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# IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR THE STAFF OF SANDWELL METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

An Employee Benefits Case Study





**AN EFFECTIVE EMPLOYEE BENEFITS SCHEME WON'T JUST RETAIN AND ENGAGE YOUR CURRENT WORKFORCE. IT CAN WORK LIKE A BEACON – GUIDING THE MOST TALENTED WORKERS RIGHT TO YOUR DOOR.**





# THE CLIENT

Sandwell is a metropolitan borough council in the Black Country made up of six large towns - Oldbury, Rowley Regis, Smethwick, Tipton, Wednesbury and West Bromwich.

It's responsible for managing and delivering all aspects of the borough's public services; from bin collections, to schools, roads and public housing.

With such a large remit, its workforce is just as large; with over 4,500 employees from diverse and multi-generational backgrounds.



# THE CHALLENGES

The pressure was on Sandwell to offer a staff benefits programme that not only gave access to a wide range of useful benefits, but also engaged, and appealed to each and every one of their employees working in disparate locations – no small task!

But that's not all.

They also needed a programme that could be delivered cost neutrally. This would help generate substantial savings for both the Council and their employees, and help boost the local economy.

No pressure, then...







## **GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS:** **HOW DID WE HELP SANDWELL METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL?**

When we first met with Sandwell, they already had a benefits platform in place which was performing well. However, it was over four years old and hadn't undergone any major changes in that time, meaning that staff engagement had stagnated and plateaued.

The key reason behind the stagnation was due to the demographics of their workforce changing. Baby boomers were retiring, and the focus needed to change to attracting talented millennials.

The first step in the process was talking to the staff of Sandwell to get first-hand insights into what they liked, what was relevant to them, and what they felt would engage them best.

This was done through employee focus groups and surveys. Once the results were collected and reviewed, we could then sit down to flesh out how we could help kick-start renewed motivation amongst their employees, and attract new talent in the process.

# WHAT THEY'VE SAID...



Our objectives have certainly been met, but it has been the additional pieces of work, such as working on our individual branding and facilitating award submissions, that has exceeded our expectations.



- Mark Stanley, Senior HR Partner, Sandwell Council





# MORE THAN JUST SKIN DEEP

We didn't just want to offer a new selection of benefits, without making the user experience more enjoyable for Sandwell's employees.

