

## Guidance Notes

### Scottish Teachers' Pension Scheme

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

To help people save more for their retirement, the government now requires employers to enrol their workers into a workplace pension. This applies to those who aren't already in one in respect of any of their employments and who in respect of that employment are aged 22 or over, under State Pension Age and who earn over £10,000 a year (or pro-rata per pay period).

The Council provides membership of the Scottish Teachers' Pension Scheme (STPS) provided by the Scottish Public Pensions Agency (SPPA) who on 1 April 2015, introduced a new Scottish Teachers' Pension Scheme (Teachers' 2015). If you are joining Teachers' 2015 for the first time, or if you are re-joining the scheme after a break of five years or more, you will be in the 2015 scheme and your normal pension age (NPA) will be equal to your state pension age (SPA).

#### 2. AUTOMATIC ENROLMENT

As a teacher aged between 16 and 75, you will be automatically entered into membership of the STPS, but have the right to opt out.

A copy of the employees' guide to the STPS can be viewed at [Scottish Public Pensions Agency home page | SPPA](#). As a member of the scheme you will be required to contribute the percentage of your salary as set out in the table below. The Council will also contribute to the scheme on your behalf.

**STPS** – Employee contribution tables for 2026/2027

Actual Pensionable Pay	Employee Contribution Rate
On earnings up to and including £36,195	7.35%
£36,196 to £48,724	8.88%
£48,725 to £57,775	9.9%
£57,776 to £67,975	10.61%
£67,976 to £92,693	11.73%
£92,694 and above	12.14%

Notes:

1. The pensionable pay figures will be increased annually in line with the cost of living.
2. The contribution rate will be determined by your pensionable earnings for a pay period.

The Scottish Teachers' Pension Scheme (STPS) in which you participate is a qualifying pension scheme, which means it meets or exceeds the government's standards. You will

receive tax relief on those contributions, and on any extra contributions you choose to pay to the STPS. In the STPS, tax relief is given under the net pay arrangements (in accordance with section 193 of the Finance Act 2004).

### **Can I opt out of the scheme?**

If you do not wish to be a member of the scheme (or decide at some later date that you do not wish to remain a member), you will be able to opt out. You can do this by obtaining an Opting Out form available from the Scottish Public Pensions Agency website [Opting out but continuing to work as a Teacher | SPPA](#) or contact Scottish Public Pensions Agency – Teachers Section on 01896 893 000 for further information. Please note, however, that you will not be able to sign and date the opting out form until, at the earliest, the first day of membership of the scheme. If you make a valid opt out within 3 months of being enrolled into the STPS you will be treated for all purposes as not having become an active member of the STPS on this occasion and the Council will refund to you the contributions paid by you.

If you do not opt out within the ‘opt out period’ mentioned above, you will still be able to opt out of the STPS at any time in the future and be entitled to whatever benefits are due under the rules of the STPS.

### **If I opt out, can I re-join the STPS at a later date?**

Yes, should you decide at any time to opt out, you have the right to opt to rejoin the STPS from the beginning of the next available pay period after electing to rejoin (subject, of course, to meeting the normal requirements for being eligible for membership of the scheme and being under age 75 at that time). To do so please:

- send a letter, signed by you, to Payroll and Pensions Team, South Ayrshire Council, Wellington Square, Ayr, KA7 1DR, stating the name of the post (s) in which you wish to join the scheme; or
- send an email to [PayrollAndPensions@south-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:PayrollAndPensions@south-ayrshire.gov.uk) with your request containing the phrase

*“I confirm I personally submitted this notice to join the Scottish Teachers’ Pension Scheme”* to [PayrollAndPensions@south-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:PayrollAndPensions@south-ayrshire.gov.uk)

You will then be sent further information on the scheme, including relevant forms to complete, and will be enrolled into the STPS.

### **Regular re-enrolment**

If you decide at any time to opt out of membership of the STPS you will automatically be re-enrolled into the scheme on what is called the “re-enrolment date” if, on that date, you are aged at least 22, under State Pension Age and earning more than £10,000 (current figure) or pro-rata per pay period, unless you had opted out within 12 months prior to the “re-enrolment date”. The “re-enrolment date” is a date chosen by the Council and will be within a period of 3 months either side of every 3<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of 1 May 2013.

### **A commitment from the Council**

The Council must continue to maintain your membership of the STPS (unless you personally choose to opt out of membership of the scheme or cease to be eligible for membership), and the Council must ensure the scheme continues to meet certain government standards.

### **Right of Appeal**

#### **Informal Process:**

Some pension issues can be resolved using the informal process.

