staff to train and patrol as a Special Constable – volunteer police officer. You could spend one day a fortnight on paid leave for Specials training and duty. You will patrol across Harrow and develop your experience and skills e.g. assertiveness, problem solving to use in your day job. Those volunteering in this scheme are entitled to free travel on London Underground, London Buses, DLR, Tramlink and Transport for London operated London Overground service. You will need approval from your manager before joining the scheme.

Working Parents

(C) Maternity Leave and Pay operates alongside the Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) scheme.

All pregnant women, regardless of length of service, are entitled to paid time off for ante-natal care and a minimum of 52 weeks maternity leave, commencing no earlier than 11 weeks before the week the baby is due.

Levels of maternity pay are dependant upon earnings and length of continuous local government service. For example, an employee with one year's service at 11 weeks before the expected week of childbirth will receive 6 weeks pay at 90% of weekly pay, then 12 weeks pay at 50% of weekly pay plus lower rate SMP, then 21 weeks at lower rate SMP. The remaining 13 weeks are unpaid.

(C) Adoption Leave and Pay is based on the principles of the maternity scheme. You are eligible for adoption leave provided you meet the criteria set out in the scheme.

(F) Supporting a New Parent – up to 1 week's leave for supporting a new parent at full pay is available to an employee provided they are nominated by the main carer of the child and the leave is to support them on or around (within 8 weeks either side) the time of the birth/adoption of the child.

(F) Paternity Leave - There are two different types of statutory paternity leave which an employee may be entitled to receive

- Ordinary Paternity leave – Two week's leave at/around the time of the birth (within 8 wks)
- Additional Paternity leave - Up to 26 weeks' leave to be taken within the first year of the child's life or the first year after the child's placement for adoption

If the employee has already taken a period of leave for supporting a new parent, they will only be entitled to one week's Ordinary Paternity Leave.

(F) Parental Leave for parents of children under the age of 5 years is available during the year to care for a child.

Up to 18 week's parental leave (effective from 8 March 2013) may be taken each year, in blocks of one week. Staff are required to give notice and agree the timing of parental leave with their manager.

(V) Childcare Vouchers – see Financial Benefits and Discounts section for more information on this salary sacrifice arrangement.

Healthy Working

(F) Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) – The Council recognises the increased pressures placed upon staff both in their personal and working lives. To help employees deal with these increasing pressures, the Council offers this Employee Assistance Programme through HM Assist.

HM Assist is a free confidential service available to you, which provides 24 hours, 365 days per year counselling support on a range of personal and work-related issues and problems such as:-

- Starting a new job
- Buying a new home
- Relationship milestones
- Having children
- Managing money
- Family crises

- Moving location
- Staying healthy
- Personal crises
- Returning to work
- Responsibility at work
- Illness
- Retirement issues

(C) Occupational Health Service (OHS) is an independent and confidential service run by Health Management Ltd (HML) that is available to all Harrow Council employees. The role of the service is to:

- offer advice and guidance when an employee returns to work following illness, injury and surgery.
- Run immunisation programmes for occupational risks as determined by Risk Assessment.
- Offer support at work for people with special medical needs e.g. ongoing health problems.

In addition, the service also provides:

- Follow up on referrals to Occupational Health after work related illness and injury
- Referral to Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) for health and personal worries, stress, bereavement, addictions (alcohol, drugs, etc)

Consultation is by appointment only. The Occupational Health Service does not provide treatment or diagnosis for general health conditions, which remain the responsibility of the employee's General Practitioner.

(F) Eye Testing – If you are considered a Display Screen Equipment (DSE) user, you may be entitled to a free eye test and an eyecare voucher for/towards corrective spectacles. Employees should contact Corporate Health & Safety Services for more information.

(C) Sickness Absence – The Council wants to support employees unable to attend work due to sickness, and to take the necessary steps required to facilitate their early return to work. If you have concerns regarding your health, you should speak to your line manager or you could speak to a Counsellor from HM Assist.

(V) Yoga - a 12-week Yoga course has been running at the Civic Centre for many years, organised by Corporate Health & Safety Services. There are three courses a year mirroring the school academic year. This form of Hatha yoga concentrates on holding the posture for an extended period of time. It is a well-balanced combination of Relaxation, Breathing and Posture, aimed at steadying the mind and bringing it into focus.

