

# Pensions Matters

## Autumn 2023



City of Westminster

Working in partnership with

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## 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 areas of Service Levels are met, which are published regularly on the Hampshire Pension Services (HPS) [website](#).

As well as BAU work, the team have been working on a number of other work streams over the last few months including:

- McCloud remedy and employer data submissions
- Ongoing development of both our Member Portal and Employer Hub
- Employer annual return data submissions and uploads
- Annual benefit statements produced and published
- Pension Saving statements

All the above areas rely on the support of Scheme Employers providing accurate and timely data, so would like to thank you for your ongoing and continued efforts.

Over the next quarter the team will continue to focus on the implementation of the McCloud remedy, as well as continuing to develop features on our Member portal. The Employer Services team will also have a focus on working with Employers to support in the usage of the Employer Hub, as well as engaging with external payroll providers to help ensure smooth administration.



In January 2024, HPS will have a full Customer Service Excellence (CSE) assessment.

The assessor for this accreditation will often be keen to hear from one or two Employers on the service that is provided, if you would like the opportunity to share your experience, please email [pensions.employer@hants.gov.uk](mailto:pensions.employer@hants.gov.uk)

## 2023 Annual return – Employer performance and data quality

The deadline for the completed and signed annual returns was **30 April 2023**.

By this date we received 62% of all returns (compared to 63% last year). Thank you to all Employers who sent these on time – we are aiming in 2024 for these to be 100%.

It was pleasing to see that the number of queries raised to The City of Westminster Pension Fund employers reduced this year from 775 to 455, resulting from some of the great work employers and payroll providers have been undertaking to make improvements to their processes.

Queries Sent						
	Starters	Leavers	Missing Data	Additional Contributions	Other	Total
<b>2023</b>	70	90	171	4	<b>120</b>	<b>455*</b>
<b>2022</b>	313	208	199	0	<b>55</b>	<b>775*</b>

\*Excludes pay queries

We are keen to see this reduce further in 2024, as the annual returns are used to calculate the information that members receive on their annual benefit statement that we statutorily have to produce by 31<sup>st</sup> of August each year.

### Outstanding queries

If you do have any queries to still respond to, please ensure that these are dealt with **as a priority** to ensure that members records can be updated and there is no impact to your 2024 return preparation.

## Employer Performance

As part of our ongoing commitment to improve the quality of data held, we benchmark scheme employers on the timeliness, financial control and data quality from annual returns. Below is a summary of some of this year's outcomes specific to Employers in The City of Westminster Pension Fund:

Measure	2022/23
Total data queries as % of membership sent to employers	9.4%
Employers rated red in one or more areas	11 (32%)
Employers rated green across all criteria	4 (12%)

Employer performance letters will be sent to employers who have been rated red (significant concern) in one or more of the areas assessed.

We are keen to work with employers to support in ongoing improvements to timely and accurate data submitted and use this as an opportunity for positive engagement.

If you do have any questions or concerns, please email [pensions.eoy@hants.gov.uk](mailto:pensions.eoy@hants.gov.uk)

## Data Validation Exercise

For those employers who were rated as red for data quality, you will be asked to complete a data validation declaration.

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.

More information will be sent to Employers detailing the actions required and purpose of the exercise.

# Employer LGPS notifications - Reminder

Please can we remind employers:

- An amendment form should be provided when a member is moved back to the main section of scheme from 50:50 when being re-enrolled into the main section as part of an employer's auto-enrolment requirements.
- **When sending Hampshire Pension Services a copy of the employee election for 50:50 or return to main section, or an opt out form** – the employer/payroll part at the bottom of the form should be completed. This confirms to us the date that this is applied from, and in respect of an opt out whether this has been refunded if contributions paid for 3 months or less. Forms will be returned to employers if this is not completed, as we are unable to update pension records without this information.

**Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS)**  
**Election to join the 50:50 section**

This form is for completion by those members of the LGPS who wish to leave the main section of the Scheme and move to the 50:50 section of the Scheme. Before completing and returning the form, please read the notes overleaf.  
 Please complete using BLOCK CAPITALS and black ink only.

**Personal Details:**  
 Surname: \_\_\_\_\_ Mc/Mrs/Miss/Ms/Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Forename(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_  
 National Insurance No.: \_\_\_\_\_ Employer: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_ Daytime Tel. No.: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Job Information:**  
 Please provide details below of the job(s) you hold with your employer in which you wish to elect to join the 50:50 section. If you have more than one job you can opt for the 50:50 section to one, some or all of the jobs and you should only provide details below of the job(s) which you wish to elect to join the 50:50 section. If you wish to move to the 50:50 section in more than 2 jobs you will need to complete and return an additional form.  
 If you hold jobs in the LGPS with different employers you will need to complete and return a separate form to each employer.

