

**NORTHERN IRELAND  
SOCIAL CARE COUNCIL**

**TRAVEL AND  
SUBSISTENCE  
POLICY**

**Final v2.0**

February 2024

## Document Control Sheet

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### Approvals

| Date     | Document Version | Approver Name and Title |  |
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|          |                  |                         |  |

# **NORTHERN IRELAND SOCIAL CARE COUNCIL**

## **TRAVEL AND SUBSISTENCE POLICY**

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# NORTHERN IRELAND SOCIAL CARE COUNCIL

## TRAVEL AND SUBSISTENCE POLICY

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Northern Ireland Social Care Council (Social Care Council) has developed a Travel and Subsistence Policy to help ensure the most efficient, effective and economical use of its travel and subsistence budget to provide all staff with a standard access point for processing and arranging travel and accommodation. It is designed to achieve the most cost-effective and economical use of taxpayers' money.
- 1.2 **This Policy must be read in conjunction with the [Agenda for Change Handbook, section 17](#) which outlines the terms and conditions for HSC staff**
- 1.3 The Policy applies to all staff.

### 2. Policy Principles and Values

#### Principles

- 2.1 The overriding principle is 'efficient and economic travel' –
  - While travelling on official business you must use the most efficient and economic form of transport, taking into account not only the cost of travel but also subsistence costs and potential savings in official time and appropriate consideration of work-life balance. Consideration should always be given, at the outset, to alternative means to deliver the business e.g. video/call conferencing, etc.
  - All staff are responsible for ensuring that no unnecessary costs are incurred and that the Social Care Council receives good value for money for its use of public funds. When claiming expenses, you must be mindful that expenditure of any type must be justified and demonstrably reasonable.
- 2.2 **Reimbursement is not appropriate when no additional expense is incurred.**
- 2.3 The Policy is underpinned by three important public sector service principles:
  - **Accountability** – the Social Care Council must be capable of standing the test of Assembly scrutiny, public judgements on propriety and professional codes of conduct;
  - **Probity** – the Social Care Council must demonstrate absolute honesty through its Travel and Accommodation Policy and procedures. Staff must

show accuracy and compliance when claiming reimbursement for travel, or related travel expenses;

- **Openness** – there must be transparency in all the Social Care Council's activities in relation to this Policy to promote confidence with stakeholders, including the Department of Health (DoH) and the public.

2.4 All travel and accommodation expenditure must relate to the strategic objectives of the Social Care Council and all expenditure incurred must be reasonable and justifiable.

### **Values**

2.5 The Policy will operate in line with the Social Care Council's core values –

- **Respect** – those claiming reimbursement through this Policy will respect the use of the public purse and operate under the most efficient and economic means to deliver business on behalf of the Social Care Council;
- **Integrity** – those claiming reimbursement through this Policy will demonstrate the highest degree of transparency, accountability and honesty;
- **Partnership** – those claiming reimbursement through this Policy will work together to ensure the most efficient means to travel were utilised e.g. travelling together to share costs where applicable;
- **Excellence** – those claiming reimbursement through this Policy will do so accurately and diligently.

## **3. Claims for Travel and Subsistence**

### **Making a Claim**

3.1 When making a claim for travel and/or subsistence, you should note the following points –

- It is your responsibility to bear the cost of daily travel between your home and your work base. HMRC guidance states that workers cannot claim home to work base mileage. See guidance at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/490-employee-travel-a-tax-and-nics-guide>;
- All claims must refer to the actual expenses incurred and must be supported by receipts. If a receipt is not available you must include a written explanation regarding this;

- Claims processed through HRPTS which *include* receipts (e.g. car parking expenses, sundry items) must be printed out and all receipts clearly marked and stapled to the claim before being passed to the authorising manager (when first claiming travel you will be provided with one to one assistance and training). The Authorising Manager will sign off the receipts and retain a copy of the claim (and receipts) for one year (so that they may be inspected by Internal Audit as part of their annual audit programme). In the claim "Comments Box" on HRPTS please make sure as much detail as possible is provided to substantiate the travel.
- All staff claims must be processed through HRPTS.
- In making a claim you are indicating that the costs incurred are accurate, relevant and in accordance with this Policy and the Agenda for Change handbook (see link above at 1.2)

### **Authorising a Claim**

- 3.2 Travel claims processed through HRPTS are approved by Authorising Officers. Authorising Officers are usually heads of function and they must ensure they have fully checked and confirmed that the claim is appropriate and correct, validating the sight of receipts where appropriate.
- 3.3 If an Authorising Officer has a query regarding your claim they will make contact with you on the basis insufficient detail has been provided to substantiate the miles being claimed. You are expected to provide further detail at this point. A delay in responding to this request may result in a delay in the processing of your claim.

