

Employee Benefits

We offer a range of comprehensive benefits which recognise and reward the contribution made by our staff. Here is a summary of the main ones:-

Note: Some of these benefits are grade related. Details of the job grade should be included with the job details. If you need clarification please contact the office in which the vacancy is based.

● **Holidays – Between 23-30 days holiday (dependent upon service and grade)**

The holiday year runs from 1st April to 31st March. Annual leave entitlement is as follows:

Grades 1 to 4:

up to 5 years' service: 23 days
from 5 to 10 years' service: 25 days
over 10 years' service: 30 days

Grades 5 & 6:

up to 5 years' service: 25 days
over 5 years' service: 30 days

Grades 7 & 8:

30 days

The enhancements will be given at the start of the qualifying year.

Staff in Belfast receive 22, 24 and 29 days' holiday respectively.

● **Bank Holidays and Concessionary Days**

In addition to the annual leave detailed above, staff in England and Wales receive eight paid statutory Bank Holidays. The firm also gives an additional four paid concessionary days over the Christmas break when our offices close, the dates for which are set by the firm each year. Staff in Northern Ireland do not receive the additional four concessionary days but instead receive 13 paid Bank Holidays.

● **Structured Pay System**

A fair and transparent pay structure (linked to a grading system) is in place, which rewards staff equally for the work they do and recognises performance. Posts which are grade 5 and above also qualify for a car allowance payment, this will usually be indicated in the job advert.

● **Two Annual Pay Reviews**

An annual pay review is negotiated with the staff union. There is also a second pay review where incremental salary progression is determined on the basis of individual performance.

● Pension Scheme

There are two options for pension membership.

Workplace Pension Reform (Auto Enrolment). This is a statutory pension arrangement whereby staff will automatically be enrolled into a pension scheme in line with statutory requirements. This applies to those who are not members of the occupational pension scheme. Both the employee and the firm make contributions

The Cheviot Trust occupational pension, this is the non-statutory pension scheme that is discretionary. The firm will pay a contribution of 6% of gross salary per annum on behalf of staff who are members of the scheme. Staff who join the scheme (members) must contribute a minimum of 5% of gross salary per annum. For staff aged 45 and over the firm will increase its contribution to 8.5% and will match that of staff up to a maximum of 11%.

● Life Assurance

This is a benefit to members of the pension scheme which is invoked if the member dies whilst still in employment with the firm and is an active member of the occupational pension scheme. The benefit pays four times the member's annual salary. If you join the pension scheme within 12 months of commencing employment with the firm, you will automatically be covered by this policy (subject to underwriting for high earners and anyone not actively in work at the time of joining). However, if you join the pension scheme more than 12 months after starting your employment with the firm, you will be required to complete a medical form and the underwriters of the policy will consider your application. This benefit is only provided to staff aged up to 65.

● Permanent Health Insurance

The firm provides members of the pension scheme with permanent health insurance which provides members who are off with long-term sickness with a proportion of their salary until the member reaches the age of 65 or completes a successful return to work, whichever is the sooner. The detailed arrangements are as stipulated and enforced by the insurer at the time of the claim, the current proportion is 75% of salary less notional single person's state incapacity benefit and a deferred period of 26 weeks. If you join the pension scheme within 12 months of commencing employment with the firm, you will automatically be covered by this policy (subject to underwriting for high earners and anyone not actively in work at the time of joining). However, if you join the pension scheme more than six months after starting your employment with the firm, you will be required to complete a medical form and the underwriters of the policy will consider your application. This benefit is only provided to staff aged up to 65.

● Staff Development

A structured appraisal system is in operation throughout the firm and there is an established policy for training and development.

● Interest Free Loans

Loans may be granted for annual season tickets for both travel and car parking after three months' continuous employment.

- **Maternity and Paternity Pay**

After qualifying service periods there is generous maternity pay above the statutory minimum.

Two weeks paid paternity leave during Ordinary Paternity Leave, subject to the statutory qualifying period. And pay during Additional Paternity Leave will be in accordance with the statutory regulations

- **Childcare Allowance**

Employees on grades 1 and 2 with at least one year's service are entitled to vouchers to assist with childcare.

- **Childcare Vouchers**

The firm operates a voluntary child care voucher salary sacrifice scheme whereby an employee can opt to 'sacrifice' part of their salary in return for childcare vouchers. This results in tax and NI savings for employees.

- **Conveyancing**

The firm will undertake conveyancing work either free of charge (except in relation to disbursements) or at a reduced charge provided the member of staff has not less than two years' unbroken service. The entitlement is for one free transaction in each three year period.

- **Cycle to Work Scheme**

The firm operates a voluntary scheme whereby an employee can opt to 'sacrifice' part of their salary for a twelve month period in return for a bicycle. This results in tax and NI savings for the employee. The bicycle must be used to commute to work for at least half of the year. Other conditions apply.

- **Sports and Social Club**

Each branch operates their own club. Various functions take place throughout the year. Membership is optional and is subject to a small subscription fee. The management at their discretion donate a sum in addition to the amount subscribed by members, usually the contribution from management is double that of the staff.

- **Trade Union Membership**

Thompsons recognises the GMB union. We encourage all staff to join the trade union as we believe this is the best way for the firm and staff to work together. All terms and conditions of service are agreed by way of collective bargaining with the GMB staff union.

- **Pension Scheme**

There are two options for pension membership.

Workplace Pension Reform (Auto Enrolment). This is a statutory pension arrangement whereby staff will automatically be enrolled into a pension scheme in line with statutory requirements. This applies to those who are not members of the occupational pension scheme. Both the employee and the firm make contributions