

A GUIDE

Your Annual Statement explained

Helping you make sense of the numbers



Countrywide Assured

The purpose of this guide

This guide aims to help you make sense of your pension's Annual Statement. It explores each section highlighting key information and things to look out for.

You'll also find a list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) on page 6. It's made up of typical queries to our Customer Services helpline, so we hope they will answer any questions you have about your statement.

Our aim is to keep things simple. But there are some things we cannot avoid, such as widely-used pension and industry terms. You'll find all the definitions of the terms included in this guide and your Annual Statement on page 08 – should you need them – with those included in this guide underlined. You'll also find we've highlighted important messages and information with the help of icons – see the key below.

Key:

A key to the icons used throughout this guide.

 Important information

 Warning

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 **The statement shown here is an example created specially for this guide.** It aims to help you navigate your way around this important document. Your own Annual Statement will show features and amounts relating to your plan and will differ from those shown in the examples included in this guide.

If anything is unclear or you need more information, please contact us using the number shown at the top of your statement and having your plan number to hand will help too.

Understanding your Annual Statement

THIS PAGE OFFERS A SNAPSHOT OF YOUR PLAN OVER THE PAST 12 MONTHS. THE SUMMARY HIGHLIGHTS KEY DETAILS SO YOU CAN SEE AT A GLANCE YOUR PENSION PLAN'S PROGRESS SINCE LAST YEAR'S STATEMENT.

ANNUAL STATEMENT

This statement provides an overview of your pension so you can make sure it's on track for your retirement.

countrywideassured.co.uk

CURRENT STATEMENT DATE 31 December 2018

PREVIOUS STATEMENT DATE 31 December 2017

Customer helpline:
XXXXXXX

Opening times:
Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm

Your plan summary

YOUR NAME	A N OTHER		
YOUR SELECTED RETIREMENT DATE	31/01/2027	YOUR AGE AT SELECTED RETIREMENT DATE	65
PLAN NAME	Retirement Account	PLAN NUMBER	XX000000ZZ
PLAN TYPE	Personal Pension	PLAN STATUS	In force
START DATE	31/12/1992		

CURRENT CONTRIBUTION (including tax relief)	£202.29	ESTIMATED ANNUAL MANAGEMENT CHARGE during statement period	£858.00
FREQUENCY	Monthly	OTHER CHARGES during statement period	£768.97
BONUS(ES) during statement period	£140.00		

PLAN VALUE AT LAST STATEMENT DATE		£60,850.32
TOTAL CONTRIBUTIONS DURING STATEMENT PERIOD (including tax relief)	£2,427.48	
INVESTMENT [GROWTH/LOSS] DURING STATEMENT PERIOD AFTER CHARGES PAID	£2,956.39	
PLAN VALUE AT STATEMENT DATE		£66,234.19
TRANSFER CHARGE AT STATEMENT DATE	£245.04	
TRANSFER VALUE AT STATEMENT DATE		£65,989.15

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Please remember that the plan and transfer values may go down as well as up.

TIP 1
Do read your statement along with the enclosed 'Your annual statement explained' guide.

TIP 2
Get financial advice if you're thinking about making any changes to your pension.

Your Annual Statement is designed to help you check you're on track to achieve your financial goals, such as saving for retirement. It will help you see if you need to make any changes.

We can't stress enough that getting guidance or advice is essential, especially if you have complex financial arrangements.

Here you'll find your selected retirement date. It's not fixed so let us know if you want to change it.

This figure shows your regular contributions including tax relief. You'll find the total contributions for the last year shown further down the statement.

This is a summary of your pension charges for the last year. They reflect the cost of looking after your pension and providing your plan benefits, such as death benefit and waiver of contribution. You'll find a breakdown of these charges in the section 'Your plan – money out' below.

Here you can see at a glance the value of your plan and how this compares to your previous annual statement. It shows the growth achieved over the past year, taking into account the plan contributions and charges.



Please remember that the plan and transfer values may go down as well as up.

Understanding your Annual Statement

YOUR PLAN

BENEFITS

This section features the benefits of your policy.