(V) Recognised Trade Unions:

- **UNISON** is a trade union recognised by the Council. Becoming a member of Unison could provide you with a range of benefits including representation at work and legal advice, support and other fringe benefits. To find out more information and/or join, you should contact the Harrow branch.

- **GMB** is a trade union recognised by the Council. Becoming a member of GMB could provide you with a range of benefits including representation at work and legal advice, support and other fringe benefits. To find out more information and/or join, you should contact the Harrow branch.

There will be other unions joining the Authority from 1 April 2013.

(F) Employee Support Groups are offered to staff who wish to attend, and with agreement from your manager, this will be granted as time off with pay:

- **Disability, Advice and Information Service (DAIS)** supports staff with disabilities. The group meets quarterly and regularly invites speakers to present on a variety of issues relevant to disabled people.

- **Staff Carers'** - The council has a Carer Lead Officer who staff are able to contact if they are in need of advice in relation to their caring role.

(V) Staff Restaurant (RetrEAT) – there is a staff restaurant at the Civic Centre site, which provides a range of breakfast and lunchtime meals.

(V) Cycle to Work – See the Financial Benefits & Discounts section for more information on this salary sacrifice arrangement.

Learning & Development

Harrow Council is committed to ensuring it has a competent highly-skilled workforce that is able to support the organisation to achieving its corporate priorities now and in the future.

The Council seeks to provide blended learning & development opportunities for staff to enable them to achieve the Council's priorities as well as individual performance targets and career aspirations.

We are developing our 'People Strategy 2013 to 2016' which supports the Council via:

- Right Vision
- Right People

- Right Skills
- Right Things
- Right Culture and Motivation

The final Strategy will be available on the intranet.

Investors in People (IiP) - the Council is committed to working towards and achieving IiP recognition across all directorates. The Resources Directorate is currently recognised at both Gold (Chief Executive's and Legal & Governance Directorates) and Core Level (Corporate Finance and Revenues & Benefits Directorates). Housing is also recognised at Gold level. All other directorates are working to achieve IiP Core Recognition.

Working in line with the IiP best practice framework helps to make certain that the Council continually strives to improve its people management, development practices and processes.

The Legal & Governance Directorate have also achieved the Health & Well-being IiP Award and Lexcel Accreditation.

Leadership and Management Development - The Council is committed to developing leaders of the future and is developing innovative strategies that will enable staff to improve their skills and motivations. This may include leadership development programmes, development pathways and improving career management skills. The availability of these and other initiatives will be advertised through the intranet, our e-learning system and event booking system.

Supporting staff through change – As part of the Council's on-going Transformation Programme, we are reviewing the way services are delivered in order to make efficiencies and improve the service to our customers. The review will impact on all employees, their job roles and their future employment with the Council. We have therefore developed the 'Supporting Staff through Change Programme' which consists of One- to-One Career Coaching Sessions and Group Workshops. These sessions will include topics such as CV & applications, Interview Technique and Managing Change.

IPAD is the Council's performance appraisal and development scheme, which is designed to help staff understand how they contribute to the success of the organisation, setting and achievement of objectives and identifying learning opportunities to support staff development. It also provides an opportunity for staff to consider their longer-term career aspirations and the steps required to achieve them. The annual IPAD cycle will start in April and end in March of the following year with a mid year review.

My Learning is a Learning Management System formerly called Coursebooker, being re-launched in April 2013 and will enable staff to keep a central record of learning and development activities. Staff will be able to search for and view all available training courses and book them online

(subject to Line Manager's approval). Look out for information on the re-launch in the newsletter, intranet etc.

Post Entry Training offers staff the opportunity to study for qualifications that are relevant to their work. If you are interested in studying for a qualification you should discuss the opportunities and support (including non-financial) available to you with your manager, as such qualifications may not be fully-funded, and are subject to the requirement of the job role.

The Right to Request Time Off to Train – from April 2010, staff with a minimum of 26 weeks service will have the right to request time off to undertake training that will help them to be more productive and effective at work or to address a particular skills need. The request can be made at any time and managers are expected to provide a response.

