A guide to flexible and voluntary benefits
1. Introduction

Employees have different lifestyles and needs. As they move through their working lives, these are likely to change. Flexible and voluntary benefits can help an employee create a personal package of benefits to suit their needs, instead of the ‘one size fits all’ approach of traditional employee benefits.

The range of benefits, the degree of flexibility and level of funding, reflect your organisation’s culture and reward agenda. For example, if you want to promote employee health and wellbeing you can structure the scheme to make it more attractive for employees to select health-related benefits rather than, say, leisure pursuits.

We believe that empowering employees to make benefit choices can help improve their engagement.

You control your costs and can share them with your employees. Additionally, flexible and voluntary benefits make it possible to maximise tax efficiencies.

Flexible benefit schemes allow employees to vary or ‘flex’ the benefits provided. With voluntary benefits, the employee can choose whether or not to buy the benefit being offered.

This guide aims to explain the way these benefits work and how our flexible and voluntary products can help you and your employees.

This guide uses technical terms. We’ve shown these in bold. You can find the definitions of these words in the glossary on page 14. Please ask us if you have any questions about these. Each policy will have unique terms. To find out what we’ll cover and how claims are assessed, please refer to our technical guide.
2. Which group protection products?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group Life Assurance</strong></td>
<td>Pays a lump sum to the insured person’s dependants following their death. Can be set up to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Insure the life of an employee, either as a flexible or a voluntary benefit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Insure the life of an employee’s partner as a voluntary benefit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dependants’ Pensions</strong></td>
<td>Following the death of an insured employee, can provide a regular monthly income to their dependants. Can be insured as a flexible benefit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group Income Protection</strong></td>
<td>Pays a regular monthly income when an insured employee is unable to work due to long-term illness or injury. We’ll work with you where appropriate, by providing support and rehabilitation to help the insured employee return to work. Can be insured as a flexible benefit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group Critical Illness Cover</strong></td>
<td>Pays a lump sum benefit to an insured employee, diagnosed as suffering from one of the specified conditions at the end of a survival period. There’s also the option for the insured employee to cover their partner. Can be insured as a flexible or voluntary benefit.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You (or trustees) will always be the policyholder and must decide:
- which products to include in a flexible or voluntary benefit *scheme,*
- for flexible benefits, the minimum level of each benefit to provide (we call this the core benefit), and
- the options an employee has for making changes to their benefits.
### 3. What are the advantages?

| **Choice** | • Employees choose how much they want of each benefit, within the rules of the scheme.
|           | • Over time, employees may want and need different benefits. Flexible and voluntary benefits are designed to allow the reward package to evolve and remain relevant to the employee. |
| **Range** | You can offer a wide range of benefits to appeal to the diverse needs of your employees. |
| **Engagement** | As employees get involved with choosing elements of their benefits, they’ll have a greater awareness of what’s being provided. |
| **Costs** | • National Insurance (NI) savings (for your employee and you) if salary sacrifice is used.  |
|           | • Helps you control costs because:  |
|           |   – the amount you spend can effectively be ‘ring fenced’; and  |
|           |   – you can focus spending, on the benefits your employees want. |
Flexible benefits make it possible for your employees to vary their benefits to suit their personal requirements. They can change the mix of benefits they receive, or adjust their salary by taking fewer or more benefits. You may fund all or part of the benefits.

It’s important to stress, there is no standard approach to flexible benefits. Flexible benefits can normally be split into core and non-core.

Core benefits

Core benefits are normally mandatory and paid for by you. We may apply a condition for a minimum level, this can be reflected by the core benefit.

Core benefit premiums can be calculated using a scheme specific unit rate applying to all employees, adjusted month by month as the membership changes.

Non-core benefits

Non-core benefits are offered to employees either as additional benefits or as a top-up to core benefits. Scheme rules govern when and by how much an employee can make changes to each benefit – a process referred to as ‘flexing’. Changes can usually be made at:

- the annual renewal date (also called the annual enrolment date); or
- a lifestyle event.

Non-core or flexible benefit premiums are typically calculated with scheme-specific age-related rates. As with the core benefit premiums, they’re adjusted monthly.

There can be a number of options when setting up a flexible benefits scheme and how the benefits are paid for. One option is for the core to be paid for by you with a further fixed amount, allocated for the employee to spend across a number of other product options.

