



# Noticeboard

## NEST - will you be ready?

**More reforms to Pensions in the United Kingdom are on the way. I know that the mere mention of the "P" word is enough to make us switch off, but the reforms are extensive in the industry and will affect every employer in the country starting from October 2012 and fazing in until October 2017.**

### So what is happening?

Since 1959 when the Basic State Pension was started, every employee has been entitled to a pension from the state. Since then there has been a succession of further state pension schemes run for employees through national insurance contributions (Graduated Pension, SERPS and recently S2P) which would top up the Basic State Pension and this was reliant on earnings (the more you earned the more National Insurance contributions went to the scheme). Since the 2007 Pensions Bill, "S2P" is being removed and the onus is to be placed on the employer to provide a pension scheme to fill in the gap that this leaves.



**"So does that mean our National Insurance contributions reduce?"** I hear you ask. **"No"** is the straight answer. These contributions may well be used to fortify the current Basic State Pension, although nothing has been finalised as yet.

### So what do I need to do as an employer?

Starting from October 2012 (for companies with a large amount of employees) and then running until October 2017 (for all companies no matter how small), a 'staging date' will be issued to them. This is the date by which they will firstly need to

have set up a compliant Pension Scheme and secondly to start contributing to it for their employees.

When the new rules are fully in force, the minimum combined pension contribution will be 8% of an employees' pay (if they earn between £5715 and £38,185). Of this 8%, the employer must contribute a minimum of 3%. Most employers can utilise existing pension schemes but I would suggest that they have them reviewed in order to confirm that they adhere to the auto enrolment duties.

Another duty that has been placed on the employer is that they will have to Auto-enrol all eligible employees on or before their staging date. Should the employee wish to opt out, the employer must document this fact and re-enrol the employee every 3 years.

### So what is NEST?

The National Employment Savings Trust (as you notice they haven't used the word Pension!) this is a new country and industry wide occupational pension scheme that can be used to fill auto enrolment duties if an employer does not wish to establish their own arrangements. NEST is aimed in particular at low to moderate earners who have not historically participated in work placed pensions. It will be run by the government under a trust, and the NEST Corporation will act as trustees.

The sweeping changes to the Pension landscape although they may seem a long way off companies need to start considering their options; in the future pensions could become more of a discussion point at annual staff reviews and can be integrated into the total staff remuneration packages.

The other issue is the extra administration burden and therefore extra cost this will place on the employer and or employer's accountant in order to comply with the Auto enrolment process.

If you would wish to be kept informed of the changes going forward please email me in order to receive my further newsletters on the subject.

**Michael Cooke**

Managing Director

Enable Independent Financial Life Planners

mike@enableflp.co.uk

## To transfer or not to transfer "the leave" that is the question?

### Additional Paternity Leave (APL)

As of 3rd April 2011 fathers and adoptive parents could be eligible for up to six months' paternity leave, some of them paid, if their partner returns to work and they transfer over the second half of their leave.

Employers need to amend their policies, in order to minimise the impact that these new proposals will have on their businesses.

At present, fathers are entitled to just two weeks' paid leave while mothers can take up to 52 weeks, with 39 of them paid.

The Regulations will allow for a mother returning to work before the end of her statutory leave to transfer the rest of her leave entitlement to her partner. It is stipulated that the child must be at least 20 weeks old for this additional allowance to take effect. The new father will then be paid the statutory maternity pay rate.

### Main points

- Fathers able to take from two to 26 weeks' leave.
- Mothers have to return to work before fathers can take the leave.
- Fathers paid for leave only when it falls within the 39-week SMP period.
- Additional paternity leave is only for the purpose of caring for the child.
- Fathers must have 26 weeks' continuous service at 15 weeks prior to the child's birth to be eligible, the same qualifications as for statutory paternity leave -
- The father must remain in employment until the start of APL.
- Eligibility extends beyond biological fathers to anyone who is married to, or the partner of, the child's mother, as long as that person is responsible for the child's upbringing.

At least eight weeks before the APL begins, employees must give employers:

- notice of their intention to take leave.
- a signed declaration stating their absence is to care for the child;
- a signed declaration from the mother, confirming the father's information, giving her name and address, her national insurance number and a statement of her intention to return to work.
- Apply data protection policy and procedure for the mother in the same way as for your employees.

The employer can also request a copy of the child's birth certificate and the mother's employer's name and address. Employers are likely to seek this information as a matter of course as evidence for justifying payment.

