

STAFF NOTICE 22

Relocation Expenses

AIMED AT	All FC employees considering, or involved in, a transfer
DATED	1 July 2005 (revised Transfer Grant from 1 April 2007)
CONTACT	Margaret Reilly HR Services, Silvan House
FILE REF	PP5/13

Purpose

1. This notice provides information on changes to the expenses you are entitled to when transferring to another Forestry Commission office on public interest terms. The changes are effective from 1 July 2005.

Background

2. A review of relocation expenses commenced some time ago to simplify the rules, offer a more flexible package that removed barriers for people considering relocation and minimised the stress and disruption to you and your family. The review was delayed following instructions from the Cabinet Office that government departments should introduce no new policies on relocation – one of the outcomes flowing from the publication of the Lyons report. Further guidance is still awaited from the Cabinet Office but the Forestry Commission has decided to introduce some interim changes that should help those relocating.

Summary of Changes

3. The interim changes include improvements to the following:
 - Prelim Visit (Special Paid Leave, Accommodation Costs and Travel Costs)
 - Special Paid Leave
 - Accommodation Costs
 - House Survey Costs
 - Removal of Furniture
 - Transfer Grant
 - Additional Housing Cost Allowance
 - Bridging Loan Expenses

In addition there is now an option to use the Government Procurement Card during the period of relocation for transfer costs as well as additional support for you and your family. A table showing details of the changes is included in the notice and is followed by a Q&A brief explaining relocation expenses and the changes.

Action

4. The following notices have been replaced by the issue of this notice and should be destroyed:
 - SN88 Transfer Grant

- NIM72 Bridging Finance

Changes are currently being made to the 'On The Move' booklet and the Staff Handbook will be updated at the next opportunity.

5. Staff Notices are sent out by email and copies are placed on the HR eConnect site. Managers should make arrangements to ensure that people who do not have access to email receive a personal copy of this notice. For further information about this notice please refer to the contact box above.

Kim P Lardge
Director HR

TABLE SHOWING CHANGES EFFECTIVE FROM 1 JULY 2005

EXPENSE TYPE	INDICATIVE LIMIT
<p><u>PRELIM VISIT & SPECIAL PAID LEAVE</u></p> <p>1. Special Paid Leave</p> <p>For anything associated with the relocation where time off work is required, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prelim Visit • House/School/Childcare Search • House Move <p>2. Commercial Accommodation & Meal Costs</p> <p>Actual receipted accommodation and meal costs for the individual, partner and children.</p> <p>3. Travel Costs</p> <p>Actual travel costs for individual, partner and children to visit new location.</p> <p>Travel to search for accommodation.</p>	<p>SPL to be agreed with the line manager, dependant on the needs of the individual – normally between 5-10 days in total for prelim visit(s), house/school/childcare search and house move but additional leave can be granted in exceptional circumstances.</p> <p>Necessary actual costs reimbursed within current accommodation booking limit plus meal rate e.g. for a family of four staying in Edinburgh the <u>maximum</u> overnight amount would be £348 (4X£65 + 4X £22.00).</p> <p>Flexibility to complete the house search over several visits – where the line manager agrees this is necessary.</p> <p>As required @ PTR rate.</p>
<p><u>COMMERCIAL ACCOMMODATION COSTS</u></p> <p>4. Actual receipted accommodation costs plus Meal Rate plus Incidental Expenses Allowance for individual (married or single) for the first 2 months from the date started in the new post.</p> <p>5. After 2 months - actual receipted accommodation costs only.</p>	<p>Accommodation costs within appropriate T&S booking limits (Staff Notice 16).</p> <p>At the end of the 2 month period described in 4 above, provided an individual has a dual commitment they may receive up to the relevant booking limit for accommodation costs. This will be reviewed at 3 monthly intervals. Payments will cease once that dual commitment ends. At that time you may be eligible to receive temporary AHCA in line with the current rules.</p>