Financial Benefits & Discounts

(F) Pension Scheme – the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) is statutorily funded. As such, staff can trust that it is secure, because its benefits are defined and set out in law. The LGPS is contracted out of the State Second Pension (S2P) and must, in general, provide benefits at least as good as most members would have received, had they been members of S2P. Benefits provided by the LGPS include:

- career average pension
- the ability to increase your pension by paying extra contributions;
- voluntary retirements from age 55 – pension reduced;
- an ill health pension from any age;
- if redundant from age 55 – pension not reduced
- redundancy cover from age 55;
- a death in service lump sum of three times final pay;
- a widow's, widower's, civil partner's or co-habiting partner's pension'
- children's pensions; and
- the index linking of benefits to ensure that they keep pace with inflation.

In addition, as a member of the LGPS, your contributions will attract tax relief at the time they are deducted from your pay and, up to State pension age, you will also pay lower National Insurance contributions on earnings between the Lower and Upper Earnings Limits, unless you have opted to pay the married woman's/widow's reduced rate of National Insurance.

The pension contribution rate is dependant on your pay and will be between 5.5% - 12.5%, depending on your grade; the Council contribution rate for individual pensions in fiscal year 2013/14 is 19.35%.

The Pensions team also sends out an Annual Benefit Statement to everyone in the pension scheme which gives an update on the pension benefits as at 31 March each year as well as a projection of benefits to normal pension date.

There is also a section on this statement related to the estimated State Pension Scheme benefits.

(F) Flexible Retirement – The LGPS regulations permit the immediate payment of pensions benefits, at the employers' consent, where a scheme member from age 55 reduces his/her hours or moves to a lower grade even though the scheme member has not retired from employment and continues to build up benefits in the Scheme. For further information, please contact the Pensions Office within Shared Services on 020 8424 1186. Different pension arrangements are in place for teachers.

(C) Sickness Payments - Harrow operates a sickness payments scheme for all employees, which runs alongside the Statutory Sick Pay Scheme.

If you are absent from work due to illness you will receive an allowance as follows:-

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|----------------------------|---|
| During 1st year of service | 1 month's full pay and (after completing 4 months' service) 2 months' half pay. |
| During 2nd year of service | 2 months' full pay and 2 months' half pay. |
| During 3rd year of service | 4 months' full pay and 4 months' half pay. |
| During 4th and 5th years | 5 months' full pay and 5 months' half pay. |
| After 5 years' service | 6 months' full pay and 6 months' half pay. |

If you are in receipt of Statutory Sick Pay, Sickness or Incapacity Benefit, these allowances will be deducted from the Occupational Sick Payments made to you by the London Borough of Harrow.

(C) Council's Insurance Cover for Employees - If you suffer loss or damage, including personal injury, through the council's negligence, you can claim against the council for damages. The council's main insurance covering this is the Employer's Liability Insurance.

The council is also insured to cover any injury from assault in the course of your duties. The council covers claims arising from 3rd parties, e.g. clients, relating to loss or damage caused by negligence of employees, including goods held on trust on behalf of clients.

(C) Personal Injury Allowance - The Council provides for an additional allowance to be paid to employees who become incapacitated for work by reason of an injury sustained or disease contracted in the actual discharge of their duties and specifically attributable to the nature of those duties. You can obtain more details of this from the Council's Personal Injury Allowance Scheme.

(C) Professional Indemnity for Council Employees - All employees of the Council will be indemnified against any damages, costs or legal expenses, which any such employee may be ordered to pay or may reasonably have incurred arising from activities carried out on behalf of the Council if the employee acted in good faith and honestly believed that the act complained of was within his/her power and that his/her duty as an employee required or entitled him/her to do or omit to do it. Exceptions apply. You can obtain more details on this from the Council's Professional Indemnity for Council Employees policy.

(C) Reward & Recognition Scheme allows staff to be financially rewarded for carrying out work beyond their contracted duties and responsibilities. For those undertaking the full duties and responsibilities of a higher graded post for a period of more than 4 weeks, they could receive an acting-up allowance. For those staff who are required to take on a sustained additional demand in work could receive a cash lump sum of £250 or £500.

(C) The CREATE Awards (staff awards scheme) – recognises staff for outstanding achievement in demonstrating the Council's CREATE values. A prestigious event is held annually to celebrate the winners of the awards.