Death benefit

This provides your family and loved ones with a cash lump sum should you die during the term of your plan. £75,000

Waiver of contribution

If you are unable to work because of an illness or accident, this benefit will pay your plan contributions for you. Included

Indexation

It's a built-in feature that helps to protect a plan from the effects of inflation and makes any necessary changes. It aims for a plan's benefits or contributions, or both, to keep up with the cost of living. The 'indexation rate', such as the Retail Price Index or a fixed rate, is used to keep your regular payments on track. Included

UNDERSTANDING YOUR STATEMENT

See our guide to 'Your annual statement explained' for explanations of the benefits and other key details.

PLAN VALUES EXPLAINED

This section shows a breakdown of the value of your plan using the total number of units and the sale price on the date of this statement.

Plan value at last statement date 31 December 2017	£60,850.32
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Fund name	Fund code	Type of units	Total units at statement date	Sale price at statement date £	Value at statement date £
Managed Pension	EF123	Capital	923.304	3.52	3,250.03
		Accumulation	9,764.817	4.32	42,184.01
Equity Pension	GH456	Capital	192.763	8.56	1,650.05
		Accumulation	2,043.767	9.37	19,150.10
Total plan value					66,234.19
Transfer value					65,989.15

BUYING AND SELLING UNITS

The price we pay when selling investment units should you decide to transfer your plan or take your retirement benefits is referred to as the 'bid price'. Whereas the price at which we buy the investment units with your contributions is referred to as the 'offer price'. The bid price is always lower than the offer price. The difference between each price is referred to as the 'spread'.

The cost of buying and selling units is referred to as the 'bid/offer spread' – see the Money Out section below.

WHAT ARE CAPITAL UNITS?

Capital Units have a higher annual management charge than accumulation units. Capital units are purchased in the early years (often the first 1-2 years following plan set-up or a contribution increase) as a way of spreading initial charges over the life of the plan. Often capital units are switched to accumulation units after a specified period, so the higher charges are no longer taken after that time.

INVESTMENT PERFORMANCE

For information about your Investment fund(s), visit countrywideassured.co.uk

WHAT ARE ACCUMULATION UNITS?

This is a type of unit which has a lower annual management charge than capital units. Your ongoing plan charges are taken from these units. They are found on all unit-linked plans. If there are also capital units in the plan, then accumulation units will be bought after the end of the capital unit period, and for all one-off lump sum payments. For more information, please refer to your plan terms and conditions.

All the **benefits** covered by your pension are shown here. If you need to remind yourself of what each benefit provides, see page 08 of this guide.

Your plan benefits are available to you during the term of your plan. Please bear in mind that the information covered by this guide is general. So if you need details about your particular plan, please call us using the telephone number shown at the top of the letter accompanying this guide.

This table shows how your **contributions are invested in one (or more) of your investment funds**. It tells you how many units were bought across the two types, capital and accumulation – see page 08 for more information about these unit types.

The values are calculated by multiplying the number of units by the sale price. For example, the statement shows capital units in the Managed Pension Fund (EF123) as 923.304, which multiplied by the sale price of £3.52 gives a value of £3,250.03.

The difference between the plan and transfer values equals the **transfer charge**. This charge only applies if you decide to transfer your pension to another provider or you take your money early, before the selected retirement date.

YOUR PLAN – MONEY IN

YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS

	Your total contributions	Total tax relief	Total amount Invested including tax relief
12 MONTHS TO 31 December 2018	£ 1,941.98	£ 485.50	£ 2,427.48

'ADDED EXTRAS'

The 'extras' shown here are particular to your plan and usually linked to your selected retirement date. These are valuable bonuses or guarantees, which you could lose if you take your money before or after your retirement date.

Bonus

Your plan receives additional units every year equal to 1% of the units held on the date of allocation. This means your plan received a bonus of £140.00 last year.

YOUR PLAN – MONEY OUT

CHARGES DURING 12 MONTHS TO 31 DECEMBER 2018

ESTIMATED ANNUAL MANAGEMENT CHARGE £ 858.00

This charge covers the cost of managing the investment fund(s) and administration. The annual management charge is calculated each day based on the value of the fund. Because we deduct the charge when pricing the fund rather than by selling units from your plan, the amount shown on your statement is an estimated charge.

