Derbyshire
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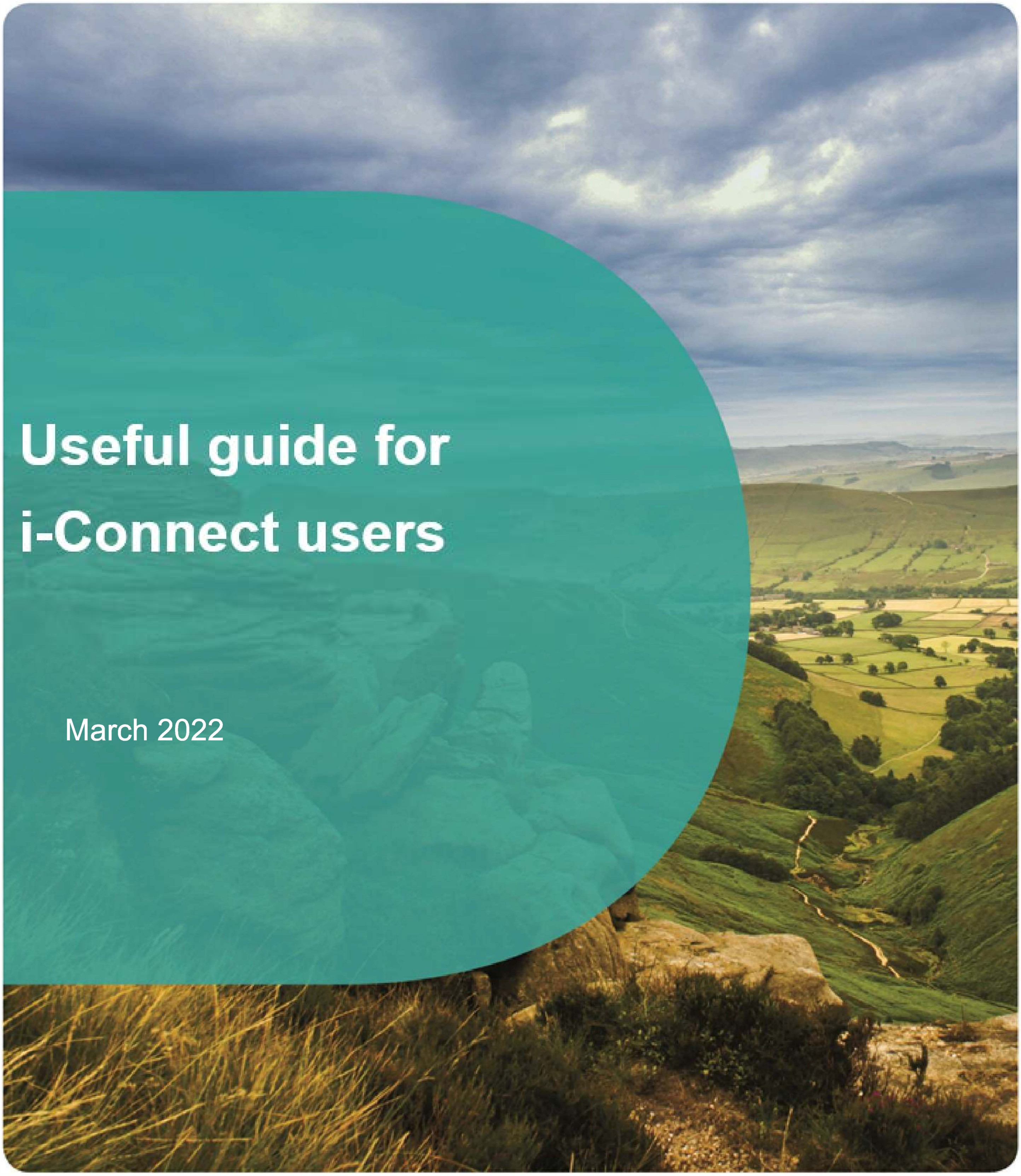

Useful guide for i-Connect users

March 2022

County Hall, Matlock, Derbyshire, DE4 3AH
Administered by Derbyshire County Council

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Contents

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Introduction to i-Connect

What is i-Connect?

i-Connect is a secure platform which automates the submission of pension data.

