

Positive actions

► **Sophie Smith looks at some of the pensions organisations going above and beyond to assist those struggling in the fight against Covid-19**



hard-copy written reports, combining information gathering with other providers, and suspending the need to obtain a full GP report before providing guaranteed quotes.

The group also called on providers to work together during this time, having already teamed up with Morgan Ash, who work with Legal & General.

Commenting on the initiative, Just Group group communications director, Stephen Lowe, says: "It is important that we do what we can to help the health professionals dealing with the full impact of coronavirus.

"We believe it is important for all providers to adapt their approach to ensure guaranteed quotations are available as quickly as possible. These steps will minimise the call being made on family doctors to supply information while still making sure customers can receive the reassurance that care fees will be covered for as long as necessary."

Mercer – Employers supporting employers

Mercer has launched a complimentary financial wellbeing resources hub to assist employers and their staff through the Covid-19 pandemic. The site provides practical information for employers to help their employees maintain financial wellbeing, with toolkits aimed at individuals and company resources alike. The site will be posting information around the evolving government and industry measures through videos, podcasts, and articles.

Mercer UK CEO, Sylvia Pozezanac, adds: "As an employer we can clearly see

With the lockdown now expected to last well into the summer season, it's important to remember that there is good news, even in the midst of a pandemic.

Pensions organisations are not immune to the impact of the current crisis, with funding levels hit and administrators facing huge pressures, but that hasn't stopped some from going above and beyond to help in the fight against the Covid-19.

Whether it is supporting the brilliant

carers and key workers who are on the front line every day, or going one step further to make sure that others simply feel safe and secure. This is an unprecedented time, but it's important to remember that help is out there.

Just Group – Helping key workers to weather the storm

Focusing their attentions on supporting key workers, Just Group has announced plans to support GPs and care advisers in the midst of the pandemic. The measures include removing the requirement for

the impact Covid-19 is having on our own people and their families, and as a trusted adviser we see the impact on our clients and their people. Drawing on our own approach to financial wellbeing, as well as the personal experience and expertise of our colleagues across our business, we have created this hub of information to support and give back to our clients and their people."

Aviva – A global effort

Aviva has done a lot of work across its various businesses to support people in the current crisis around the world, ranging from free life insurance for medical workers in Wuhan, China, to extended motor, breakdown and home cover for NHS workers in the UK.

They have also made a £10 million increase to their funding with long-standing partners, the British Red Cross, while its Italian business has donated £100,000 to the Milan municipality.

Many Aviva staff are going above and beyond too, and the company is fully supporting this, backing colleagues who previously worked in healthcare if they want to volunteer with the NHS.

Aviva CEO, Maurice Tulloch, adds: "Our people live and work in the same neighbourhoods as our customers around the world. As our employees juggle with demands at home and at work, we are committed to helping them."

AJ Bell – Wage War

AJ Bell have launched a Wage War under the umbrella of the AJ Bell Trust, with all proceeds to be distributed to charities supporting the Covid-19 efforts or directly to those in need as a result of the virus. The trust has already kick-started the fund with £50,000.

Plus, AJ Bell CEO, Andy Bell, revealed that he, and other board directors and senior management, have already donated their April, May and June wages to this fund, with many more staff signalling their intent to donate part of their wages to the fund.

Bell says: "Anyone who wants to join me in waiving or donating part of their wages to charity in their fight against Covid-19 can join us on social media #wagewaronCOVID. The AJ Bell Wage War on Covid Fund is open to anyone who wants to make a donation and be assured that it is used to support a Covid-19 cause."

Secor Asset Management – Keeping it local

Secor Asset Management will be making donations of £1,000 on behalf of every employee in an effort to do their bit in the fight against Covid-19.

Staff have chosen to make the most of the initiative to help support their own local communities, with many choosing to support local relief initiatives, such as purchasing medical supplies and supporting local businesses.

Some have even partnered with local restaurants to deliver hot meals to hospital staff on the front line, supporting both small business and key workers.

In addition, Secor has also been donating equipment such as iPads, to allow those in hospital a crucial lifeline to their loved ones in their time of need.

Secor Asset Management managing partner, Tony Kao, comments: "This small gesture enables each and every one of our employees to help some of those most in need at a time when we all need to pull together."

MNOPF – A supporting voice for members

Meanwhile, the Merchant Navy Officer Pension Fund (MNOPF) has focused on going above and beyond to support their individual members during the pandemic.

The scheme will be running a series of webinar programmes to over 30,000 members and their close families, in association with Wellbeing People, to support them with issues around self-isolation, nutrition, and mental health during this difficult time.

Thirteen live webinars have been

scheduled, with topics ranging from coping with social distancing to mental fitness, the scheme is going above and beyond to ensure that no member feels abandoned during this time. The programme is hoped to be a potential source of "continuous information and support" for members.

Hymans Robertson – A Hardship Fund for the charities on the frontline

Hymans Robertson has launched a charity Hardship Fund to meet the growing and urgent needs of the UK's most vulnerable communities and people. The fund opened to applications on 6 April, with the foundation meeting weekly to make funding decisions. The firm has again opened the initiative up to the industry, calling on other LLPs and professional services firms who may be interested in joining the initiative.

Commenting on the launch, Foundation chair, Clive Fortes, states: "We are living in unprecedented times, which has been particularly tough for the charity and voluntary sector.

"The Hardship Fund offers our existing partners access to additional funding and remote volunteering support to the most vulnerable in our community. I hope that other firms will join our initiative to make a positive impact in these uncertain times."

WEALTH at Work – Sharing the knowledge

WEALTH at Work has announced a new webcast to help employees' knowledge and understanding of their finances during these difficult times. The webcast was designed at a household level and covers a number of initiatives, ranging from what to do if your partner is self-employed to what impact being furloughed has on household finances. It will be supplied free of charge to all corporate clients to distribute to their employees.

Written by Sophie Smith