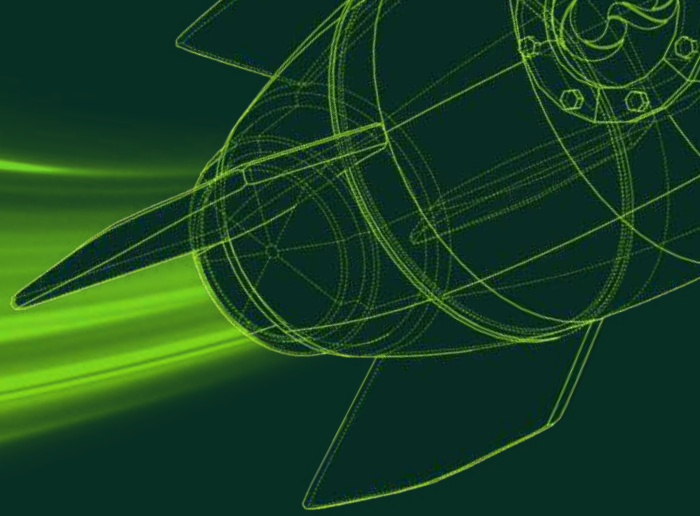




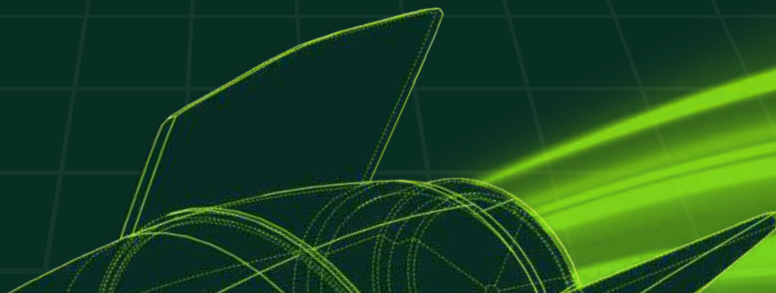
Benifex
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LAUNCHPAD

LESSONS IN REWARD AND BENEFITS
TO FUEL YOUR 2026 STRATEGY

Expert insights from the changemakers turning reward
and benefits innovation into measurable impact





INTRODUCTION

In a year defined by transformation, Benifex Launchpad brought together the boldest thinkers in reward and benefits to share how they're reimagining what value really means for their people.

Hosted at London's 180 Studios, the event featured leaders from **Bupa, Severn Trent, BDO, Acorn Group, CBRE GWS, Molson Coors, and London Gatwick** – each proving that when you put people at the centre of strategy, results follow.

Across every discussion, a new kind of reward philosophy emerged: one grounded in connection, culture, and measurable impact. Whether it was Bupa's people-first ecosystem built around flexibility and innovation, Severn Trent's inclusive approach to communication and accessibility, or BDO and Acorn's cultural reinvention through recognition, the message was clear – reward is no longer a transactional function. It's a strategic driver of engagement, wellbeing, and growth.

That sentiment echoed through every story on stage. CBRE GWS demonstrated how unifying 16 business units under one benefits platform can save millions and turn complexity into clarity. Molson Coors showed how global consistency and transparency build trust across borders. And at London Gatwick, recognition has evolved into something cultural, not just programmatic: a daily act of connection that strengthens belonging across a dispersed workforce.

This year's [Big Benefits Report](#) revealed the same shift on a global scale: the organisations leading the way are those that treat reward as an experience, not a list of options. They simplify access, personalise value, and use technology and AI to deliver benefits that truly resonate. Launchpad brought that to life – proving that the strongest reward strategies are built on innovation, inclusion, and a clear sense of purpose.

As you plan your 2026 roadmap, the lessons from Launchpad offer more than inspiration; they provide a blueprint for meaningful change. From scaling benefits as fast as your ambitions to creating cultures of recognition and redefining flexibility, these stories reveal how forward-thinking organisations are delivering real impact. Here, our expert speakers share their perspectives on what works – and what's next – in reward.

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Head of Benefits EMEA

CBRE | GWS

If you could give one piece of advice to fellow reward leaders preparing for their next reward and benefits launch, what would it be?