(C) Long Service Award – In addition to granting additional annual leave for long service, Harrow Council also presents a £400 long service award in recognition of 25 years continuous service.

(V) Car Loans are available to you if your role carries an essential user car allowance. This offers financial assistance in the form of a loan from the Council, in order to purchase a vehicle to carry out your official duties.

(V) Car Loans for Staff with Disabilities – if you have a disability, which affects your mobility, you may be eligible to participate in this scheme. A loan may be granted to cover the purchase price of a new or second hand car, plus the cost of any adaptations necessary. This is subject to certain conditions and approval from your manager.

(V) Interest Free Car Loans are available to staff who's role is graded above H10 (above G10 from 1 April 2013) and carries an essential user car allowance. This offers financial assistance in the form of an interest free car loan from the Council, in order to purchase a vehicle to carry out the individual's official duties.

(V) Season Ticket Loan – The Council offers financial assistance for you to purchase annual season tickets, subject to certain conditions. The season ticket loan can be used to purchase an annual bus, tube or train ticket for travel between home and work. The interest free loan is repaid by deductions from your pay over 12 months.

(V) Credit Union – Harrow Council has developed a Credit Union with Credit Union Solutions. The Credit Union, called M4Money serves people working and/or living in Harrow and Hillingdon.

Credit Unions are cooperatives owned by and run for their members. They offer loans at affordable interest rates and pay members a dividend at the end of each year, based on profits generated.

Normally members of a Credit Union have to save for 12 weeks before they can apply for a loan. However, council staff who join M4Money will be able to obtain a loan immediately. The amount of interest a Credit Union can charge is fixed. So that a loan of £100, repaid over 12 months would cost £13 in interest. In addition the Credit Union offers free loan protection and life savings insurance, as well as a range of different savings accounts. Signposting to money advice is available if requested.

Credit Unions are registered by the Financial Services Authority and are covered by the Savings Deposit Guarantee up to £50,000.

Payments to the credit union can be made from pay roll deductions. Staff do not need to be on a permanent contract, or out of their probationary period, to join the Credit Union.

(C) Mortgage Subsidy and Relocation Expenses are available to newly appointed key staff, who sell and buy a house as a result of taking up an appointment at the Council. The decision to offer the mortgage subsidy will be taken by the appropriate Corporate Director in consultation with the Divisional Director for Human Resources & Development and Shared Services.

(V) Low Cost Home Ownership Scheme – Harrow Council staff may be eligible for low cost home ownership. The size of properties range depending on the household income, which ranges between incomes less than £64,300 and incomes less than £77,200. Details are at www.harrow.gov.uk/lcho. Home Ownership will be on a priority basis.

(V) Childcare Vouchers – If you have a child under the age of 16 years, you could benefit from reduced childcare costs (including day nurseries, child minders, crèches, Au Pairs, Nannies, before/after school clubs and holiday clubs). Reduced costs are through savings you would make in tax and national insurance contributions of up to £933 per year which you will receive through entering a salary sacrifice arrangement i.e. your monthly pay will be reduced by the monthly amount of childcare vouchers you will receive and your tax and national insurance contributions will then be calculated based on the lower rate of pay. The vouchers are available up to a current maximum value of £55 year week.

(V) Cycle to Work – This salary sacrifice scheme allows employees to hire a bike and equipment at a reduced cost free from Income Tax and National Insurance Contributions.

Simply choose a bike online or visit a local shop, claim your voucher and the bike is yours for a 12 month hire period. The cost of the bike and any safety equipment are spread over a 12 month period.

At the end of the hire period ownership of the equipment passes to Cyclescheme, who will then contact the employee detailing 3 options including the possibility of taking ownership of the bike and equipment. Use the online calculator at www.cyclescheme.co.uk to find out exactly how much you will save.

(V) KAARP – All Harrow Council staff can benefit from the KAARP scheme for benefits and discounts, such as travel, shopping, health and entertainment. The website is (www.kaarp.com)

The password for Harrow Council workers to access the Kaarp website is on the internal version of this document

(V) Staff Offers – Special offers are available to staff from eating out to tickets for shows. Staff offers can be found on the Intranet under Staff Offers.