



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Commitment to Service

JUNE 2001

This leaflet covers the following scheme:

The Northern Ireland Teachers' Superannuation Scheme

This leaflet tells you what service you can expect from the Teachers' Pensions Branch and what you can do if you are not satisfied with that service.

Our Commitment to Service

Our aim is the effective and efficient management of the Northern Ireland Teachers' Superannuation Scheme for which we have responsibility.

We aim to make 6 main commitments on the service we provide:

1. To listen to you

We welcome your comments whether you make them in writing, on the telephone, by e-mail or in person. We have set up informal and formal procedures for handling any complaints you may have (see commitment 6 "To put things right").

We are committed to listening to what you say and acting on it.

2. To give you information

There is an easy-to-read guide to the Teachers' Scheme, together with leaflets on specific subjects. You can get free copies of these booklets from your employer or from us.

3. To be courteous and helpful

We will deal with your enquiries in a courteous and helpful way. You can write to us or telephone if you prefer. Our address and telephone number are shown at the back of this booklet. Alternatively you can call in person to the Teachers' Pensions Branch (Monday to Friday between 9.30 am and 4 pm).

If your query is complicated, we may not be able to deal with it over the telephone and may ask you to write to us instead. We will deal with your query as quickly as possible (see commitment 5 "To keep our standards high").

The person dealing with your query will give you their name and telephone number so that you have an appropriate contact point.

4. To give value for money

Our service should be both efficient and economical.

5. To keep our standards high

While you are a member of your pension scheme, our aim is to:

- keep records of your service which qualifies for pension;

- ensure that the contributions your employer deducts from your earnings are paid over to us on time and are properly recorded on our computer system;
- carry out an annual check that the contributions deducted from your earnings throughout the year agree with those on your employer's annual return;
- keep you up to date with information on scheme benefits and changes to the scheme; and
- answer any questions you may have.

When the time comes for you to claim your benefits, we will endeavour to pay you the correct amounts on time.

TPB have a number of service targets. These include:

■ **Retirement**

As long as we get your application form on time, we will pay your retirement lump sum on your first day of retirement and your first pension payment during the following month.

If you are retiring, we must receive the appropriate claim form from your

employer **at least 3 months before you are due to retire.**

If you are applying to retire because of ill-health, we will need medical advice and may have to arrange a medical examination.

We try to pay all claims on time. We cannot guarantee to meet the payment target dates if your claim form arrives late, or if appropriate documentation is not provided, although we will make every effort to provide payments as quickly as possible.

■ **General enquiries**

You can ask us for information about the scheme, for example, you may want to know whether you can buy extra benefits. If you write to us, we will answer your letter **within 10 working days** of receiving it. If we cannot give you a full answer by then, we will write to tell you so.

■ **Accuracy**

We promise to pay you the exact amount you are entitled to.

These are our main service targets. Others deal with such things as the transfer of service

between one scheme and another, and refunds of contributions.

6. To put things right

We try hard to give you the best service we can. If something goes wrong, we will put it right with an explanation and an apology.

What if you are unhappy with the service you receive?

Pensions issues are sometimes complex and there may be times where you feel that a decision we make is wrong or that information we have given you is incorrect. You may feel that our handling of your problems was unacceptable.

You should not hesitate to raise any concern with the person dealing with your enquiry or claim. We would hope and expect that the vast majority of problems can be sorted out this way.

What if you are still unhappy?

If you remain unhappy with our response, you can move to a more formal process. It has 2 stages:

Stage 1. We must reconsider the original decision. We ask someone who has not been involved in any part of the

original decision to look at the case. This “appointed person” can act independently and can reach a decision purely on the facts of the case as they appear to him or her.

Stage 2. If you disagree with the appointed person’s decision, you can ask the Scheme Manager to review it. The reply will explain the reasons behind the Scheme Manager’s decision.

If this does not resolve your complaint and is about:

- *the interpretation of the scheme regulations*, you can ask for a ruling by the Minister, or
- *our handling of your case*, you can contact the Occupational Pensions Advisory Service (OPAS) and the Pensions Ombudsman - address overleaf.

Our short booklet, “Guide to the Internal Dispute Resolution Procedures”, gives more information about how to use these procedures. It is available on request.

Occupational Pensions Advisory Service (OPAS) and the Pensions Ombudsman

The Pensions Advisory Service (OPAS) provides free help and advice to members and beneficiaries of pension schemes over difficulties they have been unable to resolve with the scheme managers.

The Pensions Ombudsman is appointed to investigate and give a decision on any complaint or dispute of fact or law.

The address of both is:

11 Belgrave Road
London
SW1V 1RD

Telephone: OPAS 020 7233 8080

Pensions Ombudsman Tel: 020 7834 9144

Occupational Pensions Regulatory Authority (OPRA)

OPRA is the statutory regulator for occupational pension schemes and maintains and strengthens the law and regulations in that part of the industry. OPRA is responsible for ensuring that the people who run occupational pension schemes follow a wide range of rules. OPRA investigates and takes action against individuals who break the rules of the pension scheme or

undermine and threaten the security of the pension scheme they are responsible for. Its address is:

Invicta House
Trafalgar Place
Brighton
East Sussex
BN1 4DW

Telephone helpdesk: 01273 627 600

Teachers' Pensions Branch

Our address is:

Teachers' Pensions Branch
Waterside House
75 Duke Street
LONDONDERRY
BT47 6FP

Telephone: 028 7131 9000
Fax: 028 7131 9190



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