



Government
Actuary's
Department

HSC Pension Scheme (Northern Ireland)

Cost-cap valuation as at 31 March 2016
Assumptions, methodology and data

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At GAD, we seek to achieve a high standard in all our work. We are accredited under the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries' Quality Assurance Scheme. Our website describes [the standards](#) we apply.

2 HSC Pension Scheme - Cost cap valuation as at 31 March 2016 - Assumptions, methodology and data



Addressee and Purpose

This report was commissioned by Department of Health (DH) and is addressed to them. We understand it will be made available to the Scheme Advisory Board.

The purpose of this report is to set out our proposed approach to the cost cap valuation as at 31 March 2016 and assist DH with their decision making. It is important that DH test the assumptions and methodology adopted for the 2016 valuation signed in early 2019 in light of the transitional protection remedy. DH will also need to ensure it is content with the approach we have taken in respect of eligibility of members for the transitional protection remedy.

The report provides advice to DH on these matters, as required by Direction 55.

We would be pleased to provide advice on any alternative approaches which DH would like to consider in relation to any of the proposals in this report.

DH should consult with stakeholders as required on the contents of this report and confirm to GAD that it is content with the assumptions, methodology and approach to data that DH will adopt for the 2016 cost cap valuation.

Next steps

Department of Health should consider the following recommendations and either confirm that they are content or instruct us to adopt alternative approaches:

- 1 No changes from the 2016 valuation assumptions
- 2 The calculation methodology we recommend, as set out in section 2
- 3 Derivation of member eligibility from available data, as set out in section 3



1. Assumptions



2016 assumptions

The assumptions set by DH used in the 2016 cost cap valuation report must be the same as those adopted in the 2016 valuation reports signed in early 2019, **unless those assumptions are not best estimates or are insufficient for the purpose as a direct result of the impact of the transitional protection remedy.** This may apply because the original 2016 assumptions:

1. May be insufficient for the 'better-of' calculations we need to perform to value the remedy
2. May not be best estimate because member behaviour may change in light of the remedy

DH should consider the following recommendation and either confirm that they are content or instruct us to adopt alternative assumptions:

Recommendation

We recommend no changes from the 2016 valuation assumptions.

In making the recommendations below in Appendices 1C to 1E we have tested that the possible impact of any potential changes driven by analysis of data described does not exceed the 0.25% materiality limit described on appendix 2A. We set out further details in Appendix 1A to 1F.



2. Methodology



Calculation methodology

DH should consider the following recommendations on calculation methodology and either confirm that they are content or instruct us to adopt alternative approaches:

Recommendations

- A materiality limit of 0.25% pay (DH may propose an alternative)
- Members choose the higher valued benefit at retirement
- Remedy costs are assessed for the period 2015-2022, with costs in respect of 2015-16 assumed to be equal to the costs in 2016-17
- There is no allowance for costs of remedy in respect of member contributions
- There is no allowance for the cost of reinstating members who opted out of the pension scheme
- There is no allowance for the costs of protected members' post-2022 benefits accruing in the post-2015 scheme, rather than their pre-2015 scheme
- Tax and other impacts are excluded from the calculations

We set out further details in Appendices 2A to 2G.



Remedy cost - components

The Directions list five components of the transitional protection remedy costs. The following table sets out a summary of the calculation of each of these components, based on the methodologies above.

Remedy cost component	Calculation
Change in liabilities for the remedy period	Based on Deferred Choice Underpin (see Appendix 2B)
Change in liabilities pre remedy period	Nil: no changes to assumptions
Change in liabilities post remedy period	Assumed nil: treatment of protected members' post-2022 benefits and no change to assumptions (see Appendix 2F)
Change in member contributions during the remedy period	Assumed nil (see Appendix 2D)
Change in member contributions post remedy period	Assumed nil: treatment of protected members' post-2022 benefits and no change to assumptions (see Appendix 2F)



3. Data: Member eligibility for the transitional protection remedy



Determining members in scope for remedy

Summary of methodology

It is critical to identify members in the 2016 valuation data who are in scope for the transitional protection remedy. Broadly, as set out in the HMT consultation response, members in service before 1 April 2012 and on or after 1 April 2015 are in scope of the transitional protection remedy. We have identified the following members as being in scope of the transitional protection remedy:

- Date of Joining before 1 April 2012, or
- Protected or Taper Protected Status (even if recorded Date of Joining after 1 April 2012)

However, this will not always accurately identify members in scope, for the reasons set out on the next slide.

