



HSC Pension Service

Provided by



Business Services Organisation

EMPLOYER NEWSLETTER

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HSC (P) 02-22-23

October 2022

1. Coronavirus Act 2020– Change to Pension Legislation - Update

Following the expiry of the Coronavirus Act 2020 a number of temporary adjustments were made to the HSC Pension Scheme Regulations to extend the suspension of abatement rules until 31 October 2022. A further extension is now being introduced.

These temporary changes to legislation basically mean:

1. The 16 hours per week rule is omitted. There is no requirement for retiree's returning to HSC Employment to restrict their hours of work to 16 per week in the first month after retirement. The suspension/omission of the 16-hour rule has been extended to 31st March 2024.
2. The limit on earnings (commonly referred to as abatement) normally imposed on Special Class Nursing Staff or Mental Health Officers on return to HSC Employment after retirement is suspended. This suspension has been extended to March 2025 due to ongoing concerns regarding capacity
3. The suspension of the abatement rules for those members who availed of Partial Retirement has been extended to 31st March 2023.

If and when a further review is carried out, HSC pension Service will inform you.

2. Change to Scheme Member Contributions

Following a consultation carried out by The Department of Health (DoH) which sought views on changes to member contributions with effect from 2022, a new tiered member contribution structure will be implemented from 01 November 2022. The proposals set out in that consultation aimed to preserve participation in the scheme while protecting its substantial value for members in retirement.

The consultation document set out a number of proposals:

- Members' contribution rates would be based on actual pensionable pay instead of members' notional whole-time equivalent pay
- Rebalancing the contribution structure by narrowing the range of contribution rates.
- Increasing tier boundaries in line with annual AfC pay awards
- Phasing in the new member contribution structure over 2 years

The new Contribution structure will be implemented from 01 November 2022 using actual annual rates of earnings instead of a member's whole time equivalent pensionable earnings. These changes will be implemented in phases, with the first phase of changes coming into force on 01 November 2022. The second phase introducing further amendments to the contribution tier structure and rates will take place on a date to be confirmed in 2023.



2. Change to Scheme Member Contributions - cont

Table 1 below outlines the interim Contribution Rates effective from 01st November 2022 and Table 2 shows the contribution rates effective in phase 2 from 2023 (date to be confirmed)

Table 1

Tier	Pensionable Earnings	Contribution rate from 1 November 2022 until introduction of phase 2
1	£0.00 - £13,231.99	5.1%
2	£13,232.00 to £15,431.99	5.7%
3	£15,432.00 to £21,478.99	6.1%
4	£21,479.00 to £22,548.99	6.8%
5	£22,549.00 to £26,823.99	7.7%
6	£26,824.00 to £27,779.99	8.8%
7	£27,780.00 to £42,120.99	9.8%
8	£42,121.00 to £47,845.99	10%
9	£47,846.00 to £54,763.99	11.6%
10	£54,764.00 to £70,630.99	12.5%
11	£70,631.00 and over	13.5%

Table 2

Tier	Pensionable Earnings	Contribution rate from introduction of phase 2
1	£0.00 - £13,231.99	5.2%
2	£13,232.00 to £22,548.99	6.5%
3	£22,549.00 to £27,779.99	8.3%
4	£27,780.00 to £42,120.99	9.8%
5	£42,121.00 to £54,763.99	10.7%
6	£54,764.00 and above	12.5%

3. Member Self-Service & Annual Benefit Statements 2022

HSC Pension Service have uploaded members Annual Benefit Statements to the Member Self Service Portal accessible on the HSC Pension Scheme website at [Welcome - Altair Member Self-Service \(hscni.net\)](#)

We would like to remind all HR departments that these statements are not posted to members home addresses and instead must be accessed online. We would ask that Employers encourage all members who have not yet registered for MSS to do so as soon as possible. To register go to <https://mypension.hscni.net>, this can only be accessed via the HSC network at present, however HSC Pension Service is working on making this service accessible to all electronic devices.