OTHER CHARGES

Administration charge	£ 43.56
Death Benefit	£ 675.41
Waiver of contribution Benefit	£ 30.00
Bid/offer spread	£ 20.00
TOTAL	£1,626.97

The cost of buying and selling units is referred to as the 'bid/offer spread'. See 'Buying and selling units' above for an explanation.

We are committed to protecting and respecting your privacy. Our Privacy Policy explains when and why we collect personal information, how we use it, the conditions under which we may share it with others and how we keep it secure. The Policy also explains how you can obtain details of the information we hold about you and the choices you have about how we use your information. You can find a full copy of our Privacy Policy on our website at www.countrywideassured.co.uk or by calling our Customer Services Team on XXXXXXXX.

TIP 3

Any questions?
Call us on XXXXXXXX
Opening times
Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm

TIP 4

Before you take any action, please get financial and/or tax advice to understand fully the outcomes.

Here the **added extras** refer to benefits that may have generated money for your pension during the statement period. In this example, Mr A N Other has received an extra £140 as a **bonus**, although this 'added extra' does not take into account the plan charges shown below.

This section lists all the **costs of providing each of your plan benefits as well as our charge** for looking after your plan.

It enables you to not only understand what you're paying for but also to view your plan charges alongside the growth in value over the past year.

For further details about your plan benefits and charges, see page 08.



For customers no longer paying into their plan – referred to as a 'paid-up' plan – the charges will continue to be deducted. In some cases, this may cause the plan value to reduce to nothing.

Or if your pension plan runs beyond your selected retirement date, charges will continue to be deducted.

LOOK OUT FOR ANY NOTES INCLUDED ON YOUR STATEMENT AS THEY'RE LIKELY TO HIGHLIGHT DETAILS ABOUT YOUR PLAN THAT NEED YOUR ATTENTION.

Reviewing your Annual Statement

Taking stock of your world

Reviewing your annual statement offers an opportunity to take stock of your financial and personal situation. It's important to consider whether your plan continues to support you and your loved ones in a way that is relevant to your financial and personal circumstances today.

Take a moment to consider the following questions:

- Have there been any changes that may affect your plan with us?
 - Any health or lifestyle issues?
 - Changes in the family?
- Are your personal details on the statement correct?
- Have your circumstances changed?
 - Have you moved house?
 - Moved abroad?
 - Changed jobs or working patterns?

It's important to let us know of any changes, especially if you move home. This way we can keep you updated about your plan and you avoid missing any key calendar dates.

How to use your Annual Statement

Thinking about the past year and what you might have in mind for the future, how can your Annual Statement help you?

It may help to answer important questions such as:

- How does the value of my pension this year compare to last? i.e. is my money growing?
- When combined with my other savings, will this pension plan give me enough at retirement?
- Do I need to save more for retirement?
- Is my current investment fund performing well enough to meet my financial goals?
- Are my fund choices right for me?
- What guarantees does my pension offer and when?
- My plan has life cover, is the level of life cover too much or too little?
- Do I need to get some financial guidance or advice?

These are just a few examples of the sort of questions you may want to ask yourself when reviewing your Annual Statement.

Thinking ahead

Having completed a review of your Annual Statement, we recommend you consider what may be on the horizon in the coming year and whether this may mean making changes to your plan. You'll see below we have included some questions that may be relevant to you following your review.

Do you want to put more into your pension?

It may be possible to put more into your pension plan. To find out, call us using the telephone number at the top of your statement.

If you're thinking of transferring your pension plan, are there any important **bonuses** you need to pay attention to?

If your pension has a **bonus**, it's a **valuable benefit**. **Get advice.** If you don't have a financial adviser visit [unbiased.co.uk](https://www.unbiased.co.uk) to find one in your area.

Do you want to change your selected retirement date?

Call us using the telephone number at the top of your statement to find out what change, if any, you can make to the end date of your plan.

Is your money invested in the right fund for the short or long term? Or somewhere in the middle?

