



Dear Colleague

£500 COVID PAYMENT: OPT OUT AND FURTHER Q&A

1. [PCS\(COV\)2020/1](#) set out NHS Scotland's agreed qualifying criteria for the £500 one off payment which had been announced by First Minister Nicola Sturgeon.
 2. A number of further questions have subsequently been raised by stakeholders and this circular provides guidance in those areas. A further Q&A on these topics is attached at Annex A.
- ### Opt Out
3. Concern has been expressed about how the £500 payment will affect those receiving benefits like Universal Credit. Whilst no one should be worse off overall as a result of the payment, everyone's circumstances will be different and, where individuals have concerns about the affect of the payment, they will have the opportunity to opt out of receiving it in their February salary by informing their employer by 5 February 2021.
 4. Anyone wishing to opt out of the February payment should complete the form which is available on the Scottish Terms and Conditions Website [here](#), and forward this to their Payroll Department.
 5. This will give individuals more time to consult with contacts such as their Work Coach in order to get a clearer idea of how they will be affected. Having made that further assessment, staff will then have the opportunity to opt back in by informing their employer by 5 March 2021.
 6. To opt back in, staff should complete the form which is available on the Scottish Terms and Conditions Website [here](#) and forward this to thier Payroll Department.

22 January 2021

Addressees

For action

Chief Executives,
Directors of Finance,
Directors of Human Resources:
NHS Boards and Special Health
Boards, NHS National Services
Scotland (Common Services
Agency) and Healthcare
Improvement Scotland

For information

Members, Scottish Partnership
Forum
Members, Scottish Terms and
Conditions Committee
Members, Scottish Workforce and
Governance Committee

Enquiries to:

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Council Tax Reduction

7. The legislation put in place in support of the £500 payment means that it should be disregarded in the calculation of Council Tax Reduction. However, staff in receipt of Council Tax Reduction should inform their local authority that they have received the COVID payment in order to ensure that it does not affect their reduction.

Action

8. NHS Boards and Special Health Boards should make all staff aware of the opt out provisions set out in this circular.

Enquiries

9. Employees should direct their personal enquiries to their employing NHS Board or Special Health Board.

10. This circular is available online at www.publications.scot.nhs.uk.

Yours sincerely



LAURA ZEBALLOS

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Workforce Pay, Practice and Partnership Division



**NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE
APPROVAL OF REMUNERATION AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE**

In accordance with regulations 2 and 3 of the National Health Service (Remuneration and Conditions of Service) (Scotland) Regulations 1991 (S.I. 1991/537) the remuneration and conditions of service set out in the attached Scottish Government Health Workforce Directorate circular of 22 January 2021 – PCS(COV)2021/1 – in respect of opting out and other issues associated with the £500 one off payment are hereby approved for the purposes of the said Regulations.

LAURA ZEBALLOS
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22 January 2020

FURTHER Q&A ON £500 COVID PAYMENT

Opt Out

Q. I am not sure how the £500¹ payment will interact with the benefits I receive. What should I do?

A. You can opt out of receiving the payment in February, providing you let your Board Payroll Department know by 5 February 2021. This will give you more time to consider the matter. Nobody should be financially worse off as a result of the payment. However, individuals in receipt of Universal Credit may wish to discuss any potential impact with their work coach before making a decision on the payment. Providing you then inform your Employer by 5 March 2021 that you do want to receive the payment, you can still get the £500.

You can find both the opt out and opt in forms [here](#).

Q. I have already chosen to spread the payment over 3 months, can I now choose to opt out?

A. Yes, if you continue to have concerns about the affect the payment will have on your benefits situation, you can opt out at this stage to give you more time to consider the matter.

Q. If I decide to opt back in, can I still have the payment spread over three months?

A. Yes. The form allowing staff to opt back in, also allows individuals to choose to either receive one payment of £500 or to spread that over three months.

Council Tax

Q. I receive a Council Tax Reduction. Will this be reduced if I receive a COVID payment?

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

Q. Do I need to tell my local authority that I have received a COVID payment?

A. Yes, if you currently receive a Council Tax Reduction, and have been paid either a lump sum payment or have selected to receive this payment by monthly instalments you should contact your local authority to make them aware of this payment. This will make sure that this payment does not reduce your level of Council Tax Reduction. As your local authority may request verification of the payment you have received, please retain your payslip for this purpose.

¹ The £500 payment will be pro-rata for less than full time staff, as set out in PCS(COV)2020/1. All references to the “£500 payment” in this Q&A should therefore be read in that context by less than full time staff.

Q. What will happen if I do not tell my local authority that I have received a COVID payment?

A. If you do not tell your local authority, your level of Council Tax Reduction may reduce or stop.

How Payment is Calculated

Q. Why does someone who only worked for 5 weeks during the qualifying period (17 March 2020 to 30 November 2020) get the same as someone who worked for the whole of that period?

A. Providing someone fulfils the criteria of one month's continuous service within the qualifying period, their payment is based on their average hours whilst working in NHS Scotland. Employers and Staff Side representative discussed in detail what the most practical and logistically feasible way of allocating the payment would be and this is the approach which was arrived at in partnership.