

**GUIDANCE ON STARTING SALARIES, INCREMENTAL
POINTS, ACTING ARRANGEMENTS AND RELATED ISSUES
FOR STAFF PAID ON AGENDA FOR CHANGE TERMS AND
CONDITIONS OF SERVICE**

August 2025

Guidance on Starting Salaries, Incremental Points, Acting Arrangements and Related Issues – Updated August 2025

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1. INTRODUCTION

This guidance is based on the AfC Terms & Conditions Handbook and takes account of additional nationally issued guidance. **Managers are asked to note that their ability to apply discretion on starting salaries can only occur within the scope of the AFC terms and conditions of service, which this guidance is intended to outline.** The purpose of this guidance note is to bring together in a single document the information managers require in order to determine starting salaries and the process where there may be a case for awarding incremental credit.

Agenda for Change (AfC) specifies the arrangements which apply to staff joining or rejoining the NHS. Managers are asked to note that awarding incremental credit without good reason is contrary to the principle of fair pay on which AfC terms and conditions are based. This guidance also aims to ensure that managers across all AfC job families in NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde are implementing these arrangements fairly and consistently. This guidance does not apply to entitlement dates for the purpose of Annual Leave, Sick Leave, or Maternity Leave.

Full arrangements for existing staff are contained within the AfC handbook, updated from time to time by NHS Circulars. The latest version of the AfC Handbook can be accessed via the [MSG website](#).

2. STARTING SALARIES FOR NEW STAFF (NEW ENTRANTS TO THE NHS)

2a) Starting Salary at Minimum Spine Point

This section applies to staff joining the NHS for the **first time**. All new employees should be appointed onto the minimum spine point of the pay band unless the circumstances described at paragraph 2b) apply.

2b) Starting Salary above the Minimum Spine Point

Managers may offer new entrants a salary above the minimum of the scale to recognise relevant experience ([Ref DL\(2021\) 47](#)). Where a manager can evidence that a new entrant has significant relevant experience which would justify a starting salary above the minimum of the pay band they are required to consult with their Human Resources Manager at the point when **the preferred candidate is identified and prior to any offer being made** – see Appendix 1 form. Guidance on processing the form for eESS is included at Section 11 and Appendix 2. Managers and Human Resources Managers are reminded of their responsibility to consider the impact on other posts/postholders to ensure fairness and consistency.

2c) Incremental Dates

The incremental date will be the anniversary of the date of appointment in both circumstances described above.

3. STARTING SALARIES FOR STAFF RE-JOINING AFTER A BREAK IN SERVICE GREATER THAN 3 MONTHS

3a) Break in Service

A break in service for the purposes of determining incremental credit is 3 months or more.

3b) Salary Placement

It has been nationally agreed that following a break in service, employers can award incremental credit in complete years only i.e. the staff member need not start at the minimum of the pay band however periods of less than 1 year or part years above 1 year will not be taken into consideration. In order to determine whether to grant increments for previous service this must be deemed to be relevant, and the following factors should all be taken into consideration:

- The staff member has relevant recognised service which equates directly to the competences required for the post;

- The staff member has worked out with the UK and has relevant recognised service which equates directly to the competencies required for the post.

To ensure fair pay and consistent processes managers who wish to appoint above the minimum should discuss this with their Human Resources Manager and complete the form at Appendix 1 for submission **at the same time the new start is completed on eESS**. This allows an appropriate audit trail for future reference should there be an equal pay claim. Where there has been a break greater than three months the Payroll Department will not apply a salary above the minimum of the band without an appropriately completed and authorised Starting Salaries Form - Appendix 1.

3c) Incremental date

The incremental date will be the anniversary of the date of appointment.

4. STARTING SALARIES FOR STAFF RE-JOINING WITHOUT A BREAK IN SERVICE OR WHERE THE BREAK IS LESS THAN 3 MONTHS

4a) Appointment to the Same Band

An individual re-joining without a break in service (or a break of less than 3 months) to the same pay band will retain their previous incremental point – application of this will rest with Payroll and will require no input from Managers

4b) Incremental Date

The incremental date will be the previous incremental date deferred by the number of days of broken service.

4c) Promotion

Staff member re-joining without a break in service (or break less than 3 months) must be treated with fairness and equity and placed on the appropriate spine point. Confirmation of previous NHS service is required and thereafter salary placement will be actioned by Payroll. Placement on the appropriate salary will be in accordance with the promotion rules outlined at paragraph 1.12 and 1.13 of the AfC Terms and Conditions. The incremental date will be the anniversary of the date of appointment.