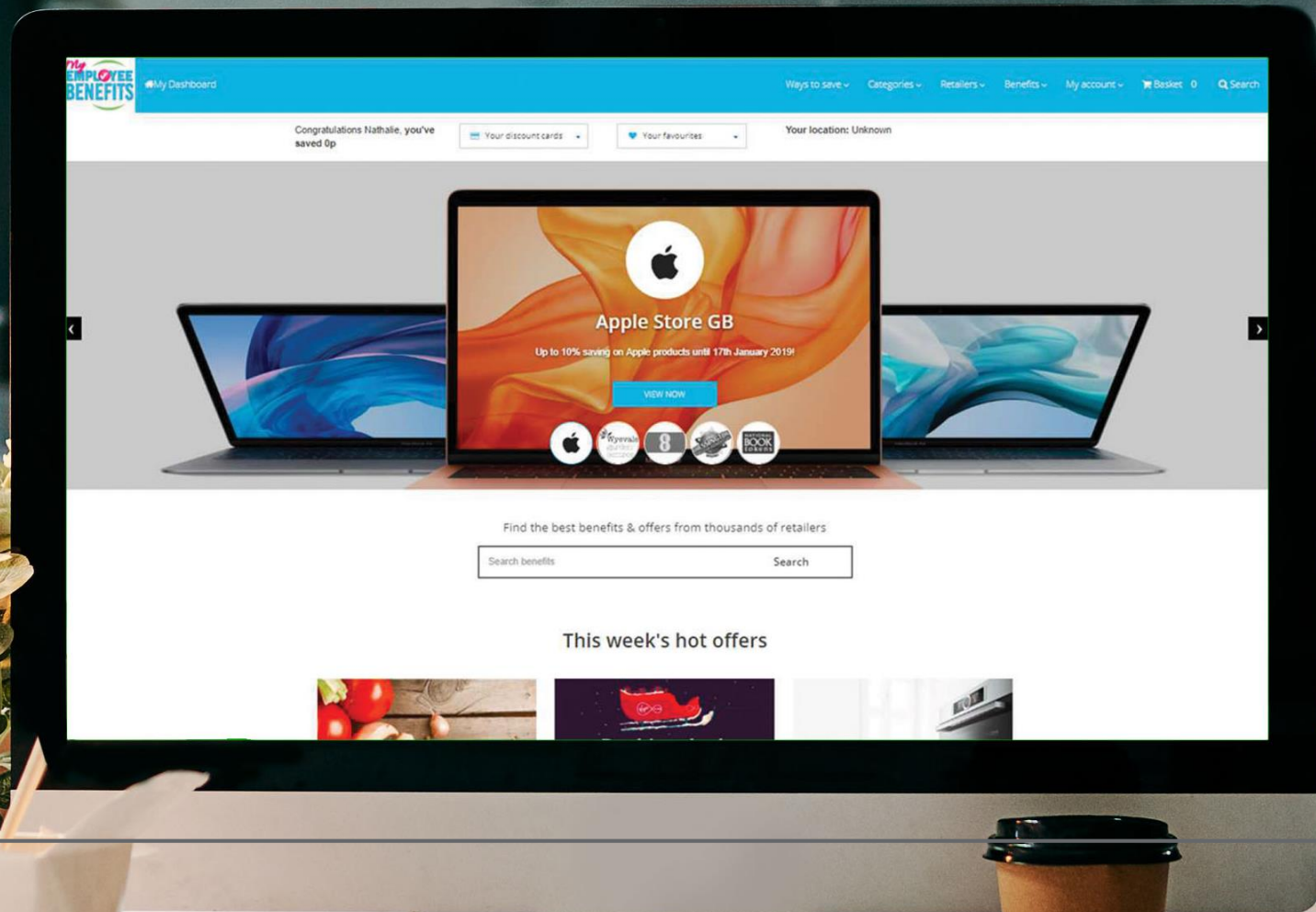
Following consultations with staff, we looked to rebrand the scheme's name, platform and logo. Staying power was key in this decision, but creating something that wouldn't alienate their employees or indeed confuse them was equally important.

This is how "My Employee Benefits" was born. It's simple and creates an inclusive, family feeling giving employees something they can identify with and call their own. Plus, the use of vibrant colours reflects ethical diversity, something that Sandwell are immensely proud of!





An intuitive mobile-optimised hub is home to all of Sandwell's employee benefits, making it easily accessible from either desktop device or our dedicated mobile app any time, maximising the schemes' reach.





# THE GOOD STUFF

With the new look and feel agreed, we could then select the benefits that we felt would work best for Sandwell's staff.

The Council's benefits scheme has been designed to not only appeal to all their 4,500 multigenerational, diverse employees working in disparate locations; but one that could be delivered cost neutrally - generating substantial savings for both the Council and their employees and help boost the local economy!

The plan includes a good mix of benefits ensuring that there's something for everyone (including the Council!) and was carefully selected following feedback gathered from employee focus groups.

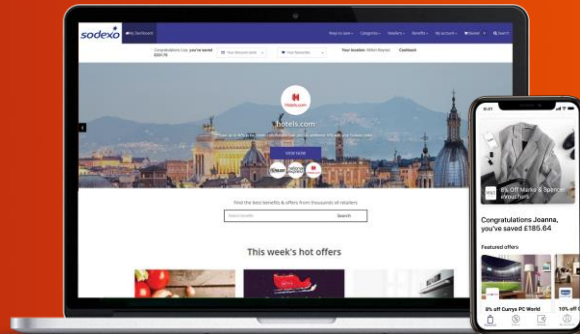




# OUR ALL-IN-ONE BENEFITS PLATFORM

It has everything hard working employees need – whether it's shopping discounts, cycle to work, travel or health and financial wellbeing – it's all here!

Sandwell's employees can log into their benefits platform online at work from their desktop, whilst on the move from their mobile, and now with a dedicated mobile app to access instant savings.



