



Circular Letter LG (P) 02/2024

26 June 2024

To: Each Chief Executive
Each Human Resources/Corporate Services Director

Extension of Deadline – VRS for Local Authority Water Services Staff

A Dhuine Uasail,

1. I am directed by the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage to refer to circular LG (P) 01/2024, dated 1 February 2024, that announced the introduction of the Voluntary Redundancy Scheme for local authority water services staff.
2. Notice is hereby provided to local authorities that the closing date for the Scheme is being extended to 30 September 2024. This extension is being provided following a request received by the Department from the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) and following consultation with the CCMA. This is in the context of ongoing discussions taking place relating to the terms of transfer of certain water services grades to Uisce Éireann. The extended deadline will allow these discussions to conclude and water services staff may then make an informed decision on the options available to them.

Purpose of the Scheme

3. The purpose of the Voluntary Redundancy Scheme is to enable the exit of eligible local authority staff from public water services delivery roles as local authorities withdraw from direct involvement in the public water services system, which is being fully integrated into Uisce Éireann in line with the Government Policy Paper on Water Sector Transformation (February 2021).

Eligibility

4. The Scheme is available to local authority water services staff, as defined in the Master Co-Operation Agreement¹ (i.e. staff engaged in the provision of water services for more than 50% of their time).
5. Local authority water services who wish to avail this Scheme must be members of any of the following superannuation schemes:
 - Local Government Superannuation Scheme (LGSS), or
 - Single Pension Scheme.
6. The Scheme continues to apply to those local authority water services staff who are under preserved pension age at 30 June 2024, and who have already accrued

¹ The Master Co-Operation Agreement is the agreement between Uisce Éireann and the Local Authority Sector that replaces the previous Service Level Agreements



entitlement to preserved superannuation benefits under a local government scheme (2 calendar years' reckonable service) at that date.

7. Staff who will reach preserved pension age during the extended deadline period, between 30 June and 30 September 2024, continue to be eligible for the Scheme. Such staff may apply for voluntary redundancy and agree a departure date with their local authority in advance of reaching preserved pension age.
8. There will be no automatic right to redundancy; all applications will be considered in the context of the Framework.
9. Employees currently on a career break will not be eligible to apply, however those who are due to resume duty before 30 September 2024 following a career break may apply.

Terms

10. The terms of the Scheme are set out in detail in Appendix A and there is an application form at Appendix B1, with an acceptance form at Appendix B2. This circular including Appendices A, B1 and B2 should be made available to all persons who are eligible to avail of the Scheme. In all cases an offer of acceptance cannot be finalised until a duly completed acceptance form (at Appendix B2) has been signed and submitted by the applicant.
11. The terms of the Scheme provide for the payment of:
 - a) A severance payment of 3 weeks' pay per year of actual service plus statutory entitlement under the Redundancy Payments Acts, or the equivalent, subject to an overall limit of:
 - (i) 2 years pay; or, if less,
 - (ii) one-half of the salary payable to preserved pension age.
 - b) Preserved pension and lump sum payable on attaining preserved pension age (60, 65 or 66 as appropriate).
12. Employees who pay modified PRSI rates (Class D) will receive the equivalent terms to those with statutory entitlements.
13. The Scheme will be open to applications until 30 September 2024. Decisions on applications will be made after the closing date with departure dates to be arranged to take place by 31 December 2024.
14. In order to ensure operational stability, an individual's departure date shall be at least three months from the date of application for voluntary redundancy except in cases where the individual reaches preserved pension age at an earlier date, in which case the departure date should be before the individual reaches preserved pension age.



15. In exceptional circumstances, and only where an early departure may prove incompatible with the safe operation of water services, the departure date of the individual concerned may be necessarily delayed by three months but shall be no later than 31 March 2025.
16. In cases where an individual will reach preserved pension age within 3 months of their date of application for voluntary redundancy then their departure date shall be in advance of reaching preserved pension age.

Decision making process/Oversight arrangements

17. In implementing the Scheme, local authorities shall have regard to the effective discharge of their responsibilities under Section 159 of the Local Government Act 2001 as well as to the Master Co-Operation Agreements signed with Uisce Éireann, in particular to the continued security of supply and safe operation of water services.
18. Each local authority shall keep Uisce Éireann informed regarding applications received and decisions about departure dates in order to allow Uisce Éireann to plan, recruit and train replacement water services staff as required. Local authorities shall engage with Uisce Éireann when selecting the order in which applicants seeking to avail of this Scheme should depart their local authority
19. A decision on an application to avail of the Scheme should be made by a Director of Services as soon as practicable after the closing date with departure dates to be arranged to take place by 31 December 2024.
20. In the event of a decision to refuse an application, the applicant may then appeal, within two weeks, to the Chief Executive to reconsider the decision. The Chief Executive decision, which shall be binding in all cases, must be made within three weeks of the referral.
21. In all cases applicants must be given a decision by 20 December 2024 (*at the latest*).

Filling of vacancies

22. Any vacancy which arises in water services as a result of a person availing of this Scheme shall be a matter for Uisce Éireann to address by way of redeployment or recruitment. A local authority shall not have any responsibility in the filling of such vacancies.

Record Keeping/Registrar

23. Local authorities should bring this Circular to the notice of all eligible staff in water services.
24. Queries from local authorities in relation to this Circular should be addressed to Local Government HR, at localservices@housing.gov.ie.



25. Staff should address queries in relation to this Circular to the HR Section of their local authority.

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Sharon Finegan

Principal Officer

Local Government HR