

## Standard Life Staff Pension Scheme

### Coronavirus Update – as at 11 May 2020

### Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

*In light of the coronavirus pandemic and accompanying uncertainty, we wanted to take a moment to reassure you that we're closely monitoring the situation and how it impacts on your pension. Our service providers and advisers have implemented and are monitoring their business continuity plans to ensure they can continue providing services to you at this time.*

*We have created this FAQ document to answer the typical questions you may have.*

**This document will be regularly reviewed and updated as necessary so please access the site regularly. If you require further information or have additional questions, please refer to the section "Where can I get more information?".**

#### Content

The FAQs have been grouped under the following headings

- ✚ **Administration Services** – those services provided directly to you from our Scheme Administrator (Mercer) and DC Section provider (Standard Life Assurance Limited). We also let you know how you can find out more about your benefits;
- ✚ **DC Section members** – The coronavirus pandemic has had a substantial effect on global investment markets generally which members of the DC Section may have seen impact their DC funds. In this section we provide further information on the things you need to consider;
- ✚ **Thinking about retiring** – a reminder of the options you have when retiring, highlighting the risks of scams and what to watch out for and further information on how you can access independent professional support to help you make a decision;
- ✚ **Security of Benefits** – providing further information on the impact coronavirus has had on the security of the benefits held in the DB Section of the Scheme;
- ✚ **Further information** – who you should contact if you require further information or have additional questions.

## Administration Services

### Are any administration services affected by the coronavirus?

Currently **all** the services provided by our Mercer and Standard Life Assurance Limited are continuing to be provided as normal. This means that:

- ✚ If you have already retired, your pension will continue to be paid.
- ✚ If you have not yet retired, you will still be able to take your benefits and exercise your options at retirement in the usual way.
- ✚ If you have not retired and have benefits in the DC Section, you will still be able to make changes (e.g. fund switches) in the usual way.
- ✚ You and Standard Life Aberdeen's (SLA) contributions are still being invested.

**The Trustees are closely monitoring the situation. If there is any change in the current status, both Mercer and Standard Life Assurance Limited have been instructed to ensure that retirements, deaths and transfers are prioritised. We will inform members of any changes in service via this FAQ.**

### Is there any change to current administration processes?

In light of the current environment and the isolation that many members may be facing, the Trustees have authorised Mercer to accept a clear/high quality scanned or photographed copy (e.g. from a mobile phone) of any documents required for the processing of member-events (e.g. transfer/retirement settlements).

There will be an additional layer of security if you opt for this temporary process which will require Mercer to contact you to ask some security questions before they can progress your case. Please note that the existing process, i.e. returning hard copies by post, will continue for those able to do so.

### How do I find out more about my benefits in the Scheme?

As a reminder, you have access to Mercer's online OneView portal. OneView is a secure website available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, which provides you with real-time access to your pension benefits, Scheme information and the facility to manage your pension benefits online.

### Can I still access a copy of my P60? (Pensioners only)

Yes, your P60 is available to view on OneView within the "Your documents" section under materials and downloads.

### How do I access OneView?

- ✚ We encourage you to login to the member website regularly which can be accessed through the following link [www.merceroneview.co.uk/standardlife](http://www.merceroneview.co.uk/standardlife)
- ✚ If you haven't yet enrolled on the website, it's easy to do. To register, please use the web address shown above and click on "Register" under the "First Time User" heading.

- ✚ It is a quick and easy process; you will need your Scheme membership number to hand and will be asked to create a password.
- ✚ You can quickly and easily update your personal details and your Expression of Wish form, and we'd like to urge you to do this regularly.

**Further information on OneView and how to access it is available on the Information section of the member communication hub – [www.slps.co.uk](http://www.slps.co.uk)**

### **How often can I get a benefit quote?**

You can log on to the Mercer OneView site and get an indicative benefit quotation, for example a retirement quote or a transfer value quote, at any time. The OneView site also has details of the current value of your DC pot. There are no restrictions on how often you can access OneView for indicative benefit quotations.

If you want a formal quotation then you need to contact Mercer on 0330 100 3491 or by e-mail at [standardlifepensions@mercer.com](mailto:standardlifepensions@mercer.com) to request this.

Remember for Transfer Values, in line with statutory requirements, you are only entitled to one guaranteed quote in any 12-month period and your adviser will need the formal quote before they can give you advice.