Following discussions with DH, we do not expect these limitations to have a material impact on the results and we do not require any additional data to prepare the cost cap valuation report.



Determining members in scope for remedy

Limitations of methodology

We have identified the following potential sources of inaccuracy:

- a. The Date of Joining is after 1 April 2012 and reflects the date joined current employment but the member may have had previous qualifying employments which commenced prior to 1 April 2012.
- b. The Date of Joining item is not always clearly defined and may not be correctly recorded by administrators.
- c. Date of Joining is before 1 April 2012 but the member may have had a disqualifying breaking service (for example, five years or more) or was not an active member of the scheme as at 31 March 2012 or 31 March 2015.
- d. The Date of Joining is after 1 April 2012 and reflects the date first joined scheme but the member may have had previous service in a different scheme which brings them in scope for the transitional protection remedy.



Summary

Summary of active data as at 2016

61,845

Active members of the HSCPS Scheme as at 31 March 2016

£1,725m

Active salary roll as at 31 March 2016

Determining members in scope for remedy



Existing data provided for 2016 valuation calculations continues to be used to determine eligibility

Members in scope for remedy

48,237

Active members in scope for remedy

84%

Of the active membership as at 31 March 2016 is in scope for remedy (based on actual pay)

Data uncertainty

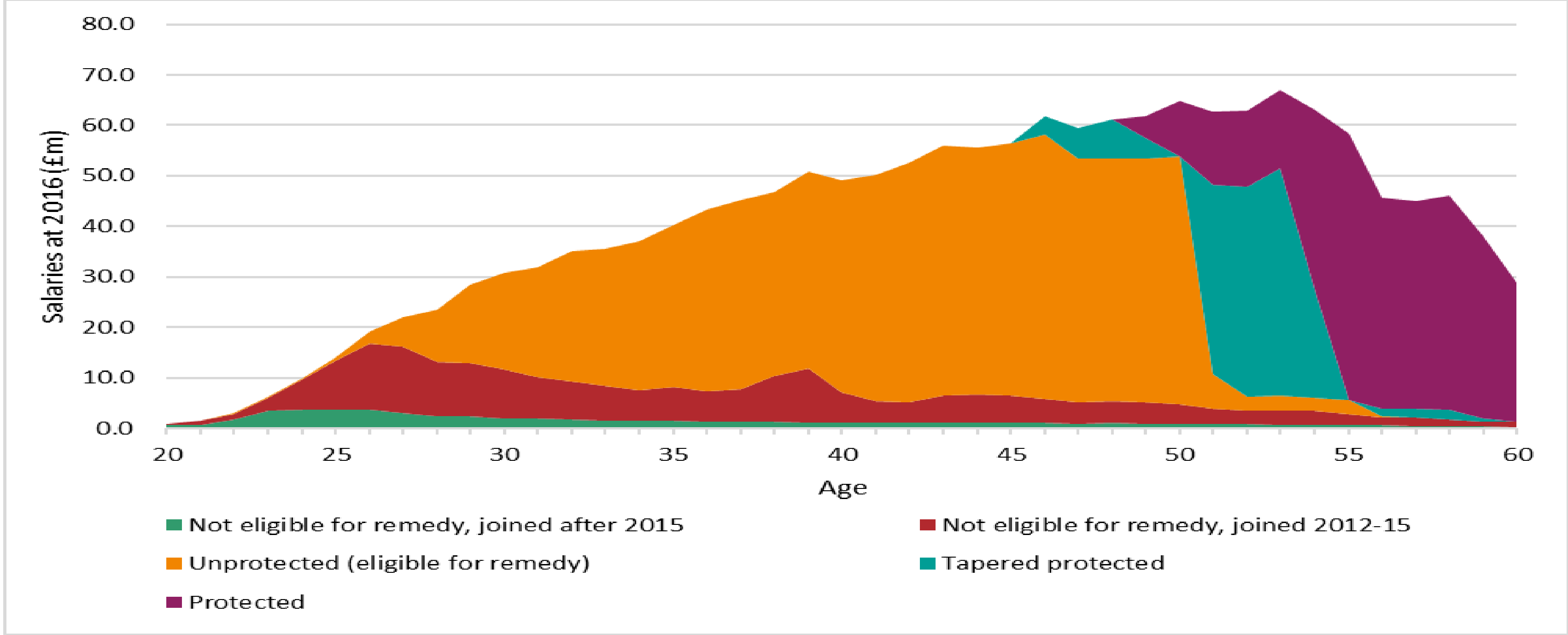
There is **residual data uncertainty** in relation to members in scope for remedy which could affect the valuation results.