“Get your business partners and employee facing roles to support in getting the messaging out. Create the FAQ’s, run the drop-in sessions for them, and have them take some of the employee lift.”

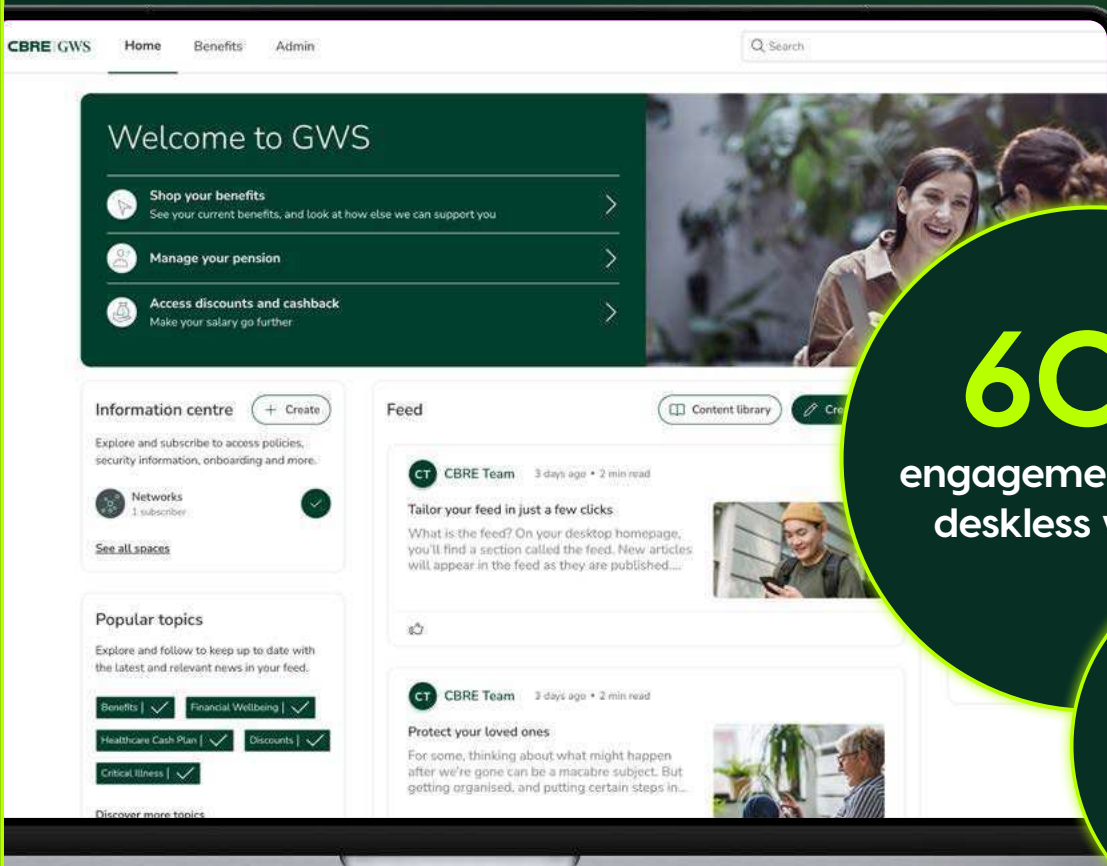
If you could challenge one thing about how organisations approach reward today, what would it be and why?

“In an ideal world, the reward approach in a business would be simple, easily defined and aligned to a robust Job Architecture (not reducing flex and choice in the Benefits space). Overarching reward strategies throughout comp and bens would have three to five year plans with all work feeding to support that goal (retention, attraction, cost containment, simplification, automation etc). Too often Reward has a short-term view of how to support a business, which is often an immediate reaction to a business need.”

SESSION | Scaling your benefits as fast as your ambitions

What's worked best for you in getting the wider business behind a new approach to reward?