The MSS Portal allows members to view their pension record including Service History, Annual Benefit Statements, and Annual Allowance Data View etc.

HSC Pension Service has also developed a number of calculators which will make it easier for members to forecast their potential benefits at retirement. Members can use their latest Annual Benefit Statement which holds information required for input into the calculator. The [calculators](#) are available on the HSC Pension Service website and can be accessed from any device i.e. the staff member is not limited to using these whilst on a HSC network. This should in turn reduce the number of pension related queries for employers.

4. Unpaid Leave/Career Breaks & Pension Implications

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](#) Factsheet 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.

Employers must also ensure that payment of contributions is reconciled before being paid over to the HSC Pension Scheme Account via the normal contribution payment mechanisms. A statement of contributions paid should also be forwarded to HSC Pension Service in order to maintain member records.



5. Reduction or Forfeiture of Benefits - Reminder

The HSC Pension Scheme Regulations allow for HSC pension benefits to be reduced or forfeited under certain circumstances.

Employing Authorities should make HSC Pensions aware of any legal proceedings in respect of a loss to public funds as a result of a Scheme member's criminal, negligent or fraudulent act or omission.

Where there is a loss to public funds as a result of a Scheme member's criminal, negligent, fraudulent act or omission their HSC pension benefits may be reduced to recover the loss. Where an Employing Authority has suffered a financial loss, HSC Pensions may reimburse them directly by offsetting the member's HSC pension benefits once these have been claimed. Please note that the loss to public funds does not include any investigation or legal costs incurred by the employer.

When contacting HSC Pension Service, Employing Authorities should provide as much information as possible including:

- The amount of loss to public funds and whether any of the loss has been or is to be repaid by other means.
- Details of how the loss to public funds has occurred.
- Copies of the Certificate of Conviction if applicable.
- If the amount of the loss to public funds is disputed, a copy of the Court Order enforcing the member's obligation to repay the loss.
- Where the amount of loss to public funds is not disputed by the member, HSC Pensions will require the member's consent to offset benefits in order to recover the loss.

Forfeiture

Where an active or deferred Scheme member has been convicted of any of the following offences some or all of their HSC pension benefits may be forfeited:

- An offence in connection with employment which is certified by the Secretary of State either to have been gravely injurious to the State or to be liable to lead to serious loss of confidence in the public service.
- An offence of treason.
- One or more offences under the Official Secrets Acts 1911 to 1989 for which the member has been sentenced on the same occasion to a term of imprisonment of, or to two or more consecutive terms amounting in the aggregate to, at least 10 years.

Survivor and/or dependants benefits may be subject to forfeiture if the survivor or dependant has been convicted of the murder, manslaughter, or unlawful killing of the member.

If you have any cases where you believe forfeiture may be applicable please inform HSC Pension Service as soon as possible and include all relevant documentation.

Any correspondence/queries should be sent to John Coyle, Pension Liaison Manager at HSC Pension Service.



6. Consideration for Ill Health Retirement Applications - Update

As you are aware we have been encountering difficulties in getting applications for consideration for Ill Health Retirement processed as efficiently as we would like.

HSC Pension Service uses the NI Civil Service OHS Department to assist in the process. The delays in service provided by Civil Service OHS has arose as a result of staffing issues within their organisation which they are trying to address.

I have contacted the Civil Service OHS for an update and they have confirmed that there has been no real change to their staffing situation as yet but they are still trying to improve the situation.

Serious Ill Health Applications (those with life expectancy of less than 1 year) will continue to be prioritised.

I would therefore request that you let prospective applicants know of the possible delays in processing their applications. You may also wish to consider starting the process as early as possible to reduce or eliminate the prospect of members moving to a nil pay situation.

Please note: members knowingly, approaching or waiting to go on to a nil pay position before submitting their application for consideration for Ill Health Retirement cannot be prioritised for consideration for Ill Health Retirement over members who have genuinely submitted their application as part of the normal process.



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

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