You can find latest fund information on our website [countrywideassured.co.uk](https://www.countrywideassured.co.uk)

Frequently asked questions

Here are the top ten questions our customers ask after receiving their Annual Statement:

Q How can I find out more about the charges?

A See your Annual Statement, section 'Your plan – money out'. There you'll find a breakdown of charges for each of your plan benefits, if any, over the past year as well as the cost of looking after your plan. Knowing your plan charges enables you to weigh up the cost relative to the growth in value of your pension.

Q How are the charges paid for?

A This depends on the type of pension plan you have with us. For example, for some policies, our charges are covered by the unit price or by selling investment units, and others, by deducting an amount from the regular contribution.

Q Where can I get guidance or advice about my pension?

A If you're aged 50 or over, Pension Wise offer a free face-to-face or telephone appointment so you can get personal pension advice. Call **0800 138 3944** or visit **pensionwise.gov.uk**

Or talk to an independent financial adviser (IFA). Visit **unbiased.co.uk** to find one in your area.

Q Can I switch funds?

A It may be possible to switch funds. Please contact us to find out more.

Q How can I transfer my pension plan?

A If you're thinking about transferring your pension plan to another company, we strongly recommend you get advice. Before you take any action, please check if you have any bonuses that you may lose by transferring your pension plan. It's important to look at all the details to make sure you don't lose out.

Take a look at our website where you'll find our dedicated guide 'Your pension transfer explained' or call us to send you a printed copy.

Q Where can I find fund performance information?

A As performance information changes daily, you'll find the latest short and long term results for each of our funds on our website **countrywideassured.co.uk**

Q How can I cash-in my plan?

A Cashing-in your plan is normally only possible at age 55 and over. Taking such a step needs careful thought, especially if you have bonuses. It's important to check your plan details to make sure you don't lose out.

If you have any questions about your plan or would like more information on taking your retirement benefits, call us using the telephone number at the top of your statement.

Before you take any action, we strongly recommend you get advice. To find an independent financial adviser in your local area, visit **unbiased.co.uk**

Q Where can I find more about my pension options at retirement?

A Visit our website **countrywideassured.co.uk** where you'll find details of all your pension options and a copy of our comprehensive guide 'Your pension options explained.'

If you're aged 50 or over, Pension Wise offer a free face-to-face or telephone appointment so you can get personal pension advice. Call **0800 138 3944** or visit **pensionwise.gov.uk**. Or speak to an independent financial adviser (IFA). You can find one in your local area by visiting **unbiased.co.uk**.

Q How do I let you know about my change of address?

A Call us using the telephone number at the top of your statement. Or complete the 'Change of address' form enclosed with your Annual Statement and return it to the address provided on the form.

Q How can I increase my plan contributions?

A It may be possible to increase (or reduce) your contributions but it depends on the type of plan you have with us. The best way to find out is to call us using the telephone number at the top of your statement.

Any questions?

To find the answers visit **countrywideassured.co.uk** or call us using the telephone number at the top of your statement.

What's next?

Useful services and support

Get advice – Pensions



Free guidance

Pension Wise offers dedicated, impartial advice and guidance on all things pension related. It's a service set up by the government to help people better understand their pension options following the 2015 pension reforms.

Free appointment

Pension Wise offers free face-to-face and/or telephone appointments. It's available to everyone aged 50 and over, no matter how large or small the amount of pension savings.

It may be a good idea to prepare for an appointment. See the Money Advice Service booklet: 'Your pension: it's time to choose'.

- 📄 www.pensionwise.gov.uk
- ☎ 0800 138 3944 – see the Money Advice Service booklet for further information about this service.



This is an independent and impartial service set up by the government. It offers a wide range of information, advice, tools and tips on pensions and other topics, all designed to help people make 'informed decisions and plan for a better future'.

- 📄 www.moneyadvice.org.uk
- ☎ 0800 138 7777

Their website also provides details of flexible income providers and their products:

- 📄 www.moneyadvice.org.uk/drawdown-tool under the section 'shopping around'.



This guide is one of many available from the Money Advice Service: 'Your pension: your choices'.