"Including business leaders at the table to have a voice in what we're trying to build. I always take more than one approach for leaders to review and invite the people who 'know the business best' to feed into the right option for our company. I always find a much more engaged workforce and leadership if they feel included in the design"



60%
engagement among
deskless workers

**+43
NPS**
(+14-point rise)



Tina Samson

Reward Programme
Director, EMEA & APAC



Based on your own experience, what's the first small step you recommend others take if they want to start a big transformation?

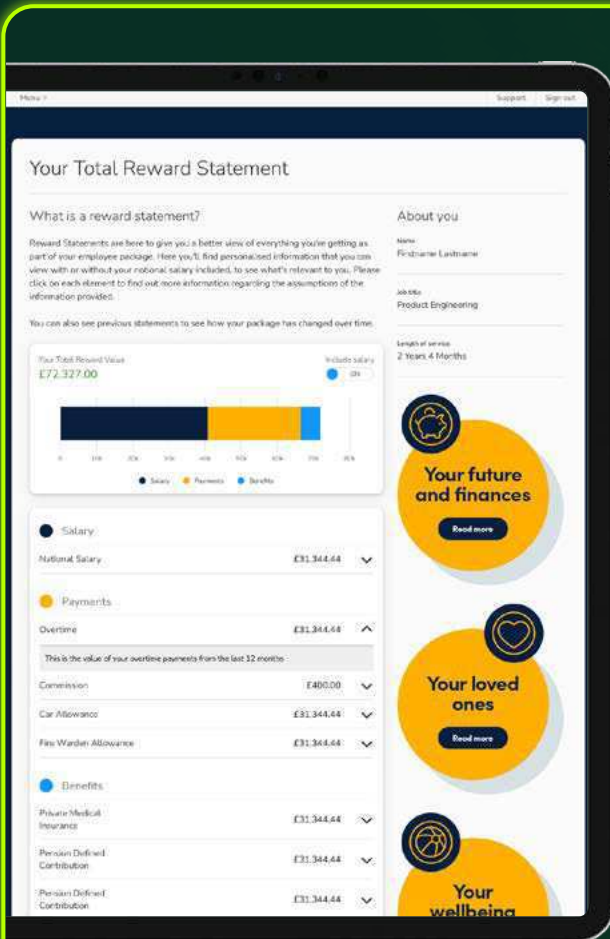
"If your strategy covers multiple countries, I recommend aligning on a global framework that balances the overall project needs while reflecting individual differences. We benchmarked every market to understand cost, competitiveness and consistency. It's also beneficial to gain feedback from employees through a working group or simple survey on what's important to them. That helped us shape something genuinely representative."

If you could challenge one thing about how organisations approach reward today, what would it be and why?

"It would have to be education. Remember to build education on the basics, both through line managers and to individual employees, so they trust your working practices. Building that understanding early drives long-term engagement."

Looking ahead, what new ideas or innovations excite you most about the future of work and reward?

“Technology that enables flexibility and personalisation. Our unified digital platform now connects 16–18 countries across EMEA and APAC, giving every market a shared identity while preserving local flexibility. Introducing Total Reward Statements has already transformed visibility and will be key to the EU Pay Transparency Directive. We’re also exploring AI-led support and flex funds to take personalisation even further – that hugely excites me.”



86%
of employees
logged in

17.5k
benefits
administered

“

We didn't know it at the time, but Total Reward Statements have future-proofed our compliance strategy.

”



Tom Pridmore

Head of Reward, Benefits & Wellbeing

BDO



Stephen Campbell

Senior Benefits Manager

BDO

What's one way you've seen your reward initiatives truly move the dial on engagement, performance, or culture?

"We've seen recognition start to shift our culture already. Reviving our old voucher award programme and empowering all colleagues – top to bottom – with the same ability to acknowledge and reward others has promoted the power of thank you through social recognition. We're seeing this grow daily through the interactions on the platform.

From an engagement perspective, awareness is everything – whether you're introducing change or just reinforcing what you already do, keep it front of mind for colleagues. We have targeted local and holistic communication approaches and seen great results in just the first few months: over 21,000+ recognitions posted, more than 9,000 interactions, and 82% of the business engaged with the revised platform – compared with limited usage of our previous voucher scheme."

SESSION | When recognition takes off: Igniting a culture of appreciation

What's one piece of advice you'd give to reward leaders preparing for a new recognition launch?