5. STARTING SALARIES FOR EXISTING STAFF MOVING TO A NEW POST

5a) Promotion

Where an existing member of staff is promoted to a higher pay band, they will normally move to the minimum of the new pay band.

If, on promotion, the working pattern remains substantially the same, staff will move to the first point on their promoted band producing an increase when basic pay, and unsocial hours payments (if applicable) are combined.

Existing staff members will be placed on a higher starting salary under the following circumstances:

- 1) If the working pattern changes on promotion, pay should be set either at the minimum of the new pay band or, if this would result in no pay increase, the first pay point in the band which would deliver an increase in pay (by reference to basic pay and unsocial hours payments (if applicable) are combined). **Managers must confirm any changes to a staff members work pattern by adding a payroll note on eESS.**
- 2) **In exceptional circumstances**, where an existing staff member has previously received incremental salary credit (as outlined in Appendix 1 of this process) due to relevant previous experience gained at a higher level (in completed years only), consideration may be given to additional incremental credit in the event that the staff member secures a promoted post. The staff member must have previous experience (in completed years only) working at the same or higher level, managers must consult with their Human Resources Manager to determine whether additional incremental credit may be applied to the promoted post in circumstances such as:

- Person held a Band 6 post in NHS England for many years and secured a Band 5 post in NHSSGC with an Appendix 1 form used to appoint to the top of Band 5.
- The person then secures a Band 6 post within NHSSGC, so the manager may exceptionally re-consider their new starting salary to further recognise the Band 6 service from NHS England to determine if there is justification to apply a starting salary above the minimum of the pay band.

Managers are required to consult with their Human Resources Manager at the point **when the preferred candidate is identified and prior to any offer being made** to ensure consistency of application with staff who have always been employed by NHSSGC (see Appendix 1 form). Guidance on processing the form for eESS is included at Section 11 and Appendix 2.

- 3) Incremental credit will be given for time spent at the higher banding if the staff member has previously undertaken a period of secondment at the same banding as the promoted post.

5b) Pay Protection on Promotion

In line with [PCS\(AFC\)2022/1](#) staff on organisational change pay protection who secure a promoted post or are in a deployed post that is subsequently regraded, they will be placed on a pay point that takes into account their protected earnings to ensure no detriment. If the protected earnings exceed the top of the new pay scale an individual will move to the top and the balance of their protected earnings will be paid on a mark time basis.

5c) Pay on regrading

In accordance with NHS Scotland's job evaluation policy, if an individual's pay band increases as a result of a re-evaluation, their placement on the appropriate salary will be in accordance with the promotion rules outlined at paragraph 1.12 and 1.13 of the AfC Terms and Conditions. The incremental date will be the anniversary of the date of appointment.

5d) Pay where there is no change of Band

A member of staff may seek to change their role and move to a post on the same pay band as their existing post. In this situation there is no entitlement to a promotion increase and the individual retains their existing salary. There is no change of incremental date in respect of the change.

5e) Movement to a lower Band

Where, a staff member re-trains in a different area of work at a lower band, for wider service or operational reasons, with the explicit agreement of the line manager and the Human Resources Manager concerned, their existing level of pay should be protected on a mark time basis. Once protection is agreed, it may not be withdrawn until the staff member concerned has had a reasonable opportunity to complete their retraining and progress to a point where pay protection is no longer required

Where a staff member is unfit for their substantive role due to a work related injury/illness and requires to change jobs permanently to a position on a lower band they will receive a period of protected pay in line with organisational change pay protection ([PCS\(AFC\)2022/1](#)).

This does not apply in capability or conduct cases, or in cases where the staff member applies to move to a lower banded post on their own volition. In these cases, the salary in the lower post will be assessed on the basis that all service in the higher banded post had been service in the lower band.

6. STARTING SALARY GUIDANCE FOR AFC STAFF TRANSFERRING TO SCOTLAND FROM OTHER PARTS OF THE UK, CHANNEL ISLANDS AND ISLE OF MAN (Ref: [PCS\(AFC\)2023/5](#))

6a) AFC Staff transferring to a post at the same band

In the event a staff member is transferring from NHS employment in another part of the UK, Channel Islands or the Isle of Man, into the same AfC Band, for the purposes of their starting salary the staff member will be placed on the pay point they would have been on had they performed all of their previous service in NHS Scotland.

