

Your NHS Pension Choice Employers Newsletter

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Newsletter for all NHS Chief Executives, Payroll Managers, Pensions Officers, Directors of Finance, Directors of Human Resources, Direction Bodies, all GP Practices, all Out of Hours Providers, SHA Directors of Workforce and NHS Trades Union Contacts



Reviewing some of the steps in the **NHS Pension Choice Exercise**

In this edition we have included some important updates you need to be aware of. Please take time to read this and if necessary contact the Choice helpline for employers (0300 123 1701) if you have any queries. It should be brought to the attention of all relevant personnel including all managers.

As always we welcome feedback on the content of this newsletter and thank you for your continued support with this exercise.

Yours sincerely

Ian Merga

Choice Communications
and Stakeholder Manager



Inside:

- Choice Statements and posters – changes to the implementation timetable.
- Changes to the NHS Pension Choice Road Show timetable.
- Demonstrating that members have received Choice Statements.
- Pensions On-line (POL) facility – changes affecting GP Practices.
- Choice Statements – reminder for those retiring or being compulsory transferred out of the NHS Pension Scheme.
- Additional communications.

1 Revision to implementation plans for the delivery of Choice Statements

The Choice Newsletter 1 dated 27 April 2009 and the May payslip leaflet set out the anticipated delivery of Choice Statements.

Following a Department of Health led independent review of the Choice Programme and feedback received during the initial NHS Pension Choice Road Shows we have reviewed our implementation plans and made some adjustments to our approach.

These changes will provide:

- Further opportunities to test Choice communications prior to the mass rollout of Choice Statements;
- Additional time for larger employing authorities to address any remaining data quality issues. This will ease pressures resulting from the Flu Pandemic and now the Quality Productivity Challenge (QPC) agenda;
- The opportunity for NHS Pensions to develop lower level implementation plans for employers so they have greater clarity on precisely when they will receive their Choice Statements.

The changes are:

- **Initial Tranche Sites (South West, South Central and SE Coast SHA's – road show attendees)**

The first statements will be delivered to smaller organisations (e.g. General practices) during February and March 2010. Larger organisations will receive statements during April 2010. The time period for completion of the NHS Pension Choice Exercise in these areas will be extended if necessary.

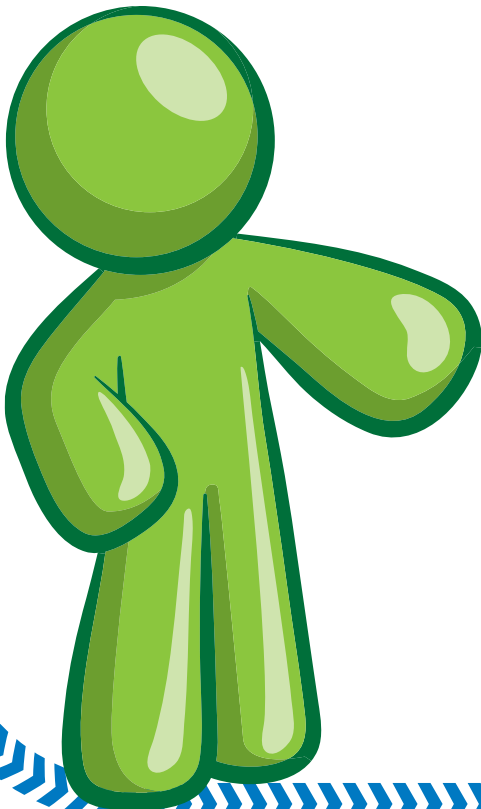
- **For all other NHS Employing Authorities**

There may be a minor impact on the start date of the NHS Pension Choice Exercise in your area. Please see the table below for the latest information.

- **Early Adopter Sites; Cornwall and Isles of Scilly PCT and Yeovil District Hospital NHS Foundation Trust**

Statements are currently being produced for the remaining members who were aged 50 or over on 1 October 2009 who have yet to receive a Choice Statement. NHS Pensions will therefore be contacting employers' Data Cleanse leads as a matter of urgency to address any outstanding data quality issues relating to such members. The statements for these members will be issued by the end of January 2010.

The rollout of Choice will still start in January 2010 and the exercise will still be completed by March 2012.