Job Title / Location	Payroll Number (if known)
Job 1	
Job 2	
Job 3	

**Declaration:**

- I have read and understood the notes overleaf.
- I confirm that I wish to move to the 50:50 section in the job(s) I have indicated on this form.
- I understand that during the period I am in the 50:50 section in that job I will only be building up half my normal pension in that job.
- I understand the choices I make now are important in planning for my retirement and that if I elect to join the 50:50 section I will have a lower income when I retire than if I was a member of the main section of the LGPS.
- I understand that any additional pension (APC) contract I have to purchase additional pension in the LGPS must cease (unless it is to purchase pension 'top' during a period of authorised unpaid leave of absence, or during a period of unpaid additional maternity, paternity or adoption leave, or unpaid shared parental leave, or during a period of industrial action).
- I am aware that at any time whilst I am eligible for membership of the LGPS I can choose to opt back into the main section of the LGPS by making an election to my employer.
- I am aware that:
  - if, during a pay period, I go onto no pay due to sickness or injury, or during a period of ordinary maternity leave, ordinary adoption leave or paternity leave, and I am still on no pay at the beginning of the next pay period, my employer will then move me back into the main section of the LGPS. On return to work I would have the right to make an election to move back to the 50:50 section if I wish to do so.
  - my employer is required to automatically put me back into the main section of the LGPS approximately three years from the date they first have to comply with the automatic enrolment provisions of the Pensions Act 2016 (or any subsequent amendments) unless I have previously made a further 50:50 election at that time which I wish to do so.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**IMPORTANT: You can only sign and date this election form once you have commenced employment in the job(s) in which you wish to join the 50:50 section. You cannot sign and date the form before then as it will be treated as an invalid election.**

**For Official Use Only:**

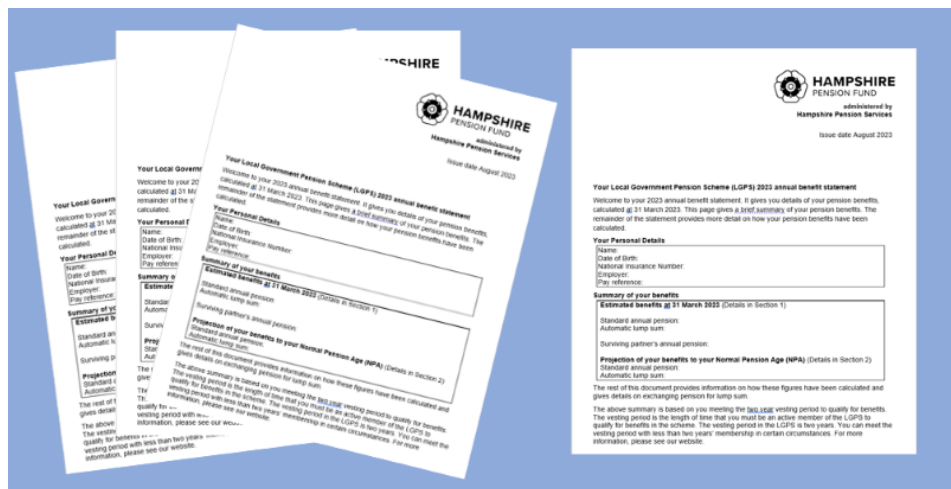
Action	Year	Month	Day
Not received by Employer/HR/Payroll	/	/	/
Notification sent to payroll / allowed	/	/	/
Notification of move to 50:50 section issued to the Fund?	Yes / No		
Date of 50:50 section commencement	/	/	/
50:50 Contribution rate	%		
Authorised Signature			/ /

As part of the Administration Strategy, we also wanted to remind employers about SLA requirements for pension notifications to be sent, these can be found detailed within the [Administration Strategy document](#).

If you outsource your payroll and delegate pension responsibilities, it is important that you liaise with your payroll provider to ensure that they are meeting these requirements on your behalf.

If you have any questions or concerns in your ability to meet these, please email [pensions.employer@hants.gov.uk](mailto:pensions.employer@hants.gov.uk)

# 2023 Annual Benefit Statements



The 2023 active annual benefit statements were published and ready to view by members on their member portal account in Mid-August 2023.

We are pleased to advise that in 2023 we were able to produce 99.38% of active member statements by the statutory deadline of 31<sup>st</sup> August. We are continuing to work with Employers to resolve any queries to allow a statement to be produced.

## Pensions Dashboard Programme (PDP)

In March this year, DWP announced a reset of the programme as part of refreshing the delivery plan for the [new connection deadline of 31 October 2026](#).

We have continued to prepare for Pensions Dashboards and the requirements for connection.