An impact of between **-0.1% and +0.1%** on the cost cap contribution rate

The sensitivity to the left shows the impact on the cost cap contribution rate if 5% more or less active members are eligible for remedy than assumed.



Membership in scope for transitional protection remedy

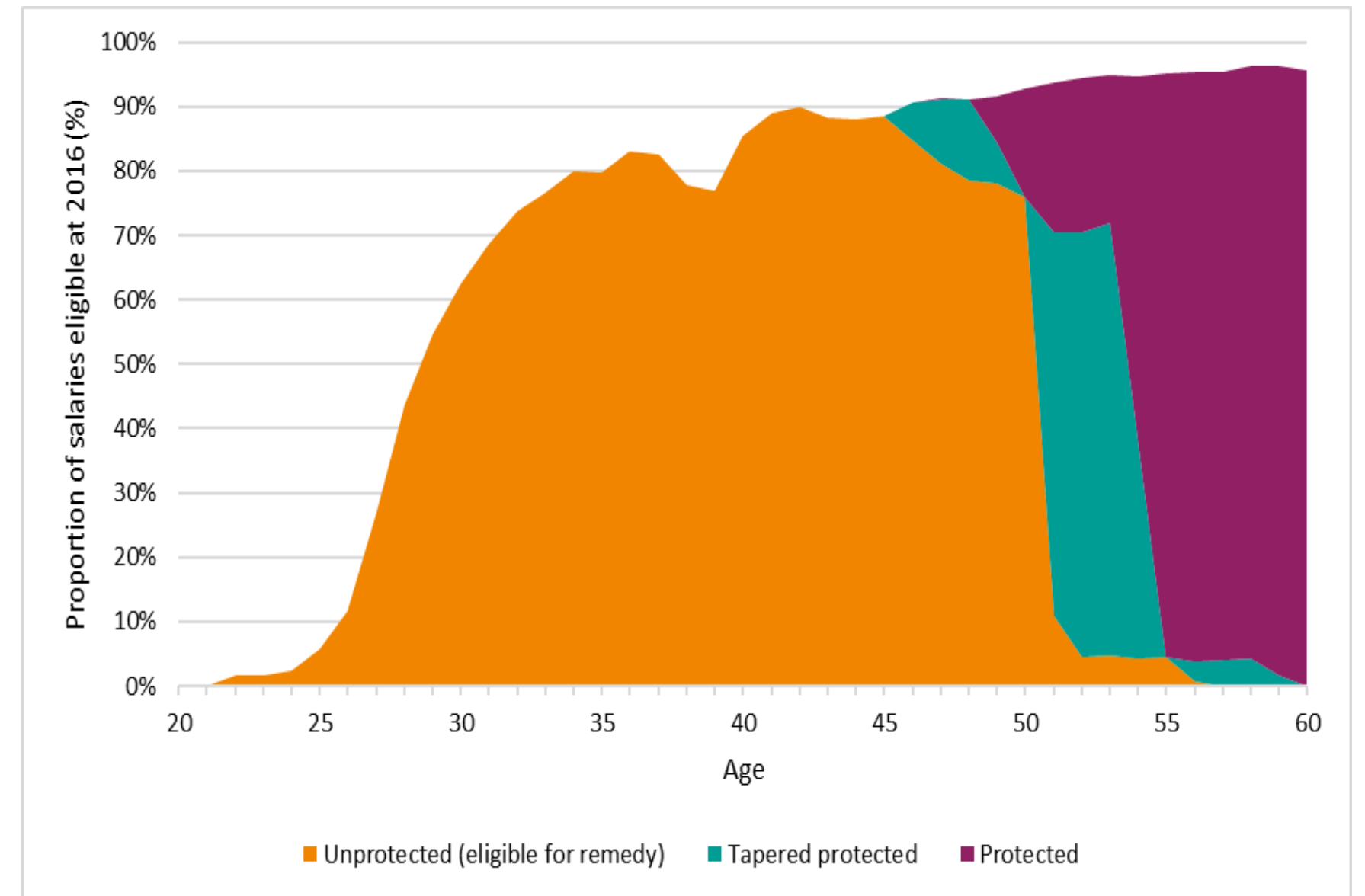


Summary statistics at 31 March 2016 – Actives

Protection status as at 31 March 2016

Section	Number of members	Salary £m
Protected members	12,570	398
Tapered protected members	5,349	173
Eligible unprotected members	30,318	878
Ineligible and joined between 2012-2015	10,377	218
Ineligible and joined after 1 April 2015	3,231	58
Total	61,845	1,725

Proportion of members eligible for the transitional protection remedy

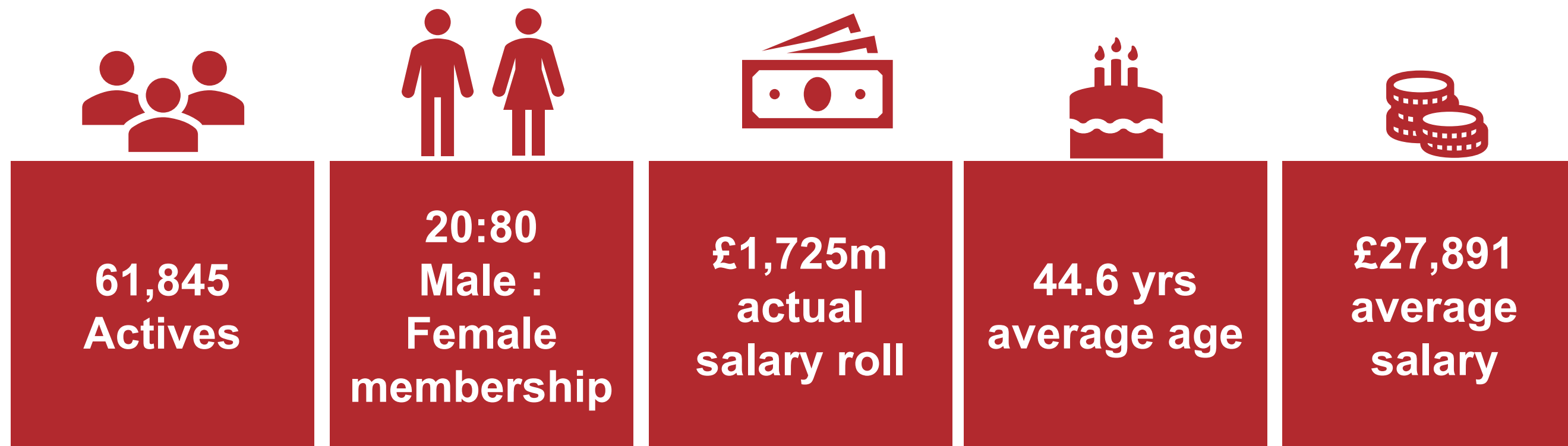


4. 2016 data: Quality and uncertainties



Active data as at 31 March 2016

Summary statistics



Data quality

2016 valuation data adjustments

Data was received from HSC Pensions Service for the 2016 valuation. This was generally reasonable for the purposes of the valuation calculations, however, some aspects of the data were incomplete and/or unreliable for certain elements of our calculations. The results of this valuation therefore rely on assumptions and adjustments in respect of incomplete and/or unreliable data. As stated in our reports dated 13 March 2019, in GAD's opinion these adjustments are reasonable and appropriate for the purpose of this actuarial valuation. However, it should be noted that the results in the 2016 valuation reports might have been different if more reliable data had been available. GAD have subsequently received data for the valuation as at 31 March 2020, and the process of checking that data and reconciling it with the data as at 31 March 2016 is ongoing.