## SANDWELL'S BENEFITS AT A GLANCE



### LIFESTYLE DISCOUNTS

- eVouchers & Gift Cards
- Cinema Benefits
- Holiday Discounts
- Prepaid Cashback Online
- Cash Back



### EMPLOYEE WELLBEING

- Cycle to Work
- Gym Memberships
- Employee Assistance Programme
- Annual Leave Purchase



### SALARY DEDUCT

- Green Car Allowance
- Tech Deduct
- Childcare Vouchers \*

\* Childcare Vouchers no longer open to new applicants



# SPREADING THE GOOD WORD

Of course, having a top-of-the-line benefits package and shiny new platform doesn't mean 'job done'. After all, if no-one knows about it, how will it ever be used effectively?

Once everything was up and running, high impact emails were sent out to all employees with a call-to-action pushing them to their new benefits hub, where they could view a step-by-step tutorial video.

A competition incentivised employees to make a purchase within the first month with headline prizes, including £200 in shopping vouchers and cinema tickets (carefully selected based on their popularity).

We also organised employee roadshows at key locations and times to maximise reach. Posters were placed in high traffic areas one week prior and pop up banners, scheme cards and fun giveaways enticed employees to the event.



Sodexo listens to our requirements, and our organisation's needs, and always tries to meet them wherever possible.



- Mark Stanley, Senior HR Partner





01 JANUARY	02 FEBRUARY	03 MARCH	04 APRIL
<b>Competition: TRAVEL</b> Employee Discounts 2nd Monthly offers 4th Hot offers 11th Themed: Holidays 16th Travel 23rd Film: Coco 25th Hot product offer 30th Competition launch	<b>Competition: EURO CAMP</b> Employee Discounts 1st Monthly offers 6th Hot offers 13th Themed: Valentine's 13th Black Panther / Fifty Shades Freed 20th Hot product offer 22nd Travel 27th Competition launch	<b>Competition: MERLIN</b> Employee Discounts 1st Monthly offers 6th Hot offers 8th Hot product offer 13th Travel 22nd Themed: Easter 27th Film: Peter Rabbit / Ready Player One 29th Competition launch	<b>Competition: THOMAS COOK</b> Employee Discounts 3rd Monthly offers 5th Hot offers 10th Hot product offer 17th Travel 19th 2018 Holidays on sale 24th Avengers - Infinity War 26th Competition launch
05 MAY	06 JUNE	07 JULY	08 AUGUST
<b>Competition: TRAVEL</b> Employee Discounts 1st Monthly offers 3rd Hot offers 8th Hot product offer 15th Travel 22nd Themed: Holidays extra 24th Film: Hans Solo 29th Competition launch 31st Hot product offer	<b>Competition: HOUSE OF FRASER</b> Employee Discounts 5th Monthly offers 7th Hot offers 14th Hot product offer 19th Travel 21st Themed: Electrical 26th Film: Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom 28th Competition launch	<b>Competition: GIFT CARD PROMOTION</b> Employee Discounts 3rd Monthly offers 5th Hot offers 10th Hot product offer 17th Travel 19th Film: The Incredibles 2 24th Themed: Summer Holidays 26th Competition launch	<b>Competition: FILM</b> Employee Discounts 2nd Monthly offers 7th Hot offers 9th Hot product offer 16th Travel 21st Film: Family Themed 23rd Themed: Back to school 30th Competition launch
09 SEPTEMBER	10 OCTOBER	11 NOVEMBER	12 DECEMBER
<b>Competition: HOTPOINT</b> Employee Discounts 4th Monthly offers 6th Hot offers 11th Hot product offer 13th Travel 18th Film: Smallfoot 26th Themed 25th Hot product offer 27th Competition launch	<b>Competition: HALLOWEEN</b> Employee Discounts 2nd Monthly offers 4th Hot offers 9th Film: The Jungle Book 23rd Hot product offer 30th Competition launch	<b>Competition: CHRISTMAS</b> Employee Discounts 1st Monthly offers 4th Hot offers 8th Travel 15th Film: Fantastic Beasts 2 20th Themed 27th Hot product offer 29th Competition launch	<b>Competition: FILM</b> Employee Discounts 4th Monthly offers 6th Hot offers 11th Themed 13th Hot product offer 18th Film: Christmas fun themed 23rd Hot product offer 27th Competition launch

Whilst employees want benefits they'll use and love, finding ways to effectively convey information about the plan can be a challenge, particularly in Sandwell's environment where employees are far from homogeneous. A 12-month communication plan ensures that the scheme is kept front-of-mind 24/7/365.





