

## **9.10 Overseas Posting and Travel**

This policy sets out the rules regarding payment of travelling expenses for overseas postings, detached duty or overseas visits.

This section gives guidance on:

- Eligibility and entitlement to allowances for transfer journeys - Section 2
- Modes of travel - Section 5
- Medical and compassionate journeys including arrangements for childbirth - Section 7
- Leave journeys after a qualifying period overseas - Section 8
- Children's visit journeys - Section 9

**The following terms within this policy are defined in the glossary:**

Detached duty, COLA terms, children

**You may also be interested in the following policies:**

8.07 Pay for Overseas Postings, 9.04 General Guidance on Overseas Posting, 9.06 Administrative Arrangements for Overseas Posting, 9.07 Other Allowances and Grants or Overseas Posts, 9.08 Medical Arrangements at Overseas Post, 9.09 Overseas Subsistence Allowance, 9.10 Overseas Posting and Travel, 9.11 Cost of Living Addition for Overseas Posts, 9.12 Financial Liabilities of Staff Who Leave Overseas Post Early

This policy is version 1.0

For a printable version please click the icon. Please make sure that your printed version is current with the one on this portal.

This homepage is only a guide to the policy, not the policy itself. In the event of any discrepancy between the content of this homepage and the associated policy, the wording of the policy shall apply.

## **9.10 Overseas Posting and Travel**

### **1. Introduction**

1.1 This Section outlines the rules for payment of travelling expenses when you are undertaking a posting overseas, or on detached duty or a visit overseas. The cost of outward and return journeys and the cost of local travel on official business are paid by the Department. However, beyond this your entitlement depends upon the duration of the posting and your individual circumstances.

### **2. Transfer journeys**

#### **2.1 Eligibility and Entitlement**

2.1.1 A posting expected to last at least 12 months allows you to be accompanied by your partner and family and entitles you to the full range of applicable allowances. You can also claim holiday visits for your children where they remain at school in Northern Ireland. If you are based in Northern Ireland and posted for less than one year you will be posted on long-term Detached Duty terms and will not qualify for the appropriate allowances for your partner and family.

2.1.2 Return journeys will be provided for:

- a. those members of your household who received an outward journey and were resident with you during your overseas assignment; and
- b. children born and those under the age of 19 legally adopted during the overseas assignment.

### **3. Deferred and anticipatory homeward journeys for families**

3.1 If you decide, for personal reasons, to leave your family in Northern Ireland at the time of posting, you may later apply for official arrangements to be made for them to join you provided:

- a. the total cost is not more than would have been incurred had the family accompanied you at the time of transfer; and
- b. each family member will be with you at the overseas station for at least 12 months or, exceptionally, not less than 6 months.

**3.2** When members of your family wish to return to Northern Ireland before the end of your posting abroad, they may be allowed to anticipate their homeward journey for that posting provided they have been resident at the overseas station for 12 months or more. Departments may, at their discretion, abate the period of 12 months if the need for the return to Northern Ireland is beyond the control of you or the family. If you wish a child to return to Northern Ireland, for example for educational reasons, Departments may, at their discretion, abate the qualifying period of residence overseas to not less than six months. Other than in the case of mid-posting transfers, travel at public expense for the dependant to rejoin you is not allowed.

## **4. Mid-posting transfers**

**4.1** If you are transferred during an overseas posting to a new area abroad and your dependants have already returned to Northern Ireland under the provisions of paragraph 3.2, the cost of conveying your family from Northern Ireland to the new area abroad is allowed. This is within the cost which would have been incurred had they remained with you and is provided they reside with you for at least 12 months or exceptionally not less than six months.

## **5. Methods of travel**

### **5.1 Travel by Air**

**5.1.1** Unless otherwise specified, air travel may be allowed in accordance with the conditions set out in Handbook Section “Travel and Subsistence”, policy 9.02 on Official Travel paragraphs 3.2.14 and 3.2.15.

### **5.2 Travel by Rail**

**5.2.1** The class of travel on railways abroad to which you are entitled is as follows:

- a.** If your salary scale rises to the EOI maximum or over, for you and members of your family: First Class.
- b.** Otherwise, you and members of your family: Standard Class

The class of travel to Dublin by train is the same as that for travel within the United Kingdom - see paragraphs 3.2.10, 3.2.12 and 3.2.13 of the Handbook Section “Travel and Subsistence”, policy 9.02 on Official Travel.

### **5.3 Private Travel Arrangements (PTAs)**

**5.3.1** You may travel other than by official routes, but only if it is approved and within the cost of an official journey.

