**21st August 2020**

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**AHCPS Summer E-zine August 2020**

Dear Branch Secretary

Below is an update on current issues. Please circulate to all members.

**Covid-19 Update**

DPER issued updated Guidance and FAQs for Public Service Employers during COVID-19 with effect from 30 July 2020. Paragraph 1.1 outlines that public service employees “will be required to return to the employer’s work premises when and as necessary and deemed appropriate by their employer”. A copy of the Guidelines & FAQs can be accessed  [here](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gov.ie%2Fen%2Fnews%2Ff819e5-covid-19-information-for-civil-and-public-servants%2F&data=02%7C01%7Cjlacey%40ahcps.ie%7C42bfd403d2344d81e19708d845c41447%7C277ade41e68b4bd2bfe5cadf0ffdc255%7C0%7C0%7C637336055740160393&sdata=lJzQtBL%2BNCR6TDVzRSIoMc8AH%2BQ7oqc914WmeZK%2FEfc%3D&reserved=0). The guidelines contain a link to the HSE website that provides a list of people in high risk groups where specific care arrangements are required. Paragraph 2.2 addresses very high risk (extremely vulnerable) employees who should be facilitated to work from home to the maximum extent possible.

It must be noted that the above DPER update preceded the Government decision to delay phase 4 of the re-opening roadmap. Government advice to all employees is to continue to work from home where possible. Any decision to return employees to the workplace should be consistent with Government/NPHET advice that currently has an emphasis on remote working out to the 13**th** September 2020.

**The Return to Work Safely Protocol**as issued by the Department of Enterprise & Innovation can be accessed [here](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gov.ie%2Fen%2Fpublication%2F22829a-return-to-work-safely-protocol%2F&data=02%7C01%7Cjlacey%40ahcps.ie%7C42bfd403d2344d81e19708d845c41447%7C277ade41e68b4bd2bfe5cadf0ffdc255%7C0%7C0%7C637336055740160393&sdata=MDXlXSl8vVLl57N1lNKTu2vHXp7%2FY7L7o8VIZ666zcQ%3D&reserved=0). Each employer is required to have their own protocol in place and have lead worker representatives appointed who are responsible for ensuring safety measures are being followed.

**Pay/Pensions**

**Public Service Pay & Stability Agreement 2018 – 2020:**The next restoration to pay scales is 2% on 1**st** October 2020. The Minister has confirmed both publicly and to the Public Service Committee that this 2% commitment will be honoured. The Association has prepared an information sheet for members showing revised salary scales that can be accessed [here](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ahcps.ie%2FPublic_Service_Stability_Agreement_20182020%2FDefault.774.html&data=02%7C01%7Cjlacey%40ahcps.ie%7C42bfd403d2344d81e19708d845c41447%7C277ade41e68b4bd2bfe5cadf0ffdc255%7C0%7C0%7C637336055740170395&sdata=5omEITIQ9nG36dSiYyqHMLe%2FQ90CNWVEVlFwUlgfjXw%3D&reserved=0).

The remaining FEMPI-related deduction, that is due to be restored by 1**st** July 2021, is also shown.

Details in relation to Government policy on increases to Public Service pensions up to 2020 can be accessed through circular 2/2018 [here](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fcirculars.gov.ie%2Fpdf%2Fcircular%2Fper%2F2018%2F02.pdf&data=02%7C01%7Cjlacey%40ahcps.ie%7C42bfd403d2344d81e19708d845c41447%7C277ade41e68b4bd2bfe5cadf0ffdc255%7C0%7C0%7C637336055740170395&sdata=voeeYJzUFYSqIdODW4vtg2BFKq6nJQcS9Trlicwyn%2FA%3D&reserved=0).

**Income Continuance Reminder**

Our Income Continuance cover provides for a 75% level of pay and is underwritten by New Ireland Insurance at a cost of 0.57% of gross salary before tax relief. The Association successfully negotiated the inclusion of cover to retirement at age 66/67/68 for members recruited since 1**st** January 2013. The new IC Scheme continues to cover Pre & Post ‘95 members to 65.

All members are urged to check that they have IC cover. If not, application forms can be accessed [here](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ahcps.ie%2FIncome_Continuance%2FDefault.144.html&data=02%7C01%7Cjlacey%40ahcps.ie%7C42bfd403d2344d81e19708d845c41447%7C277ade41e68b4bd2bfe5cadf0ffdc255%7C0%7C0%7C637336055740170395&sdata=wNU8EVGtm3tjyXh4VDT%2BnA%2FVToQkQcrHxliReLPc2X0%3D&reserved=0). The pay slip deduction should record as Ahcps Icp or similar and equate to gross salary x  0.57%.

**Tax Saver Tickets**

The press release of 12**th** August 2020 issued by the National Transport Authority can be accessed  [here](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ahcps.ie%2FTravel_Pass_Scheme_2020__NTA_Press_Release%2FDefault.1063.html&data=02%7C01%7Cjlacey%40ahcps.ie%7C42bfd403d2344d81e19708d845c41447%7C277ade41e68b4bd2bfe5cadf0ffdc255%7C0%7C0%7C637336055740180384&sdata=i5651PzVc%2BjTxt0eGJ8qNJNmSLOu5Lw0u0TfnoVPQm4%3D&reserved=0).

