

FACT SHEET

UNCRYSTALLISED FUNDS PENSION LUMP SUM (UFPLS)

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Definitions

What is an uncrystallised funds pension lump sum (UFPLS)?

A UFPLS is a way of taking benefits from your pension. It was introduced on 6 April 2015. Part of a UFPLS will typically be free of tax and the remainder is subject to income tax. Unlike going into drawdown, a UFPLS payment doesn't allow you to take the tax free element up front and leave the taxable element for a later date: it is a single lump sum payment.

The lifetime allowance was abolished on 6 April 2024. In its place, two new allowances were introduced:

- Lump Sum Allowance (LSA): This limits the amount most people can take as a tax-free lump sum during their lifetime.
- Lump Sum and Death Benefit Allowance (LSDBA): This limits the amount which can be taken as a tax-free lump sum during lifetime or following death before age 75.

What are uncrystallised funds?

Uncrystallised is the term used to describe pension funds which have not yet been accessed. You can only withdraw a UFPLS from uncrystallised funds.

Rules

Who is eligible to receive a UFPLS?

Most people who are eligible to take pension benefits are able to take a UFPLS. However, there are some restrictions:

- You have to have enough LSA and LSDBA left to cover the tax-free element of the UFPLS.
- If your pension contains money which came from an ex-spouse following a divorce (known as a pension credit) and you wouldn't be allowed to take tax free cash (also known as a Pension Commencement Lump Sum or PCLS) from those funds, you can only have a UFPLS from the value of your pension not represented by the pension credit.

If you want to learn more about any of the terms in these restrictions, please refer to our separate fact sheets.

Generally speaking, these conditions make sure that you can't receive more tax free funds through a UFPLS than you would if you were using another method to access your pension benefits. The tax free element of a UFPLS is designed to mimic the pension commencement lump sum (PCLS, or tax free cash) which you would normally get if you were going into drawdown or purchasing an annuity. However, the UFPLS rules are much simpler and can't account for all the variations in PCLS entitlement, which has resulted in these restrictions.

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How much can I receive as a UFPLS?

Other than the previous conditions, you can take as much of your uncrystallised funds as a UFPLS as you like. Bear in mind though, that you have to receive the whole taxable element in one go, which means it is taxed in one go too. A large UFPLS payment could push you into a higher tax bracket.

How much tax will I pay on my UFPLS?

The tax free element is restricted to your remaining LSA or the value of the UFPLS and the rest is taxed as income.

Only the tax-free element of an UFPLS is tested against the remaining LSA.

If the UFPLS is the first taxable payment you have taken from your pension provider, they will normally have to apply an emergency rate tax code. Emergency rate codes assume the payment is the first in a regular series and also make assumptions about factors such as your personal allowance, so can result in you underpaying or overpaying tax.

What if I'm entitled to more than 25% tax free cash?

The tax free element of a UFPLS is designed to mimic the pension commencement lump sum (PCLS, or tax free cash), but it isn't the same thing. The tax free element of a UFPLS is based on standard PCLS entitlement, but the UFPLS rules don't replicate all of the exceptions and variations to the PCLS rules.

As mentioned under 'Who is eligible to receive a UFPLS', there are rules making sure that you can't take a UFPLS if you are entitled to less than 25% PCLS, to make sure that you don't unfairly benefit from using UFPLS. If you are entitled to more than 25% PCLS and don't meet any of those restrictions then technically there's nothing preventing you from taking a UFPLS, however the tax free element will still be 25%, so you will lose some of your entitlement. Depending on the type of protected PCLS entitlement you have, taking a UFPLS may also mean that you lose your higher PCLS entitlement on any remaining uncrystallised funds.

Money Purchase Annual Allowance (MPAA)

Taking a UFPLS triggers the MPAA which reduces the amount that can be contributed to pensions each year. Please refer to our fact sheet 'Money Purchase Annual Allowance' for more detail.

Important points to consider

The value of pension funds may fall as well as rise. Your money is tied up until you take your benefits. Benefits can generally be taken any time after age 55, although this is due to increase to 57 in 2028.

This information is based on our understanding of current legislation, including (but not limited to) FCA, PRA and HMRC regulation. It does not constitute any form of advice.

Contact Details

If you'd like to speak to us about anything on this fact sheet, please contact us on:

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We may record and monitor calls. Call charges will vary.

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