Employees who have given notice may vary the date on which the leave begins, but they must give at least six weeks' notice. If this is not possible, they must give notice as soon as is reasonably practicable. This will create problems for employers, especially where there is disagreement over whether it was practicable possible to give notice earlier. Employers can also postpone an employee's return to work where a change has occurred.

They must notify the employee of the start and end date of their leave, in writing and within 28 days of receiving the notice.

As with maternity leave, employees can work for up to 10 days during their APL without bringing their leave to an end.

There is also similarity in relation to:

- redundancy and the right to be offered any suitable available vacancy;
- the right to return after going on APL; and protection against detriment or dismissal.
- Carryover of holiday entitlement in the same way that returners from maternity or adoption leave are treated
- Equality of opportunity

Overall, the costs of APL will be offset by the reduction in maternity leave costs. But employers will find this an extra administrative burden and will have to find cover for more fathers on leave.

### Next Steps:

- Alter paternity leave policy, procedures and letters to reflect Ordinary Paternity Leave (OPL) and APL
- Review all policies and procedures in relation to their impact, mirror maternity where appropriate
- Communicate changes to managers and staff

**Kerry McGowan**

HR Matters

kerry.mcgowan@birchanger-hr.co.uk

## BISHOP'S STORTFORD CHAMBER OF COMMERCE networking breakfast

Tuesday 5 July 2011

Speakers:

**David Holroyd-Doveton,**  
**Positive Print and Design Limited**  
**"An Accredited Academy Digital**  
**Coach who will show you how to**  
**unlock your digital potential"**

at

Great Hadham Golf Club

**8.15am for 8.30am**

**£15 pre-booked - £17.50 on the day**

Telephone: **01279 505 953**

Email: **secretary@bschamber.org**



**Sponsored by Domino's Pizza**  
**Free pizza voucher for every attendee**

**www.bschamber.org**

## Action List: How to prevent business fraud

During the recession, levels of fraud rose, according to the National Fraud Authority (NFA), but small businesses may feel unable to justify investing in protection against it. Protecting your business from fraud doesn't have to be expensive. These tips show you how

- Beware of external fraud**, such as phishing - when someone attempts to gain sensitive material such as credit card details by masquerading as a legitimate entity, often a bank. If in doubt, check directly with your bank. Hacking and corporate identity theft are also threats.
- Ensure that only the relevant employees have passwords to secure data or access to credit cards.** Check that any expense claims are valid, and keep an eye on receipts from your petty cash tin. Take appropriate measures to deter fraud, and investigate any suspected instances.
- Spot fraud** by keeping an eye out for unauthorised payments, or for other companies impersonating your business or directors. Prevent corporate identity fraud by making sure that Companies House has the correct details for your business, or enroll for the more secure electronic PROOF scheme.
- Set up and reassess internal control systems.** Ensure that your finance team or accountant check bank and credit card statements thoroughly. Shred all sensitive documents before recycling them.
- Validate new customers with credit agencies.** Keep an eye on your current customers' accounts too, to look for trends such as delayed or slowing payments. If you think you may have a problem with a customer, get additional trade references or use credit insurers.
- Conduct an internet search for common misspellings of your business name to check that no one is impersonating you online.** Not only could businesses with a similar name poach your customers, but if their reputation is bad, yours could be damaged by association.
- Review your IT security.** Your business could be at risk from hackers if sensitive data such as your customers' details or your intellectual property, is stored unprotected on your server. Make sure your virus software, password protection and firewalls are up to date and working.
- If you discover internal fraud**, ensure that it is clear who will lead the investigation, how to deal with the suspects and at what stage you will involve the police, if necessary. If you discover external fraud, consider getting legal advice before proceeding.

### Cardinal rules

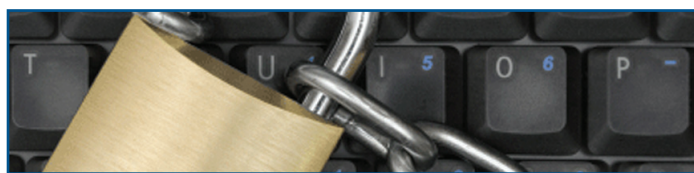
#### Do

- **Check** bank and credit card statements thoroughly
- Ensure your IT systems offer **full protection**
- **Vet** new employees and customers

#### Don't

- **Ignore** the possibility of fraud
- Forget to **review** your internal fraud prevention systems
- Assume that emails asking for bank details are **legitimate**

Information supplied by HSBC



**19th October**  
at Rhodes  
**Booking  
Stands  
now**

[exhibition@bsmb.co.uk](mailto:exhibition@bsmb.co.uk)