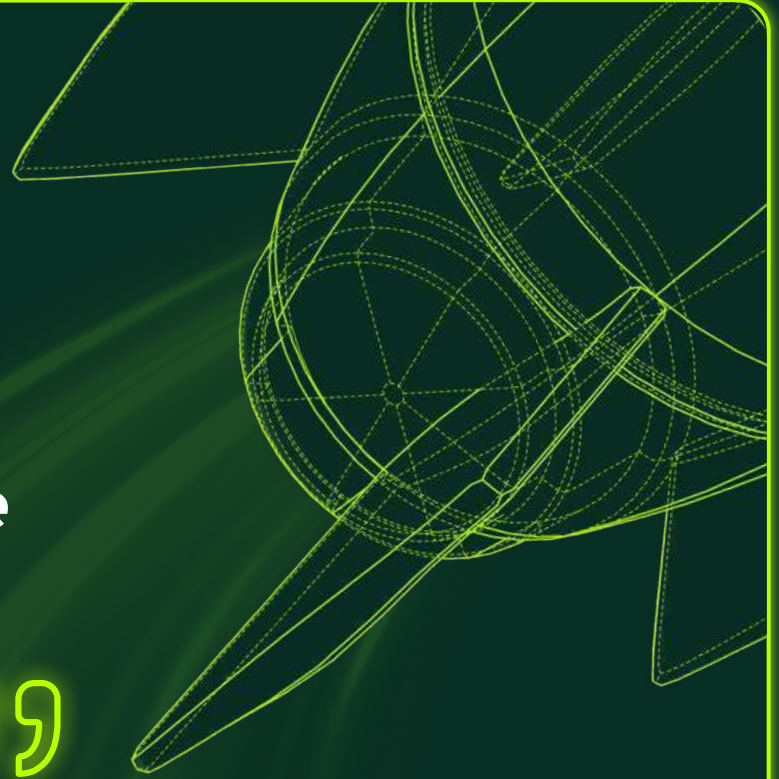
"Make sure you're showing the broader benefits of your recognition programme and linking it back to your wider people strategy. For us, it was about fostering inclusion and belonging under our 'One Firm Culture' strategy – key to supporting mental health, resilience and overall performance.

Empower everyone to recognise anyone, without the need for strict governance. Whether it was a social recognition or a monetary one, we were able to demonstrate that the feeling of being validated for the work being done on a daily basis has a direct link to motivation, engagement and ultimately business performance. And stick to your conviction on why any change to a recognition approach is worth doing, and back it up with the data, research and evidence that's readily available."

“

Promoting the power of thank you has already started a culture shift within our business.

”



What's worked best for you in getting the wider business behind a new approach to reward?

"Engagement from the top. Be it with senior leadership early on to gain buy-in, educate and promote the new scheme, through to launch and ongoing communication with all colleagues. Launch a comms plan with incentives, reminder communications, and an internal dashboard with public access for different business areas to review and promote the scheme based on demographics suited to their needs.

All these things have contributed to great engagement. Compared to the 9,000 awards made in the whole of the previous financial year on the old instant award programme, we've outperformed that by 75% in one quarter!"

21k+
recognitions
in Q1

9k
comments
and reactions

92%
of employees
logged in and
82% interacted.

Share the Joy of Appreciation



Recognise your colleagues!

Show your appreciation
for both the big and little wins

[Start your recognition](#)



To: Eleanor Jones for Being genuine
1 hour ago

Thank you so much for peer reviewing
not one, not two, but THREE reports for
me this week... [read more](#)



12



[Comment](#)



To: Paula Smith for Being bold
3 days ago

You caned that presentation Matt and I'm
taking you for lunch!

7



[5 Comments](#)

Recognised by
Micheal Smith



To: Debbie White for Being genu
3 days ago

Thank you all for picking up e
this week I've needed to a

12



[6 Comments](#)

Re
An



To: Laura and James for Being collaborative
3 days ago

Thanks for helping me out with that



To: Laura, James, Matt, and Paul for Being
3 days ago

+2

Re
An



Dylan Keenan

Engagement & Reward Manager

ACORN GROUP



What's one way you've seen your reward initiatives truly move the dial on engagement, performance, or culture?

