

**PCSPS(NI)**

Principal Civil Service Pension  
Scheme (Northern Ireland)



Department of

**Finance and  
Personnel**

[www.dfpni.gov.uk](http://www.dfpni.gov.uk)

# The Northern Ireland Civil Service Additional Voluntary Contribution Scheme (NICS AVCS)



Civil Service Pensions

This leaflet tells you how you can boost your retirement income by making additional voluntary contributions to the Northern Ireland Civil Service Additional Voluntary Contribution Scheme (NICS AVCS). The leaflet applies to members of the classic, classic plus, premium and nuvos schemes.

We have tried to use as little jargon as possible but some technical terms are shown in bold where they appear in the text. Please refer to the technical terms section for an explanation of these terms.

This leaflet provides a straightforward guide to the NICS AVCS. It does not cover every aspect; the full details are contained only in the rules which are the legal basis of the scheme. You should note that nothing in this leaflet can override the rules and in the event of any unintentional difference, the rules will apply.

## Your questions answered

### Q What are Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVCS)?

A AVCS are extra amounts that you can pay to increase your pension benefits. They are invested with a financial institution to build up until you are able to buy an annuity (pension). You can also take a cash free lump sum.

### Q How much can I pay?

A You can pay up to 100% of your salary.

### Q Who are the NICS AVCS providers?

A The NICS AVCS providers are:

- Scottish Widows' Fund and Life Assurance Society
- Standard Life Assurance Ltd

There are a number of investment choices and it may be difficult for you to decide what is best for you. The providers have booklets on the investment options and you should look at them before making your decision. You can make AVCS to one or both of the NICS AVCS providers.

### Q How do I make my contributions?

A Contributions to the NICSAVCS are deducted straight from your monthly salary. You will need to apply at least one month before the deductions are due to be made. You can increase, decrease or suspend your contributions as you wish.

### Q What are the tax implications of paying AVCs?

A You will receive tax relief on all contributions up to 100% of your taxable earnings subject to the **Annual Allowance**.

### Q When can I take my NICSAVCS benefits?

A If you joined the NI Civil Service before 6 April 2006 and you opened a NICSAVCS investment before that date, you can take your NICSAVCS benefits at any time from age 50 up to the day before your 75th birthday. For anyone else, you can take your NICSAVCS benefits from age 55 up to the day before your 75th birthday.

You do not have to retire to take your benefits.

### Q How do I cash in my benefits?

A You can use your NICSAVCS fund to buy an annuity (pension) from a Northern Ireland Civil Service AVC provider or any United Kingdom branch or office of an insurance company which is authorised to carry on long-term insurance business.

### Q Can I take any tax free cash?

A Yes, you can take a maximum tax free lump sum of whichever is the lower of either 25% of your NICSAVC fund or 25% of the remaining Lifetime Allowance.

### Q Can I take my tax free cash without taking a pension?

A No, all NICSAVCS benefits must be taken at the same time.

### Q What if I am medically retired before I reach pension age?

If you retire early due to ill health, your NICSAVCS benefits will become available at the same time as your main PCSPS(NI) scheme benefits.

### Q What if I resign?

A If you leave the PCSPS(NI) arrangements, you will not be able to continue paying into the NICSAVCS. You can leave them invested with the NICSAVCS provider until they become available. You can transfer your AVCs out to another UK tax registered scheme.

### Q What if I die before age 60?

A If you die while contributing to the NICSAVCS we will tell the provider. The provider will pay a lump sum to your nominee or personal representative. The lump sum will count towards your **LTA** and the recipient will have to pay any LTA tax which might be payable.

## Technical terms

**Annual allowance** is the value of pension rights you can build up tax-free in a tax year. Most people will be nowhere near the annual allowance. For further information ask us for the Pensions and Tax booklet.

**Lifetime allowance (LTA)** is the total value of pension benefits (except State pension) that can be taken without paying LTA tax. The Government has set the LTA at a level which means that it is likely to affect only a small number of people. For further information please read the Pensions and Tax booklet.

## Contact Details

Please contact the providers as follows for a NICSAVCS information pack.

Scottish Widows Tel. 0800 0284419 or  
[www.scottishwidows.co.uk/civilservice](http://www.scottishwidows.co.uk/civilservice)

Standard Life Tel. 0800 333305 or  
[www.standardlife.co.uk/civilservice](http://www.standardlife.co.uk/civilservice)

For more information about PCSPS(NI) pension benefits contact us at:-

Civil Service Pensions  
Waterside House  
75 Duke Street  
Derry / Londonderry  
BT47 6FP

Tel: 028 7131 9000

Fax: 028 7131 9234

Email: [cspensions.cpg@dfpni.gov.uk](mailto:cspensions.cpg@dfpni.gov.uk)

You can also obtain more information about the PCSPS(NI) pension arrangements from the website: [www.civilservicepensions-ni.gov.uk](http://www.civilservicepensions-ni.gov.uk)

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