

TfL Pension Fund: Shift Workers and Longevity!

The TfL Pension Fund faces the prospect of potential change in the future.

This has led TSSA to produce a series of leaflets designed to highlight how change could affect you but which also enables us to tell you about the benefits of your existing scheme.

Thinking about retiring?

As people approach their late 50s – or achieve the milestone of age 60 – thoughts, inevitably, turn to “what will retirement look like for me?”

Amidst a range of concerns, there can be enough to worry about in considering how long you may reasonably expect to live after you finish work – not to mention whether you can afford to properly retire, giving up your salary and having to live on your company and State pensions.

For some, the question may also be about whether they should take up a part time job to supplement their pensions – and how will they provide for their partner after their death?

In this leaflet we will be taking a look at the effect of shift working on life expectancy and how changes to the Pension Fund can cut the number of years you have in retirement.

What is current life expectancy in the UK?

According to the latest official figures from 2022, the average life expectancy of a man is 78.6 years, whilst for women it is 82.6 years.

In practice, a number of factors will influence individual life expectancies meaning that it could work out above or below these averages due to things like health, lifestyle, income, housing and employment.



The effect of working shifts

Research by organisations in the UK, Sweden and the United States indicate that working rotating shifts, including nights, can also lead to poorer health and for some, a reduced life expectancy.

One American study of 75,000 nurses over a 22 years period found that 1 in 10 of the nurses who worked rotating shift for six years died early.

Starkly, these outcomes may also affect people who work regular rotating shifts in London Underground, TfL and RfLI.



Employer and Fund data identifies poorer health and mortality outcomes for TfL/LUL shift workers. In pensions terms, this means earlier death and leaving dependant partners on significantly reduced pensions for longer periods.

What does this mean for possible future changes to the Pension Fund?

The current scheme retirement age (age 60) particularly benefits colleagues working shifts or undertaking manual work.

However, one of the options that TfL has been looking at is increasing the age at which you can retire, linking it to your State Pension Age, currently set at 66. But the State Pension Age is increasing and will be 67 by 2028 and there are plans – but no certain date yet – when it will go up to 68.

Changes advanced by the Government and under consideration by the Employer would see TfL/LUL workers enjoying a greatly shortened number of years in paid retirement, and for dependant partners, more years of significantly smaller pensions.

Overall, this means that the amount of time you might have in retirement will be reduced – and because of shift working your life expectancy might be reduced even further.

Are there any other possible effects?

Yes, there is.

One option the pension review suggested is that of TfL changing the current Pension Fund into a CARE (Career Average Revalued Earnings) based scheme. The version they have looked at involves members having to pay higher contributions.

What does all this mean?

Taking all of these factors together, it means that you will have to:

Work longer, pay more over a longer period and have less time in retirement!

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