EXPENSE TYPE	INDICATIVE LIMIT
<p><u>HOUSE SURVEY COSTS</u></p> <p>6. Homebuyers survey reimbursed or full structural survey if the homebuyers survey recommends or if the property is over 25 years old.</p>	
<p><u>REMOVAL OF FURNITURE</u></p> <p>7. Use relocation company's services or individual organises own removal.</p>	<p>Own estimate must be reasonable in comparison to relocation company. If not, further estimates should be obtained.</p>
<p><u>TRANSFER GRANT</u></p> <p>8. Rates from 1 April 2007 are:</p> <p>Married Employee - £3957 Single Householder - £2406 Single Non-Householder - £929</p>	<p>The new rates are payable to individuals who have a house purchase date of 1 April 2007 or later.</p> <p>Reviewed annually based on Retail Price Increase in February with rate changed from 1 April.</p>
<p><u>ADDITIONAL HOUSING COST ALLOWANCE</u></p> <p>9. Payable over 7 years at the full rate.</p> <p>(The period of payment/administration is being reduced but not the amount payable)</p>	<p>Payable to individuals who have a house purchase date of 1 July 2005 or later.</p>
<p><u>BRIDGING LOAN</u></p> <p>10. Full bridging costs reimbursable including valuation fees, legal fees, arrangement fee and monthly charge (interest). The relocation company Financial Adviser should be used to obtain value for money.</p>	<p>If an individual chooses not to use the relocation company Financial Adviser then a quote must be obtained and passed to the relocation company to check 'value for money' before reimbursement is agreed.</p>
<p><u>GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT CARD (GPC)</u></p> <p>11. Option to use GPC during period of relocation for transfer costs.</p>	<p>Within rules set out in the GPC Guide. Adjustments to subsequent claims will be made where expenditure exceeds entitlements.</p>

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT & ASSISTANCE

12. Financial - use of an independent financial adviser with the relocation company.

13. A 'New Area Information Pack' may be provided from our relocation company and an opportunity to request area information from the new unit manager.

14. Partner Support – use by your partner of a Commission PC in your current location for house search, job search and CV production. Working Partner Support through the relocation company which includes a practical guide on searching for jobs.

Q&A BRIEF EXPLAINING RELOCATION EXPENSES & THE CHANGES

Q1: Who is entitled to relocation costs?

If you are transferred on public interest terms you will be entitled to relocation costs. Public interest terms apply to career development moves that are also in the interests of the Commission, transfers resulting from success at internal competitions (trawls) and certain compassionate transfer cases. The amount of help depends on your status (marital and householder) and whether the distance between the old and new stations justifies full relocation or should be restricted to excess fares (the additional cost of home to office journeys).

Q2: Where can I find the definitive transfer rules?

Chapter 14 of the Staff Handbook contains the full details on transfer rules and expenses payable. As this notice amends some of the expenses payable, the chapter will be amended soon along with the 'On The Move' booklet provided to all those transferring. The transfer rules are quite complex and depend on your status and circumstances. You should speak to your [HR Services contact](#) to clarify your own entitlements prior to accepting a post which would involve a move of house. Once a posting has been confirmed you should arrange to meet your [HR Services contact](#) to discuss options and entitlements before you start to plan the move.

Q3: Are all my relocation costs reimbursed?

The main principle underlying the rules is that of reimbursement of reasonable expenses necessarily incurred. The Commission does not stipulate what kind of home you may buy or rent and there is no objection to you improving your housing standards when you move home, but such betterment will not be at the Commission's expense, because this would breach Cabinet Office's rules for the Civil Service on the proper use of public money.

Q4: If I am transferred to a more expensive area, how will the Commission help with the additional costs?

If you are moving to a more expensive area in line with the Valuation Office Agency's (VOA) average price lists provided by the Inland Revenue, you may qualify for an advance of up to six months' gross salary should you have a shortfall in funding the purchase of your new home. You may also qualify for Additional Housing Cost Allowance (AHCA) which helps to cover the necessary additional mortgage interest costs/rent when buying/renting a property equivalent to that in which you were living at your old station.

Q5: Why have more radical changes not been introduced at this time?

The review of transfer costs highlighted the advantages of providing a more flexible package but some of the major changes considered do not meet the strict conditions laid down in the Civil Service Management Code which controls policy in all Government Departments. The Cabinet Office are reviewing options for changing some aspects of relocation policy.

Q6: What does 'Indicative Limit' mean in the table of changes?

The entitlements have been simplified and are more flexible, recognising that each person transferring has different circumstances and requirements. The 'Indicative Limit' is a guide to assist you and your line manager tailor the entitlement to meet your needs. HR Services can offer guidance if there is any uncertainty over meeting exceptional or unusual requirements.

Q7: Is the '30 night' rule for accommodation costs still applicable?

No, this complex rule has been removed. You can now have 2 months of full reimbursement (actual receipted Accommodation Costs, Meal Rate and Incidental Expenses Allowance) followed by reimbursement of actual receipted Accommodation Costs only.

Q8: How do I apply for a Government Procurement Card for transfer costs?

When you meet your HR Services contact they will explain the process for using GPC for transfer costs and how you obtain a card. You should acquaint yourself with Finance rules on using the card.

Q9: If I have further questions about this notice or my entitlements who should I contact?

You should get in touch with your [HR Services contact](#) for help and advice on your entitlements. If you have a specific question about this notice or have comments about the Commission's policy on Relocation Expenses please contact Margaret Reilly, HR Services, Silvan House.

**Human Resources
Silvan House**