NHS Annual Returns Readiness

Are you ready?

To ensure readiness for Annual Returns we have put together some important information to help you better prepare for your submissions this year.

In the past year quite a number of your members did not receive an Annual Benefit Statement (ABS) or may have been delayed in receiving refunds, transfers and pension awards due to either late or incorrect data being submitted by employers.

Please take the time to read the following helpful information to help make this years' submissions better for everyone:

Starters

An annual return, which provides a record of members service, salary, pensionable pay and contributions paid in a year (1 April to 31 March), can only be recorded on a member's record if they have an active employment. If you haven't already done so, you should submit a starter form to us for each active pensionable contract of employment that the member holds, whether this is two part-time posts or one full-time post. Each starter form should therefore contain a respective unique reference number and must always be submitted before you send an annual return.

Pay References

The pay reference for GP Practices and Direction Bodies (DB) is formed from the practice or DB identification number. This number should be followed by a number of zeroes up to 15 digits. It's important that the pay reference is formed exactly as required as this is how we match your data to a member's record. If the pay reference is not correct then the data will not load to that member's record.

For example, for practice number YP00055 pay reference YP0005500000000 is correct for all data returns including the annual return. Some examples of how this number could be reported incorrectly are:

• Without additional zeroes - YP00055
• Spacing between letters and numbers – YP 0005500000000
• Additional zeroes added before the 55 – YP0000000000055
• Additional zeroes added before the identification number – 00000000YP00055
• Using letter O instead of number zero – YPOOO55OOOOOOOO

All of the above examples of incorrect pay references would result in the data failing to load to the member record.

Leavers

If a member left the scheme between 1 April last year and 31 March this year you should have sent a leaver form for the period 1 April last year to the leaving date.

There is no need to submit an annual return for these members as they are not in active membership as at 31 March this year.

Service Changes

A service change form should be used to report a change to the basis of service a member holds, if moving from full-time to part-time employment, or vice versa. Failure to report this can result in a member's pension being incorrectly calculated. For such cases you should calculate the annual return based on the full year using the current basis of service, which may result in you having to convert service from days to hours or vice versa. Full guidance can be found on the accompanying annual return checklist.

Data Submission

All annual returns must be submitted through the Employer Data Management (EDM) portal. All employers should now have a registered EDM principle user and possibly a number of basic users. We have a dedicated team of advisors to assist with any concerns you may have in using the EDM portal.

Please phone: 01896 893050

Alternatively you can email: sppaedm-enquiry@gov.scot

Data Accuracy

Particular emphasis is placed on data accuracy before sending your submissions. The Public Service Pensions (Record Keeping and miscellaneous amendments) regulations 2014 enforceable from 1 April 2015 sets out the records which Public Service pension schemes are required to maintain. Underpinned by the Pension Regulator's Code of Practice for Public Sector Pension schemes, we have a clear duty in maintaining accurate records for members.

The EDM system has a number of validations that are designed to ensure that all relevant data fields have been completed and in the correct format. If the data fails the validation stage, even for one member, then this will cause the whole file to fail until the errors are fixed.

As always we are here to help you so you can help us. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any queries with any of the information provided.