Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) – questionnaire guidance

This document is designed to help you complete the ASHE questionnaire. It is split into three sections:

- Guidance on completing the questionnaire
- Frequently asked questions
- Glossary

Please refer to this document if you are having any difficulties with completing the questionnaire. Where appropriate, more guidance information is also printed beneath the questions. However, if you require further assistance please telephone the ASHE survey team on **0300 1234 938**.

Guidance on completing the questionnaire

Section 1 – Employee Details

A specific date in **April** is chosen so that all respondents refer to the same point in time. This reference date is not the same every year.

Depending on your answer to **Question 1**, you will be directed to the correct section of the form, i.e. either **Question 2a** if you answer 'Yes' or **Question 9a** if you answer 'No'.

Section 2 – Job Details

If you answered 'Yes' to **Question 1** you will be directed to complete this section, which asks for the date the employee started working for your organisation and full details of their main job.

Section 3 – Workplace and Home Postcodes

Postcode information is important to the publication of the ASHE results as it allows ONS to generate earnings statistics for different geographical breakdowns.

The employee's workplace postcode should be for their main place of work and not a central or head office address. You can give a central or head office address if the employee has no specified base.

Please check that the postcodes printed on your questionnaire are correct; if not, please provide the correct information. If we do not already have postcode information for the employee, we will print 'NOT KNOWN' in the boxes.

Please note that **Question 3b**, which asks for the employee's home postcode, is voluntary.

Section 4 – Hours and Earnings for the Pay Period

This section requires you to provide information for your employee's earnings and hours worked. Please indicate the usual pay period in **Question 4a** and then continue to relate all remaining answers in this section to that pay period.

Answer **Questions 4d** and **4f** in full hours and minutes; e.g. please write 30 minutes instead of 0.5 hours (as the latter would be read as 50 minutes and so would be incorrect in our final results).

Basic hours for teachers: Some teachers in England and Wales work from a '1,265 directed hours per year' agreement, or a '1,365' agreement in Scotland. If your employee is part-time, ensure that you state their paid basic hours and not their teaching hours. Annual leave entitlement for both agreements should be 65 days.

Gross pay in the pay period (**Question 4k**): If your gross pay amount differs from the total of your answers to **Questions 4c e, g, i** and j, please provide an explanation in the comments box at the end of **Section 4**.

Hourly rate of pay (**Question 4m**): Only answer this question if you have crossed the 'Yes' box in **Question 4l**.

Section 5 - Pension Arrangements

This section asks for information on current membership and contributions to any pension scheme run or facilitated by your organisation. Other types of personal pension or additional voluntary contributions (AVCs) should NOT be included. If either the employee or employer is on a 'contribution holiday' the employee is still a member of the pension scheme.

Please choose **only one** of the options in **Question 5c**, which refers to the employee's main pension scheme. If you are unsure, choose the scheme with the closest definition. Further information about each scheme can be found in the **Glossary**.

Please provide amounts for pension contributions and pensionable pay that are for the same pay period given in **Question 4a**. Please convert any annual figures to the pay period given in **Question 4a**. For example, to convert an annual figure where the pay period is weekly, divide the annual figure by 52.14 (precise number of weeks in a year).

Pension information should generally be available on an employee's pay and/or personnel records. If pension arrangements are organised by an insurance company, you should obtain the details from them.

What to do if...

- ...the employee or employer contribution is a percentage:

Convert to a monetary value by multiplying the employee's pensionable pay by the percentage. For example, if an employee has a percentage contribution of 3.5% and a pensionable pay monthly of £1,200, the employee contribution is £1,200 x 3.5% = £42 per month.

- ...there are no contributions:

If the contributions are nil (for instance, if the pension scheme is non contributory or the employer or employee is on a 'contribution holiday'), write a single zero. If values are unknown, please leave blank.

- ...the employee is not a member of any of the pension schemes run or facilitated by the employer:

Answer ‘No’ to **Question 5a** and go straight to **Question 6a**.

- ...the employer pension contribution or part of it covers more than one employee:

Please do not include any lump sum figures that cover more than one employee. If contributions are a mixture of payments to individuals and lump sums paid to the scheme to cover more than one employee, give the individual amount for the employee but exclude any amounts that cover more than one employee. If no individual amount is known, leave blank.

Section 6 – Annual Earnings

Please note that, unlike the previous sections of the form, this section deals with **annual** information.

We ask for information relating to the most recent tax year prior to the survey reference date.

