



HSC Pension Service

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Business Services Organisation

# EMPLOYER NEWSLETTER

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# 1. Coronavirus Act 2020 - Change to Legislation

The UK government published their [coronavirus action plan](#) on 3 March 2020. This plan set out measures to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak.

This included increasing the available health and social care workforce. This removed barriers and allowed recently retired NHS staff and social care workers to return to work and tackle the outbreak.

From 25 March 2020, the [UK government's emergency legislation](#) suspended some regulations to allow retired NHS members to return to work.

It also allows retired members who have already returned to work to increase their commitments if needed, without affecting their pension benefits.

The measures include temporary suspension of:

- the 16-hour rule
- abatement for special class status holders in the 1995 Section
- draw down abatement in the 2008 Section and 2015 Scheme

The measures predominantly affect members of the 1995 Section, although a smaller number of members could be affected by draw down abatement in the 2008 Section and the 2015 Scheme.

**These temporary suspensions will end on 24 March 2022.**

The Coronavirus Act 2020 is designed to be time limited. Following a review of the Act in Parliament in October 2021, we have now been informed by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) that the Act has been extended to 24 March 2022.

DHSC is asking employers and members to prepare for an end to the temporary suspensions and a return to normal arrangements from the 25 March 2022.

This is when the 16-hour rule in the 1995 Section, abatement for special class status holders in the 1995 Section and draw down abatement in the 2008 Section and 2015 Scheme will come back into force.

You can find information on normal arrangements for returning to work after retirement on our [website](#).

## 2. Career Breaks/Authorised Leave - cont

From 1 April 2008 the HSC Pension Scheme Regulations changed to allow a member who commenced a period of authorised unpaid leave on or after this date (including a career break where the contract of employment is retained), to choose to remain pensionable.

Where the authorised unpaid leave is to be pensionable the employer must treat the member as they would any other active member of the Scheme and ensure that employee and employer pension contributions are paid continuously throughout the period i.e. by the 19th day of the month following that which earnings (if there were any) would have been paid.

Therefore before the leave begins, employers must make arrangements to collect the employee contributions continuously during the break. Arrears cannot be allowed to accumulate and payments made on returning to the Scheme as requests for retrospective payments of contributions cannot be accommodated.

Further information can be found on the [Authorised Leave/Career Breaks](#) on our website. If a member takes authorised unpaid leave or a career break and opts not to pay contributions whilst on said leave the employer must inform Payroll Shared Services (PSS) to de-limit that members pension record for the duration of the career break/authorised unpaid leave.

Employers should ensure all staff are aware of the rules concerning the payment of contributions during periods of Authorised Leave/ Career breaks and PSS are informed of staff not paying contributions where appropriate. Ensure that payment of contributions is reconciled and recouped by the employer before being paid over to the HSC Pension Scheme Account via the normal contribution payment mechanisms.

## 3. Department of Health Consultations

On Monday 6th December the Department of Health launched 2 consultations relevant to the HSC pension Scheme. They are the consultation on the McCloud Remedy, relating to the reforms of Public Sector Pension Schemes introduced in 2015 and the consultation on the structure of Member Contributions moving forwards under a Career Average Revalued Earnings (CARE) Scheme model.

Full details on the consultations including information on how to respond can be found on the Department of Health Website at [Consultations | Department of Health \(health-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/consultations)

Please ensure all staff and stakeholders are informed of the consultations and provided with details on how to access and respond.

## 4. Pension Applications

All Pension benefit applications i.e. AW6 forms should be submitted to HSC Pension Service by the Employer no less than 3 months prior to the planned retirement date.

If you are assisting a member of staff through the retirement process, HSC Pension Service would appreciate it if you could inform them that the AW6 should be submitted to HR 4 months in advance of the proposed retirement date .

This allows ample time for the AW6 to go through the various stages e.g. HR/PPT and minimises the risk of pension benefits not being paid on time.

**Members sometimes wrongly assume that they need to have a One to One with HSC Pensions prior to submitting their AW6. HR should reiterate that this is not a requirement for retirement.**



## 7. Contact Us

### By writing to us at:-

HSC Pension Service

Waterside House

75 Duke Street

Londonderry

BT47 6FP

**Via e- mail at:-** [hscpensions@hscni.net](mailto:hscpensions@hscni.net)

By Telephone: 028 7131 9111

10.00 am to 12.00pm / 2.00 pm to 4.00pm - Monday to Thursday

10.00 am to 12.00pm - Friday



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If you have any suggestions for the newsletter or would like a particular topic covered in future publications please do not hesitate in contacting us by emailing: [hscpensions@hscni.net](mailto:hscpensions@hscni.net)