"Our new recognition model has been a seismic shift for engagement and culture. Making peer-to-peer and leader-led recognition more visible and interactive has empowered our leaders to create their own tailored strategies – from employee-of-the-month schemes to simply sending a pick-me-up after a tough day. Every part of the business has embraced it in their own way, bringing our company values to life."

What's worked best for you in getting the wider business behind a new approach to reward?

"Consistency and accessibility have been key to our success. Our old approach relied on a few managers who weren't always aware of how our recognition programme was used. With the new platform, we've checked in regularly with leaders to offer advice and tips and ensure the approach works for everyone.

That's helped recognition become part of everyday life rather than a once-a-year event."

SESSION | When recognition takes off: Igniting a culture of appreciation

If you could give one piece of advice to fellow reward leaders preparing for their next reward and benefits launch, what would it be?

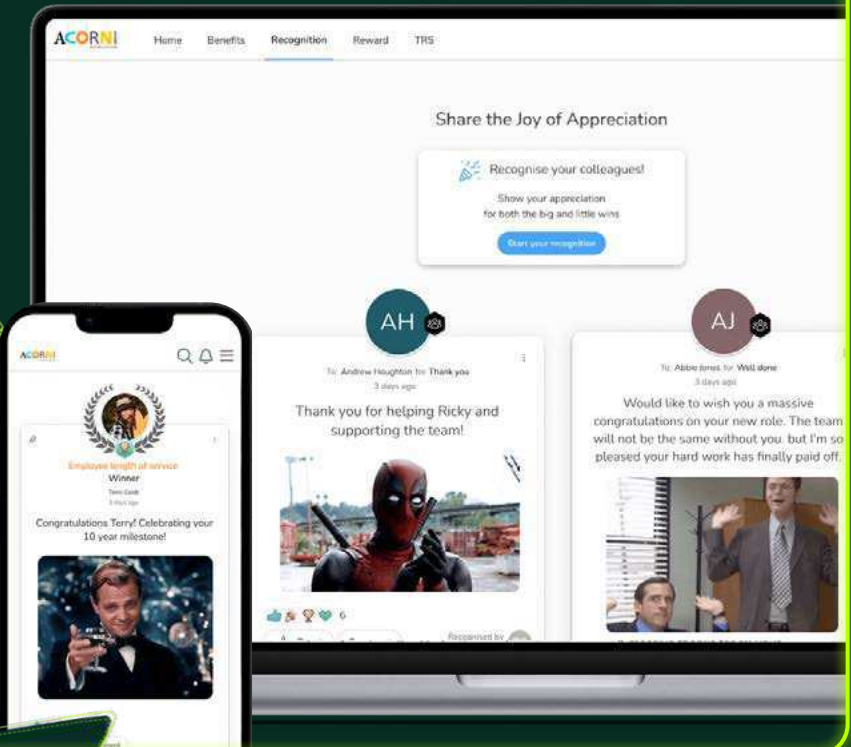
“Get people engaged as early as possible. We sent a recognition to every employee on launch day to spark conversation, and every new starter now receives a warm welcome recognition from their trainer. It means everyone experiences that feeling of appreciation from day one – that’s what builds culture.”

7,000

recognitions in year one

Attrition down across high-turnover divisions

+8-point increase in engagement score





Steve Walsh
Reward Manager



What's one way you've seen your reward initiatives truly move the dial on engagement, performance, or culture?

"Since launching High Five in 2022, we've seen our employee engagement score from our internal survey rise by 19%, particularly around perceptions of a 'fair deal'. People tell us they love the flexibility and choice our recognition programme and benefits offer. Take-up of voluntary benefits increases each year, which shows that visibility and appreciation go hand-in-hand."

What's worked best for you in getting the wider business behind a new approach to reward?

"Accessibility. Making everything digitally available on mobile means employees can engage wherever they are – whether on the airfield or in the terminal. Having the MyReward portal allows us to house all our benefits and recognition in one place, keeping reward front of mind and easy to find."