The Trustees have prepared informative guides for those members thinking about transferring or retiring from the Scheme. These can be found on the communication hub - [www.slps.co.uk](http://www.slps.co.uk)

## DC Section Members

### **I'm in the DC Section, what's happened to my fund?**

The coronavirus pandemic has had a substantial effect on global investment markets generally. The impact on the **value** of your DC investments will vary depending on what you are invested in.

**For those invested in either the Scheme's default lifestyle investment option or either of the other two lifestyle investment options available in the Scheme then:**

- ✚ If you have a long period of time before retirement (+10 years), it is important to bear in mind the long-term nature of pension savings and the number of years over which your investments can recover losses made in the short term and continue to grow in future years.
- ✚ For those closer to retirement, your investments have been gradually moving to less risky assets over recent years and this will have provided some protection to your savings from recent market events.

**For more information about the funds that make up the default investment option or alternative lifestyle options visit the Standard Life website at [www.standardlife.co.uk/funds](http://www.standardlife.co.uk/funds)**

**For those invested in any of the self-select funds that are available in the Scheme then:**

- ✚ the impact of recent market events will depend on the mix of funds you have selected.

**How can I find out which fund(s) I am invested in?**

If you are an **active or deferred** member of the scheme you can find out what fund(s) you and its value by going online – [www.mylifelens.co.uk/standardlife](http://www.mylifelens.co.uk/standardlife)

Alternatively, you can call Standard Life Assurance Limited on 0800 587 0094.

**Whichever way you decide to contact, please have your policy number and national insurance number to hand.**

**Will contributions paid by SLA to the DC Section continue? (Active members only)**

For those who are active members of the Scheme, it is important to remember that the **monthly contributions paid by the Company and you are still being paid**. So, when investment values are lower, contributions may purchase more investment units as the individual unit price lowers. This may eventually increase the overall value of your investments if they recover, however there is no guarantee of this.

**How will my overall benefits at retirement be affected?**

Your overall **benefits at retirement**, will depend on

- ✚ the contributions both SLA and you are paying into the DC Section;
- ✚ the length of the time you are away from taking your retirement benefits; and
- ✚ the form in which you are planning to take your benefits (i.e. drawdown, annuity, cash).

## Thinking about retiring

**Are my retirement options still available?**

Yes, you are able to retire whether it be before, on or after your normal retirement age (60). As a reminder, the options available to you are:

- ✚ Take your Scheme benefits as a pension income only
- ✚ Exchange part of your Scheme pension for a tax-free lump sum

You can also transfer part or all of your benefits out of the Scheme to enable you to:

- ✚ Take flexible retirement
- ✚ Buy a pension on the open market
- ✚ Take all of your benefits as cash
- ✚ Take a combined approach of the above

## Standard Life Staff Pension Scheme

The Scheme's NRA is 60 (you may have a different NRA if you joined the Scheme prior to 1982). However, currently you may retire from the Scheme once you have reached age 55 (or 50 in some cases depending on when you joined the Scheme), this is referred to as early retirement or after age 60, which is referred to as late retirement.

### **What do I need to think about before I decide to retire?**

The Trustees have prepared a retirement guide for members. This provides details of the things you need to think about when considering retiring including the benefits available in the Scheme and the options you have. The guide is issued whenever a member requests a formal retirement quotation and is also available on the communication hub – [www.slps.co.uk](http://www.slps.co.uk)

### **What do I need to think about before I decide to transfer?**

Legislation gives you the right to 'transfer' your pension. However, whilst you have this right, you should realise that transferring your benefits out of the Scheme (in whole or part) is an irreversible action that will have a lasting impact on your retirement benefits. **It is therefore crucial that you get guidance or advice before making a decision on whether or not to transfer your benefits.**

The Trustees have prepared a transfer guide for members. This provides details on the things you need to think about when transferring including the benefits the Scheme provides, the options you have should you decide to transfer, and the risks associated with transferring. The guide is issued whenever a member requests a guaranteed transfer value and is also available on the communication hub – [www.slps.co.uk](http://www.slps.co.uk)

Take your time to make all the checks you need. Read the transfer guide prepared by the Trustees and/or find suggested questions to ask your adviser on the FCA's website:

<http://www.fca.org.uk/consumers/what-ask-adviser>

**If anyone approaches you directly to offer transfer advice, be on your guard. The government has banned cold calling for pensions, so if anyone calls you out of the blue about yours, just hang up – it could be a scam.**

### **What is a pension scam?**

Pension scams can take many different forms, but broadly take the form of members being persuaded to transfer their pension out of a scheme to allow access to their funds.