### **Time Limits for Making a Claim**

- 3.4 It is essential that the Social Care Council can manage its budget including that in relation to travel. Travel claims should always be submitted promptly and not accumulated. Claims will be paid for up to three months since the first period of travel took place, however on occasions management will require the immediate (and monthly) submission of travel claims. Travel claims submitted outside the three month period will only be paid in exceptional circumstances with the approval of the Director of Registration and Corporate Services and must be accompanied by a written explanation regarding the delay in submitting timely claim forms.

## **4. Means of Travel**

- 4.1 When travelling on behalf of the Social Care Council you must agree with your manager the most suitable and means of transport for the routine journey you need to make to carry out your job. If the journey is unusual (in terms of

distance or purpose) the mode of travel must be agreed with the manager in advance of the travel taking place.

## **5. Vehicle Documentation**

- 5.1 When using your vehicle to perform your duties, employees must ensure they possess a valid driving licence, Ministry of Transport (MOT) certificate and motor vehicle insurance that which covers business travel. You must ensure these documents are current and valid when using your vehicle to carry out activities on behalf of the Social Care Council.
- 5.2 You must also ensure that you are fit and able to drive safely and that you obey the relevant laws e.g. speed limits. You must tell the Social Care Council if there is a change in your status to drive for any reason.

## **6. Mileage Allowance and Rates**

- 6.1 When you use your vehicle to make journeys to carry out your job, you will be reimbursed the cost at the appropriate rates that are set out in Annex I, on the submission of fully validated travel claim through HRPTS.
- 6.2 When calculating the miles travelled when using a motor vehicle you must use the AA route planner <https://www.theaa.com/route-planner/route> identifying the shortest route between destinations.
- 6.3 To comply with the most efficient and economic principle, you are encouraged to share transport arrangements when two or more staff are travelling to the same destination. The individual driving may claim passenger rate for the other individuals (and should include the names of the passengers on their travel claim).
- 6.4 You may be reimbursed when using a motor cycle or bicycle rather than car – and this is included in the rates set out at Annex I.
- 6.5 If you are required to carry heavy or bulky equipment you can claim for this on your travel claim – it is paid in addition to the other rates explained here. For clarity, heavy or bulky items are those which would make it difficult to use public transport or carry the goods any particular distance.
- 6.6 Reasonable parking costs will be reimbursed where these occur for travelling on business purposes. Receipts must be provided (and attached to the printed out copy of the travel claim passed to the authorising manager).

## **7. Eligible Mileage**

- 7.1 You will be reimbursed for miles travelled in the performance of your duties which are in excess of the home to agreed work base return journey. Normally, the miles eligible for reimbursement are those travelled from the agreed work base and back. However if the journey starts at a location other than the work base (e.g. starts from home) then the mileage eligible is calculated using the example shown below –

Example

Home to Work - is 15 miles

Amount that can be claimed - 0 miles

- Home to location is less than 15 miles – Cannot claim mileage as less than home to work
- Home to location is more than 15 miles – Mileage must be reduced by the home to work miles (15 miles)

7.2 To ensure compliance with this, you should clearly indicate on your claim “Comment Box” that the home to base mileage has been deducted from the miles you are claiming. You should also clearly indicate the purpose/business rationale for the travel and the names of any passengers being claimed. e.g. state who, where and the purpose of the engagement. You must also ensure that your Social Care Council diary clearly reflects the nature of the travel and the estimated time out of the office.

7.3 Where public transport is used for business purposes, the cost of bus and standard rail fares may be claimed on production of associated receipts.

## **8. Subsistence Allowances**

8.1 Staff may be reimbursed for the extra costs of meals, accommodation and travel arising as a result of official duties away from home.

### **Night Subsistence**

8.2 When you are required to stay overnight in a hotel or other commercial accommodation with the prior agreement of the Social Care Council, the overnight costs will be reimbursed as follows –

- The actual, receipted cost of bed and breakfast (where this has not been pre-paid through the Social Care Council’s travel contract), up to the normal maximum limit set out in Annex II; plus
- A meals allowance, to cover the cost of a main evening meal and one other day-time meal at the rate set out at Annex II.

