

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM TO
THE PUBLIC SERVICE PENSIONS REVALUATION (EARNINGS) ORDER
(NORTHERN IRELAND) 2017

2017 No. 30

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Explanatory Memorandum has been prepared by the Department of Finance to accompany the above named Statutory Rule which is laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly.
- 1.2 The Statutory Rule is being made under powers conferred by section 9(2) of the Public Service Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2014. The Public Service Pensions Revaluation (Earnings) Order (Northern Ireland) 2017 shall be subject to the negative resolution procedure.

2. Purpose of the rule

- 2.1 The Statutory Rule specifies the annual percentage change in earnings for the purposes of revaluation of pension benefits accrued by active members in Career Average Revaluated Earnings (CARE) public service pension schemes. The Order will be used by schemes which require an annual revaluation by reference to a change in earnings, in line with the revaluation process set out in scheme regulations, to revalue active members' benefits accrued in the scheme year 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Public Service Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, (the Act), set out requirements to introduce new and reformed pension schemes for public service employees from 1 April 2015. Under the Act the default design for these new schemes is the CARE model. In a CARE scheme each member builds up a fraction (the accrual rate) of their average annual earnings as pension for each year of membership of the scheme. At the end of each year the pension built up by each member during that period is revalued.
- 3.2 Different schemes revalue members' benefits in different ways. The revaluation process is set out in regulations for each scheme. The process applied reflects arrangements which were put in place during policy development and consultation for each individual scheme.

3.3 In all cases the revaluation process will include a reference to a cost of living index which tracks annual changes in the level of prices, or earnings. The current measure used to track change in prices is the Consumer Prices Index (CPI). The measure used for earnings is the whole economy figure for the year on year change in Average Weekly Earnings (AWE). Under section 9 of the Act the Department of Finance must produce legislative Orders each year specifying each separate figure which schemes will use in line with the process set out in their regulations. The revaluation processes for active member benefits for each of the main CARE public service schemes in Northern Ireland are:

Pension Scheme	Process for revaluation
Civil Service Pension Scheme	CPI + 0%
Devolved Judicial Pension Scheme	CPI + 0%
Local Government Pension Scheme (NI)	CPI + 0%
Police Pension Scheme	CPI + 1.25%
NI Teachers Pension Scheme	CPI + 1.6%
Health and Social Care Pension Scheme	CPI + 1.5%
Firefighters Pension Scheme	Average Earnings (AWE)

3.4 The Public Service Pensions Revaluation (Earnings) Order (Northern Ireland) 2017 fulfils the Department of Finance’s obligation to make a revaluation Order in relation to earnings (AWE). The published AWE figure relevant for 2016-2017 revaluation is 2.6%.

3.5 The Order will be used by the Firefighters’ Pension Scheme in Northern Ireland to revalue CARE benefits built up by active members in 2016-2017 by +2.6%.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 The Statutory Rule is an Order which the Department of Finance is required to make every year and does not require a consultation exercise. The Department has discussed its contents with those Departments with responsibilities for public service pension schemes at the Northern Ireland Public Sector Pensions Group. The Department has also formally notified public service Trade Unions of its intention to make the Statutory Rule.

5. Equality Impacts

- 5.1 There is no equality impact. The Statutory Rule will be used by the CARE Firefighters' pension scheme to specify the annual change in earnings relevant to the revaluation process set out in its scheme regulations. Equality screening of scheme regulations was completed by the responsible Department for each of the new reformed CARE schemes at their policy development stage.

6. Regulatory Impacts

- 6.1 The Statutory Rule imposes no cost on business, charities, social economy enterprises or the voluntary sector. A regulatory impact assessment is not considered necessary.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 The Statutory Rule specifies the percentage change in AWE to be used by the Firefighters' Pension Scheme in Northern Ireland to revalue CARE benefits accrued by active members in 2016-2017 by +2.6%. There are no financial implications for the Department of Finance.

8. Section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act

- 8.1 It is the view of the Department that the Statutory Rule is compatible with section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

9. EU implications

- 9.1 None

10. Parity or Replicatory Measure

HM Treasury will introduce an equivalent revaluation Order for the purposes of public service pension schemes in Great Britain which require a revaluation with reference to earnings.

11. Additional information

11.1 Not applicable.