

Lewis Macdonald MSP  
Convenor  
Health and Sport Committee

By Email.

23 December 2020

Dear Lewis,

### **Health and Social Care Staff £500 Thank You Payment.**

The committee will be aware of the announcement made by the First Minister on the 30 November 2020 to provide a one off pro-rata £500 payment to NHS and Social Care staff as a thank you for their continued efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic.

I write to inform you that through a frequently asked questions (FAQ) document we have now published further details of the scheme to provide a one off pro rata £500 payment to NHS and Social Care staff as a thank you for their continued efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic. I attach this FAQ document which includes updated eligibility.

All through the pandemic health and social care staff have provided, and continue to provide, vital front line services, ensuring the people of Scotland receive health and social care services at this most difficult and challenging time.

Payments for NHS staff will commence in February 2021 with the majority of staff receiving payment in February or March 2021.

In Social Care there are approximately 170,000 people working in adult social for 1,200 employers, plus personal assistants. Whilst this means some complexity, my officials are working urgently with partners to ensure more detailed guidance and payment arrangements will be in place as soon as possible. We expect payments will commence in February 2021 with the majority of social care staff receiving payment in March.

We have also listened carefully to the concerns of staff and to reduce the potential impact a single payment may have on any benefits staff may be receiving, we will ask employers to offer the option of spreading this payment over three months.

**JEANE FREEMAN**

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot)

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## **Q&A ON £500 COVID PAYMENT**

On 30 November this year, the First Minister Nicola Sturgeon announced a £500 one off pro-rata non-consolidated payment for all health and care staff as a thank you for helping Scotland cope with COVID-19. The various sectors covered by this announcement have since been working through the logistics of how to make this payment and the following Q&A covers key questions in each of those sectors.

### **Q. The payment is “pro-rata”. What does that mean?**

It means that full time staff will receive the full £500 and staff who work part-time will receive a proportion of the full amount based on the amount of time they work. So someone who works 50% of full time hours would receive £250, for instance.

### **Q. The payment is “non-consolidated”. What does that mean?**

Non-consolidated means it is not pensionable and does not create a new baseline for future pay calculations.

### **Q. Will I pay tax on the payment?**

The ability to exempt the payment from tax is not within the current powers of the Scottish Government.

### **Q. I receive Universal Credit. Will my Universal Credit be reduced if I receive the payment?**

The ability to exempt the payment from benefit calculations is not within the current powers of the Scottish Government. However, NHS Scotland employees will be given the option to take the payment in instalments over three months, so as to minimise impact on your Universal Credit award. Any recipients of the bonus who are in receipt of Universal Credit would need to notify their work coach of the change in their circumstances, in order to avoid any overpayments of Universal Credit that may result in issues with their claim.

### **Q. Will my Council Tax Reduction be reduced if a I receive the £500 payment?**

No, this payment will be fully disregarded in the calculation of Council Tax Reduction.

### **Q. How will recipients of this £500 payment know to tell their local authority if they receive a payment, so that it can be disregarded in the calculation of Council Tax Reduction?**

Scottish Government officials are currently exploring the best way to make relevant people aware of the need to tell the local authority about these payments

if someone is also getting a reduction under the Council Tax Reduction scheme. This may include a message on NHS payslips and other methods.

**Q. I do not want this payment. Can I opt out?**

Scottish Government Ministers wish to recognise the extraordinary effort that front line NHS and social care staff have made to our national effort during the pandemic. While there is no mechanism for opting out of this payment, all recipients are free to do with it what they wish, including donating to charitable causes.

**NHS Scotland**

**Q. Who is eligible for the payment?**

The following employees are eligible for the payment:

- staff who have been active in the NHS for a minimum of one month between 17 March and 30 November 2020, but who have since left NHS employment, including retirees;
- staff who accepted and worked on temporary contracts for a minimum of one month between 17 March and 30 November 2020 to aid pandemic response but who have since left NHS employment, including students who worked under temporary contracts but who have since returned to University;
- staff covered by the Two Tier Agreement;
- bank and locum staff.

**Q. Are students eligible for the payment?**

Students who worked on temporary paid contracts during the pandemic for a period of at least one month during the qualifying period, and have since returned to university, will receive the payment. This includes Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professional students who undertook **paid placements** over the Summer. However, clinical students on unpaid placements within health and social care are not eligible.