How do you keep the momentum going once a new reward initiative has launched?

“A constant drumbeat of communication. From new-starter emails to Viva Engage posts, we make sure recognition stays visible. We also spotlight milestone moments – like colleagues reaching 50 years of service – through internal comms and awards. It keeps that sense of pride alive.”

+19%
increase in
employee
engagement

98%
of employees
logged in at
launch

Attrition
down by
3.7%





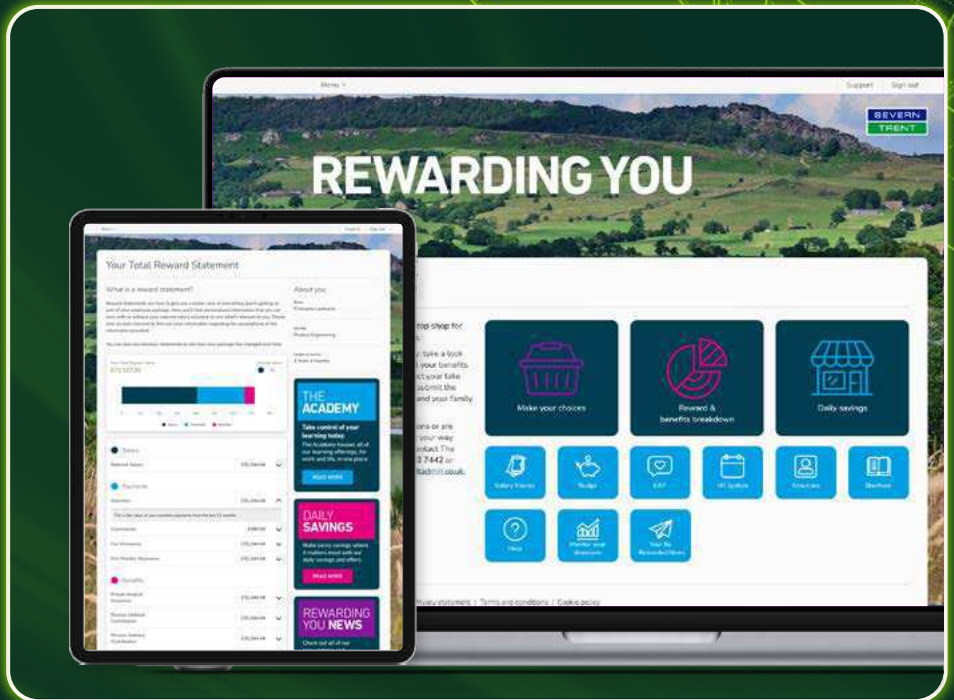
Renu Birla

Senior Reward & Benefits Advisor



£650K+

spent by employees on benefits each month



SESSION | Putting people first: How Bupa and Severn Trent are redefining benefits to drive better outcomes

What's one way you've seen your reward initiatives truly move the dial on engagement, performance, or culture?