Proposed timeline – December 2009

Statement production period	Tranche – Strategic Health Authority region	Type
January 2010	Yeovil District Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and Cornwall & Isles of Scilly PCT (completion of Early Adopters)	50+ 50+
February - March 2010	South West smaller employing authorities (selection of GP practices – practice staff only)	Any age
April - June 2010	South West employing authorities (remainder) South Central South East Coast NHS London	50+ 50+ 50+ 50+
June - December 2010	All General Medical Practitioners	Any age
July - September 2010	East of England West Midlands East Midlands Yorks and North Humber North West North East Wales	50+ 50+ 50+ 50+ 50+ 50+ 50+
October - December 2010	South West South Central South East Coast	49 < 49 < 49 <
January - March 2011	NHS London East of England	49 < 49 <
April - June 2011	West Midlands East Midlands Yorks and North Humber	49 < 49 < 49 <
July - September 2011	North West North East	49 < 49 <
October - November 2011	Wales	49 <

The following members will receive a NHS Pension Choice Pack during the first period allocated to their Strategic Health Authority regardless of their age:

- Members working in a GP Practice.
- Members working in a Direction Body.
- Ophthalmic Practitioners.
- Dental Practitioners.

All dates subject to change as the NHS Pension Choice Exercise progresses.

2 NHS Pension Choice Road Shows for employers

NHS Pensions will now review the schedule for the NHS Pension Choice Road Shows for employers in light of the revised NHS Pension Choice Exercise timetable. Further details will be provided shortly.

3 Posters timeline

During the course of the NHS Pension Choice Exercise, NHS Pensions will be sending you further posters and tent cards to display. These will assist you in fulfilling your disclosure obligations as an employer. During the NHS Pension Choice Exercise we plan to send you three different sets of posters and tent cards:

- the first will alert members that the NHS Pension Choice Exercise has commenced in their area. Distribution will coincide with Choice starting in the larger organisations;
- the next will highlight that Choice is 'Coming soon' for those members who were 50 or over on 1 October 2009. This will be delivered to you approximately two months before the Choice Statements are delivered; and
- a third set will show that it is 'Time to choose your NHS Pension path' – for those who were age 50 or over on 1 October 2009 and this will be sent to employers at the same time as the delivery of Choice Statements is made.

4 Signatures

In advance of Choice arriving, employers may wish to consider how they might demonstrate, if challenged, that all eligible staff received their personalised Choice Statements. Past experience suggests that the collection of staff signatures provides a robust mechanism and would enable employers to demonstrate due diligence if challenged. However, we appreciate that decisions on how best to deal with any potential challenge is best made at Board level. We would encourage employers to consider this important element of the NHS Pension Choice Exercise process well in advance of the Choice Statements arriving.

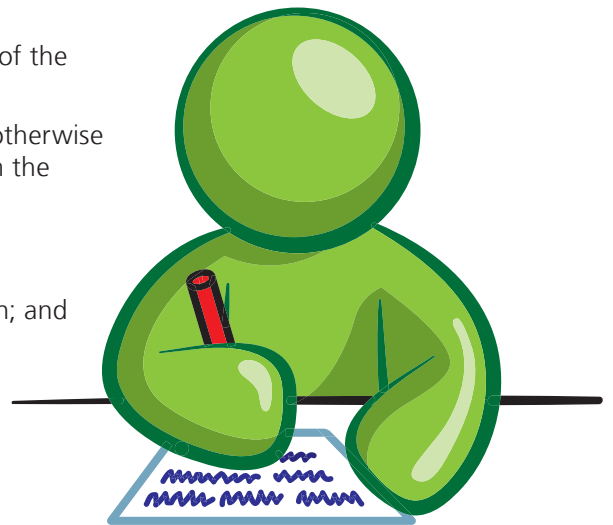
You should therefore consider very carefully how you might retain records which clearly show when the personalised Choice Statements were issued by your organisation, how they are distributed and when they are received by your staff.

5 Members who apply for ill-health retirement during the NHS Pension Choice Exercise – revised procedures

The current ill-health retirement factsheet available from NHS Pensions has been reviewed in order to include further information about the differences between the two sections of the Scheme, the options available to such members and how to opt-in to Choice. A special opt-in form for members who have applied for ill-health retirement is in development. Further details will be posted to the Choice section of the NHS Pensions website shortly.

Please note that anyone who has applied for ill-health retirement must still be in employment to be entitled to receive a Choice Statement. They are not however required to be a member of the Scheme when they make their decision. The regulations governing the NHS Pension Choice Exercise allow for such members to make their choice even if they have ceased membership, provided that:

- they were a member of the 1995 Section on or after 1 October 2009;
- have submitted an AW33E;
- receive a Choice Statement whilst an active member of the 1995 Section;
- but for the exercise of the option the person would otherwise become entitled to ill-health retirement benefits from the 1995 Section;
- the person has confirmed in writing to the Secretary of State that benefits are not to be paid from the 1995 Section and they have not revoked that decision; and
- the person exercises the option before the end of the four month period beginning with the statement issue date.