**Q. Are those on sick or maternity leave, or staff who were shielding, eligible?**

Yes, eligible staff who, between 17 March and 30 November 2020 were shielding or were on sickness or maternity leave, will receive the payment.

**Q. I work part-time, but there were times during the pandemic when I worked overtime, for more than full time hours. How much money will I receive?**

Staff working excess hours will receive the payment pro-rata according to an average of the hours worked over the qualifying period, or over the time worked during the qualifying period. The payment will be capped at £500 for those who, on average, worked more than their full time equivalent. The full time equivalent is 37.5 hours for AfC staff and 40 hours for medical staff.

**Q. What is the mechanism for receiving the payment?**

The payment will be distributed through NHS Board's Payroll Departments in staff salary payments. Those who have left NHS employment will be contacted in due course.

**Q. When will the payment be made?**

We are committed to making the payment as soon as possible in this financial year. It may take longer to make the payment to those who have retired or left NHS employment. Those payments will be made as soon as practically possible.

**Independent contractors for the NHS**

**Q. Are people who work as or for independent contractors, in the NHS, eligible?**

Yes, the following workforce groups are all eligible:  
General Practitioners and their practice teams, including those in 2C practices;  
NHS Dentists and dental teams, including administrative staff and practice managers;  
Community Pharmacists and the pharmacy teams; and  
Community optometrists and their optometry practice teams

**Q. How will pro-rata payments be calculated for those groups?**

Independent contractors will be asked to declare the Whole Time Equivalence of their partners and all staff so pro-rata calculations can be made.

**Q. How will these groups be paid?**

The bonus will be distributed through independent contractors to their partners and staff.

**Social care**

**Q. Who is eligible for the £500 payment?**

Staff employed in adult social care or children's residential care between 17 March 2020 and 30 November 2020.

**Q. I work in social care, will I get the payment?**

You are eligible if you are employed to work:

1. in one of the following registered adult social care services:

- Care home

- Housing support
- Care at home
- Day care
- Palliative care/hospice staff;

2. in the head office or an administrative role supporting one or more registered adult social care service;

3. as a personal assistant directly employed by the person you support or their family (personal assistants for adults only);

4. in a registered residential child care setting;

5. as a registered social worker (including those working with children and families and in criminal justice);

6. by a local authority within the Health and Social Care Partnership structure [discussions still to take place with COSLA on detail of who this will involve];

7. by a local authority and were redeployed to work in a registered social care services during the qualifying period.

**Agency workers, self-employed or unpaid carers are not eligible.**

**Q. The payment is “pro rata”. What does that mean?**

It means that if you worked full time (at least 37.5 hours per week) you will receive the full £500. If you worked less than that you will receive a proportion of the full amount based on the amount of time you worked. For example, someone who worked 50% of full time hours would receive £250.

**Q. I work in social care on a zero hours contract. Will I receive the payment?**

Staff must be part of the paid workforce. They can be:

- full-time or part-time;
- subject to a zero hours employment contract;
- subject to a permanent or temporary contract.

**Q. I work in the private sector. Will I receive the payment?**

This payment is for staff employed in adult social care in the statutory (local authority or health board), third and private sectors, and personal assistants who are employed directly by the person they support or their family .

**Q. Will I receive this payment if I have left or retired from a social care employer?**

Everyone who meets the qualifying criteria is eligible for the payment, including those who have subsequently left or retired.

**Q. I work in social care, how will I receive the £500 payment?**

Your employer will make the payment to you through your normal payroll. They may ask you for information to assist with this.

**Q. When will the payment be made?**

We are committed to making the payment as soon as possible in this financial year. However, the date of payment will depend on a set of logistics which are still being worked through.

**Q. I am a social care employer. How will I receive the payment from Scottish Government?**

A claim process is being put in place. Details for how you can claim for your staff will be available shortly.

**Hospices**

**Q. Will hospice staff be eligible for the £500 payment?**

Yes. Hospice staff will be eligible to receive the payment.

**Q. What is the mechanism for allocating this funding to hospices?**

A process for delivering this funding to hospice staff is being put in place. However the intention is to make payments to staff before the end of the financial year.

**Other Public Sector Workers and Key Workers**

**Q. Are other public sector workers who helped with the Covid-19 effort eligible for the payment?**

This payment is for NHS and social care staff. While the UK Government announced a public sector pay freeze for 2021/22, Scottish Ministers will publish their public sector pay policy for 2021/22 in January and this will recognise the commitment and hard work of the public sector workforce across Scotland.