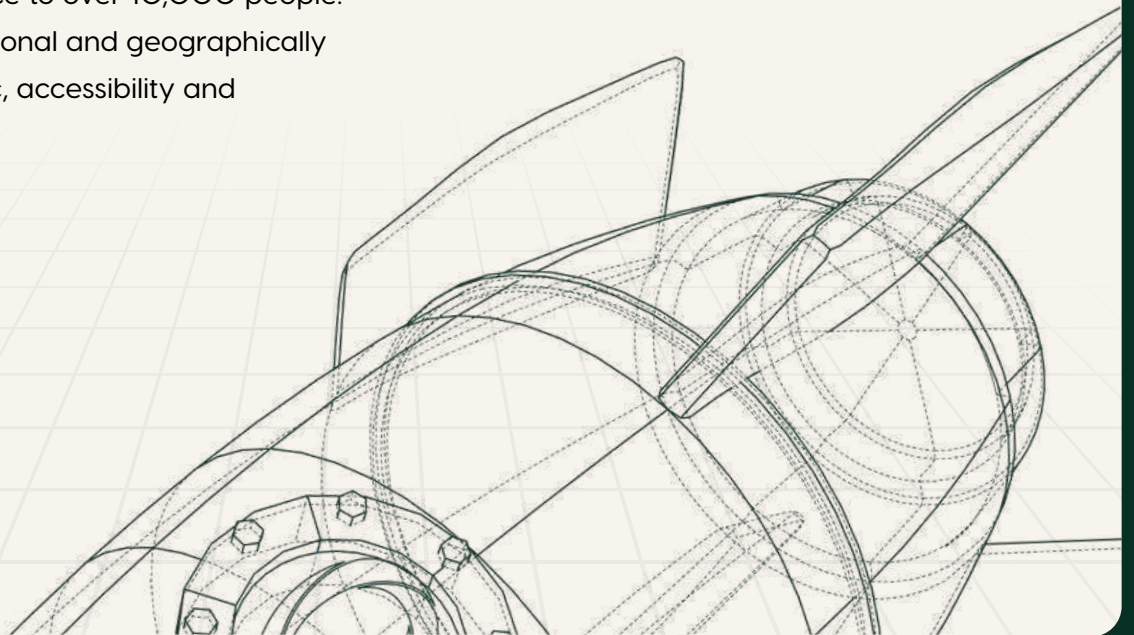
"We created a centralised, accessible reward system with two core objectives:

1. To ensure colleagues could access everything related to reward in one place – whether that's core benefits like salary, bonus, training, pension, Sharesave, life assurance, and 24/7 wellbeing services, or the circa 20 flexible benefits they can select for themselves and their families.
2. To embed a real-time recognition platform that aligns with our values and reinforces our customer-centric culture.

This strategy has been particularly vital as we've expanded our workforce to over 10,000 people. With a primarily operational and geographically dispersed demographic, accessibility and relevance were key.

Despite ongoing financial pressures, we've seen a consistent upward trajectory in engagement across all areas of reward and recognition. Colleagues are not only making more informed choices about their benefits, but they're also actively engaging with the recognition platform – celebrating each other's contributions in ways that strengthen our culture and drive performance.

It's been incredibly gratifying to see how these initiatives have helped foster a sense of belonging, empowerment, and alignment with our organisational values."



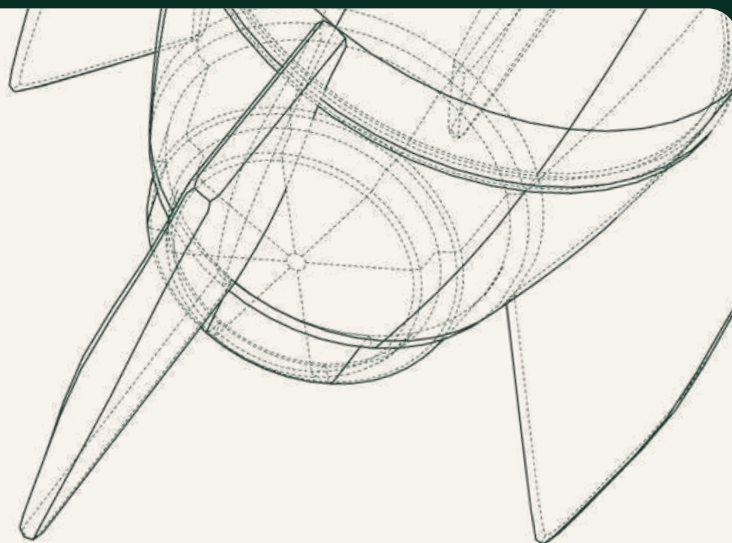
How do you keep the momentum going once a new reward initiative has launched?

"I've found that the most critical factor is ensuring our communications strategy stays rooted in the 'why'. When colleagues understand the purpose behind what we're offering, it resonates far more deeply and becomes part of the culture rather than just another HR initiative.

We're intentional about using every channel available to keep that steady drumbeat going – from roadshows, manager WhatsApp groups, and Viva Engage to employee networks, company inductions and webinars. It's about meeting people where they are and keeping the conversation alive.

79%
of employees
logged in

51%
of employees
selected
benefits



One initiative that really stands out for me is when we first introduced the YuLife gamified wellbeing app. It was a first for our Group, and there was genuine curiosity and excitement. We've built on that over the past three years with regular updates, challenges, and communications.