6b) AFC Staff transferring to a post at a lower band in the same role

In the event a staff member is transferring from NHS employment in another part of the UK, Channel Islands or the Isle of Man, to a post at a lower band in the same role, they should be treated, for starting salary purposes, as if they had performed all of their previous service in NHS Scotland at that lower band.

7. PROFESSIONAL STAFF AWAITING REGISTRATION

Professional staff awaiting registration will be placed on the minimum or appropriate point of the non registered band for their professional group. Following receipt of registration staff will be placed on the minimum point of the registered band of their professional group. Payment will be backdated to the date of their registration.

8. DEVELOPMENT OF PROFESSIONAL ROLES: ANNEX 20

(ACCELERATED PROGRESSION FROM PAY BAND 5 - PAY BAND 6)

The NHS Job Evaluation Scheme recognises that all health care professions who have as a base level, graduate qualification, evaluate at a similar level, which is Pay Band 5. Thereafter most professionals will spend several years in Pay Band 5 developing their roles.

However, there are groups of staff who tend to move quickly to operate in roles that demand a level of autonomous decision making, in the overall delivery of care that exceeds that normally associated with jobs allocated to Pay Band 5. Within NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde annex 20 is only applicable to Midwives. Please note different arrangements are in place for annex 21 posts. See Section 12 for guidance on annex 21 posts.

The spinal point placement on move to Band 6 will be determined by the normal promotion rules as outlined at paragraph 1.12 and 1.13 of the AfC Terms and Conditions. The incremental date will become the anniversary of the move.

9. TEMPORARY MOVEMENT INTO A HIGHER PAY BAND

9a) Conditions that apply

Members of staff may be moved into a higher pay band where it is necessary to fill a post on a temporary basis because:

- a) A vacancy is unfilled whilst being advertised, or
- b) The post is being held open for the existing post holder who is due to return, e.g. from long term sick leave, maternity leave or from extended training.

Pay will normally be set at the minimum of the new band. If this does not result in a pay increase, the member of staff should be paid on the first pay point in the pay band which delivers an increase in pay. Salary placement will be in accordance with the promotion rules outlined at paragraph 1.12 and 1.13 of the AfC Terms and Conditions.

In order to qualify for pay at the higher level, the temporary movement into a new pay band must be for a minimum of **1 month and should not normally last more than 6 months** except where a longer period is known at the outset and is necessary to cover maternity leave or long term sick leave.

9b) Incremental Dates

Where a temporary movement onto a higher pay band results in only one extra pay point the member of staff retains their existing incremental date.

If the temporary movement results in **more than one extra pay point**, the incremental date changes to the anniversary of the date of the temporary move.

Extensions to this arrangement must be notified to Payroll via eESS.

Subsequent promotion to a post directly following a period of acting into the same post will result in the retention of both the salary pay point of the higher banding and the incremental date.

9c) End of Temporary Movement into a Higher Pay Band

Staff returning to their substantive post following a temporary period working at a higher pay band will be treated as if they had performed all of their service within their substantive band.

10. UNPLANNED ACTING INTO A HIGHER BAND

10a) Background

The AfC terms and conditions do not currently address the issue of short-term cover, which may be required from time to time for sound operational reasons. However, the Scottish Terms and Conditions Committee (STAC) have produced instructions in the form of a Circular: [PCS \(AFC\) 2006/2](#) (as amended on 16 October 2007).

10b) Conditions

It has been agreed in partnership that NHS Boards can pay acting up premium in the following circumstances in line with [PCS2006\(AFC\)02](#):

- Where an individual provides short-term cover for a period of no less than one full shift.
- Cover of anything less than a full shift will only be paid the acting up premium with the approval of the appropriate manager, or in the case of out of hours/weekends, the appropriate designated manager, providing the individual takes the full range of duties and responsibilities of the grade senior to his/her own.
- Where any period of acting up is agreed by the appropriate manager or equivalent and the individual takes on the full range of duties and responsibilities of a grade senior to his or her own, then an acting up premium will be paid.
- Unplanned acting is not expected to be for more than 5 working days duration. If it is not possible to put other cover arrangements in place a manager can extend unplanned acting arrangements. If this was to extend beyond 4 weeks the conditions outlined in Section 9 above, i.e. temporary movement into a higher band, must be applied.

Managers are asked to note that unplanned acting payments will not normally apply:

- To staff whose job descriptions include provision to cover for their supervisor or manager
- During periods of annual leave or other planned leave such as parental leave, maternity leave, etc
- To official/rostered days off, unless there are unplanned circumstances which make this essential, e.g. someone else is on sick leave.