Independent financial advice

Getting up-to-date and independent advice could save you money in the long run. It's important to view an adviser's upfront fee alongside the potential long-term savings in areas such as tax and charges.

A pension expert will review existing pension savings and offer options that are personal to individual needs – a welcome benefit if there are complex circumstances to consider, such as health and/or dependants.

For many, getting independent advice takes away the fear of making the wrong decisions and the stress of shopping around.

- Finding a local independent adviser is easy.
- 📄 Visit www.unbiased.co.uk

Definition of key terms

Accumulation units

Typically accumulation units are purchased for regular contributions, from year two or three onward, and for all one-off lump sum payments. The ongoing policy charges are paid for by cashing-in units.

Administration charge

This charge covers the cost of looking after your plan until your selected retirement date. See your latest Annual Statement for more details.

Allocation rate

This relates to the portion of your contribution that is invested in your plan.

Annual management charge

This charge covers the cost of managing the investment fund(s) and administration.

The annual management charge is calculated each day based on the value of the fund. Because we deduct the charge when pricing the fund rather than by selling units from your plan, the amount shown on your statement is an estimated charge.

Bid/offer spread

The bid price is the price we pay when selling investment units should you decide to cash-in your plan or make a claim. The offer price is the price at which we buy the investment units with your plan contributions. The bid price is always lower than the offer price. The difference between each price is referred to as the 'spread'. The bid/offer spread contributes to the cost of investing your contributions into the investment fund.

Bonus

A plan may benefit from a bonus by extra units being added at certain times during the life of your plan. To find out more about the bonus relating to your particular plan, please call us quoting your plan number.

Capital units

This type of unit tends to be used during the early years of a plan but not exclusively, for example, an increase in a plan's contribution. Your pension contributions buy capital units and after a specified period, there is a switch from capital to accumulation units. The annual management charge tends to be higher for capital units.

Death benefit

This provides your family and loved ones with a cash lump sum should you die during the term of your plan.

Disability benefit

This provides you with either a cash lump sum or income each year should you become ill or disabled before your plan's maturity date or your selected retirement date. Details of the disability benefit covered by your plan are shown in your plan's terms and conditions. Or you can find out more by calling us and quoting your plan number.

Enhanced allocation

If your statement refers to an 'enhanced' allocation rate, it means the amount we invest in your plan is greater than the regular contributions you make.

Indexation

It's a built-in feature that helps to protect a plan from the effects of inflation and makes any necessary changes. It aims for a plan's benefits or contributions, or both, to keep up with the cost of living. The 'indexation rate' is either the Retail Price Index or a fixed rate.

Retail Price Index (RPI)

It measures the change in the cost of a typical selection of retail goods and services and is one of the key measures of inflation.

Tax relief

Paying into a pension attracts tax relief. This means, in addition to your pension contributions, the government 'tops up' a pension in the form of pension tax relief. The amount depends on your rate of income tax. Your pension contributions get tax relief at the highest rate of income tax you pay. For example, for a basic-rate taxpayer (20%) contributing £100 each month to their pension, this would actually cost them £80 because the government tops up the pension by £20, the amount that would have been taken in tax from £100 of their salary. For more information about tax relief visit:

 moneyadvice.service.org.uk/en/articles/tax-relief-on-pension-contributions

Waiver of contribution

If you are unable to work because of an illness or accident, this benefit will pay your plan contributions for you.

Other guides available from Countrywide Assured



Pension options guide

A guide to support and help you understand the different ways you can access your retirement savings. It's designed to give you a complete view so you can make an informed decision.



Surrender process guide

Surrendering a policy isn't an easy decision to make, particularly if you have extra benefits and guarantees. This guide aims to help you weigh up the pros and cons and what to do should you decide to go ahead.



Transfer guide

A guide to help you weigh up the pros and cons of transferring your pension. It's a decision that needs looking at from every angle, because once you transfer your pension, there's no going back.



Maturity guide

A guide to help you understand how to access your money when your policy reaches its maturity date and the options that may be available to you.

Notes:

Any questions?

Call us using the telephone number shown on the top of the letter accompanying this guide.

Or go to
countrywideassured.co.uk

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