



The Chief Executive of:
Each Health and Social Services Board
Each HSS Trust
Central Services Agency
Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council
Northern Ireland Guardian Ad Litem Agency
Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service Agency
Northern Ireland Health Promotion Agency
Northern Ireland Regional Medical Physics Agency
Northern Ireland Social Care Council

GP Practices
Direction Bodies

Staff Representative Bodies

Circular HSS(S) 02/05

Date: 16 August 2005

Dear Colleague

REVIEW OF THE HPSS SUPERANNUATION SCHEME - CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION ARRANGEMENTS

The purpose of this circular is to update you on progress with the NHS Pension Review in England and Wales and to notify you of the consultation arrangements for Northern Ireland.

Background

The review of the NHS Scheme came about as a result of three issues:

- A Government proposal that all public sector pension schemes should be based on people taking their pension at 65
- Inland Revenue proposals on changes to tax regimes that create opportunities for making schemes, and retirement, more flexible
- Pressure from staff and employers to modernise the scheme.

The NHS Pension Review

The NHS Employers organisation has been leading the review of the NHS Pension Scheme for England and Wales in partnership with NHS management and staff side representatives. Consultation

on a number of proposals for a new NHS Scheme in England and Wales commenced on 10th January 2005. Some of the main proposals are:

- Improving the accrual rate for benefits
- Survivor benefit cover for unmarried and same sex relationships
- Flexibilities towards the end of staff careers
- Options for increasing savings for retirement

Northern Ireland

The HPSS Superannuation Scheme operates on a policy of parity with the NHS Scheme for England & Wales and therefore it would be our normal approach to introduce the same pension provisions as apply to the NHS (England & Wales).

In view of this it has been agreed with HPSS management and staff representatives that the Department will use the NHS consultation document for consultation in Northern Ireland. This will be issued with a covering HPSS letter asking for responses to be sent to the Department's HPSS Superannuation Branch. Superannuation Branch will feed responses in to the NHS consultation.

The Northern Ireland consultation is due to commence in the week commencing 24th January, which is also likely to be the start date for consultation in Scotland. The consultation will run to the end of April 2005.

Communications

Representatives from HPSS Superannuation Branch met with HPSS management and staff side representatives, nominated through the HPSS Partnership Forum, on 17th December to discuss the proposals in the NHS consultation document and to agree the consultation process for the HPSS Scheme. Angie Walsh and Mark Belchamber, who have been working on the NHS Review, provided the representatives with details of the proposals from the employers' and staff side perspectives respectively, including some of the technical background.

It was also agreed that the group would initially meet again following the start of the consultation process to discuss and agree a communications strategy. It is intended that the group will continue to meet throughout the review.

Information for Staff

A short booklet is being issued to all HPSS staff with their pay advices in January 2005. This booklet contains information on:

- Why the review was necessary
- The proposals for a new scheme
- Transferring to a new scheme
- How to get copies of the consultation documents
- How they can give their views
- Where to direct enquiries.

A copy of the booklet is enclosed/attached with this circular.

Obtaining Copies of the Consultation Document

Copies of the document can be obtained:

- From the HPSS Superannuation Modernisation Website:
www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/superann/modernisation.asp
- By e-mail at modernisation@dhsspsni.gov.uk.
- By phoning 028 71 321260

These facilities will be available from 24th January 2005.

Enquiries about the Consultation:

HPSS Superannuation Branch staff will be available on an enquiry line from 24th January 2005 to deal with any enquiries about the consultation.

The enquiry line number is 028 71 319185

Enquiries about this Circular

If you have any enquiries about the content of this circular please contact Russell McGowan at Russell.mcgowan@dhsspsni.gov.uk or on 028 71319141.

Yours Sincerely

Phil McCusker
HPSS Superannuation Scheme Manager