If you need to raise a complaint regarding a decision made by South Ayrshire Council then you must make it:

- in writing to Payroll and Pensions Team, South Ayrshire Council, Wellington Square, Ayr, KA7 1DR, and
- within 6 months of the day when you were told of the decision you want to complain about.

Your complaint will be considered, and if the nominated person finds in your favour, the original decision about which you made the complaint will be required to be reconsidered. The decision will be given to you in writing within 2 months of receiving it or if there is no decision made within this time limit, you should be informed of the reason for any delay and when you may expect a decision.

### **Formal Process:**

If you remain dissatisfied with any decision affecting you made in relation to the Scottish Teachers Pension Scheme, you have the right to ask for the decision to be looked at again under a formal complaint procedure. The complaint procedure's official name is the "internal dispute resolution procedure" (IDRP).

A formal IDRP is an appeal to Scottish Ministers that will be determined on their behalf by the Head of Policy at SPPA.

Challenges can be on the basis that

- (a) Other information which was available at the time of the original application but not presented, has come to light; and/or
- (b) If you are not satisfied with the way in which your case has been handled, or you do not feel that sufficient consideration has been given when applying the pension scheme's regulations
- (c) Scheme Regulations have not been applied correctly.

You can ask someone to take your complaint forward on your behalf. This could be, for instance, a trade union official or work colleague. No charge is made at any stage for investigating a complaint under the internal dispute resolution procedure. Expenses that you will have to meet are your own (and/or your representative's) time, stationery and postage.

However, in advance of appealing through the formal Internal Dispute Resolution Procedure you may wish to consider contacting the Pension Ombudsman's Early Resolution Service and discuss any potential complaint with a member of their team who will be able to provide with a member of their Team (tel 0800 917 4487) or email [helpline@pensions-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:helpline@pensions-ombudsman.org.uk)

If you still wish to submit a formal appeal to the Scottish Ministers for a full review and determination of the original decision, your application must be submitted on the Form IDRP available from the SPPA website [Scottish Public Pensions Agency home page | SPPA](#)

- to the Head of Policy, Scottish Public Pensions Agency, 7 Tweedside Park, Tweedbank, Galashiels TD1 3TE
- within 6 months of receiving the decision that you wish to dispute

The decision by the Head of Policy will be provided to you within 4 months of receipt of your application.

## **Subsequent Action**

If you remain dissatisfied, you can approach The Pensions Ombudsman [www.pensions-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.pensions-ombudsman.org.uk) or the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman [www.spsso.org.uk](http://www.spsso.org.uk) if you have reason to believe that the decision was not properly made or implemented provided you do so within 3 years from the date of the original decision (or lack of decision) about which you complained.

### **3. TRANSFERRING PENSION BENEFITS INTO THE TEACHERS' 2015**

If you have previous membership in any other UK Public Service Pension Scheme you may be entitled to retain a lower normal pension age (NPA). This is subject to your age, and the length of break between leaving your old scheme and joining the Teachers' 2015.

If you are interested in transferring previous pension rights into the scheme you should contact the Scottish Public Pensions Agency (SPPA). Please note that transfer applications will only be accepted within 12 months from the date you joined the scheme, and before your NPA. Any delay in applying for a transfer could impact upon the value of your transfer.

### **4. INCREASING PENSION BENEFITS**

Early Retirement Reduction Buy Out (ERRBO) - Members of the Teachers' 2015 pension scheme can pay additional contributions in order to secure an earlier retirement age. You must apply for this within 6 months of joining the 2015 scheme.

### **5. WHERE TO GO FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

For further information on the Scottish Teachers' Pension Scheme please visit [Scottish Public Pensions Agency home page | SPPA](#).

You can find out more about your State pension age (SPA) at [www.gov.uk/calculate-state-pension](http://www.gov.uk/calculate-state-pension).

If you have any questions about the scheme, please contact Scottish Public Pensions Agency on 01896 893 000 or write to Scottish Public Pensions Agency, 7 Tweedside Park, Tweedbank, Galashiels, TD1 3TE.

If you have any other queries, please email South Ayrshire Council Pension Team at [PayrollAndPenions@south-ayrhire.gov.uk](mailto:PayrollAndPenions@south-ayrhire.gov.uk)

For further information on the Pensions Ombudsman's Early Resolution Service please visit [www.pensions-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.pensions-ombudsman.org.uk)

For more general information about pensions and saving for retirement please visit [www.direct.gov.uk/workplacepensions](http://www.direct.gov.uk/workplacepensions)