

Pensions Matters

Winter 2023



City of Westminster

Working in partnership with



LGPS Employers' Newsletter

We hope you find it informative, as always, we welcome any feedback you may have.



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Administration Update

The team have continued to ensure all Service Levels are met. These are published regularly on the Hampshire Pension Services (HPS) [website](#).

As well as BAU work, the team have been working on several other areas of work over the last couple of months including:

- McCloud remedy implementation
- Ongoing development of both our Member Portal and Employer Hub
- Employer performance
- Employer bitesize training
- Pension Saving statements issued

Over the next quarter the team will continue to focus on the implementation of the McCloud remedy, as well as ongoing development of features on our Member portal. In December, to increase engagement, we will be issuing a newsletter to both active and deferred members.

Moving into 2024, the Employer Services team will look at further ways we can support employers and payroll providers in 'getting it right first time' to reduce queries needing to be sent, which we know is an area employers would be keen to reduce as well, and will have a positive impact in reducing delays for members.

Contacting Hampshire Pension Services

From 4 December 2023, we are making a small change to our phone availability. From this date our phone lines will be open Monday to Friday, 9am to 4.30pm.

Our customer support team will be working and available to answer member emails/secure messages between 8.30am and 5pm. This change allows us to focus our resources where there is most demand and provide time for any necessary follow up work to be done.

As an employer, if you do have a query which you need some support on, please email pensions.employer@hants.gov.uk. If you would like us to call you, please also let us know of a suitable time and number to reach you.



Data Validation exercise

For those employers who were rated as red for data quality as part of 2023 annual return employer performance process, you will have been asked to complete a data validation declaration and **return by 15 January 2024**.

As part of this exercise, you should check that you (or your payroll provider on your behalf), have sent all appropriate starter and leaver notifications for members since 1 April 2023. **Declarations should be completed and returned by the Scheme Employer (not payroll provider)**.

If you are an employer who has not received this request, but would be interested in undertaking this exercise, please email pensions.eoy@hants.gov.uk

2024 Annual return

During the next few weeks, we will issue a draft annual return template to employers, to help with planning for the 2024 submission. There will be no changes to the data required on the member breakdown tab, however employers and payroll providers should note the prompts for checking data before it is submitted.

The 2024 annual return will be due by 30 April 2024.

To help prepare, we wanted to remind you of some other actions you should be taking to help put you in the best position and ensure a smooth 2024 annual return process:

- Ensure any outstanding 2023 annual return queries are urgently resolved.
- Ensure you are up to date with starter and leaver notifications, as well notifications for opt outs, 50:50 and main section scheme changes.
- Liaise with your payroll provider (if applicable) to ensure they understand the requirements and deadline to submit to you for sign off and submission to Hampshire Pensions.

Workshops

Annual return workshops will be planned in between February and April 2024, and will be advertised shortly.



As always, if you need any support to submit your annual return data accurately and on time do contact us – pensions.eoy@hants.gov.uk

Query responses

From time to time, we may need to query information provided on an Employer form, or information held on a member's pension record.

Please can you ensure all queries are **responded to within 10 working days**, unless we advise otherwise, to ensure we reduce delays in our ability to administer pension records. If you use a third-party payroll provider, please ensure that they are able to meet this, on your behalf.

More information on Employer SLAs, can be found on the [Pensions Administration Strategy](#).

Employer Hub – Online Services

We are pleased to advise that over the last few weeks, we have introduced the following to the Employer Hub:

- **Starter Form acknowledgment –**

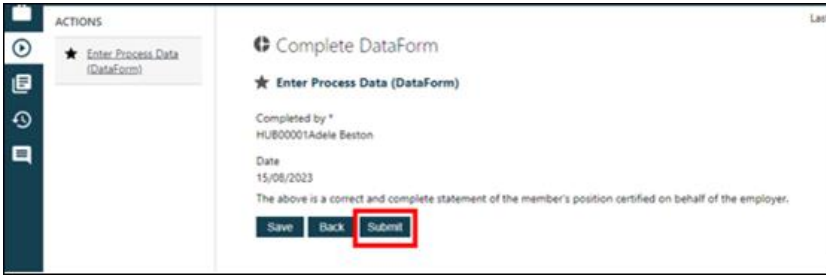
When a new starter form is submitted via the Employer Hub an acknowledgment email will be sent to advise that this has been submitted successfully.



Saved Forms

From 15 December 2023 any Employer Forms which have been saved but not submitted after 30 days will be deleted. This is following feedback at the recent Employer Focus group.

When a user completes a form on the Employer Hub, they will have the option to save as they go along, when reaching the end of the Form, the user will be presented with the option to save, go back or submit. It is important that the submit button is selected for the form to reach us and the relevant process started:



For more information including a full run through of the Employer Hub processes and submission, please refer to the [Hub user guide](#).

