



Pensionable membership

Introduction

Your pensionable membership is the length of time you have made contributions in the NHS Pension Scheme. For ease, we call this membership. Membership is what we take into account for the purposes of calculating your retirement benefits.

It may be that the membership shown on Your NHS Pension Choice Statement is not what you expected. The aim of this factsheet is to explain how we work out your membership in the NHS Pension Scheme.

What counts as membership in the Scheme?

For employed service to count as membership you must be paying pension contributions to your employer.

What doesn't count as membership in the Scheme?

Not all employed service is pensionable. Examples of employed service which does not count as membership are:

- Overtime (but part-time employees may count hours worked as overtime up to and including full-time as long as it is paid at the normal rate for the job);
- Sickness absences without pay;
- Strike days (Industrial Action) or other forms of unauthorised absence without pay.

If you decided to "opt out" of the NHS Pension Scheme at any stage- then this period of employment will not count as membership because you did not make contributions at this time.

If you work full-time then your membership may be the equivalent of the years and days you were employed in the NHS. It is important to understand that membership will be different if you work part-time now or have done at any time in the past.

Similarly, if, at any stage of your career, you left the NHS and received a refund of your Scheme contributions, this service will no longer count as pensionable membership.

Members who started working for the NHS before 6 April 1988 may have served a "Waiting Period" (WP) of 2 years before becoming eligible to pay pension contributions. Employees who served the full 2 years WP would be credited with one year's membership in the Scheme.

Any membership you are buying or have bought using the 'added years' facility also counts as membership.

What are the Scheme's membership limits?

Some members may be affected by the Scheme's membership limits of 40 years at age 60 (55 for members with special class status) and 45 years overall.

Before 1 April 2008 the maximum membership all members could have at age 60 was 40 years. Members with special class status could have maximum membership of 40 years at age 55. Anyone who had exceeded the limit of 40 years had their membership restricted. After age 60 (55 for members with special class status) they could have more membership up to an overall maximum of 45 years.

Since 1 April 2008 the Scheme's maximum membership has been 45 years at any age.

For members with special class status, including Mental Health Officers (who can earn membership at a faster rate after they have 20 years membership), the membership limit has not changed. For these members the 40 year limit remains at age 55 and the overall maximum of 45 years also remains.

The maximum 45 year limit applies to calendar length membership. If you have ever worked part-time your calendar length membership will always be higher than your actual membership.

What is full-time membership?

A member is classed as full-time if their contract of employment is on a full-time basis. Each day that you work and pay into the NHS Pension Scheme counts as one day's membership.

What is part-time membership?

A member is classed as part-time if they have a contract of employment for less hours than the full-time hours for their particular job.

All contributing part-time membership is changed to equal full-time equivalent membership when we work out your pensionable membership. For example, if you were employed for 12 years in a job which for a full-time employee is 40 hours per week and your part-time contract was for 20 hours per week, your membership would total 6 years.

What will change if I move to the 2008 Section?

There is no difference between how membership is worked out in the two sections of the NHS Pension Scheme.