**5.3.2** The following conditions apply to PTAs:

- a. PTAs may not be part official and part privately arranged;
- b. PTAs are treated as any other journey in relation to entitlements, for example those under the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme;
- c. insurance cover for PTAs is your responsibility and you should ensure that you purchase adequate cover for injury, loss of personal effects, medical expenses and cancellation;
- d. claims in respect of aborted PTAs are inadmissible and any official costs incurred may be recovered from you;
- e. subsistence allowance is limited to that which would have been paid had the normal method of travel been used; and
- f. additional travelling time taken to complete a PTA journey is reckoned as annual leave or otherwise made good.

**5.3.3** Applications for PTAs should be submitted to your Department. If you use your private car you may claim the Northern Ireland Public Transport Rate for the most direct route, together with the cost of car ferry charges and 'Green Card' insurance. The total reimbursement to you will not, however, exceed the cost of the passage which the Department would otherwise have arranged had the car not been used.

## **6. Journeys on official business from stations abroad**

**6.1** If you are serving abroad on COLA terms and use your private motor vehicles on official business you may be paid mileage allowance in accordance with the regulations for payment of motor mileage allowance as detailed in the Travel and Subsistence Part of the Handbook, policy 9.02 on Official Travel. The rates of allowance will, however, be those applicable to the overseas location.

## **7. Medical and compassionate journeys**

### **7.1 Medical Journeys**

**7.1.1** Departments may approve a medical journey to Northern Ireland if a qualified doctor recommends:

- a. return to Northern Ireland; or
- b. expensive treatment at the overseas location.

If repatriation is recommended, Departments will also seek advice from the Occupational Health Service (OHS) if time permits. To avoid expenditure on fares, paid leave journeys or final departures may be advanced to bring the patient home.

**7.1.2** If the doctor considers that the patient should be escorted, the cost of the fare may be reimbursed, but only with the prior approval of the Department.

**7.1.3** Anyone returned to Northern Ireland on medical grounds must be cleared by the OHS before returning to post. To authorise a journey back to post Departments should treat each case on its merits and it would be expected that there should be at least three months to serve at post before a paid leave or transfer journey.

#### **7.1.4 Medical journeys by dependants**

a. If it is recommended that your child should be returned to Northern Ireland, your partner may accompany them at public expense. If it is recommended that your partner should be returned to Northern Ireland, they may be accompanied at public expense by any children under the age of 5.

b. There is no entitlement to subsistence, but Departments have discretion to allow receipted necessarily incurred expenses on the journey.

## **7.2 Childbirth**

**7.2.1** If you are pregnant you must inform your Department without delay so that they can consider whether the posting will be affected. You and your partner qualify for a fare paid journey to have your baby(ies) in Northern Ireland either by choice or when the OHS agrees that local medical facilities are inadequate. Subsistence is not payable.

### **7.2.2 Childbirth in Northern Ireland by choice**

a. Provisions are as follows:

i. fare paid journey to Northern Ireland for the mother and any children under 5 years or age;

ii. a return fare to post is paid only if you have at least three months remaining until a leave or transfer journey

iii. childbirth journeys at public expense are not normally allowed during the three months following your first arrival at post or return from mid-tour leave.

### **7.2.3 Childbirth in NI from necessity**

- a. Provisions are as follows:
  - i. fare paid journey to Northern Ireland for the mother and any dependent children under 5;
  - ii. economy class fare for partner to attend the birth;
  - iii. to keep travel expenses to the minimum, paid leave journeys must be advanced if due within a period of three months.
- b. In either of the above situations, if the birth was premature, or if there were any difficulties and the baby is to accompany the mother on return to post, you or your partner should inform the Department before a return journey is arranged.

## **7.3 Compassionate journeys to Northern Ireland**

### **7.3.1 Illness**

- a. Departments may authorise a fare paid (economy class) compassionate journey for either you or your partner if your child, parent, brother or sister is dangerously ill or dies. Only in the event of a dangerous illness or death of a child of the relationship may the fares of both you and your partner be paid.

A fare paid (economy class) compassionate journey will be granted to you if your partner (who has remained in Northern Ireland) is dangerously ill or dies.

If you or your partner is allowed a compassionate journey, they may be accompanied, at public expense, by children under 5 years of age.

A qualified doctor must certify that:

- the relative is dangerously ill; and that
- the presence of you (or partner) is needed.

### **7.3.2 Exceptional Circumstances**

- a. The Department may, provided it is consulted before the journey is made, authorise a fare paid journey if it is satisfied that there are urgent matters that can only be resolved by a short visit to Northern Ireland by you or your partner. Examples of this could be a child in serious trouble or extensive damage to property.
- b. The class of travel for compassionate journeys to Northern Ireland is economy and subsistence is not payable

## **7.4 Compassionate journeys to overseas post**

**7.4.1** If you or your partner at post is dangerously ill, Departments may authorise a compassionate journey for the following close relatives:

If you are accompanied, you or your partner	Parent or child and one companion (two persons)
If you are unaccompanied or single	Next of kin and companion (two persons)

**7.4.2** Economy class travel costs are payable from and to home addresses and are limited to the cost of travel from Northern Ireland where relatives live in a third country.

