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# Newsletter

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**The  
Importance of  
Salary  
Benchmarking**

***Managing  
Compassionate  
Leave***

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## **The Importance of Salary Benchmarking**

Salary benchmarking is when businesses compare their pay structures with industry, regional and national standards. Due to the competitive nature of the hiring market, businesses cannot afford to guess when it comes to assigning salary bands to their roles.

### **Why is salary benchmarking important?**

#### **1. Attracting Top Talent**

Candidates now have more access to salary data than ever before, this means they already know what salary they are expecting for a role when they are looking to start a new position. If your salaries are not in line with market expectations, the best candidates may never even apply! Benchmarking your salaries makes your role competitive and stand out to candidates.

#### **2. Employee Retention**

Benchmarks are not just used for attracting new talent but also retaining the talent you have. When employees feel they're being fairly paid, they're more likely to stay. Salary benchmarking gives you the data to make informed pay decisions, helping you retain your top performers and avoid costly turnover.

#### **3. Fairness & Transparency**

Pay equity is often at the forefront, especially with gender pay reporting. By regularly reviewing and adjusting pay scales, small businesses can demonstrate a clear commitment to fairness.

#### **4. Clear Pay Structures**

Introducing salary benchmarking early means you can create a more structured and scalable approach to compensation. This makes it easier to grow your team, promote from within, and ensure consistency across departments and locations.

### **How to start salary benchmarking:**

- Check out free salary resources such as Glassdoor, Indeed, and LinkedIn Salary Insights;
- Subscribe to annual salary surveys;
- Reach out to AgileHR Consulting – we can use our resources to help with salary benchmarking current & future roles, based on your business size, location and hierarchy.

*If you would like more information on Salary Benchmarking, please contact [chelsey@agilehrconsulting.com](mailto:chelsey@agilehrconsulting.com)*



## **Managing Compassionate Leave**

In every workplace, moments arise when employees face deeply personal crises: bereavements, critical illnesses in the family, or other life-altering events. As HR professionals, how we manage compassionate leave is not just a matter of compliance, it's a test of our organisation's values, leadership, and humanity.

Done well, compassionate leave management safeguards both employee well-being and business continuity. Done poorly, it can leave lasting scars on trust, morale, and retention.

### **1. Know the Law, but Lead with Humanity**

Statutory provisions for compassionate leave are important - but they are a starting point, not the destination.

- Go beyond the minimum where possible - allow additional leave, flexibility in how work is done on return, and easy access to counselling.
- Ensure policies are easy to find and written in plain language so employees don't have to navigate bureaucracy during distress.

Compassionate leave policies signal the culture you want to build.

Compliance is the floor. Compassion is the ceiling.

### **2. Balance Consistency with Sensitivity**

Consistency ensures fairness, but overly rigid application can feel cold and disconnected. HR leaders must balance equity with empathy by:

- Using policy as a framework, not a script.
- Allowing discretion for unique circumstances (e.g., travel time for overseas funerals, complex family arrangements).
- Avoiding one-size-fits-all return-to-work timelines—grief and recovery have no standard clock.
- Keep decision-making transparent to maintain trust.

Equity and empathy can - and should - coexist.

### 3. Equip Managers for the First Conversation

The first conversation an employee has about compassionate leave often sets the tone for their entire experience. Managers should:

- Respond with empathy first, process second.
- Avoid probing for unnecessary details. Respect privacy and boundaries.
- Confirm that support will continue beyond the leave period.

What people remember is often not the exact words, but the tone, the presence, and the humanity shown.

**Tip:** HR should invest in emotional intelligence training for managers and leaders in their business so they can handle these moments with confidence and care.

### 4. Stay Connected Without Overstepping

While employees are away, maintaining a respectful connection can help them feel supported. A short message, a reminder of available support, or help with practicalities can mean a lot.

- Keep contact minimal but meaningful during leave.
- Provide information on Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs), bereavement support, or flexible work arrangements.
- Use gentle check-ins, always making it clear there's no obligation to respond immediately.
- Communicate openly about work arrangements so the employee isn't blindsided on return.

The goal is to make support feel available without pressure.

### 5. Plan a Gentle Return

Returning from compassionate leave can be more difficult than taking it. Strategies include:

- Arrange a return-to-work conversation to check how the employee is coping and to adjust plans if needed.
- Offering a phased return or temporary workload adjustments.
- Giving space for private moments or breaks as the employee readjusts.
- Being alert to delayed grief or burnout and signposting available support services
- Offer occupational health services if needed.

**Best practice:** Arrange a re-entry conversation to acknowledge the event, discuss workload, and agree on adjustments - without making the employee relive the trauma.

It's not about restoring the old normal - it's about helping someone navigate a new one.

## 6. Make Compassion Part of the Culture

The way you handle compassionate leave reflects the true character of your organisation. Embed a culture of care by:

- Recognising that supporting employees through crises boosts long-term loyalty.
- Ensuring senior leaders model empathy and respect for personal circumstances.
- Reviewing policies annually to keep pace with evolving expectations around well-being.

Culture is not just what's written - it's what's felt when life turns upside down.

Managing compassionate leave well requires more than policy knowledge - it demands emotional intelligence, leadership courage, and cultural alignment. HR's role is to bridge the gap between business needs and human needs, ensuring that employees return not just to a job, but to a workplace where they feel valued, understood, and supported.

Handled with thoughtfulness and care, compassionate leave becomes more than an absence - it becomes a moment where your organisation proves its integrity.

*Article by Sharmina. Please do reach out to any member of the Agile HR team if you would like further support with this.*