



HSC Pension Service

Business Services Organisation

Provided by

HSC Pension Service

**Welcome to the
HSC Pension Service
Member Newsletter**



This newsletter is for all active and deferred members of the HSC Pension Schemes and contains important information about your HSC Pension Scheme Benefits

December 2022



Applications for Consideration for Ill Health Retirement

Eligible HSC Pension Scheme members who have a medical condition which prevents them from carrying out the duties of their employment may apply for consideration for Ill Health Retirement (IHR). Members who are successful in qualifying for IHR may access the HSC Pension Scheme benefits before their Normal Retirement Age with no actuarial reductions applied to the benefits payable.

The process requires the member, their employer and their employer's Occupational Health Service Department to each contribute to the written application. At times, an application can and will include further supporting medical evidence from the member's GP/Consultant etc.

While HSCPS is ultimately responsible for making the decision on whether a member qualifies for IHR, HSCPS seeks the opinion of Medical Advisors employed with the NICS OHS on the interpretation of the medical evidence provided in the application.

In July 2022, the NICS OHS had written to HSCPS to inform us that they were encountering issues with staffing levels and that these issues would unfortunately impact service delivery.

Such impacts included longer processing times of normal applications and appeals, however those applications where a member suffered with a terminal illness with a limited life expectancy were still being prioritized.

Employers' Attendance Management Teams (who normally manage such applications) were informed accordingly of the potential delays in normal and appeal applications.

Current Position

The Director of Learning & Development, OHS and Welfare in the NICS OHS has now provided HSCPS with a further update on the staffing issues they are encountering and how this will impact services, summary of main points below:

- There has been a reduction in NICS OHS Medical Officer resource in November, and this will reduce further in December. This will have an impact on the delivery of services.
- NICS OHS is working to explore and implement additional delivery options in light of recent developments and further updates on these will be provided.
- Recruitment of nursing staff is at an advanced stage, and medical officer positions have been advertised with interviews planned early January 2023. NICS OHS are also working to source additional capacity via medical agency
- An overarching review on the NICS OHS delivery model is being commissioned and discussions were due to commence with Business Consultancy Services in early December to take this forward
- Short term limits to service provision that will be required until interim arrangements are in place. Therefore, as of 8 December:
 - a) Referrals will be processed on a prioritised basis.
 - b) Health & Social Care Pensions referrals will be deemed a priority in instances when a terminal illness requires that medical advice be provided on grounds of ill-health retirement.



Protection of Pensionable - Cont

Voluntary Protection of Pay

If a member of the 1995 Section of the Scheme has attained minimum pension age and chooses to 'step down' to a less demanding role where their new or remaining duties are

less demanding and carry less responsibility than their previous duties, they may be able to apply for voluntary pay protection, if their pay reduces by at least 10%.

To apply a member must complete Form [PROPAY1](#) and submit to their employer **after 12 months and within 15 months** of the date their pay reduced.

HSC Pension Service will assess each application to ensure it meets the eligibility criteria and notify the member of the outcome.

Further information on protection of pensionable pay can be found at:
<http://www.hscpensions.hscni.net/membership-contributions-and-pay/>

Career Breaks/Authorised Leave

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 re-couped by the employer before being paid over to the HSC Pension Scheme Account via the normal contribution payment mechanisms.



Extension of Voluntary Scheme Pays for Annual Allowance

To help support HSC Pension Scheme members who are dealing with Annual Allowance related tax, we have taken the decision to extend the voluntary scheme pays deadline for 2020/21.

If you have an annual allowance charge for 2020/21 and you're wishing to use voluntary scheme pays to pay all or part of this charge, you now have until 31 March 2023 to submit your application.

Scheme pays allows you to ask the HSC Pension Scheme to pay your annual allowance charge to HMRC. In return, your HSC Pension benefits will be permanently reduced when these become payable or if you leave and transfer out of the Scheme. The HSC Pension Scheme offers both a mandatory and voluntary scheme pays facility.

We do not have the authority to extend the mandatory scheme pays election deadline for 2020/21 as this is confirmed in legislation. The 2020/21 mandatory scheme pays deadline was 31 July 2022.

Submitting your scheme pays application, known as a scheme pays election (SPE2) before the mandatory deadline allows us to consider your election under the mandatory scheme pays facility or a combination of the mandatory and voluntary scheme pays facilities. If paid under the mandatory scheme pays facility, the HSC Pension Scheme is responsible for paying your tax charge to HMRC by their deadline.

If you apply to use scheme pays and we pay some or all of your annual allowance charge using our voluntary scheme pays facility, you remain responsible for the charge until the payment is made and for any interest that may be incurred for payments made after HMRC's tax bill deadline. HMRC's deadline for 2020/21 was the 31 January 2022.

You can find more information about mandatory and voluntary scheme pays, how to apply and the deadlines for doing so on our [annual allowance](#) webpage. If you have any queries about your Annual Allowance please contact our dedicated Annual Allowance Team at aaqueries@hscni.net.