8.3 The Social Care Council is included in the HSC Regional Travel Contract and uses this contract to book flights, accommodation and other travel related costs for staff travelling outside of Northern Ireland.

8.4 If you stay overnight in non-commercial accommodation (e.g. with a friend or relative), the rate for this is provided at Annex II. This includes an allowance for meals and receipts are not required.



- 8.5 If you are staying in accommodation provided by the Social Care Council or host organisation you are entitled to an allowance to cover meals which are not provided free of charge (up to the total set out at Annex II).
- 8.6 Where accommodation and meals are provided without charge to the individual e.g. on a residential training course, an incidental expenses allowance at the rate set out at Annex II will be payable.

### **Day Subsistence**

- 8.7 A meal allowance is payable when you are absent from home on official business and more than five miles away from your work base, by the shortest practicable route. Day meals allowance rates are set out in Annex II. These allowances are not paid where meals are provided free at the temporary place of work.
- 8.8 A day meals allowance is payable only when an employee spends more on a meal/meals than would have been spent at their place of work. You are therefore required to certify, when claiming, on each day a meals allowance is claimed where a receipt is not available.
- 8.9 Normally, when claiming a lunch meal allowance you would be expected to be away from your work base for more than 5 hours and covering the normal lunch time period of 12 noon to 2.00 pm. To claim an evening meals allowance you are expected to be away from your work base for more than ten hours and unable to return to work or home before 7pm. You can qualify for both a lunch and evening meal allowance in some circumstances

## **9. Travel outside Northern Ireland**

- 9.1 The Social Care Council are contracted to use travel services through a Regional HSC Travel Contract.
- 9.2 Requests for travel arrangements outside of Northern Ireland must be approved by the relevant head of function in the first instance and are managed by Business Support using the HSC Travel Contract.
- 9.3 The individual and head of function must ensure that travel to attend the event/conference in Northern Ireland is essential, taking into account other means to access the event e.g. use of smart Video Conferencing. The authorising officer must always also be mindful that where more than one individual is travelling to the event outside of Northern Ireland, that there is a clear and justifiable business reason for this.
- 9.4 Travel outside of Northern Ireland, using the Travel Contract, are based on most effective and cheapest public rate. This often means that the travel arrangements are non-refundable. Individuals and authorising managers must therefore ensure that travel is only booked when and where it is essential as cancelled travel will result in unnecessary costs to the Social Care Council.

- 9.5 Overnight accommodation when travelling outside of Northern Ireland must be justified at the outset and is the exception rather than the rule. For example, a meeting in London between 10am and 5pm can normally be completed through one day's travel. As with air travel, accommodation booked through the Regional HSC Travel Contract will be done so on based on the most effective and cheapest public rate.

## **10. International Travel**

- 10.1 There is particular scrutiny over any international travel which is deemed as travel outside of the UK and Ireland.
- 10.2 Where there is a clear and justifiable business reason for international travel this must be booked using the template at Annex III and approved well in advance by the Chief Executive.
- 10.4 International travel for the Chief Executive is approved by the Chair of Social Care Council's Board.
- 10.5 International travel is also reported to the Permanent Secretary at the Department of Health.

## **11. Booking Taxis**

- 11.1 A separate procedure operates for booking taxis which are managed by Business Support on behalf of the organisation.

## **12. People with a Disability**

- 12.1 People with a disability will be supported with appropriate travel arrangements to enable them to fully engage in any business duties that require travel. These arrangements will be agreed in consultation with the individual in advance of the travel. Individuals should let the appropriate officer in the Social Care Council aware of any travel needs they may have.

## **13. Training and Support**

- 13.1 Staff will be provided with training on submitting a travel claim before first submitting a claim. In addition, all authorising officers will be provided with training on authorising claims.
- 13.2 At the same time, staff will be able to avail of detailed HRPTS guidance notes and regular reminders will be sent to staff (and authorising officers) reminding them of key points when submitting (or approving) travel claims.

## **14. Personal Safety, Security and Confidentiality**

- 14.1 The Social Care Council recommends that staff take extra care and exercise due caution when travelling on business on behalf of the Social Care Council (when travelling alone, during darkness, in unfamiliar areas).

- 14.2 Staff should take reasonable steps to ensure the security and safe keeping of all Social Care Council equipment and documentation when travelling on business on behalf of the Social Care Council.