Where can I find out more?

Details of the 2016 valuation data provided including any checks and adjustments made to the data are set out in the [2016 valuation data report](#). Details of the adjustments applied to the data for uncertainties are set out in Appendix C of the [2016 valuation assumptions report](#).



5. Reliance and limitations



Limitations

Data

As set out in the 2016 data report issued on 13 March 2019, GAD has relied on data and other information supplied by DH or their appointed administrator as described in the report. GAD has not sought independent verification around its general completeness and accuracy.

Any checks that GAD has made are limited to those described in the report, including those relating to the overall reasonableness and consistency of the data. These checks do not represent a full independent audit of the data supplied.

Throughout this report the totals given for summed data may not be exactly the same as the sum of the components shown due to rounding effects.

Macro-level risks

The Directions permit changes to the 2016 valuation data and assumptions only as a direct result of the impact of the transitional protection remedy. In preparing this advice, we have therefore not made any adjustments for material macro-level risks or uncertainties, such as climate-related risk.



Reliance

Reliance and sharing

This report has been prepared for the use of DH and will be made available to the Scheme Advisory Board. No other person or third party is entitled to place any reliance on the contents of this report, except to any extent explicitly stated herein. GAD has no liability to any person or third party for any action taken or for any failure to act, either in whole or in part, on the basis of this report.

Compliance statement

This report has been prepared in accordance with the applicable Technical Actuarial Standards: TAS 100 and TAS 300 issued by the Financial Reporting Council (FRC). The FRC sets technical standards for actuarial work in the UK.



Appendix 1: Assumptions



Appendix 1A: Direction requirements

The Directions require that assumptions set by DH used in the 2016 cost cap valuation report must be the same as those adopted in the 2016 valuation reports signed in early 2019, **unless those assumptions are not best estimates or are insufficient for the purpose as a direct result of the impact of the transitional protection remedy** [Direction 55].

Where this applies, DH must determine new assumptions:

- having obtained advice from GAD
- following such consultation of such persons (or representatives of such persons) as DH considers appropriate
- that are best estimates, and do not include margins for prudence or optimism
- that have regard to:
 - previous valuation assumptions
 - the analysis of demographic experience in the 2016 valuation report
 - relevant data from any other source
 - any emerging evidence about historic long term trends or long term trends expected in the future

Appendix 1B: Assumptions not affected by remedy

The following summarises assumptions set by DH which we have not considered further as part of this work on the basis that we see no reason why they would be inappropriate as a direct result of the transitional protection remedy:

- Mortality before and after retirement
- Ill-health retirement
- Proportion married / partnered
- Age differences between spouses / partners
- Commutation of pension for a lump sum in excess of any defined lump sums



Appendix 1C: Age retirement

The original 2016 age retirement assumptions distinguished between members depending on:

- **Protected members** (including those with tapered protection): Retirement patterns based on experience in the legacy scheme
- **New entrants joining the 2015 scheme and transitional members**: Based on behaviours expected in the reformed scheme.

Analysis

We recommend retaining the original age retirement assumption.

It is possible that remedy may lead to some behavioural changes in relation to retirement patterns.

For example, it may be the case that transitional members will now receive more legacy benefits than they had previously factored in to their retirement projections. These additional legacy benefits may mean they are more likely to follow retirement patterns based on experience in the legacy scheme i.e. **retire earlier** than has been assumed.



Appendix 1C: Age retirement continued

Analysis (cont)

However, we believe it is premature to change the retirement assumption for the purposes of this exercise, for the following reasons:

- We have no evidence in relation to member's retirement plans to support changing this assumption.
- It is possible that steps might be taken to encourage members to continue working.

In addition, it is worth noting that allowing for members to retire at an earlier average age would **increase** the scheme's transitional protection remedy cost. In turn, this would **increase** the scheme's overall Employer contribution correction cost, which is the cost that is compared to the scheme's Target cost to determine if a floor breach or a ceiling breach has arisen. In other words, allowing for members to retire at an earlier age would make a floor breach less likely and a ceiling breach more likely. Although, as previously noted, a decision has been made to waive any ceiling breaches that arise.