Our aim is that all of our employers will have replaced the current year-end return process and the majority of individual data submissions with i-Connect by March 2023.

Methods of submitting data

File upload - You can report directly from your payroll system onto our i-Connect csv template, which you can then submit directly through the secure i-Connect portal to our pensions database. There is also a separate template to enable payroll providers to submit data for multiple employers on a single submission.

Online Return – If you have less than 30 members and/or your members are paid the same every month, you may be interested in our Online Return method of submitting data. If you use the Online Return method, i-Connect will guide you through 8 screens in which you only need to edit data that differs from the previous month.

If you are yet to contact us regarding your i-Connect onboarding process please email pensions.iconnect@derbyshire.gov.uk as soon as possible. We will then provide you with the relevant template to complete so we can start our testing process.

Our testing process

When you start your onboarding process, we will test a few months' worth of submissions to get you up to date before we provide you with access to the i-Connect portal so you can submit data yourself. As you will be submitting data directly into our pensions database, it is important we test the quality and formatting of your data to ensure you do not encounter any serious issues when you're submitting this data yourself on a monthly basis.

Until you are provided with access to i-Connect, you should submit all forms as you would have prior to the implementation of i-Connect. This is because our testing is conducted in our dedicated test environment to begin with, and until we have satisfied our testing criteria, we will not load any data into our live environment. Therefore, it is important you continue to send all forms as usual during this process, so your members suffer no detriment to the processing of their benefits.

When you 'go-live' on i-Connect, you will be sent an email confirming which forms you no longer have to complete.

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Reporting Help

What information should I report every month?

Please refer to the guidance documents provided to you at the start of your onboarding, this will confirm which items fall into the following categories:

- Mandatory
- Conditional
- Optional
- Ignore

What should be included in the field PENSIONABLE_PAY?

Identical to our year-end process and our leavers forms, please include the following in both the monthly and cumulative 'year-to-date' pensionable pay figures reported via i-Connect:

- Monthly salary payments made to the member
- Assumed Pensionable Pay (APP) where applicable
- Additional allowances (as per the 2014 regulations)
- Any additional payments/arrears paid that month that are 'pensionable' (e.g. pay award)

If you submit data using a 'file upload' – the fields this relates to are:

- PENSIONABLE_PAY
- MAIN_SECTION_CUMULATIVE_PEN_PAY
- 5050_SECTION_CUMULATIVE_PEN_PAY

The total monthly pensionable pay reported in the 'PENSIONABLE_PAY' field should reconcile to the pensionable pay reported on your contribution return (CR1) form.

How should I report term-time workers (payment days/weeks)?

It has always been Derbyshire Pension Fund's policy to reduce the Full Time Equivalent salary by payment days/weeks – please do not reduce the weekly working hours by payment days/weeks. We appreciate that other LGPS funds can apply this the other way around, however it is very important we remain consistent with our policy on this to date, otherwise this could directly impact a member's final salary benefits.

Auto enrolment exercises

When you go through an auto-enrolment exercise, please ensure your next i-Connect submission includes <u>all opt-ins</u> from this exercise. Where employees have opted out on entry to the scheme, you should also report an opt-out date for these employees. It is important these are reported so we keep a record of those that have opted in/out as this can aid us in responding to queries from members / The Pensions Regulator.

How should I report leavers?