Member data quality is a vital part of the success of Pensions Dashboards and members being able to successfully match with their pensions and see up to date information. Therefore, there is an increasing importance that employers continue to provide timely and accurate data at all times.

For more information, please refer to the PDP FAQs:

[Frequently asked questions on pensions dashboards | Pensions Dashboards Programme](#)

## Employer Hub – Online Services

We are pleased to advise that there has been a number of developments with the Employer Hub over the last month, these include:

- **Tabbed employer Forms** – these enable users to complete sections of the form and save as they go, enabling the user to come back and finalise later. We are positive that this will resolve issues some users were having with timing out.
- **Upload of documents** – Users are now able to upload:
  - Ill-health certificates
  - Employer initiated authorisation forms
  - Leaver forms (a solution for employers/payroll providers who mailmerge forms on the word document, without the need to complete directly onto the online form)



We are also aware of feedback given by users that it would be helpful to have confirmation that a starter form has been submitted and/or a copy of the form as a PDF. This is something that is currently on our development plans.

### 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:

4 October 2023	10:00 to 11:00	<a href="#">Sign up here</a>
30 November 2023	11:00 to 12:00	<a href="#">Sign up here</a>
11 December 2023	10:00 to 11:00	<a href="#">Sign up here</a>

There is no charge for attendance at these sessions.

If you would like to find out more, please email [pensions.employer@hants.gov.uk](mailto:pensions.employer@hants.gov.uk)



## Member Portal – Update and developments

### One time codes

Earlier in the year we introduced one time codes by text message where a mobile number for the member is held – feedback from members has been really positive on this change including the speed in which this is received.



We do ask Employers to encourage members to review their member portal account and add a mobile number if this is not recorded.

### Preserved refunds

Previously anyone with less than 2 years' service who had left the scheme could not see their pension record on the portal. This has now changed for Preserved refund members and a new facility added so these members can request a refund via their Member Portal account.

A preserved refund is where a member has been in the scheme for over three months but does not meet the two year membership to entitle them to an LGPS pension benefit. Although this does not directly impact you as an employer, you may have employees who opt out of the scheme and are keen to investigate a refund, which is not done via your payroll.

## Strike actions - FAQs

The LGA have published an employer and member frequently asked questions (FAQ) about strike action. The FAQ covers the common questions asked when LGPS members take strike action.

You can access these as follows:

- Employer FAQs on the employer guides and documents page of [www.lgpsregs.org](http://www.lgpsregs.org)
- Member FAQs on the frequently asked questions page of [www.lgpsmember.org](http://www.lgpsmember.org)

## Ill-health retirement

### Ill health retirement bite-size training

The LGA have recently published ill-health retirement bite-size training for employers. The training is free and interactive. It covers the ill-health retirement process, including the criteria, decision-making process and benefits payable. There are 2 separate courses covering active and deferred members. You can find the training on the employer bite-size training page of <https://www.lgpsregs.org>



### Ill-health retirements for ex-employees – employer responsibilities

Over the last couple of months, we have had a number of employers refer ex-employees to Hampshire Pension Services to claim their pension under ill-health, we therefore wanted to remind employers again for the process which employers must follow.

A former employee may apply to you to have their pension paid, unreduced, on ill health grounds. You must follow the process as you would for an active employee. The only differences are that:

- The LGPS regulations which apply will depend on when the employee left the scheme. You will need to use the relevant certificate so that it refers to the relevant regulations.
- You will not need to allocate the member to one of the three tiers because pensions paid to deferred members are not enhanced.
- You will not need to send leaver information as you will have sent it in the past.

It is important that as an Employer you are following the correct procedures to consider ill-health retirements as any complaints made to the Pensions Ombudsman could be upheld for not following processes, regardless of whether the right decision was made.

More information on ill-health retirements can be found on our [website](#).

If you do have any questions including the process which should be followed, please email [pensions.employer@hants.gov.uk](mailto:pensions.employer@hants.gov.uk)



On 8 September 2023, DLUHC laid [The Local Government Pension Scheme \(Amendment\) \(No. 3\) Regulations 2023](#) and published its response to the most recent McCloud consultation. You can view these documents on the [GOV.UK website](#).

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

Now regulations are laid, the LGA are working on guidance for implementation, as well as member communications which can be used.

### **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.

**Action:** 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.

## Updated – Discretions template

### Employer Local Government Pension Scheme Discretions Policy

Employer name:  
Employer number:  
Policy effective from:

Discretions template (HPS - Updated August 2023)

Under the LGPS regulations all Scheme Employers must ensure they have a published discretions policy, including a number of compulsory discretions.

### Updated template

We have recently updated the Discretions template for Employers to use, reflecting the LGA guidance. This along with more details on 'Discretions Policies' can be found in the employer area of the [Hampshire Pension Services website](#).

