

TECHNICAL NOTE

FLEXI-ACCESS DRAWDOWN

Scottish Widows Platform

For Professional Advisers only

Flexi-access drawdown allows individuals to take an income and tax-free cash (Pension Commencement Lump Sum (PCLS)) from their money purchase pension arrangement while it remains invested.

If an individual chooses to take flexi-access drawdown, they can still buy an annuity at any time.

All new drawdown plans taken out from 6 April 2015 will be flexi-access drawdown arrangements.

Requirements

Benefits can be taken under flexi-access drawdown from age 55 rising to 57 on 6 April 2028 or earlier where a lower protected pension age applies or if benefits are being taken through ill-health.

There's no requirement to have a minimum level of income from other sources.

Existing Drawdown Pensions

All pre-6 April 2015 flexible drawdown arrangements automatically became flexi-access drawdown arrangements.

A pre-6 April 2015 capped drawdown arrangement can elect to convert to flexi-access drawdown or, where the capped drawdown income limit is exceeded, it is automatically converted to flexi-access drawdown to avoid the unauthorised payment rules applying.

Income

Flexi-access drawdown arrangements have no restrictions on the amount of withdrawals that can be made and so no review system.

Tax

Individuals can normally take 25% PCLS from their designated flexi-access drawdown fund to the limit of the Lump Sum Allowance. The standard Lump Sum Allowance is £268,275 but individuals with protection may be entitled to take more than this. The remainder of the fund can be taken as taxable income (with no upper limit). Income payments are taxed through the PAYE system at the individual's marginal rate for earned income and the tax is deducted from the payment before it's paid to the individual.

Protected PCLS

Individuals, who qualify, may take more than 25% PCLS under their scheme through scheme specific tax-free cash protection or if they have either primary or enhanced protection and the lump sum at 6 April 2006 was more than £375,000. In addition individuals with Fixed or Individual Protection are entitled to a higher Lump Sum Allowance, 25% of their protected amount.

Death Benefits

If an individual dies before age 75 with remaining flexi-access drawdown funds, any lump sum, or income payments to beneficiaries up to the Lump Sum and Death Benefit Allowance, will usually be paid tax-free. The standard Lump Sum and Death Benefit Allowance is £1,079,100 but is reduced by the tax-free element of any previous Relevant Benefit Crystallisation Events. If an individual has protection they may be entitled to a higher Lump Sum and Death Benefit Allowance.

If an individual dies on or after age 75 with remaining flexi-access drawdown funds, any lump sum or income payments made to beneficiaries will be taxed as pension income under PAYE at the recipient's marginal rates.

Transfers

Flexi-access drawdown benefits can be transferred from one provider to another without resulting in an unauthorised payments charge provided:

- the benefits are transferred to a new 'empty arrangement' under the receiving scheme (prior to being merged into a single arrangement), and
- the benefits are paid as flexi-access drawdown under the receiving scheme.

Once an individual has commenced flexi-access drawdown they cannot revert to capped drawdown.

Further Pension Contributions

Individuals in flexi-access drawdown may continue to make contributions, however, if they take any taxable income they will be subject to a reduced annual allowance – the Money Purchase Annual Allowance (MPAA).

The MPAA will apply only to money purchase contributions. The individual may in addition accrue benefits in a defined benefit scheme up to the value of £60,000, less any money purchase contributions within the MPAA, before an annual allowance charge applies.

Carry forward is not available in conjunction with the MPAA.

Key Point Summary

There are no restrictions on how money can be withdrawn from flexi-access drawdown arrangements, although no more than 25% (normally) can be taken tax-free up to the Lump Sum Allowance.

Flexi-access drawdown allows individuals to access their entire money purchase pension arrangement giving them greater flexibility.

If an individual wants to access funds through flexi-access drawdown, they will trigger the MPAA as soon as they draw an income. Anyone who needs to contribute more than this annually will have limited options, thereby compromising their long-term savings plans and restricting future access to long-term income.

**For more information on the Scottish Widows Platform, please contact your consultant.
We may record or monitor calls to improve our service.**



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Every care has been taken to ensure this information is correct and in accordance with our understanding of the law and HM Revenue & Customs practice, which may change.

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