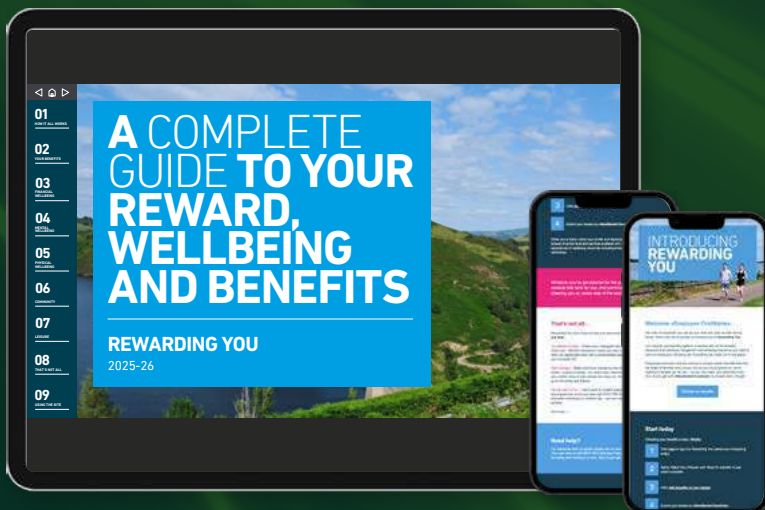
Today, around 70% of our colleagues have loaded the app, and it's become one of the most asked-about benefits by new starters – right up there with pension and Sharesave. That kind of sustained interest doesn't happen by accident. It's the result of consistent storytelling, visible leadership support, and making sure every initiative feels relevant and valuable. When people see the benefit in their day-to-day lives, they engage – and that's how we keep the momentum going."

What's worked best for you in getting the wider business behind a new approach to reward?

"One of the most powerful drivers of success in launching new reward initiatives has been securing genuine buy-in from both senior leaders and frontline colleagues. It's not just about top-down endorsement – it's about making sure the offer reflects the needs of those who'll actually use it.

We listen carefully and continuously – research, gather feedback, and stay as close as we can to the realities of our diverse workforce. It's important to challenge misconceptions and keep the conversation open, especially when introducing something new.

We've learned that high engagement stats don't tell the full story – what really matters is the personal impact. How a benefit can support someone through a tough time, help their family, or simply make life easier. That's why storytelling is central to our communications strategy. Real-life examples bring the reward offer to life and help others connect with it emotionally. When people hear how a colleague used a wellbeing service or made the most of a flexible benefit, it builds trust and relatability. Ultimately, it's an ongoing journey, doing our best to create a reward culture that feels inclusive, relevant, and human. When people see that we're genuinely trying to make a difference – they get behind it. And that's when the magic happens."



728

virtual GP consultations
completed this year



Katie Duxbury
Head of Pay & Benefits



What's one bold idea you believe could transform the future of reward and benefits?

"Removing the taxation barriers for benefits that support health and wellbeing. Looking after our people takes the burden off the NHS now and into the future – employers and employees shouldn't be penalised for that."



SESSION | Putting people first: How Bupa and Severn Trent are redefining benefits to drive better outcomes

Looking ahead, what new ideas or innovations excite you most about the future of work and reward?

“Hyper-personalisation. It’s not for the employer to segment the population and serve benefits up to designated audiences. People’s needs are more nuanced than that and continually morph, so giving employees the ability to personalise their interactions and engagement with wellbeing is key.”

What’s worked best for you in getting the wider business behind a new approach to reward and benefits?

“At Bupa, we attack the issue by working from the customer outcome backwards. If we’ve done this right, then there’s no need to get the business behind something – the business (our colleagues) are already leading the way.”



“

This isn't a tech project; it's a people strategy.

”

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THE BIG BENEFITS REPORT

Discover how leading organisations are transforming benefits.

Based on insights from 3,500+ employers and employees worldwide, The Big Benefits Report 2025/26 reveals what people really want – and how technology, AI and flexibility are powering the next era of reward.

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