**7.4.3** Subsistence at post is payable for up to 7 days, but may be extended to a maximum of 10 days if the doctor recommends a longer stay.

**7.4.4** The arrangements which apply in the event of your death or dependent overseas are detailed at Section 9.05 Introduction to Overseas Pay and Allowances.

## **8. Leave journeys**

**8.1** If you expect to serve overseas for at least 24 months you qualify for an economy class fare paid leave journey to Northern Ireland after 12 months for yourself and qualifying dependants *resident* at post. You qualify for such journeys on completion of each full year spent at post on the basis that you spend a further full year at post (in other words the entitlement for a two-year posting is one journey, a three-year posting earns two journeys and a four-year posting earns three journeys). Where a posting is extended by between 4 and 12 months, a pro rata percentage of the cost of a journey may be paid by the Department.

**8.2** You are required to serve the full length of posting to qualify for all fare paid entitlements. Should you leave the post early for non-operational reasons you may be required to refund pro rata, any funds spent in anticipation of service a full posting, for example you would qualify for  $\frac{1}{12}$  of the cost of the journey for each completed calendar month of service at post.

**8.3** The minimum period to be spent in Northern Ireland is 14 days and the period of leave is counted from the day of arrival in Northern Ireland to the day of departure.

**8.4** On the Northern Ireland portion of homeward travel journeys, you may claim the cost of the rail or bus fares for direct journeys between the arrival/departure airport and the former place of duty in Northern Ireland. Within the cost of these journeys, you may claim for direct return journeys between the arrival airport and the chosen leave address in Northern Ireland.

## **9. Children's visit journeys (CVJ s)**

**9.1** For the purposes of CVJs, the definition of children at paragraph 4.1 (in Section 9.05 Introduction to Overseas Pay and Allowances) has been extended to cover your and your partner's dependent children who are 19 to 22 years of age inclusive and in full-time education at or below First Degree level. The upper age limit is reduced to 20 in the case of dependants undertaking other courses of education or vocational training leading to a recognised qualification.

**9.2** If you are Northern Ireland-based but serving overseas on a posting of 12 months or more you may be allowed return economy class air passages for your children at school in Northern Ireland to visit you overseas.

### **9.3 Children Under 18**

**9.3.1** Return air journeys from Northern Ireland to the overseas station may be granted to enable children under 18 years of age to visit you at the overseas station as follows:

- a. If you are accompanied or are divorced or separated and your children are normally resident with you. - three visits per year in each of the three main school holidays
- b. If you are unaccompanied or are divorced or separated and your children are not normally resident with you. - two visits per year during two of the three main school holidays

Entitlement to CVJs continue until the end of the academic year (including the school holidays) in which the child reaches the age of 18 provided the child remains at school.

### **9.4 Dependants Between 18 and 22/20 Inclusive**

**9.4.1** One return air journey may be granted during each 12 months of your overseas tour to enable dependent children age 18 to 22/20 years - see paragraph 9.1 concerning upper age limits. The following conditions apply:

- a. entitlements may not be carried over from one 12-month period to another;
- b. you must have at least nine months of your tour remaining;
- c. the 12-month period commences from either your posting date or the date of the child/children's return to Northern Ireland to commence higher education;
- d. children at college outside Northern Ireland will have the cost of their CVJ limited to the cost of an official return journey from Northern Ireland to your station abroad; and

- e. in all cases CVJs cease when the child leaves full-time education or their 23rd/21st birthday, whichever is earlier.

**9.4.2** If you are intending to return to Northern Ireland on leave you should make every effort to coincide your journey with a school holiday, thus avoiding the need for a CVJ . Such a journey reduces that year's CVJ entitlement from three to two, two to one and one to none. Where you are unable to spend the whole of a school holiday in Northern Ireland a CVJ can be taken, providing the children spend at least 14 days at post. In exceptional circumstances, Departments may authorise shorter visits, having regard to the cost and distance involved.

## **9.5 Duration of Visits**

**9.5.1 CVJ** should normally be for at least 14 days including travelling time. Where this is impractical a shorter visit, as deemed reasonable by the Department, may be allowed, for example if the school holidays are less or in the case if you are divorced or separated from your partner.

## **9.6 Reversed CVJ**

**9.6.1** If you or your spouse wishes to use a child/ren's journey(s) to fund a parent's return to Northern Ireland you can claim an economy class fare within the corresponding cost of the child/ren's journey to post.

**9.6.2** The visit must normally be for at least 14 days and parents with more than one child cannot have both CVP and reversed CVP entitlements during the same holiday period.

**9.6.3** Reversed CVJ s are not permissible in place of a CVJ by a student aged 21 or over.