6 Retirees factsheet

In light of feedback during the recent NHS Pension Choice Road Shows, NHS Pensions is revising the retirees factsheet. We will provide additional information about the calculation of the ten year reckonable pay period which relates to the 2008 Section only. This is where a member retires within 3 years of 1 April 2008 (when the new 2008 Section was introduced). We will post the revised factsheet on the Choice section of the NHS Pensions website shortly.

7 NHS Pension Choice Toolkit for employers

NHS Pensions is developing a toolkit for employers which will set out the roles and responsibilities of employers during the NHS Pension Choice Exercise. The purpose of the toolkit is to assist employers in carrying out their responsibilities. It will also contain a series of flowcharts along with supporting text to help employers in the day to day administration of the Scheme during the NHS Pension Choice Exercise. The toolkit will guide employers through, for example, the steps to be followed for those who might need to receive their Choice Statement early or in cases where the member has applied for ill-health retirement on how they might defer their choice. The toolkit will be posted on the Choice section of the NHS Pensions website shortly.

8

Pre tranche planning

NHS Pensions is also developing materials to assist employers in preparing for the delivery of Choice Statements in their area. The materials will set out the checks employers will need to make in advance of Choice arriving and what localised plans they will need to have in place when the personalised Choice Statements are received in their area. The materials will describe the activities required and a self-assessment for Choice readiness. Further information will follow shortly.

9

Pensions Online (POL) – GP Practices and Direction Bodies only

An amendment has recently made to the POL system which will only affect GP Practices and Direction Bodies. When you next enter the POL system to update information you will be prompted to provide your usual 5 digit code. Once you have entered your code the system will prompt you for some additional information. You will be asked to identify from a drop down menu, which Primary Care Trust (PCT) your Practice/Organisation is connected with. Once you have identified the relevant PCT you will then be able to use the system as usual. The purpose of this is to enable NHS Pensions to identify which SHA region your Practice or Organisation falls under for the distribution of Choice Statements.

10

NHS Pension Choice Practitioner Guide

With the assistance of the British Medical Association (BMA), NHS Pensions has developed an additional guide – the NHS Pension Choice Practitioner Guide, specifically to assist Medical and Dental Practitioners during the NHS Pension Choice Exercise. This guide should be read alongside the main NHS Pension Choice Guide, which are both available from the Choice section of the NHS Pensions website.



Please ensure that the NHS Pension Choice Practitioner Guide is given immediately, to those Practitioners who are in the process of retiring in advance of the main tranche. As an interim measure, please download copies of the guide from the Choice section of the NHS Pensions website at www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/pensions. Hard copies will be produced and dispatched to Practitioners, along with their Choice Statements, as part of the main NHS Pension Choice Exercise. We expect that all Practitioner statements will be distributed during the period June to December 2010. Practitioners should read the Practitioner Guide as well as the main NHS Pension Choice Guide.

Please remember that for **all** members, including Practitioners who retire before the start of the main NHS Pension Choice Exercise, they must be given a copy of the Choice DVD, NHS Pension Choice Opt-in Form and the NHS Pension Choice Guide.

11 Choice Statements - general

It is important to remember that eligibility to participate in the NHS Pension Choice Exercise requires a person to be an active member of the 1995 Section at the time NHS Pensions issue the personalised Choice Statement. NHS Pensions may only accept an option to join the 2008 Section if a statement was issued to the person whilst that person was an active member of the 1995 Section and:

- the member is in active pensionable employment at the time they make their choice; and
- the option is received by NHS Pensions before the end of the 4 month time limit.

The only time an option may be accepted where a member is no longer in active pensionable employment is when that member would otherwise become entitled to immediate payment of pension benefits from the 1995 Section however, the personalised Choice Statement **must** still have been issued whilst that member was in active pensionable employment. It follows therefore that if a member leaves employment before a personalised Choice Statement has been issued they are no longer eligible for Choice.

Employers are reminded that some members are eligible to opt-in to Choice early and receive a Choice Statement in advance of Choice arriving in their area. Such members are detailed in Choice Newsletter 4. In such circumstances both members and employers should allow sufficient time (before a retirement or move to an organisation that does not have access to the NHS Pension Scheme) for a statement to be produced.

NHS Pensions will aim to supply a Choice Statement within 20 working days from the receipt of a signed opt-in form providing the individual membership records are up to date and accurate. Members should also be allowed up to 4 months from the date of the Choice Statement in which to make their decision.