

April 2017

Questions received in Pension Services, and our answers, about pensions in payment.

You probably hadn't considered this before but the Pension Services payroll system pays a variety of pensions derived from different regulations, including:

1. Pensions under the Local Government Pension Scheme paid by the Oxfordshire Pension Fund to former members, their widows, widowers, civil partners, eligible co habiting partners and eligible children.
2. Pensions awarded under various compensation regulations paid alongside the LGPS pension, but paid for by the employer awarding the compensation.
3. Pensions for 'credit members', payments derived from the financial settlement following divorce.
4. Compensation and employer cost pensions awarded by the Local Education Authority and paid to teachers who have taken early retirement.
5. Firefighter's pensions, being paid under both the old and the new schemes.
6. Pensions awarded and paid for by employers under a variety of compensation or gratuity provisions.

Often the questions we receive relate more to the continuing payments and changes happening in your life than where the pension originated, but as far as possible, our answers apply to all different types of pensions listed above. This question and answer sheet is a response to provide general information for as wide a group as possible. Where it is clear that something is specific to a particular type of pension, we will add a note to indicate any special terms.

The LGPS scheme changed in April 2014 to a 'CARE' scheme.

The LGPS 2014 scheme, introduced the 'CARE', Career Average Revalued Earnings, pension. This means the pension builds up each year in a 'pension account' for each employment for every active member, based on actual earnings during the year. At a second past midnight of 31 March, the pension in the account is revalued following Treasury Orders.

When LGPS members retire or request their pension, the value on the pension account moves to the retirement account, and the amount of the pension from the active account may be revalued, while the pension in payment is subject to the pension increase orders. For those retiring during the months leading up to their first pension increase date, we have to ensure we do not apply increases twice, in that year of transition from active membership to retirement or from deferred pension to pension into payment. To do this we may have to apply a form of proportioning for each of these types of increases.

Treasury Orders for pension revaluation applies at a second after midnight of 31 March. The Pension Increase date is the first Monday after 6th April.

For 2017 the revaluation factor and the pensions increase rate were both 1 percent.

I am getting my pension, but I am not 'retiring' and I have a new job – do I have to tell you?

Please tell us about new employment. Some pensions will have built in rules about any new earnings – some will have restrictions about future local government employment, others will look at potential pension scheme membership, and some pensions in payment must cease altogether if you are able to take up 'gainful employment'.

As this would be a very individual enquiry, tell us – write in about your plans and we can give you the individual reply you will need to make an informed decision, if you are still undecided about your next move. If you have already taken the new job – again tell us and we will let you know if you can expect a change to the pension we currently pay you.

April 2017 addition for retired Fire fighters entering new employment after June 2013

The pensioner newsletter included a notice about rule changes surrounding re-employment after starting to get your fire scheme pension.

We can give you a little more background here, but we do still recommend you contact us in Pension Services if you have started a new job with a Fire and Rescue Service, or related employer since June 2013?

A 'related employer' would include a Fire and Rescue service employment, which is part of the county council.

The new earnings limit would mean your pension might have to be reduced -

if the earnings of your new job amount to more than the total of the salary you earned when you retired less the pension you are receiving... in other words 'current pension and new pay must not exceed old salary'

Even if you think you would be under those limits, but have started a new fire service job since June 2013, please get in touch with Pension Services on 03300 241 369

April 2015 addition for retired fire-fighters and their partners

In 2015, the government announced that a widow's or widower's pension would continue in payment following remarriage. However, we have not received any published consultation to bring in a change of regulations.

I am getting married – will my new wife/ husband get a proportion of my pension if I die first?

Generally yes. However, the definite answer will depend on the type of pension we are paying, and when you retired. A pension **may** also be possible for your co habiting partner if you have retired with a LGPS pension, although again it will depend which rules were in operation when you left the scheme.

I have never been married but I do have a long-term partner, will they get anything from my pension if I die first?

Generally no. A common-law wife or husband is not recognised and will not automatically receive a pension after your death.

If you receive a **LGPS pension** and you have paid contributions into the fund since April 2008, (unless you receive a councillor's pension), and you and your partner satisfy the conditions to be eligible co-habiting partners, and at your death your partner is still eligible, your partner will receive a pension. Please note that this is not a blanket automatic provision. All the conditions laid out in the LGPS regulations must be met before we can pay a pension.

If you receive a pension from the regulations of the New Fire Pension Scheme, then there are similar arrangements to recognise a co habiting partner. Do check with Pension Services about the entitlement requirements.

What information is on the payslip?

Your pension payment advice [or payslip] shows personal information. Each different type of pension has its own code in front of the line of information.

For most pensioners, LGPS and Fire Fighters there is one line to indicate the value of the monthly pension and a separate line to show the monthly value of accumulated pension increase.

Where you receive a compensation, or added years pension in addition to your LGPS pension you will have a third line to show the compensation monthly value

Teachers with compensation pensions have a single line, showing the combined original pension and any additional pension's increase.

Net pension = the amount going into your bank or building society after any tax deductions.

I do not understand why I have a new tax code, can you help?

Sorry, but all matters of tax are personal between you and the HMRC, and we cannot intervene. Please contact HMRC with your enquiries, we must operate the coding notices we receive from that department.

I am getting divorced, what happens to my pension?

