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EMPLOYER PENSION NOTICE

EPN: 22-2021 B

From: Civil Service Pensions Policy, Legislation and Communications

Date: 17 December 2021

To: Employers with no or partial HRConnect coverage

Re: Movement of Protected Legacy Scheme Members to alpha with effect from 1 April 2022

Purpose: The purpose of this EPN is to:

- notify employers that all fully protected members of the legacy scheme, the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (NI) [PCSPS(NI)], will be moving into alpha from 1 April 2022;
- advise employers of their requirement to ensure that the interface reflects this change; and
- advise employers that Civil Service Pensions will be communicating with these members over the coming weeks.

Timing: Immediate

Action: Employers should:

- read and note all employer responsibilities outlined within this Employer Pension Notice;
- ensure all members in the fully protected group are moved into alpha and the relevant data updates are supplied to Civil Service

Pensions Systems Team on the April interface files as per paragraph 4; and,

- provide a list of protected members as per paragraph 6 by **23 December 2021**

Background

1. When alpha was introduced on 1 April 2015 as part of Civil Service pension reforms, members were assessed by their age (age test) and service history (presence test) as to whether they would be eligible to:
 - remain in the PCSPS(NI) (fully protected group);
 - move into alpha at a later date, depending on age (tapered protection group), or;
 - move into alpha on 1 April 2015 (no protection group or gave up their tapered protection as part of the Options Exercise).
2. EPN 16/2020 informed employers that the Department of Finance (DoF) were consulting on changes to the transitional arrangements introduced as part of the 2015 reform of public service pension schemes, and sought views on proposals to remove the discrimination identified by the Courts (known as the McCloud Judgment). In February 2021, EPN 06/2021 announced the outcome to the consultation and implementation of a 'deferred choice underpin' which will allow eligible members a choice when they retire, of which pension scheme benefits they would prefer to take for the remedy period. It also confirmed that the legacy PCSPS(NI) scheme (Classic, Classic Plus, Premium and Nuvos sections), will be closed in relation to service after 31 March 2022, closing the remedy period. Most active members had already moved to alpha in 2015, or subsequently transitioned between 2015 and 2022, so they are not impacted by the planned move. However, active members remaining in the 'fully protected group' will be moved into the alpha scheme from 1 April 2022.
3. Legislation has been introduced in response to the McCloud Judgment, setting out the ways in which various public sector pension schemes will correct for the age discrimination introduced by the 2015 public sector pension reforms. A motion to extend the provisions of the Public Service Pensions and Judicial Offices Bill (the Bill) to public service schemes here, was debated in the Assembly on 1 November 2021 and a Legislative Consent Motion passed. The Bill is currently in passage at Westminster. In addition, public service schemes will carry out consultations on more detailed scheme specific changes to both prospective and retrospective scheme regulations.

What needs to be done

4. Employers must ensure that those members within the Fully Protected Group are moved into alpha on 1 April 2022 and that the relevant data updates are supplied to Civil Service Pensions Systems Team on the April interface files as per the normal process in place.
5. Following our communication to all members in February 2021 on the outcome of the consultation, we will also be writing directly to members in the fully protected group reminding them that they will be moving into alpha on 1 April 2022. In our letter, we will signpost to the Civil Service Pensions website, which will contain key messages about moving into alpha, short information videos and FAQs.
6. We will make every effort to ensure the letters reach all relevant members, however to ensure accuracy and allow a reconciliation of data, we require your assistance and ask that you provide a list of all members who had full protection in the legacy scheme.
 - The names and NINOs must be provided using an Excel spreadsheet (password protected) and returned to cspensions@finance-ni.gov.uk marked '**FAO the McCloud Remedy Team**' in the subject title.
 - Please issue the security password separately in a follow up email to the above email address, marked '**FAO the McCloud Remedy Team**'.
 - We would be grateful if this information be provided by **23 December 2021** at the latest, including **nil returns**.

Point of contact

7. Any queries regarding the content of this EPN or issues relating to the provision of the requested data should be sent to:

Noeleen.McGinley@finance-ni.gov.uk

This notice is for employers only and should not be issued to scheme members.

Yours sincerely



Peter Philip
Civil Service Pensions, Policy, Legislation and Communications