Changes to Submitting a Scheme Pays Election if You are About to Retire

If you have an annual allowance charge you can either pay the charge directly to HMRC yourself or share the responsibility for the payment with the HSC Pension Scheme using the scheme pays facility.

This is known as a scheme pays election. The HSC Pension Scheme offers both mandatory and voluntary scheme pays facilities.

If you are about to retire, you should try to submit your scheme pays election before you retire. This allows us to consider your election for payment under the mandatory scheme pays facility or a combination of the mandatory and voluntary scheme pays facilities.

When paid through the mandatory scheme pays facility, the HSC Pension Scheme is responsible for paying your tax charge to HMRC by their deadline.

If it isn't possible to submit your scheme pays election before you retire, we have recently changed our processes to accept scheme pays elections after retirement.



Changes to Submitting a Scheme Pays Election if You are About to Retire (cont.)

You can now submit a scheme pays election after you have retired, as long as your election is received before the relevant scheme pays deadline for the tax year in question.

So for example, if you would like to make a scheme pays election for 2021/22 this must be received by 31 July 2023.

Any scheme pays elections submitted after retirement will only be considered under the voluntary scheme pays facility.

If your election is accepted after retirement you will remain responsible for the charge and any interest charges if the payment is received by HMRC after its tax bill deadline of the 31 January (for 2021/22 this is 31 January 2023). We may also need to put in place arrangements to recover any pension overpayments that have been caused because of your scheme pays election being accepted after retirement.



Partial Retirement

Partial Retirement is a feature of the 2008 & 2015 sections of the Scheme to support a phased withdrawal from the workplace with a reduction in employment commitments supplemented by partial payment of pension.

The concept of partial retirement is where an active member claims a portion of accrued benefits whilst still continuing in pensionable employment. The member is required to have a change to the terms & conditions of the continuing employment and a reduction in pensionable earnings. Further information on Partial Retirement can be found on the [Partial Retirement Factsheet](#).



Pension Workshops & 1-1 Consultations

Pension Workshops and Staff Engagement sessions continue to be provided primarily via Zoom or Microsoft Teams. We have also recommenced a small number of face to face sessions and hope to increase numbers as and when we can accommodate this although feedback in general suggests that many members feel the electronic platform makes these session much more accessible.

Following feedback from scheme members and employers HSC Pension Service are also offering sessions specifically dealing with the issues which have arisen as a result of the McCloud Judgement and the recent Public Sector Pension Scheme consultation.

HSC Pension Service will continue to provide One to One pension consultations BY PHONE for those staff who have attended one of the generic Pension Workshops.

Your HR Team will advertise dates for upcoming Workshops and one to one consultations available in your Trust/Organisation and the contact details for applying.

If you have any specific issues relating to your HSC Pension and wish to contact the HSC Pension Service directly please use one of the following:

General Enquiries – hscpensions@hscni.net

Annual Allowance queries – aaqueries@hscni.net

General/Dental Practitioners enquiries – gpcertificates@hscni.net

Member Self Service enquiries – mssqueries@hscni.net

Application for Cash Equivalent Transfer Values (CETV) for Divorce Proceedings

When involved with divorce proceedings or the dissolution of civil partnerships your solicitor will often ask you to obtain a 'Cash Equivalent Transfer Value' (CETV). To enable us to calculate the CETV we require essential pay and membership details from the Payroll Pensions Team.

If you are a contributing member of the Scheme or have left in the last 12 months a request for a CETV must come from your Solicitor/Legal Representative (requests directly from members will be returned). The Solicitor/Legal Representative should complete form [PD1](#) and send together with form [PD2](#) to aw6.est.ppt@hscni.net or post to the address below.

Payroll Pensions Team

Waterside House

75 Duke Street

Derry/Londonderry

BT47 6FP

If you are not a contributing member of the Scheme you should complete form [PD1](#) and send directly to HSC Pension Service.

Requesting a Pension Estimate

If you would like a current value of the pension benefits you hold with HSC Pensions, you can submit an Estimate Request. You can do this via your Employer, on the HSC Pension website or at the link below.

[Request-a-Pension-Estimate-Final-1.pdf \(hscni.net\)](#)

Things to bear in mind when submitting an Estimate request;

- 1) Estimates can only be completed at most 12 months from date of retirement/date of request
- 2) Estimates take 6-8 weeks for completion, from the date they are received into the Pension Administration Team. They do go through checks with the Pension Payroll Team prior to this, so can take up to 13 weeks in total.
- 3) You are entitled to one free Estimate (calculation) in a 12 month period. You can receive additional calculations but there is a charge for each, currently £45 per calculation. Payment must be received before additional calculations are completed.

If you are not within the above criteria for an Estimate, you can also access the Annual Benefits Statements through the [Member Self Service](#) portal. These Statements reflect benefits accrued up to 31/03 each year. They are auto-generated based on what information we have received by 31/03 and get automatically uploaded to the Member Self-Serve Portal for ease of reference.





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: 02871319111

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: john.coyle@hscni.net

