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HSC EMPLOYERS GUIDE SPECIAL CLASS MEMBERS AND MENTAL HEALTH OFFICERS



1. Mental Health Officers – 1995 section members only

Mental Health Officers (MHOs) status applies to certain groups of staff who were members of the scheme prior to 1 April 1995 subject to certain conditions. It is given in recognition of the nature of the work undertaken by the member. From 1 April 1995, MHO status is no longer available to new members, however existing members have a right to retain it, providing they do not have a break in HSC pensionable employment of five years or more and continue to work in an employment which attracts MHO status and remain members of the 1995 section of the scheme. MHO status is not available in the 2008 section or the 2015 scheme.

Eligibility

MHO status is defined in scheme regulations as:

An officer working whole time on the medical or nursing staff, (including nurse managers as above) of a hospital used wholly or partly for the treatment of people suffering from mental disorder, who devotes all, or almost all, of their time to the treatment or care of people suffering from mental disorder;

- Any officer employed in such a hospital or Unit, ward, area, site, etc, or who has subsequently transferred to care in the community, who is within a class or description of officers designated by the scheme regulations as MHO for this purpose

And

- A specialist (definition agreed by employer) in part-time HSC employment who devotes all, or almost all, of their time to the treatment or care of people suffering from mental disorder and who satisfies the requirement of the scheme regulations.

From 8 April 1976, scheme members employed full-time who held MHO status may also retain that status on the move to part-time employment provided that;

- There is a break of less than 5 years in their service
- They receive no scheme benefits; and
- There is no actual change in the duties performed.

Definitions

Hospital Establishment

For an establishment to be classed as a 'hospital for the treatment of persons suffering from mental disorder' it must be used wholly or partly for the care or treatment of patients suffering from mental disorder.

Over recent years government policy has been to return patients with mental disorder to their home environment wherever possible and, therefore, in principal HSC Pension Service can accept that MHO status may be retained by those now working outside the confines of a hospital. However, in all cases such a post should be checked with HSC Pension Service to confirm that the duties of that post still qualify for MHO status.

Treatment and Care Time

'Whole or substantially the whole' of an MHOs time is not specifically defined in the scheme regulations, therefore, the area of granting MHO status is one of discretion and judgment.

However, it is expected that to qualify for MHO status, officers must devote almost all of their time to the treatment or care of mentally disordered patients.

Behind each decision to grant an officer MHO status is the underlying principle that the whole spirit and intention of the scheme regulations is designed to give individual recognition to those who are subjected to the stress and strain of having mentally disordered patients constantly in their care.

MHO status for senior nursing staff and managers.