Your solicitor will ask you to provide a valuation of your pension. You can phone in to request this information from Pension Services. There is a charge to provide the pension valuation. The value of your pension including the provision for a spouse or civil partner will be part of your matrimonial assets. The court may decide that your pension should be shared with your former spouse or civil partner.

I am going into hospital will my pension continue?

Yes, we will continue to pay your pension into your bank or building society account, to the account held in your name.

I am considering setting up arrangements to authorise my daughter / son / solicitor to deal with my finances, what do I need to send you?

There is useful information about the different roles and responsibilities of an appointed attorney on the following websites

www.ageuk.org.uk/money-matters/

www.gov.uk/power-of-attorney

We can **only** pay your pension to a bank account in your own name or to a joint account where you are named. We can then send the paperwork about your pension to your attorneys, on your behalf, if we have a copy of the signed and registered 'Property and financial affairs Lasting Power

of Attorney form' on our file. The forms are only valid when stamped by the Office of the Public Guardian.

Your attorney can register and help you with your pension online, using [My Oxfordshire Pension](#) however again we must have a copy of the registered authorisation, as above.

After my death, will you pay a Death Grant?

Any payments after your death are determined by when you started to get your pension and which scheme is paying the pension. For many recently retired **LGPS pensioners** there may be a minimum pension payment prescribed in the regulations. For these, the County Council has the absolute discretion on where to make payments of death grant, but you can help guide those decisions by keeping your 'Expression of Wish' forms up to date.' You can contact Pension Services for a form or download one from our pensions' forms page on this website. Please note: your wishes are only valid when the completed form is held on your pension record – so please return the form here.

I have lost my pay advice can you send me another one?

I am sorry but we cannot issue duplicate pay advice slips. We can write to confirm the amount of pension paid and tax deducted. Remember we only issue a payslip when the amount being paid differs by more than £1 when compared to the previous month.

The phone number for questions about the pension being paid, or if you have not received a payment is 03300 241 369.

If you register and log in to the online pension record using [My Oxfordshire Pension](#) you have access to your pay advice slips every month.

Where is my P60?

A good number of pensioners ask from the beginning of April for their P60. We will send out the P60s when we have completed all the details for the whole payroll, not on an individual basis. We have until 31 May to send out this form.

If you register and log in to the online pension record using [My Oxfordshire Pension](#) you have access to your history of P360s while on pension.

Bank account changes

Make sure you tell us about bank account changes in plenty of time before the next payment is due. Even when you update your own details using [My Oxfordshire Pension](#) do this in the first half of the month, or make sure you have not closed down the previous account until the new details are been acknowledged.

The 'Tell Us Once' scheme

The aim of this scheme is that when a death is registered with the local registrar all other parties are also informed. HOWEVER – the registrar may not include occupational pension schemes in that arrangement. Your family and friends will still need to notify all the pension providers – even when they are the local council – of your death and not rely on this scheme. There are moves to alert public sector pension providers of a death through this system, but it is not currently fully operational yet, so the advice above remains for the time being.

Pensions: Freedom and Choice

From April 6th 2015 the government introduced the opportunity for members of a defined contribution pension scheme, aged at least 55 to explore how to use their pension pot more flexibly.

These new flexibilities do not apply to any Defined Benefits you have in a Defined Benefit pension scheme, including the LGPS, and therefore they have no direct impact on your Defined Benefits from the LGPS. As we are paying your pension from the LGPS, there is no provision for you to take a transfer from the fund to an alternative scheme that may offer the flexible arrangements. We have a Freedom and Choice Question and Answer sheet for members of the LGPS currently paying into the scheme, if you also wanted further background information, please see the section at the foot of page www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/lgpsmembersguide

Trivial Pensions

We can convert a very small LGPS pension, into a single lump sum in certain circumstances. If you want to find out more please get in touch with Pension Services.

Two things will be certain - the single lump sum will be taxable and taking a single payment would include any future benefit for your partner after your death too.

Members self service *My Oxfordshire Pension*

We introduced the on line access to your pension record in March 2017.

Now in operation for pensioners, once you have registered and logged into the secure website you will have the opportunity to edit your personal details such as your home address and your bank account. You can also see your payment statement every month.

Once in operation, this service will be the main way we will communicate with members, unless the individual writes in to 'opt out' of the self-service scheme.

We have a dedicated help for *My Oxfordshire Pension* online and website questions.

By phone [0330 0536760](tel:03300536760)

And email pension.mssenquiry@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Pension Services relocation and contact details

Please call before visiting the office. We cannot guarantee parking.

Pension Services, Oxfordshire County Council, 4640 Kingsgate, Cascade Way, Oxford Business Park South, Oxford, OX4 2SU

0330 0241 369 is the general enquiry number concerning pensions in payment

General email Pension.services@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Please note that this is a note for general information. Nothing shown here can override any regulation within any of the pension schemes or discretionary payments regulations.

We will revise the Q and A sheet regularly, if there is a subject you think we should include please pass on your suggestions.

PS . . . Important final note

This letter gives you brief information about your pension. It is for general use and cannot cover every personal circumstance. In the event of any dispute about any benefit due under your pension scheme regulations, the appropriate legislation will prevail. This notice does not confer any contractual or statutory rights and is for information purposes only.