It applies to employees with Annual Travel passes with **Luas, Bus Eireann, Dublin Bus or Irish Rail.**Private providers operate under their own terms & conditions.

As set out in the press release there is an automatic 6-month extension for tickets valid on May 1**st**. Ticket holders also have the option to cancel their ticket and receive a refund.

**Member Engagement**

**Remote Working Survey**

The Association recently surveyed members in relation to their experience of working remotely since the beginning of the Covid-19 emergency. The survey had a very strong 50% rate of participation. We would like to thank all participants for your support in achieving this outcome.

The detailed results of the survey – including quantitative results and a summary of open responses - can be accessed on our website at the following link:

[https://www.ahcps.ie/AHCPS\_Survey\_on\_Remote\_Working/Default.1061.html](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ahcps.ie%2FAHCPS_Survey_on_Remote_Working%2FDefault.1061.html&data=02%7C01%7Cjlacey%40ahcps.ie%7C42bfd403d2344d81e19708d845c41447%7C277ade41e68b4bd2bfe5cadf0ffdc255%7C0%7C0%7C637336055740180384&sdata=OnpispRhykNhwfVU%2Fh5I%2BdYcvs9W0PzUhxSj1nFfaKI%3D&reserved=0)

The Association has established a sub-committee of our Executive to develop a strategy to ensure   members’ interests are protected in any central policy initiatives. The Association made a submission to the DBEI Public Consultation on Remote Working Guidance. A copy can be found [here](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ahcps.ie%2F_fileupload%2FAHCPS%2520Submission%2520to%2520DBEI%2520on%2520Remote%2520Working%2520-%25207th%2520August%25202020.pdf&data=02%7C01%7Cjlacey%40ahcps.ie%7C42bfd403d2344d81e19708d845c41447%7C277ade41e68b4bd2bfe5cadf0ffdc255%7C0%7C0%7C637336055740190378&sdata=i180y3YXmla9Dc7uVIYK0W7TdHzZ7HqVnpoLGEcto5o%3D&reserved=0)

As a next step, the Association will develop a more comprehensive paper that will be used as the negotiating position of the Association in our consultations with DPER on the development of a central policy for the public and civil service.

**Consultative Council:**It is intended that a special Consultative Council will be organised virtually to consult with branches on this paper before it is finalised.

**On-Line Retirement Course:**The Association intends to run an online retirement course for members in conjunction with Cornmarket on 9**th** September next. Details on how to register for this course will be sent in the coming days.

**Webinars:**The Association held three webinars in July covering ‘Building Resilience through Impact & Presence, Building Resilience through Interpersonal Connections and Building Resilience through Emotional Intelligence. They were booked out within a few hours and it was necessary to increase the capacity.

**Website Re-development**

Plans for the new website are advancing to include a new user-friendly members area and the facility for on-line member applications. We hope to have this operational in Q4 of 2020 or Q1 of 2021 at the latest.

**Service Wide Mobility Scheme**

The Association engaged with DPER in July on the matter of the inclusion of APs in the Service Wide Mobility Scheme. A further meeting is to take place in September. It is possible the necessary software changes to facilitate the extension of the Scheme will not be in place for the targeted inclusion of APs in Q4 of 2020. If that happens it is the Association’s position that a manual system should operate to mirror that in place under PO Mobility. We are very conscious from the level of regular enquiries that this is an important issue for members keen to see the facility available for the AP grade.

**Parental Leave**

Parental Leave entitlements have been increased for parents of eligible children. The additional 20 days is available for dates beginning on 1**st** September 2020. This is the second of a two phased extension to the Parental Leave entitlements resulting in a total 130 day leave entitlement.

**ADC**

The Association has provisional plans for the rescheduling of the ADC in November but is monitoring  social distancing requirements to see if this remains possible and practical.

**Twitter**

Members are reminded of the Association’s twitter account **@ahcps** Please follow and retweet etc.

This circular will be placed on the Association’s website [www.ahcps.ie.](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ahcps.ie%2F&data=02%7C01%7Cjlacey%40ahcps.ie%7C42bfd403d2344d81e19708d845c41447%7C277ade41e68b4bd2bfe5cadf0ffdc255%7C0%7C0%7C637336055740190378&sdata=XM94p0LjPjv71sy8mOl3vTu9BYke3zSaGn0E8lHswTo%3D&reserved=0)

[Best regards](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ahcps.ie%2F&data=02%7C01%7Cjlacey%40ahcps.ie%7C42bfd403d2344d81e19708d845c41447%7C277ade41e68b4bd2bfe5cadf0ffdc255%7C0%7C0%7C637336055740200369&sdata=Hax6VchHF5kV9AoDMSJurA2o1ta9NSUMAuMLb9oUO6s%3D&reserved=0)

Ciaran Rohan

General Secretary