Please note that if your employee is part of any type of salary sacrifice scheme you should answer ‘Yes’ to **Question 6c** and then enter figures corresponding to the value of goods or services they receive in **Question 6d**.

Section 7 – Annual Leave Entitlement

Annual leave should be recorded in **days**. Please enter the number of whole days before the decimal point and any fractions after the decimal point. For example, if the employee is entitled to 30 and a half days paid annual leave enter 30 before the decimal point and 5 after it, i.e. 30.5 days.

Section 8 – Pay Agreement

This section is to establish whether your employee’s pay has reference to a collective agreement, and at what level this exists. See **Glossary** for definitions of the different types of collective agreements.

Section 9 - Employee History

This section only needs to be completed if you have crossed the ‘No’ box in **Question 1**. If the employee has ever been employed by your organisation and has now left then you will need to provide the month and year that they left. If they have never been employed by your organisation then answer ‘No’ to **Question 9a** and go straight to **Question 10b**.

Section 10 – Comments and Contact Details

This section has a box for comments where you can tell us anything you think might help us regarding the information you have provided.

We also ask for a contact name and telephone number so we can get in touch with you to ask about the information provided should we have any queries.

Frequently asked questions

Why do I need to provide ONS with this information?

Providing accurate information for this survey is a statutory requirement under the Statistics of Trade Act (1947). Information collected is used to compile annual statistics which illustrate the distribution of earnings and paid hours for employees within industries, occupations and regions. This analysis is used extensively by government departments, professional organisations, the media and the general public. Information is never given out in a form that identifies an individual employee or employer. It is an offence under the Statistics of Trade Act (1947) for ONS to disclose any individual data relating to a return.

What if I can't provide the information required?

If information is not available by the return date, please make every effort to derive this information from records kept or give informed estimates. Leaving a section blank may prompt a representative from ONS to contact you in order to further clarify information. If there is no alternative, give a full explanation in the comment box in **Section 10**.

Why does the questionnaire refer to the past if the employee still works for the company?

The ASHE questionnaire is written in the past tense because it refers to a reference date that is in the past. You are required to fill in this questionnaire if the specified person was employed by you on the reference date, even if they are not employed by you at present.

For what period should I provide information?

The reference period for which you should provide information changes throughout the questionnaire and is summarised below:

- **Sections 1, 2 and 3 –** information should be provided for the survey reference date in April specified on the questionnaire.

- **Sections 4 and 5** – hours and earnings information provided should relate to the employee's pay period that includes the reference date in April, i.e. the pay period given in answer to **Question 4a**.

- **Sections 6 and 8** – annual information provided should relate to the most recent tax year (ending 5 April) prior to the survey reference date.

Why are there 'Go to...' instructions after some of the questions?

Where a 'Go to...' instruction appears after a question, please go straight to the question specified depending on your answer. This will prevent you from answering unnecessary questions and will reduce the amount of contradictory information collected by ONS.

If the employee is a teacher on a '1,265' or '1,365 directed hours' agreement, how do I calculate their basic hours?

If you are having trouble calculating your employee's basic hours for the pay period specified in **Question 4a**, the following information may be helpful:

- '1,265 directed hours' agreement:
  - Basic WEEKLY hours should be 32 hours and 26 minutes (divide 1,265 by 39 working weeks).
  - Basic MONTHLY hours should be 141 hours and 2 minutes.

- '1,365' (Scotland) agreement:
  - Basic WEEKLY hours are capped at 35 hours.
  - Basic MONTHLY hours should be 152 hours and 11 minutes.

For further assistance please telephone the ASHE survey team on **0300 1234 938**.

Glossary

- **Additional voluntary contributions (AVCs)** - a pension top-up arrangement where an employee pays additional amounts into a pension run by their employer in order to increase their pension entitlement. Normally, the contributions are deducted from the employee's pay.

- **Benefits in kind** - benefits which employees receive from their employment but which are not included in their salaries or wages. They include things like company cars, private medical insurance paid for by the employer and cheap or free loans.

- **Collective agreement** - an agreement between one or more employers and one or more trade unions/workers' committees concerning aspects of employment such as pay and conditions. Types of agreement include:

  - **National/Industry** - an agreement at UK level, or an agreement for a particular industry as a whole. This is the most common type of agreement and exists mostly for occupations such as teachers, health professionals and protective service occupations.

  - **Sub-national** - an agreement at regional level; this can cover more than one employer and more than one industry. This type of agreement is quite rare but exists for some public service professionals, childcare services and some teaching occupations.