When a member has left the scheme, please report the relevant date of leaving and where possible, please ensure the 'reason for leaving' closely resembles those available on our L1 leaver form. This will help the team quickly identify what the next step is in closing the member's pension record. The reasons available on the L1 are:

- Opted out
- Compulsory Transfer (TUPE)
- End of contract
- Resignation / Redundancy Under 55
- Dismissal / Ill Health Capability
- Gross Misconduct Dismissal
- Redundancy 55+ / Efficiency Dismissal
- Flexible Retirement
- Retirement / Resignation 55+
- Employee Reaching Age 75
- Ill Health Retirement
- Death in service

If the reason for leaving does not closely resemble one of the options available on the L1 leaver form, this is likely to be queried with you.

L1 forms should always be submitted without delay if the leaver is aged 55+, or if the reason for leaving is 'ill health retirement' or 'death in service'. Any delay to these being submitted will cause undue delays to processing benefits payable to the member (or their beneficiary).

Where leavers do not meet the criteria for an L1 but they have service prior to 1st April 2014, we will ask you to complete an L3 form. We appreciate you may not know when some members have service prior to 1st April 2014 due to transfers/aggregations, so we identify L3s required monthly and include these in our monthly queries.

Where members are under age 55, and do not meet the criteria for either an L1 or an L3, we can close the record down without a leavers form as all the information we need will have been submitted via i-Connect.

Please note – during your onboarding process you still need to send L1s for all leavers as detailed on page 3 of this guidance.

Service breaks

Where members have received reduced pay and do not meet the criteria for APP, you should report a service break to the fund for the effected period. Where members have had multiple service breaks within the same period, please email details of this to pensions.iconnect@derbyshire.gov.uk as soon as you have completed your current months' submission.

Where APP is applicable, please do not report a service break

Member contact details

On your i-Connect submissions please only report a member's current home address. Please **do not** provide any of the following:

- Member's personal or work email address(es)
- Member's personal or work telephone number
- Member's work address

Should the member want to access our member self-service portal "*My Pension Online*", they can complete our Online Access Request form. This process will add their email address to our records.

Unless the member has completed the Online Access Request form, we do not have consent from the member to hold that information on their pension record.

Full Time Equivalent Salaries

When providing the member's Full Time Equivalent (FTE) Salary, this should be the FTE as at the end date of the month plus any additional allowances accrued during the year (as per the 2008 regulations).

On year-end returns you will have provided this information across two separate columns. One to report the FTE and another to report additional allowances accrued during the year (as per the 2008 regulations). This is now only a single column on your i-Connect submissions and the figure provided in this column is used to calculate final salary benefits on the pension statements we send to active members every year. As described on page 4, the base rate FTE should be reduced for payment days/weeks.

How do I report data for members with multiple roles?

Where members have multiple roles, you need to separate the data on your submission per role. If multiple roles are paid under the same payroll number, you should provide a unique post reference for each post. I-Connect will use this unique post reference to match to the relevant record on our database. If you require further information on this, please do not hesitate to email pensions.iconnect@derbyshire.gov.uk.

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Employer responsibilities

Deadlines for submissions

When you are 'live' on i-Connect, the submission deadline is the same as your CR1 deadline – 19th of the following month. E.g. your April data should be submitted no later than 19th May.

If you are expecting to miss this deadline due to situations outside of your control, please contact us as soon as possible to make us aware.

Monthly queries

Following each of your submissions, we run a range of data quality reports and send you any queries identified as soon as we can. Whilst these reports will check a variety of data items, it is your responsibility to ensure the data submitted is accurate. You should aim to resolve all queries before you submit your next file.

If you submit data on behalf of multiple employers, it is your responsibility to investigate any queries raised and provide responses as soon as possible. If you have any agreements in place regarding the completion of forms for the fund (e.g. you are a payroll provider but the school complete their own forms), you should pass on any requests for forms sent to you by the fund.

Reconciliation

Following each submission, we will attempt to reconcile the monthly i-Connect data against the contributions return (CR1) form you have submitted for the same employer/period. If we cannot reconcile the data against the CR1, this will be queried and a revised CR1 or details of which data is to be revised should be submitted as soon as possible.

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