For an explanation of ‘Lifestyle Events’, please see page 8.

Example: Normally core benefits are set at a minimum level of cover for a particular product such as life cover. The employee can then incrementally increase their cover under non-core benefits, when eligible.
Non-core benefits can be funded in the following ways:

| Flex pot | A percentage of salary which the employee may have the option to spend on a range of benefits. This may also be referred to as benefit allowance and flex account. |
| Benefit ‘trading’ | More of one benefit can be taken by taking less of others, for example, selling holiday entitlement to buy some income protection cover. |
| Salary sacrifice | Employee gives up or sacrifices part of their salary – in exchange you provide a non-cash benefit. For example, life insurance, pension or childcare vouchers. You could use the NI saving to help manage the administration of the arrangement. Legislation restricts the benefits that can be provided through salary sacrifice. |
| Salary deduction | Dependent on the tax status of the benefit, the employee will pay with a deduction from either their net or gross salary. For example, group life assurance for employees, deductions will be made from their gross salary; for group critical illness cover deductions will be made from their net salary. |
Flexible and voluntary benefits

Legal & General flexible Group Protection benefits

We normally apply the following terms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Group Life Assurance</th>
<th>Dependants’ Pensions</th>
<th>Group Income Protection</th>
<th>Group Critical Illness Cover</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimum membership</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100 (waived if combined with group life)</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum core benefit</td>
<td>1 x salary (or £10,000 flat rate)</td>
<td>15% salary</td>
<td>40% salary</td>
<td>1 x salary (or £10,000 flat rate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum total benefit</td>
<td>12 x salary (we can consider a higher limit depending on individual circumstances)</td>
<td>No set maximum</td>
<td>80% salary or £350,000, if lower (reduced if employee pension contributions insured)</td>
<td>The lower of 5 x salary or £500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Flex’ step size</td>
<td>1 x salary</td>
<td>% of salary or prospective pension, as agreed</td>
<td>% of salary, as agreed*</td>
<td>1 x salary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max ‘step’ increase</td>
<td>1 or 2 steps, as agreed</td>
<td>1 step</td>
<td>1 step</td>
<td>No limits on the number of incremental steps</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

1. Increases in benefit (‘flexing up’) may occur at the annual renewal date or following a Lifestyle Event.
2. Decreases in benefit (‘flexing down’) can take place at any monthly accounting date by any number of steps. The benefit cannot go below the core.
3. On joining the scheme (or on the date flexible benefits are introduced) depending on eligibility, employees select any level of cover between the minimum and maximum, for each benefit.
4. *Our Multiflex Group Income Protection (GIP) product allows both the amount of benefit and the length of payment term to be ‘flexed’. An extension of the payment term counts as one ‘step’.
5. We apply the medical ‘free cover limit’ to the combined core and non-core benefit.
6. A pre-existing and related condition exclusion applies to critical illness cover.
‘Lifestyle events’ are a defined set of circumstances which could impact the employee’s benefit needs. When a lifestyle event occurs, the employee can change their level of benefit from the next monthly accounting date, rather than wait until the next annual renewal date.

Standard Lifestyle Events are:

- marriage or registering a civil partnership
- birth of a child
- adoption of a child
- death of a dependant
- divorce or dissolution of a registered civil partnership.

We can consider additional lifestyle events if they meet our policy terms.

Following a lifestyle event, changes to benefit levels must usually be completed within two months.

For further details about our flexible benefits, please use our standard technical guide for more information:

- Group Life Assurance and Dependents’ Pensions
- Group Income Protection
- Group Critical Illness Cover
5. Voluntary benefits

Products and services you don’t pay for, can often be offered to your employees as voluntary benefits. You can help promote this facility at the workplace. The cost can normally be more favourable than if your employees purchased it directly. However, cover ends when the employee leaves your employment.