  - **Organisational** - a single employer agreement that covers some or all of its employees. This type of agreement is common in retail and sales companies, and general administrative occupations.

  - **Workplace** - an agreement applying only to employees in one workplace or site. Agricultural occupations and transport companies sometimes have this type of agreement.

- **Contribution holiday** - a temporary period during which the employer or employee takes a break in making pension contributions because of a surplus in a defined benefit pension fund.

- **Pensionable pay** - the earnings on which benefits and/or contributions are calculated under the pension scheme rules. One or more elements of earnings (e.g. overtime) may be excluded.

- **Pension schemes:**

  - **Defined benefit** - a pension in which the rules of the scheme specify the rate of benefits to be paid. The most common defined benefit (DB) scheme is a final salary scheme in which the benefits are based on the number of years of pensionable service, the accrual rate and on the final year's salary. Other DB schemes calculate benefits using the average of selected years' salaries, or the best year's salary within a specified period before retirement. Career Average Revalued Earnings (CARE) schemes are becoming increasingly common; a form of DB scheme where the pension is based on salary multiplied by the accrual rate in each year of an individual's working life. Entitlements that are built up each year are revalued until retirement in line with inflation or earnings.

- **Defined contribution** - a pension scheme in which the benefits are determined by the contributions paid into the scheme, the investment return on those contributions, management charges and the type of annuity purchased upon retirement. Such schemes are also known as money purchase schemes.

- **Group personal pension (GPP)** - an arrangement made for the employees of a particular employer (or group of employers) to participate in a personal pension scheme (provided by insurance companies) on a group basis. This is a collecting arrangement only; the contract is between the individual and the pension provider, normally an insurance company. The benefits received from GPPs are determined by the contributions paid, the investment return on those contributions (less management charges) and the type of annuity purchased upon retirement.

- **Stakeholder pension** - available since 2001, a flexible, portable, personal pension arrangement (provided by insurance companies) with capped management charges, that must meet the conditions set out in the Welfare Reform and Pensions Act (1999) and be registered with The Pensions Regulator. They can be taken out by an individual or facilitated by an employer. You should only include if the employee is a member of any stakeholder pension that has been arranged through the employer. The benefits received from stakeholder pensions are determined by the contributions paid into the scheme, the investment return on those contributions (less management charges) and the type of annuity purchased upon retirement.

- **Group Self Invested Personal Pension (SIPP)** - a specialised type of group personal pension scheme under which employees make their own investment decisions. You should only include if the employee is a member of any SIPP that has been arranged through the employer.

- **National Employment Savings Trust (NEST)** - a workplace pension scheme set up at the end of 2011 that all employers can use to automatically enrol their UK-based workers. NEST was set up to meet the criteria of a qualifying scheme under new employer duties outlined in the Pensions Acts 2008 and 2011. NEST is an occupational defined contribution scheme with fixed levels of minimum contributions (specified as a percentage of a member's earnings). The benefits received from NEST will be determined by the contributions paid into the scheme, the investment return on those contributions (less management charges) and the type of annuity purchased upon retirement.

- **S2P/ SERPS** - the Additional State Pension received in addition to the Basic State Pension. The State Second Pension (S2P) is the successor, from 6 April 2002, to the State Earnings-Related Pension Scheme (SERPS), previously known as graduated retirement benefit. The additional state pension provides an earnings-related second pension based on National Insurance contributions. It is possible for defined benefit occupational pension schemes to be **contracted out** of the additional state pension.

  - **Contracting out** - this is a statutory arrangement where pension schemes that meet certain conditions may contract out of S2P. The members' and employers' National Insurance contributions (NIC) are reduced or partially rebated. Members of a contracted out pension scheme obtain rights in the pension scheme in place of additional earnings-related benefits under the state scheme. Whether an employee is contracted out may be indicated on the employee's pay slip by a NIC table letter of D, E, C or L. NIC tables are issued by HM Revenue and Customs for employers to use to calculate the correct NIC amounts to apply to an employee's earnings. From April 2012 contracting out for employees in defined contribution or personal pensions ceased. Contracting out is now only possible for members of defined benefit occupational pension schemes.

- **Salary sacrifice scheme** - where an employee agrees to receive goods or services in place of some of their basic pay. The employee agrees to new employment terms with a new level of basic pay. The goods and services received can be any non-cash benefit but common examples are child-minding services, health or dental plans, use of a company car, changes in pension contributions, etc.

For further assistance please telephone the ASHE survey team on **0300 1234 938**.