

Chief Executives
Directors of Finance and Human Resources
Direction Bodies, all GP Practices and
Out of Hours Providers and
Staff Side representatives

Issue 1
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your pension **CHOICE**

NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the first edition of Your Pension Choice Newsletter, designed to provide important information to all HSC employers about members of the HSC Pension Scheme and the choice they have to transfer their 1995 section membership to the 2008 section.

Background

You may recall from previous communications about the introduction of the 2008 section to the HSC Pension Scheme, that members of the 1995 section would be offered the option of moving to the 2008 section. This exercise is known as Your Pension Choice. The option to transfer will be purely voluntary.

Since the introduction of the 2008 section, HSC Pensions has been working in partnership with the HSC employers and Trades Unions to agree the administration of Your Pension Choice.

Purpose

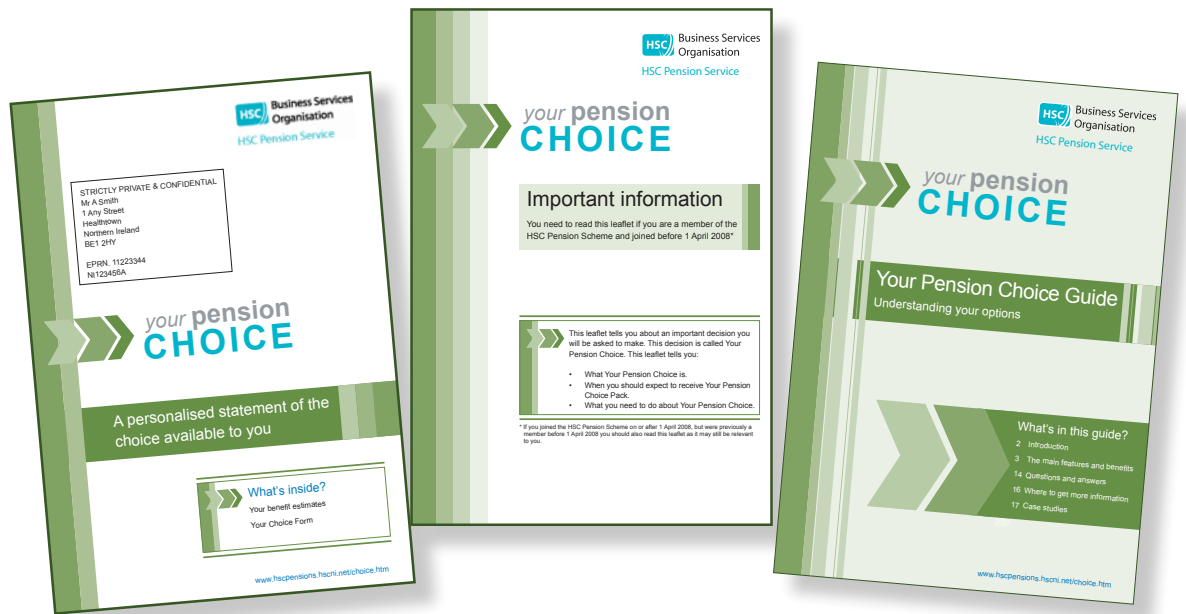
The purpose of this Newsletter is to let employers know when the exercise is expected to start, what is likely to happen and what HSC Pensions will be doing to support employers and employees.

Current position

It is anticipated that the legislation which will facilitate the exercise will come into force on 1 October 2009. Therefore work is now underway to agree the precise detail of how the exercise will be managed and communicated. We are currently planning a series of employer briefings which will give you the opportunity to ask questions. The first of these presentations was delivered by staff from HSC Pensions at the recent HSC Trades Union Forum.

How to recognise Your Pension Choice

To help this exercise stand out amongst the many other messages being delivered to employees within their workplace we have developed a unique brand for Your Pension Choice. The brand and some examples of how it will be used are shown below. Whenever you see this branding the documents will be referring to Your Pension Choice. This brand will be used on employer and employee communications so whenever you see it please pay close attention and make sure you understand the actions that you are required to take.



What is expected to happen and when?

As part of Your Pension Choice exercise each eligible member of the 1995 section will receive a pack, which will include useful information to enable them to make an informed decision. The pack will also include a statement showing a comparison of the benefits the member has accrued in the 1995 section and the benefits they would receive should they decide to move all their membership to the 2008 section.

HSC Pensions are planning to send the mailing for members in October 2009.

Members due to retire

For those who have planned to retire on or shortly after 1 October 2009 the process will be different in that these members will not automatically receive a statement. In order to meet disclosure requirements however, these members must be provided with information packs about the exercise and given the opportunity of receiving a Your Pension Choice statement. Anyone wishing to receive a statement will then have his or her request fast tracked since they must be given at least 3 months before their intended retirement date to make their choice.

Anyone in this position must therefore be brought to the attention of HSC Pensions at the earliest opportunity i.e. before the AW6 is submitted.

Members applying for ill health benefits

There will also be a different approach for those who are in the process of applying for ill health retirement benefits. These members will be able to delay their decision until the outcome of their ill health retirement application is known.

More detailed information about dealing with members who are due to retire or who are applying for ill health retirement benefits will be given in future issues of this Newsletter.

Support for HSC employers

Throughout Your Pension Choice exercise HSC Pensions will be working closely with HSC employers in order to ensure that the exercise is carried out as efficiently as possible and disclosure requirements are met. Along with other support arrangements some of the communication products currently being prepared are:

- Workplace posters
- Employer information packs
- FAQs factsheet
- DVD
- Individual modelling arrangements
- Dedicated help line available for 1 October 2009
- Dedicated email address - yourpensionchoice@hscni.net
- HSC Pensions website information - www.hscpensions.hscni.net/choice.htm

Membership records

In the meantime employers are asked to ensure that member records are updated. As you will appreciate for the exercise to run efficiently member data will need to be as up to date as possible in advance of statements being produced.

Further information

We will be issuing further editions of this Newsletter to update you as the project progresses and will upload information onto the dedicated area of the website so remember to log in from time to time.

If you have any immediate questions, please email them to yourpensionchoice@hscni.net

Yours sincerely



David Bingham
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Business Services Organisation