The benefit is delivered through a ‘group’ contract between you and us.
Legal & General voluntary Group Protection benefits

Employees can normally buy cover in either £10,000 or £25,000 units. The following terms usually apply:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum membership new scheme</th>
<th>Life Assurance Employee*</th>
<th>Life Assurance Partner*</th>
<th>Critical Illness Cover Employee**</th>
<th>Critical Illness Cover Partner**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2,500 potential members (stand alone)</td>
<td>• 2,500 potential members (stand alone)</td>
<td>• 500 potential members (linked to a standard or flexible benefit Legal &amp; General group protection scheme).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 potential members (linked to a standard or flexible benefit Legal &amp; General group protection scheme).</td>
<td>100 inforce members</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum membership existing scheme moving to us</td>
<td>100 inforce members</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum total annual premium</td>
<td>£2,000 per policy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum individual benefit</td>
<td>£250,000</td>
<td>£250,000</td>
<td>£250,000 or 5 x salary, if lower</td>
<td>£150,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underwriting requirements</td>
<td>Application form includes medical and lifestyle questions – initial cover and increases in cover</td>
<td>Application form includes medical and lifestyle questions – initial cover and increases in cover</td>
<td>Pre-existing and related condition exclusions</td>
<td>Pre-existing and related condition exclusions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum ‘unit’ increase</td>
<td>There’s not normally a limit on how many units of cover are increased at any one applicable time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* We’ll issue separate policies for employee and for partner life assurance.
** We’ll issue a single policy for employee and for partner critical illness cover.
Applications for Life Assurance or Partner Life Assurance

Employees applying for the first time or those selecting higher cover levels, will need to complete an application form, where they’ll need to answer some health-related questions.

If the health-related questions can be answered ‘no’, the application has been successfully completed. If one or more of the questions is answered ‘yes’, it may still be possible to provide cover. However, they must provide more health-related information – our preferred way of gathering this is by telephone interview. We’ll then decide whether or not we can provide cover.

Applications for Critical Illness Cover

We don’t ask for evidence of good health when the application is made. However, new cover:

- is subject to a pre-existing and related condition exclusion, and
- can only take effect on the date the employee first becomes eligible, the annual renewal date or following a lifestyle event.

For an explanation of ‘Lifestyle events’, please see page 8.

See the relevant Technical Guide for more information:
6. What is your role?

When setting up a flexible benefit or voluntary benefit scheme, you have certain duties. With a group protection benefit insured with us, you must be able to:

• communicate benefit options and our terms and conditions to your employees
• apply the eligibility terms set by us
• calculate premiums and pay the correct amount to us each month
• ask your employees to provide us with medical evidence, when necessary
• maintain reliable membership records and send us monthly data
• make claims and distribute benefits in accordance with the scheme.

To help, you could consider outsourcing certain day-to-day running of the tasks, to a third party.
7. What will we do?

Depending on the type and size of scheme we can:

- provide you with up-to-date unit rates, rate tables and free cover limit (we’ll always give you at least three months’ notice of any changes)
- draft explanatory literature for employees
- attend employee roadshows
- provide an Employee Assistance Programme that offers all your employees support and help with everyday issues in their work and personal life.
8. Glossary

**Annual renewal date**
The anniversary date of when your **policy** starts or another yearly date that we’ve agreed with you.

**Dependant**
Individual who in our opinion is (or was) wholly or partly maintained or financially assisted by the member.

**Free cover limit**
The maximum amount of cover we will provide to a member without the need for medical evidence or details of their hobbies. We’ll tell you the free limit in our quote as a level of benefit or **scheme earnings**.

**Member**
Employees included in the **scheme** in accordance with the eligibility terms.

**Membership**
The **members** covered by the **policy**.

**Monthly accounting date**
This is the first day of each monthly accounting period. Normally this is the **annual renewal date** and the same day of every month afterwards.

**Partner**
In relation to the employee, it can be their spouse, registered civil partner or unmarried partner, in general who:
- is financially dependent on the employee, or with whom financial interdependency exists which contributes to the employee’s standard of living;
- is over the age of 16;
- has the same main residence as the employee; and
- is not a foster child or child of the employee.

**Policy**
The legal contract between you and us. You choose how much of the benefits to insure under the policy.

**Scheme**
The arrangement you have set up to pay the benefits promised to your employees.

**Scheme earnings**
The earnings we use to work out a **member’s** benefit.

**Step**
The amount that a **member** can add to or subtract from their level of cover, when permitted by the **scheme** rules.

**Unit rate**
The cost for each £100 of cover, multiplied with the total **scheme earnings** or total benefit for the **policy**. We’ll tell you the unit rate in our quote.
Flexible and voluntary benefits

Contact us

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We may record and monitor calls. Call charges will vary.
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