Employer Focus Group

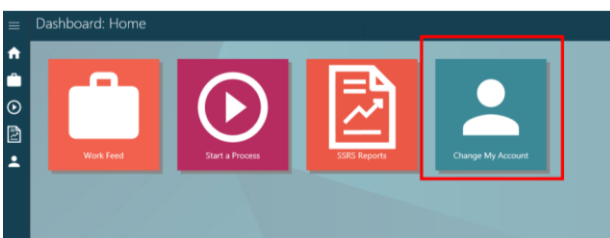
Thank you to all everyone who attended the Employer Focus Groups in October 2023. Notes from the meeting can be found [here](#).

Following feedback on the Employer Hub, we are looking at the following for our Hub development plan:

- Upload of Opt Out forms
- Upload of CETV and member estimate request forms
- Improve wording on the leaver form in terms of dates for cumulative pay that should be input.

One-time code

We wanted to remind Hub users that earlier in the year we introduced one-time codes via SMS where a mobile number is held for the user. The default for one-time codes is via the registered email address if no mobile number is held. You can add a mobile number to your Employer Hub account when you are logged in under the 'Change My Account' tile.



Employer Hub Demos

As always, we are keen to work with Employers and payroll providers to ensure that the Employer online service is being used to its potential. We are therefore pleased to be offering the following monthly Employer Hub Demonstrations:

8 January 2024	11:00 to 12:00
19 February 2024	11:00 to 12:00

There is no charge for attendance at these sessions – you can sign up for these via our [Employer training web page](#)

To find out more information on the Employer Hub or to access this, please use the link below: [Link to Employer Hub](#) or email pensions.employer@hants.gov.uk

Member Portal – Update and developments

URL changing

Following feedback from members to make the Member Portal more accessible and memorable, we are changing the URL to access the Member Portal to:



mypensionportal.hants.gov.uk

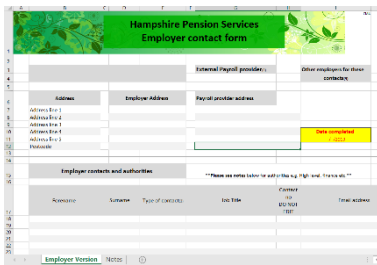
A redirection from the existing URL will be in place for the next 15 months. Members who access the Member Portal via the Hampshire Pension Services website will not be affected.

This change is planned to be implemented around 11 to 13 December 2023.

Transfer documents

As part of ongoing developments to the Member Portal, we are currently working on enabling members to upload documents relating to a transfer via their online account. Watch this space for more information in the future.

Contact Forms and Updates



As always, we just want to remind you that we can only accept and release information to those named on the contacts and authorisation form in the areas that they are named as being able to deal with for you as a Scheme Employer.

It is an employer responsibility to ensure we are kept up to date with any changes, so please keep us updated by emailing pensions.employer@hants.gov.uk and we will send you a copy of your Contact Form to review.

McCloud



The regulations to implement the McCloud remedy and change the existing underpin to ensure it works effectively and consistently for qualifying members, came into effect from 1 October 2023.

Service Data Upload

So that we can apply the remedy, we need to ensure that pension records are updated with the service and service break data for the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2022. We are currently working through the Employer McCloud data submissions we have received and are updating records where possible.

Reminder: For members who leave or retire after 1 October 2023 to have remedy calculated, whilst work is ongoing to validate data and update records, we ask employers to provide full-service information on leaver forms, regardless of whether the data has been provided by a McCloud submission.

Member resources

The LGA have created new areas in the member website. The new pages include:

- a short video
- frequently asked questions
- an interactive ‘Am I affected?’ tool
- examples of how members might be affected
- detailed information about how the remedy will affect different types of members

[The McCloud Remedy: LGPS \(lgpsmember.org\)](https://lgpsmember.org)

Backdated pay award

The local government pay award from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 was agreed in November 2023. For employers whose staff are affected by this, a STOP PRESS communication was issued to advise of the actions that should be taken in respect of pensions:



Active members

- The 2023/24 Annual return should be completed as normal, for those that have received this payment, and reflect the backdated pay award in pensionable pay figures provided.
- Information on how contributions bandings should be reviewed are provided in section 10 of the [LGA HR guide](#).
- Please note, the contribution payments are due/collected and payable to the Pension Fund at the point these are paid.

Ex-Employees

When salary arrears are paid to ex-employees who were in the LGPS, the employer must inform Hampshire Pension Services. Employers will need to:

- Advise Hampshire Pension Services of the amended CARE and final pay figures on the ‘revised pay spreadsheet’. If you are only paying arrears on request, please can you send this spreadsheet to us no more often than once a month (i.e., not each time a single member contacts you). Please email this to pensions@hants.gov.uk

- Where backdated contributions are paid, please advise the member that you will provide revised pay figures to Hampshire Pension Services, who will write to them as soon as possible. While we will prioritise any members who retired and will recalculate pension and pay any arrears, it may take some time for Pensions to work through these recalculations. We would be grateful if you could set this expectation with the member when you contact them.