# IN SIGHT IN MIND

As part of the on-going engagement campaign, real-life employee case studies are being designed to demonstrate how each scheme works and how the employee benefits from it through savings made, and improvements to their quality of life.

The Council also leverages team briefings to promote the scheme and local managers are encouraged to cascade it down to their teams (consequently bridging any communication gaps missed by the campaigns).

Promotional banners, posters and leaflets also feature prominently in each location. This is on top of a pro-active 12-month communication plan that actively keeps the benefits programme at the forefront of Sandwell's employee engagement strategy all-year round.



# **HOT** STATS

**45%** EMPLOYEE TAKE UP.

**£300,000** SAVED BY EMPLOYEES.

**£200,000** SAVED IN NATIONAL INSURANCE.

**A CERTIFIED** INVESTOR IN PEOPLE.

AND THAT'S **JUST THE START...**





# THE ALL-IMPORTANT OUTCOMES

The brief was a tough one, but thanks to the close collaboration with Sandwell and our experience in building effective benefits packages, the scheme has been an astounding success.

Employee benefit take up stands at 45% and employees have saved over £300,000 in total since launch. Not only that, the Council's 2018 achievement of the 'Investors in People' Silver accreditation is testament to the scheme's success!

Also, Sandwell Council has saved over £200,000 in NI, which has not only funded the scheme but has also been reinvested in several key HR initiatives.





# THE ALL-IMPORTANT OUTCOMES

What makes the scheme's success even more remarkable is that the Council doesn't have a dedicated reward team in place.

All programme elements (launch, operation, communication) are managed by the Resourcing team in addition to their day-to-day responsibilities with the support of the team here at Sodexo Engage.

This is testament to the Council's commitment to putting their employees at the heart of everything they do while being mindful of the need to keep the scheme cost neutral.



# AND THERE'S MORE...

What makes Sandwell's reward and benefits scheme even more remarkable is that it's delivered at zero net cost. Since the programme launch, Sandwell has saved over £200,000 in NI allowing them to fund new projects that are part of their business strategies including:



A Talent Connect Programme ensuring the council has a management and leadership pipeline of talent for the future.



A 'Jobs Promise' initiative providing a 2-year guarantee of a job for any employee. This has resulted in a ten-fold increase of employees being redeployed; with more than £1 million of redundancy cost avoidance. Savings from the benefits scheme fund enhanced training and development for redeployees.



The 'Right person, right place, right time' initiative promoting career opportunities and appointing internally wherever possible. This has included funding the development of an externally accessed portal, pop-up job fair resource and promotional material to increase Yammer followers and employees signing up for job alerts.



# DON'T JUST TAKE OUR WORD FOR IT...

There's no doubt that the benefits programme we've implemented with Sandwell has been a popular and successful project.

Senior stakeholders at the Council have seen a demonstrable improvement in both their employee engagement and talent retention. But more importantly, their scheme has been recognised by industry peers as a scheme to be proud of: winning the 2019 Employee Benefits Award for 'Best Voluntary Benefits'.



We now have a clear, award winning employee benefits offering, that not only rewards existing employees and aids retention but also supports our approach to attracting new talent.



- Mark Stanley, Senior HR Partner, Sandwell Council





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Our employee benefits offering has been recognised nationally on several occasions, including winning a HR Excellence award and multiple Employee Benefits awards.

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- Mark Stanley, Senior HR Partner, Sandwell Council



# WHO WE ARE

Part of Sodexo Employee and Consumer Engagement, our employee benefits solutions help workplaces grow a positive culture by attracting and retaining top talent and increasing employee engagement.

We understand that every workplace is different - our mission is not to build a culture for you, but to help nurture and grow the one that already exists.

At Sodexo, we have over 50 years' heritage in creating award-winning experiences that make people's lives better.

From growing employee culture and inspiring success in your workplace, to driving consumer engagement with your brand, we transform the way in which employees and consumers behave or perform, meaning they'll engage more deeply with you.

**Sodexo,**

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