Employers should regularly review their policy to ensure it remains reflective and appropriate. Copies of published policies should be sent to [pensions.employer@hants.gov.uk](mailto:pensions.employer@hants.gov.uk)

To support employers we offer a ['Discretions' bitesize workshop](#) covering the requirements for a Scheme Employer and the decisions that need to be made. The next session is on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

## Contact Forms and Updates

The image shows a spreadsheet titled 'Hampshire Pension Services Employer contact form'. It contains several sections for data entry:

- External payroll providers:** A table with columns for 'External payroll providers' and 'Other employers for whom contacts'.
- Addresses:** A table with columns for 'Address', 'Employer Address', and 'Payroll provider address'. It includes rows for 'Address B-1', 'Address B-2', 'Address B-3', and 'Home'.
- Employer contacts and authorisation:** A table with columns for 'Name', 'Surname', 'Type of contact', 'Job title', 'Contact no.', and 'Email address'. A note above this table reads: "\*\*Please use names later in staff list to add to this table. Thanks all\*\*".
- Employer Version:** A dropdown menu at the bottom left.

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](mailto:pensions.employer@hants.gov.uk) and we will send you a copy of your Contact Form to review.

## Changes to Payroll Provider

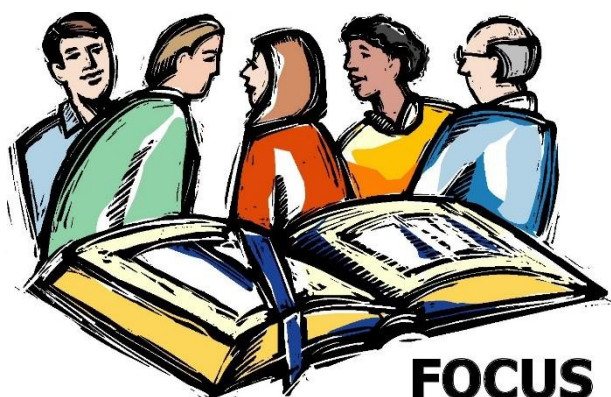
If you change your payroll provider, it is important to make Hampshire Pension Services aware of these changes as soon as possible. HPS will guide you through the actions required from an LGPS perspective, to ensure there are no impacts to your employee's LGPS pension.

More information on the steps which will need to be followed to ensure a smooth transition can be found on our '[Change of Payroll Provider Factsheet](#)' available on our website.

If you do have any questions or concerns, then please email [pensions.employer@hants.gov.uk](mailto:pensions.employer@hants.gov.uk) and someone from the team will get in touch.

## Employer Focus Group

Our next virtual Employer Focus Group' is to be held on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> October 2023.



### FOCUS GROUPS

During the session, we are keen to discuss and hear feedback on the following:

- Employer Hub recent developments
- Member Online service developments
- Member engagement

We have run these focus groups over the last few years, with the purpose to primarily help create and improve communications and processes, feedback to help with administration policy setting and review of documents for both members and employers. We have had some great feedback in the past, which we form part of our considerations before implementing or making changes.

If you are interested in being part of this Focus Group, please email [pensions.employer@hants.gov.uk](mailto:pensions.employer@hants.gov.uk).

## 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:

Employers in the LGPS, Starters and Opt Outs	3 November 2023	11am
Leavers and Retirements, including Starter, Leaver and Estimate Forms	8 November 2023	2pm
Pensionable Pay	9 November 2023	9.30am
APC's, Absences, paying in more, Paying in less – 50:50	13 November 2023	3pm
Organisational changes (Outsourcing, Mergers, Change of Payroll)	22 November 2023	10am
Discretions and disputes	27 November 2023	2pm

Please note that **there is no charge** for attendance at any of the sessions above.

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](mailto: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.

## LGA Employer Role training events

In addition to the bitesize employer training sessions which Hampshire Pension Services run, the LGA have several dates throughout 2023 where they are running 'Employer role' training events. There is a small charge for these sessions.

For more information and to book a space, please use this link:

[Events | Local Government Association](#)

## 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 241 – August 2023**

- Ill-health retirement bite size training
- Strike action FAQs
- Pensions Dashboard

#### **Bulletin 240 – July 2023**

- The LGPS gender pensions gap
- DLUHC consultation on investment reforms

#### **Bulletin 239 – June 2023**

- Scheme annual report 2022
- McCloud remedy consultation
- DWP push back Pensions Dashboard deadline

#### **Bulletin 238 – May 2023**

- Automatic enrolment – call for evidence

If you have any topics, you would specifically like covered, please let us know for consideration by emailing [pensions.employer@hants.gov.uk](mailto: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](mailto:pensions.employer@hants.gov.uk) and we'll be glad to help.**