## New Members

**Ken Bertram**  
**David King**

K.B. Driving Ltd  
Sovereign Medical

16th June · Lussmanns · 12.30pm - 2pm

[www.the3rdthursday.com](http://www.the3rdthursday.com)

This month's speaker is **John Mann**

## Dates for your diary

**June 15th**

Meet the neighbours networking BBQ at Manor of Groves  
Contact Harlow Chamber: Laura Byatt, [accounts@harlowchamber.co.uk](mailto:accounts@harlowchamber.co.uk)  
price members £20 +VAT, non-members £25 + VAT

**July 5th**

Networking breakfast Sponsored by Domino's Pizza  
David Holroyd-Doveton, Positive PD, speaking on Blogging and twitting for business

**NO NETWORKING BREAKFAST IN AUGUST**

**September 6th**

Networking breakfast  
Graham Elliott, Hays Macintyre speaking on VAT issues

# 20 QUESTIONS

## Francesca Cozens Committee Member of Bishop's Stortford Chamber of Commerce

Job title:

**Family Solicitor at Nockolds LLP**

Lives:

**Great Dunmow**



**1. What car are you driving at the moment?**

Peugeot 206

**2. How long does your journey to work take?**

Between 20 - 30 minutes depending on traffic and term times

**3. If you won the lottery would you retire?**

If I won the lottery I do not think I could give up work entirely as I think I would actually get bored if I was at home all the time! I would give more time to my voluntary work with the Grandparents' Association who are a very worthwhile cause

**4. What do you always carry with you to work?**

I never leave home without my mobile telephone

**5. What was your first job and the amount in your first pay packet?**

I worked at my local village shop selling newspapers, sweets and household goods. My first shift was 10 hours long and I earned a whole £10 which was a huge amount of money at the time

**6. Would you say you live to work, or work to live?**

I work to live which enables me to spend time with my family and also to be involved with the Grandparents' Association

**7. What can you see from your office window?**

I am fortunate to see St Michaels Church in all its glory from my window

**8. Do you make time for lunch every day?**

Yes, I make time for lunch most days as I like to get out of the office when I can to clear my mind for the afternoon

**9. As a business person, describe your three main qualities?**

Enthusiastic, loyal and compassionate

**10. And your worst quality?**

Untidy, but I trust that my Secretary would know where things are

**11. What irritates you most about being in business?**

Unreasonable opponents fuelling disputes between parties particularly where there are children involved where matters could remain amicable

**12. What has been your most satisfying moment in business?**

Last year Nockolds made their first application for Investors in People and we were the first law firm in East Anglia to achieve a Bronze Award on the first application and this was very satisfying

**13. What is the most important thing you look for in new recruits?**

Personality and ability to connect with clients and a good sense of humour

**14. If you could work in a completely different field, what would it be?**

As a child I clearly watched too much television as I always wanted to be a solicitor growing up, I blame LA Law, alternatively, the only other thing I can remember thinking I might want to do as a child was go to the moon!

**15. How important do you think a university education is to success in business?**

I very much enjoyed the experience of University and University education has enabled me to become a solicitor at a much younger age than a non-university route. A University education can be of great assistance in succeeding in business but I do not feel it is essential. There are a lot of other important skills that cannot be learned in the classroom.

**16. What was your biggest mistake in business?**

Taking people at face value

**17. If you could employ anybody from the world of business who would it be, and why?**

Mark Zuckerberg - Founder of facebook. He could help me with, say, short network marketing. He took a very simple idea which has taken the world by storm

**18. What advice would you give to an aspiring entrepreneur?**

Know your product and market and just keep going.

**19. If you could choose to work for any company in the world which would it be and why?**

Nockolds - I have now been with Nockolds for 4 years and it is genuinely a great place to work.

The firm is committed to looking after its clients and its staff

**20. If you could turn the clock back, what would you have changed about your business career?**

I joined Nockolds as a newly qualified solicitor 4 years ago and wished that I had found them earlier and completed my training at the firm.

## Sponsor Opportunity

**Would your company like to sponsor the Noticeboard?**

Noticeboard is printed 6 times a year and distributed to all Chamber members, business contacts, libraries and points of information. Sponsors get an advertisement as a part of the package, which costs only £100.

**Please contact Philippa, Chamber Secretary on:**

**01279 505 953**

## Noticeboard

Is designed and printed by **Marketing Kinetics**

Telephone: 01279 758 850 • [www.marketing-kinetics.co.uk](http://www.marketing-kinetics.co.uk) • [inbox@marketing-kinetics.co.uk](mailto:inbox@marketing-kinetics.co.uk)