Further detail is provided in section 15 of the [LGA HR guide](#) and [LGA Backdated pay award FAQs](#).

If you do have any questions or concerns in respect of the above, please email pensions.employer@hants.gov.uk.

LGPS Pay Protections

Final pay is used to calculate pension built up in the LGPS to 31 March 2014 (or to 31 March 2022 for those entitled to the McCloud remedy).



Final pay must be provided when a member leaves and is usually the average FTE pay during their final year, up to their leaving date.

Best in the last three years

To protect members who have had a drop in pay in the three years up to leaving, you must check the previous two years in case one of them is higher. We do ask this on the leaver form, with the higher figure needing to be provided, along with details of the year that this was from.

Best three-year average in the last 13 years' pay

If an employee's rate of pay was reduced, frozen or restricted in their last 13 years of membership, other than flexible retirement, they can ask you to use the best three-year average of the last 13 years' pay. To do this:

- Calculate a FTE average for each year ended 31 March in the last 13 years.
- Work out each rolling 3-year average and increase in line with inflation.
- The best 3-year average will be the final pay.

More information on final pay, including pay protections can be found on our website. You will also find a 3 in 13 spreadsheet calculator. [Full time pay | Hampshire County Council \(hants.gov.uk\)](https://www.hants.gov.uk)

For more information generally on Pensionable Pay, please refer to our [website](#) or come along to one of our [Pensionable Pay workshops](#). If you use a third-party payroll provider, please ensure that they have processes in place to check and provide the above information when needed.

Salary sacrifice AVC Framework

Portsmouth City Council has established a single supplier framework agreement for salary sacrifice additional voluntary contributions (AVCs).

The single supplier is AVC Wise. You can find more details about the framework on the [Council's website](#).

Employer training bitesize sessions



We currently run several virtual bitesize training sessions for Employers on various areas of the LGPS to help them with their administration and regulatory responsibilities. Each session is between 45 minutes and two hours long.

The next available sessions are detailed below:

Employer Hub Demo	8 January 2024	11am
Pensionable Pay	10 January 2024	9.30am
Employers in the LGPS, Starters and Opt Outs	29 January 2024	2pm
APC's, Absences, paying in more, Paying in less – 50:50	31 January 2024	10am
Organisational changes (Outsourcing, Mergers, Change of Payroll)	2 February 2024	11am
Discretions and Disputes (IDRPs)	5 February 2024	10am
Leavers and Retirements, including Starter, Leaver and Estimate Forms	9 February 2024	2pm
Employer Hub Demo	19 February 2024	11am

Please note that **there is no charge** for attendance at any of the sessions above, we do however ask if you are no longer able to attend, that you cancel your space at least 72 hrs in advance.

For more information and to book your space please visit the [Hampshire Pensions Employer area](#) of our website.

If you are unable to book a place on a course, email pensions.employer@hants.gov.uk with details of the course you would like to attend, including how many places you require. We will keep a waiting list and will consider running additional training if the demand is high enough.

Pension Tax sessions provided by Affinity Connect



Over the last few years, Affinity Connect have provided Pre-retirement courses to members, as a retirement specialist.

We wanted to let you know that Affinity Connect now offer a session on 'Taking advantage of pension tax allowances' session - [Pension Tax Allowances | \(affinityconnect.org\)](#)

The course is designed to provide employees with an overview of some of the key decisions to consider with their pensions. This will include understanding tax relief opportunities available, the limits applied to obtain tax relief and the consequences of exceeding the limits, including actions to consider with their pensions.

If you would like to find out more on anything Affinity Connect could run for your own employees, please contact events@affinityconnect.org or contact 'Training' on 0800 019 6076.

Other news

LGPC bulletins

The LGA have released the following pension bulletins on their website

<http://www.lgpsregs.org/index.php/resources/news-updates>

Bulletin 244 – November 2023

- McCloud member factsheet
- HMT confirms LTA abolished from next April
- Pensions Dashboards

Bulletin 243 – October 2023

- Academy conversions guidance
- Public service pensions remedy newsletter
- McCloud – Dedicated areas of member websites
- Pensions Dashboards
- September CPI rate announced

Bulletin 242 – September 2023

- McCloud member factsheet
- LGA response to abolishing the Lifetime Allowance (LTA)
- Article on reasons why dashboards are needed
- Pensions (Extension of auto-enrolment Act 2023)

If you have any topics, you would specifically like covered, please let us know for consideration by emailing pensions.employer@hants.gov.uk

We hope you find this edition of *Pensions matters* helpful. If you have any comments or queries, please email pensions.employer@hants.gov.uk and we'll be glad to help.