

# How Elior automatically enrolled

Read a case study from Justin Johnson at Elior on how they planned for automatic enrolment, and the ways they communicated the changes to their workers with the help of their provider.

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## Company information

**Company:** Elior UK plc

**Name:** Justin Johnson

**Role:** Head of HR, People's Services

**Company size:** 10,000 employees

**Sector:** Catering

**Staging date:** 1st April, 2013

## Key lesson

Get a bite sized plan together and use clear communications to help explain to workers what's happening

## Getting your plan together

Elior's nationwide business in contract catering depends heavily on having a flexible workforce. Our company employs thousands of relatively lower-paid casual and part-time workers across numerous hospitality sites nationwide, including Premier League football clubs.

I'm sure that thousands of employers of all shapes and sizes will be able to relate to having a complex workforce of shift workers, many working anti-social hours.

If I'm honest, when I first sat here two years ago reviewing the legislation and the information from The Pensions Regulator, I thought how on earth do you work your way through this? But it seems much more achievable if, like us, you break it up into a bite-sized plan – ie we need to get to A and then B and then C – so just keep it simple.

At the end of the day, I think the pre-staging period should be a time for calm, not panic.

## **Communicating to workers**

When we have a big match or event going on, we use casual workers to meet the peak in business. We always knew that engaging across 750 sites and with large numbers casual workers was going to be challenging.

We staged all five of our business on the same date because of the legal requirement for companies to communicate pension changes to their staff. It would have been impossible for us to communicate with the workers otherwise.

The law states that employers have to inform workers of pension changes, whether they are in an existing pension scheme or not, at different points of the automatic enrolment lifecycle.

The communications should tell workers about the pension changes and how it will affect them personally. You have to let workers know if you postpone or defer automatic enrolment, and give information on opting out after you have been enrolled.

These examples are just the minimum requirements. Finding a provider that can support you with already formatted letters, promotional leaflets and ideas about how to get the message of change across to employees is well worth investigating.

## **Ways your provider can help with communications**

We chose our pension provider for two reasons. One was flexibility, in that employees with their identifying National Insurance number can go on contributing to their pension pot wherever their working life takes them. The other reason was because we liked their communication materials.

They go some way to make pensions interesting - their welcome pack, the website - it was all simple, clear and concise. We thought that was appropriate for the demography of our workforce.

Our provider worked alongside Elior to ensure all the key communications staging posts over the process were met. They also got involved in pension awareness training for Elior's HR line managers. At least within these sites they were better equipped to handle responses from the employees themselves.

There were posters, a short booklet with a questions and answers discussion, payslip messages, articles in internal newsletters and magazines, and a dedicated telephone employee advice line.

We came at it from multiple angles really. In my view, focusing on really good staff communications will make the work of affecting the changes within your organisation much easier.

## **Statutory communications**

After the staging date there's a statutory obligation to write to all your workers including casuals. We had 10,000 letters, confirming what the company's intentions were concerning automatic enrolment. We had postponed automatic enrolment, so our next obligation fell at

the end of postponement period. We had to write to people to say yes, we have now auto enrolled you and you will soon be receiving your welcome pack from the provider.

It's a challenge to engage in all your employees on the subject of pensions, so you can't communicate enough in advance of staging. For smaller organisations the principles are the same, it's just done on a much smaller scale. I'd say focus on pinning down what you need to physically do in your own company, draw up a plan, and then it does become more manageable.