Appendix 1D: Salary scales

For the purposes of an actuarial valuation, it can be appropriate to set a long-term assumption that reflects the 'average' expected experience of scheme members. However, this does not take account of more granular variations in pay growth, which may impact on the valuation of an underpin.

Analysis

We recommend retaining the original salary scale assumptions.

The original 2016 valuation assumptions do not differentiate between members (except on the basis of gender and to set different promotional assumptions for manual Officers compared to Practitioners and non-manual Officers).

We have therefore investigated whether adopting three alternative salary scales (low/medium/high) and applying these to the population in-scope of the transitional protection remedy of a typical scheme would materially impact on the transitional protection remedy cost.

Our analysis has shown the impact of such a change in the salary assumption would be immaterial to the results of this valuation.



Appendix 1E: Withdrawal

Like salary scales, different groups of members may have withdrawal rates that are higher or lower than the average adopted at the 2016 valuation. In theory, this could affect the cost of the transitional protection remedy.

Analysis

Although it would be possible to further refine the withdrawal assumption by splitting the population into groups (low withdrawal rates, medium withdrawal rates, high withdrawal rates), we would not suggest further work in this area because:

- The analysis we have carried out on salary scales indicates the impacts of changes to salary scale are immaterial. Sensitivity analysis indicates that the transitional protection remedy cost is less sensitive to withdrawals than salary scales.
- The existing withdrawal assumption provides for a probability distribution of withdrawal at each future age, which is more refined than the existing salary scale assumptions and therefore should already better reflect differences between members than the salary scale assumptions.



Appendix 1F: Turnover

‘Turnover’ is a collective term for the set of assumptions we use to project a population of active members. As part of this valuation, we will project the number of members who are eligible for the transitional protection remedy from the data as at 31 March 2016 out to 31 March 2022. The original valuation assumptions are long-term assumptions set with the purpose of valuing the accrued liabilities at 31 March 2016, and allowed for decrements over all future service, not just for the period to 2022. It is therefore appropriate to consider whether the 2016 valuation assumptions are appropriate for projections over the period to 2022.

Analysis

We have considered the appropriateness of the projection of the 2016 data using our valuation assumptions for typical schemes, by comparing the projected run off in 2016-20 with the known run off from 2012 to 2016. Projected run offs in 2016-20 are generally below the known run off from 2012-16, but we think this outcome is reasonable because:

- Run off in 2012-16 would have included a high number of recent joiners leaving the scheme, we would expect lower turnover in the transitional protection remedy group after 2016 because (by definition) this group will have at least 4 years’ service.



Appendix 1E: Turnover continued

Analysis (cont)

- The number of withdrawals and age retirement in 2012-16 were typically above assumptions. The 2016 assumptions reflected the 2012-16 experience, but also considered experience over a longer period, and so it was assumed that withdrawal would not remain at their higher 2012-16 rates. This is consistent with the outcome in the projections: run offs in 2016-20 are generally below the known run off from 2012-16.

We are therefore content that the original long-term projection assumptions remain appropriate for the population in scope of the transitional protection remedy.



Appendix 2: Methodology



Appendix 2A: Materiality limits

In preparing the valuation results, we may adopt specific simplifications provided they are not expected in aggregate to have a material impact on the valuation results. In this context, we propose that an estimated aggregate **impact of less than 0.25% of pay** would be regarded as immaterial. DH should let us know if you would like us to work to an alternative materiality limit; in particular it may be appropriate to work to a tighter limit if the valuation results are close to the cost cap ceiling or floor.

Details

The impact of a simplification is the estimated difference between the valuation results (as calculated using the simplification) and the valuation results if calculated in full detail. Such simplifications may relate to the data requested, the form of assumptions adopted, or the calculations performed. For example, the liabilities in respect of historic added years contracts may be sufficiently small that it would be disproportionate to value them in the same level of details as other liabilities, so we may adopt simplifications.

