

Questions & Answers

Important information about pensions allowances

The amount of pension tax relief you receive is restricted. Since 6 April 2016 further restrictions may affect your entitlement and you may need to take action, depending upon your financial circumstances.

Please read our questions and answers and speak to a financial adviser if you feel you are affected by these changes.

What is the Annual Allowance?

There's a limit to the amount of pension savings (also known as pension inputs) which you can make over a 12-month period, before you face a tax charge. This is called the Annual Allowance. All pension input periods are aligned to the tax year (6 April to 5 April).

For money purchase arrangements, such as personal pensions and additional voluntary contributions (AVCs), the amount of Annual Allowance you have used is found by adding together the total contributions paid by you, or on your behalf over the tax year.

For defined benefit arrangements, such as final salary schemes, the amount of Annual Allowance you have used is worked out using a calculation to factor in the growth of your benefits over the tax year.

If you go above the Annual Allowance, you may be liable for a tax charge and you must let HMRC know by completing a tax return.

How much is the Annual Allowance?

Tax Year	Annual Allowance
2018/2019	£40,000
2017/2018	£40,000
2016/2017	£40,000
2015/2016 – after 8 July 2015	£0 (plus up to £40,000 carried over from the period up until 8 July 2015)
2015/2016 before 9 July 2015	£80,000

What if I don't have sufficient allowance?

You are able to carry forward any unused Annual Allowance from the three previous tax years, provided you were a member of a UK-registered pension scheme during this period. Special rules applied to the 2015/2016 tax year.

Does the level of my income affect my Annual Allowance?

If your total income, including income from investments, pensions, your salary, bonuses or trading profits, is over £110,000, you may have a reducing Annual Allowance. This is called the Tapered Annual Allowance.

The maximum reduction for those with the highest incomes will be £30,000, leaving a minimum allowance of £10,000 in the tax year.

It's worth noting that regardless of whether you are subject to the Tapered Annual Allowance or not, you may still be able to carry forward unused allowance from the last three years to increase your allowance in any tax year.

The Tapered Annual Allowance and carrying forward allowances, is a tricky subject, so you should speak to a financial adviser. Alternatively, for more information visit: gov.uk/guidance/pension-schemes-work-out-your-tapered-annual-allowance

What's the Money Purchase Annual Allowance?

The Money Purchase Annual Allowance (MPAA) will apply if you have "flexibly accessed" your pension.

There are different ways you can "flexibly access" and the most common are:

- taking a cash lump sum (uncrystallised funds pension lump sum);
- taking income from flexi-access drawdown. Taking tax-free cash only does not count;
- if you have a capped drawdown fund and take income above the cap.

The MPAA may limit the amount of pension contributions that can be made before an Annual Allowance tax charge is made.

The MPAA will not affect you if you have taken final salary or career average benefits only. It also does not apply to any final salary or career average benefits that you may build up in the future.

How much is the Money Purchase Annual Allowance?

The MPAA for different tax years, are listed below:

Tax Year	MPAA limit
2018/2019	£4,000
2017/2018	£4,000
2016/2017	£10,000
2015/2016 – after 8 July 2015	£0 (plus up to £10,000 carried over from period up until 8 July 2015)
2015/2016 before 9 July 2015	£20,000

How will I know if I have triggered the MPAA?

If you have flexibly accessed any pension, so triggering the MPAA, then your pension scheme or provider will tell you.

You then have to inform any other money purchase pension scheme which you, your employer or a third party is paying into on your behalf within 91 days. If you don't do this, you may be fined by HMRC. You don't need to do this if you are only paying into a defined benefit scheme.

What happens if I exceed the MPAA?

If you are subject to the MPAA, you will get a tax charge on any pension contributions to money purchase pensions which exceed the MPAA in a tax year. This is based on both contributions made by you, and on your behalf.

Unlike the Annual Allowance *there is no facility to carry forward any unused MPAA*.

In any year when you exceed the MPAA, your Annual Allowance for other types of tax-relieved pension saving, such as defined benefits, is reduced by the MPAA.

What happens if I am subject to both the Tapered Annual Allowance and the MPAA?

If you are subject to the MPAA, your limit on contributions made by you, or on your behalf, to money purchase plans is reduced to £4,000.

For other types of tax-relieved pension saving, such as defined benefits, you would have an alternative Annual Allowance of £36,000 for 2018/2019 (the standard Annual Allowance less the MPAA).

However, if you are also subject to the Tapered Annual Allowance the alternative Annual Allowance will be subject to a gradual tapering.

This means if you are affected by the MPAA and Tapered Annual Allowance your alternative Annual Allowance is reduced by the Tapered Annual Allowance, less the MPAA.

The amount of the tapered reduction will depend on the amount of your total income and potentially could reduce your alternative Annual Allowance for other types of pension saving to £6,000. Where the MPAA is exceeded and the Annual Allowance is tapered to a minimum of £10,000.

If you think you may be affected by this, we'd suggest getting in touch with a financial adviser.

Is there a limit to the amount of pension benefits I can build up?

There's a limit to the total amount of pension benefits that can be drawn before you incur a tax charge.

This limit is known as the standard Lifetime Allowance (LTA) and applies to the total of all of your pension benefits including any existing entitlement you have to defined benefit schemes, but excluding the State Pension.

The standard Lifetime Allowance (LTA) is:

2018/2019	£1,030,000
2017/2018	£1,000,000

The LTA will continue to change each year in line with any increases in the Consumer Prices Index (CPI).

With some limited exceptions, each time you take benefits from a pension scheme, including payments out, when you reach 75 or die, it uses up your LTA.

Once the allowance is used up, a tax charge applies. This is currently 55% if the amount over the lifetime allowance is used for a lump sum, or 25% if it is used for income payments.

You may be able to apply for protection from the tax charge or you may have a form of protection from when the LTA was reduced in the past.

I have some more questions. Where can I find help?

Working out tax can be tricky and depends on your personal circumstances and tax rules can also change in the future, so we'd recommend you speaking to a financial adviser on this subject.

And there's also two free and impartial services, set up by the Government, to help you.

The Money Advice Service

General guidance on all aspects of pensions is available from the Money Advice Service at moneyadvice.service.org.uk

Tel: **0300 500 5000**

Pension Wise

For people over 50, Pension Wise is also available. This free government service offers guidance to people with defined contribution pensions on all the options available for their pension savings.

You can find out more at pensionwise.gov.uk, or by calling **0800 280 8880** to book a phone or face-to-face appointment.

More help online

For more information on the subjects covered in this leaflet, please visit the HMRC website: gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-revenue-customs

