

More Than Pay: Building a Sector-Wide Approach to Total Reward in Students' Unions

Aim

Explore how Students' Unions can benchmark pay more effectively, develop compelling total reward offers, and collaborate across the sector to improve attraction, engagement and retention.

Current Challenges

- Current recruitment pressures
- Rising employment costs
- Limited charity funding
- Competition from universities and commercial employers

What makes people stay?

Apart from salary, what are the three biggest reasons people stay working at your Students' Union?

- Flexible working
- Benefits (annual leave, wellbeing)
- Culture/people
- Development
- Purpose/meaningful work
- Security/comfort
- Location
- Progression opportunities (inc. sideways)

What is Total Reward?

Financial

- Salary
- Pension
- Increment schemes
- Bonuses
- Cost of living support

Benefits

- Leave
- Flexible working
- Family friendly policies
- Buying/selling additional leave
- Health benefits

Development

- Training
- Coaching

- Apprenticeships
- Career pathways
- Internal progression

Experience

- Culture
- Recognition
- Purpose
- Leadership
- Wellbeing

Build the ideal SU Total Reward Package

Suggestions included:

- 9 day fortnight
- Different working hours (35) or days
- Cheese Friday
- More wellbeing initiatives
- Game days (traitors, squid games)
- Pension
- Employee assistance programme
- Counselling/therapy
- Separate development conversations from performance conversations
- Office layout
- Line manager bootcamp/ 6 month manager development programmes
- Effective Officer induction

Collaboration

Opportunity for a 2027 sector total reward survey and report (February time) to benchmark:

- salaries
- benefits
- development
- absence
- recruitment

Additional opportunity for shared costs on:

- benefits – healthcare for example
- other negotiated group discounts?
- training provision

None of us individually has all the answers, but collectively we're employing thousands of staff across the sector. If we share data and ideas rather than working in isolation, we can build stronger, fairer and more attractive workplaces.