Note that the data used and the assumptions adopted have a much greater impact on the valuation results. These impacts are discussed at chapter 4 of the [2016 valuation report](#), and for example a decrease in the discount rate of 0.25% pa would increase the employer contribution rate by 4.0% of pay.



Appendix 2B: Member choice

Under the Directions, eligible members accrue benefits in the pre-2015 final salary scheme, with the assumed right to choose on benefit crystallisation to have accrued pension benefits for the remedy period either in that pre-2015 scheme or in the post-2015 CARE scheme. We assume that on benefit crystallisation the member takes the higher valued benefit, valuing £1 pa pension as £20.

Details

We have valued the remedy benefits by projecting the member's benefits for the remedy period in both the pre-2015 final salary scheme and the post-2015 CARE scheme. Benefits are valued in each contingency (eg retirement or death), at each future date and for each eligible individual, using the same demographic assumptions (eg retirement ages) for both the pre-2015 and post-2015 scheme calculations.

In determining which benefits members will choose, we have taken account of the member's pension after commutation (valuing £1 pa pension as £20) and lump sum (both commuted lump sum and any automatic lump sum). The chosen benefit structure is then valued using the valuation assumptions (ie pensions are not valued using the 20:1 factor in the final results and explicit allowance is made for contingent survivor pensions).



Appendix 2B: Member choice continued

This approach is only likely to be inaccurate where the difference in value between the pre-2015 and post-2015 schemes is relatively small and therefore represents a relatively small proportion of the overall cost of the transitional protection remedy. We are satisfied that taking a more accurate approach would have an immaterial impact on the overall results.



Appendix 2C: Remedy benefits accrual period

The costs of remedy are assessed for the remedy period between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2022, calculated as follows:

- 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2022: Costs are calculated prospectively based on membership data as at 31 March 2016.
- 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016: Costs assumed to be in line with cost for service from 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017.

Details

The direct calculation of costs for the period 2015 to 2016 is challenging both in terms of data requirements and calculation methodology. Since the data we would require is unlikely to be available and the overall impact of this period is small compared with the overall uncertainty in the calculation, the approach appears the most reasonable and practical.



Appendix 2D: Member contributions

The contribution rates in the pre-2015 and post-2015 schemes are the same, but differences in pensionable pay definitions for Practitioners may result in different rates applying to a small number of individual members. As part of the transitional protection remedy it will be necessary to make good any under or over payment of contributions by members who are currently in one scheme but opt for benefits in the other.

We have made no allowance for this making good of contributions in our calculations.

Analysis

Although the contributions may be different in the pre-2015 and post-2015 schemes, the contributions are sufficiently similar that we are satisfied that taking a more complex approach would have an immaterial impact on the overall results.



Appendix 2E: Opt-outs

Some individuals would have been eligible for the transitional protection remedy but opted out of the scheme. We understand that members who opted out due to the changes to the pension scheme may be eligible to apply to have their opt-out reversed and benefits reinstated. This may lead to an additional cost for accrual prior to 2016 and may also affect the cost of benefits accruing after 2016.

Analysis

Although there is a potential cost, we recommend making no allowance for these additional liabilities. This is on the basis that we have limited data on which to assess the number of members who would be eligible for this reinstatement, and what evidence we do have indicates costs are unlikely to be material.



Appendix 2F: Protected members: post-2022 benefits

Under the 2015 scheme reforms, protected members would accrue benefits in the pre-2015 scheme until retirement, which could be after 2022 if members work beyond their scheme's normal pension age (NPA). These members will now be moved into the 2015 scheme from 2022. This will typically result in a small cost because the 2015 scheme is often more valuable for older members working after NPA than the pre-2015 schemes.

Analysis

Our analysis shows that the costs associated with protected members working beyond 2022 would be immaterial.



Appendix 2G: Exclusions

The calculated costs of remedy make no allowance for the following:

- Any tax impact on members or HMRC, consistent with the treatment at the 2016 valuation
- Any impact of tax compensation schemes associated with the remedy
- Members' additional voluntary contributions or transfers-in, the value of which are assumed to be unchanged as a result of remedy
- Pension debits and credits on divorce, which are assumed to be cost neutral to the scheme
- Any adjustments made in respect of Public Sector Transfer Club transfers