## **15. Equality Screening**

- 15.1 This Policy has been screened for equality implications as required by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and for compliance with human rights and disability legislation.

## **16. Review**

- 16.1 This Policy is subject to review after three years or earlier if necessary.
- 16.2 This Policy was endorsed by the Board on April 2024 and is therefore due review by April 2027.

[February 2024]

# ANNEX I

## REIMBURSEMENT RATES *(LAST UPDATED 1 JULY 2014)*

| Type of vehicle/<br>allowance        | Annual Mileage<br>up to 3,500 miles<br>(standard rate) | Annual Mileage<br>over 3,500 miles<br>(standard rate) | All eligible miles<br>travelled |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|---------------------------------|
| Car (all types of<br>fuel)           | 56 pence per mile                                      | 30 pence per mile                                     |                                 |
| Motor Cycle                          |  |   | 28 pence per mile               |
| Pedal Cycle                          |  |   | 20 pence per mile               |
| Passenger<br>Allowance               |  |   | 5 pence per mile                |
| Reserve Rate <sup>1</sup>            |  |   | 28 pence per mile               |
| Carrying heavy or<br>bulky equipment |  |   | 3 pence per mile                |

Drivers of electric cars should use the business mileage rates above

Drives of leased cars should use the rates below

### Leased Vehicle Business Mileage Reimbursement Rates

| Date Rate Calculated           | Dates Rate in Effect  | Fuelled Vehicles Rates<br>(pence per mile) | Wholly Electric Vehicle<br>Rates<br>(pence per mile) |
|--------------------------------|---|--|--|
| 1 <sup>st</sup> December 2022  | 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2023 – 31 <sup>st</sup> May 2023          | 15.6                                       | 8  |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> March 2023     | 1 <sup>st</sup> June 2023 – 31 <sup>st</sup> August 2023        | 14.2                                       | 8  |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> June 2023      | 1 <sup>st</sup> September 2023 – 30 <sup>th</sup> November 2023 | 13.8                                       | 9  |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> September 2023 | 1 <sup>st</sup> December – 29 <sup>th</sup> February 2024       | 14.5                                       | 10   |

<sup>1</sup> Reserve Rate applies when, for example, an employee uses his or her vehicle when suitable public transport is available and appropriate in the circumstances, subject to a maximum of the public transport cost which would have been incurred.

**Subsistence Allowances**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Night Allowance – first 30 nights</b>  | Actual receipted cost of bed and breakfast up to a maximum of £55  |
| <b>Meals Allowance</b>  | Per 24 hour period: £20.00   |
| <b>Night Allowances in non-commercial accommodation</b>                             | Per 24 hour period: £25.00   |
| <b>Night Allowances after first 30 nights</b>                                       | Maximum amount payable - £35   |
| <b>Day Meals Subsistence Allowances</b>   | Lunch allowance (more than five hours away from base, including the lunchtime period between 12:00 pm to 2:00 pm) £5.00<br><br>Evening meal allowance (more than ten hours away from base and return after 7:00 pm) £15.00 |
| <b>Incidental expenses allowance (this allowance is subject to a tax liability)</b> | Per 24 hour period: £4.20  |
| <b>Incidental expenses allowance (this allowance is subject to a tax liability)</b> | Per 24 hour period: £4.20  |
| <b>Late night duties allowance (this allowance is subject to a tax liability)</b>   | Per 24 hour period: £3.25  |

## ANNEX III

### **PRE TRAVEL AUTHORISATION FORM**

This form must be completed and signed by the Chief Executive for any international travel<sup>2</sup> prior to confirming arrangements with travel agency.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Title:</b>  |  |
| <b>Traveller/s information including Directorate and job title</b> |  |
| <b>Dates of travel:</b>  |  |

|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| <b>Flight Details</b>        |  |
| <b>Accommodation Details</b> |  |
| <b>Other Travel Expenses</b> |  |

|   |
|---|
| <b>Description of travel: (Including contribution to the business needs of the Social Care Council)</b> |
|   |

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| <b>Total Cost (incl. vat)</b> |  |
|-------------------------------|--|

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| <b>Approver Signature:</b> |  |
| <b>Print Name</b>          |  |
| <b>Position</b>            |  |
| <b>Date</b>                |  |

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<sup>2</sup> International Travel refers to all travel outside the jurisdiction of UK and Ireland as outlined in R Pengelly Letter ref RP834 dated 27 September 2016.