10c) Notification of Unplanned Acting

Unplanned acting arrangements require to be notified on SSTS roster notes to the payroll department detailing the reasons in accordance with the guidance above. Unplanned acting is deemed to be a short-term arrangement (not more than 5 days see 10b above). Managers are expected to put in place arrangements in accordance with the provisions for temporary movement into a higher band as outlined in Section 9.

11. GUIDANCE ON COMPLETING STARTING SALARY FORM

Managers are advised that difficulty in recruiting does not justify a starting salary above the minimum of the scale.

Managers require authorisation to offer a salary above the minimum of the scale. This applies to:

- new entrants to NHS
- re-entrants who have a break of more than 3 months
- existing staff on promotion who have previous service in a higher band before a break of more than three months.

In line with [DL \(2021\) 47](#) if a manager wishes to recognise relevant experience of a new staff member which equates directly with the competence requirements of the post in question, they must state the reasons and provide supporting evidence fully documented. Evidence will be taken from:

- The application form
- References
- Payslips
- Staff transfer certificates.

In fairness to existing staff or staff who may be internally promoted, care must be taken that incremental points awarded in recognition of experience only recognise completed years of experience at the level of the pay band in question, and not below it.

Incremental credit will not be given for reasons of market forces.

See the flowchart at Appendix 2 for guidance on processing the transaction on eESS.

12. APPLICATION OF TRAINEE/ANNEX 21 GUIDANCE

Guidance for Trainee/Annex 21 roles is available on HR connect and can be accessed via the following link:

Add in link to separate guidance.

13. DISPUTE RESOLUTION

It is acknowledged from time to time a staff member may not agree with the starting salary decision made by their manager. In such occasions every effort must be taken by both the staff member and manager to resolve any differences informally. If not already involved, advice must be sought from the Human Resources Manager before the manager communicates their final decision to the staff member.

Managers are reminded that they can only apply discretion on starting salaries within the scope of the AFC terms and conditions of service.

If a staff member remains dissatisfied with the starting salary decision made by their manager they will have a right to request a review of this decision by writing to the next-in-line manager within 14 days. Grounds for review must be clearly outlined and include supporting evidence. A paper-based review will be carried out by the next-line-manager (with no prior involvement in the starting salary decision) and the Head of Human Resources. The staff member will be notified in writing within 7 calendar days of the outcome of their starting salary review. There will be no further right of review.

14. ADDITIONAL SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE

Managers who require any additional support and guidance in the application of the terms and conditions covered by this document should contact the HR Support and Advice Unit.

Appendix 1

STARTING SALARIES - APPROVAL TO RECOGNISE EQUIVALENT SERVICE

The Starting Salaries Appendix should be used to request placement on a higher salary in the following circumstances:

- For staff new to the NHS
- For staff re-joining after a break in service greater than 3 months
- For current staff with previous NHS Service in a higher band prior to a break of more than 3 months
- For current staff with previously recognised equivalent service in a higher band with another employer now being promoted to the same or higher band

In the circumstances described in Section 11 of the Starting Salaries Guidance Document, Managers may offer a salary above the minimum of the scale to recognise relevant experience. The reasons and supporting evidence should be fully documented, in particular the links to the KSF Outline. Evidence may, for instance, be taken from the application form, references and job descriptions and staff transfer certificates. Verbal evidence provided at interview must be documented.

Refer to the Starting Salaries Guidance document for guidance on the completion of this form. See also Appendix 2 for Flow Chart.

Employee Name:		Pay number:	
		Group Code & Pay Point:	
Post:		Post Band:	
Recruiting Manager:		Department:	
Interview Date:			
Interview Panel:			
Starting Salary Requested:			
Incremental Point (refer to latest AFC pay circular)			
Rationale: See 2b of guidance notes	Impact on others in post in immediate team/department:		
	Impact outside immediate dept:		

	Consistency (with other staff):				
Career History <i>(please detail all relevant posts which would support the application)</i> Attach confirmation i.e. contract / payslip	Start Date	End Date	Post	Band / Grade	Employer
Supporting Evidence – <i>This can include:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Rationale for granting additional years incremental credit based on career history</i> <i>link to KSF Competencies and attach KSF Outline</i> 	<u>Please continue on the reverse of this form if needed</u>				

	Signed	Print	Date
Recruiting Manager			
Budget Manager			
Professional Lead			
HR Manager			

eESS Starting Salary Approval Process

Please ensure that you have read the foregoing '*Guidance on Starting Salaries, Incremental Points, Acting Arrangements and Related Issues*'.