It's important to be aware that while the majority of financial advisers are regulated and pension arrangements are registered, this is not always the case. There is a heightened risk that scammers and unscrupulous financial advisers will try to take advantage of the current coronavirus situation by targeting pension scheme members. Your pension benefits are valuable assets. Like anything valuable, your benefits can become the target for scammers.

Pension scammers may:

- ✚ Try to obtain personal information about you (either illegally or by convincing you to provide the information).
- ✚ Apply pressure for you to make a quick decision.
- ✚ Make claims that seem “too good to be true”.
- ✚ May try to flatter you in to making a bad decision.
- ✚ May downplay the risk associated with the decision.

### How can I protect myself from a pension scam?

To avoid being the victim of a scam there are several steps you can take:

- ✚ Use the Financial Services Register and Warning List (<https://www.fca.org.uk/firms/financial-services-register>) to check who you are dealing with.
- ✚ Beware of adverts on social media channels and paid for/sponsored adverts online.
- ✚ Do not click links or open emails from senders you don't already know.
- ✚ Avoid being rushed or pressured into making a decision. If a firm calls you unexpectedly, use the contact details on the Register to check that you're dealing with the genuine firm.
- ✚ Do not give out personal details (bank details, address, existing insurance/pensions/investment details). We strongly recommend reading the Pension Regulator's guidance on pension scams, which you can find at: <https://www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk/en/pension-scams>
- ✚ If you are asked to transfer your pension elsewhere, we recommend exercising caution and visiting ScamSmart (<https://www.fca.org.uk/scamsmart/warning-list>) to check the firm you are dealing with is regulated and to see whether what you're being offered is a known scam or has the signs of a scam. The site also has specific guidance relating to the coronavirus.
- ✚ If you are approaching retirement then the Money and Pensions Service (<https://www.pensionsadvisoryservice.org.uk/>) is also a useful resource.

**Remember that if it sounds too good to be true then it probably is. See the "Further Information" section for how you can get additional support.**

## Security of your benefits

**How has this affected the Scheme's funding position? (DB only)**

**In summary, the DB Section is well prepared, and payment of pensions is unaffected. Specifically:**

- ✚ These are testing times on the financial markets, with share prices having fallen sharply in response to concerns about the coronavirus and its potential impact on the global economy.
- ✚ For those pension schemes with large holdings in equities, the market volatility will have had a significant impact on asset values.

- ✚ The Scheme's investment strategy, however, is designed to weather this kind of market volatility. It does this by holding a well-diversified portfolio of assets. Therefore, whilst the fall in equity values will have had some impact on the Scheme's assets, it has not been material.
- ✚ Further, the investment strategy has been designed to ensure that the Scheme's assets and liabilities are closely matched. This means that even changes in interest or inflation rates (which impact the movement in the value of the liabilities) will not translate into significant changes to the Scheme's funding level.
- ✚ We'd like to assure you that the Trustees and our advisers are closely monitoring the financial situation and reassure you that we expect no impact on the Scheme's ability to continue to pay benefits that are due.

For information on how your DC investments may be impacted, please refer to the section “**DC Section members**”.

## Further information

### Where can I get more information about my benefits?

Remember: If you have any questions about your pension, look on the OneView site first and you may well find the answer. If you cannot find the answer you are looking for **AND** your query is urgent, please contact the Scheme administrators using the details below.

**By email:** [standardlifepensions@mercer.com](mailto:standardlifepensions@mercer.com)

**By phone:** 0330 100 3491

### I am thinking about retiring/transferring or making changes to my DC funds - where can I get additional support/guidance?

The Trustees strongly encourage you to take independent financial advice before making any decisions about retirement, transferring or making changes to your DC funds if you are a member of the DC Section.

If you are new to seeking financial advice, there's plenty of help online:

- The **Money Advice Service** offers a wide range of general financial guidance. Despite the name, it cannot give you personal financial advice, or tell you what decisions to take, but it does include help with choosing an adviser, and what you might want to ask them. [www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk](http://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk)
- The **Unbiased** portal has a facility that helps you find an adviser in your area. [www.unbiased.co.uk](http://www.unbiased.co.uk)
- The **Financial Conduct Authority** holds the list of registered financial advisers. You need to make sure anyone you consult is properly qualified and authorised to help you – so a good way to do that is by making sure they're on here. [www.fca.org.uk](http://www.fca.org.uk)