

The Local Government Pensions Committee
Secretary: Terry Edwards

CIRCULAR

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No. 242 - FEBRUARY 2011

FORTHCOMING RESIDENTIAL COURSES IN 2011

Purpose of this circular:

1. This Circular has been issued to advise administering authorities and employers participating in the Local Government Pension Scheme of the availability of residential training courses being held during 2011. The courses have been organised by the Local Government Pension Committee (LGPC).

Background

2. The LGPC has been running residential courses aimed at practitioners at both administering and employing authority level since 2004. The course is named "Insight" and it covers most aspects of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) at a foundation level. The presentation and delegate material is constantly updated in line with changes in regulations and developments, giving attendees the very latest information on the LGPS and associated matters.
3. The way in which the pensions function is divided between administering and employing authorities varies significantly nationwide. Also, where the administering authority and employing authority are one and the same, which offices or individual officers within that authority have responsibility for what part of the pensions function, appears to vary too. Some employing authority staff (either Human Resources or Finance/Payroll) occupy posts that are mainly or wholly pension scheme related.

4. Although it was originally envisaged that there might be a need to devise separate training events for employing authority staff and staff in administering authority Pension Sections, we concluded that a foundation course for practitioners that was equally attractive to administering and employing authority staff could well meet the training needs of both sides whilst having the added advantage of fostering good working relationships and facilitating networking. Experience over the past seven years has proved this to be the case.

Course Details

5. Two courses have been organised for 2011 as follows:

The Royal Hotel, Scarborough 16 - 19 May 2011

The Cavendish Hotel, Eastbourne 19 - 22 September 2011

6. A full programme is attached as **Appendix A**, but highlights of the course are:

- A history of the Scheme and current developments
- A look at the alternatives and possible futures for the LGPS
- Contributions payable
- How membership counts in the calculation of benefits
- How final pay is assessed
- Good quality communications
- Minimising and resolving disputes
- The benefits the scheme provides and how they are calculated, including:
 - Refunds of Contributions
 - Preserved Benefits
 - Retirement Benefits
 - Death Grants and Survivors' Benefits
 - Transfer Values

7. The LGPS is a complex scheme to fully understand and one of the intended outcomes of the course is to get delegates to appreciate all aspects of being involved in administering a pension scheme.

8. There are a number of practical exercises, many of which involve the calculation of benefits. There is ample time built in to allow for discussion of the various aspects of the scheme and delegates are actively encouraged to participate in this way. The course is designed to be both challenging and thought provoking.

9. A training event spanning four days solely about the topic of local government pensions may not sound particularly interesting. Of course, training is necessary to maintain performance objectives and standards but there are few people who enjoy the boredom it can entail. A lot of effort has been put into the 'Insight' training event to make the learning experience interesting and even fun at times. This enhances the overall experience and knowledge of those who attend and hopefully leads to people retaining what they have been taught.

10. The session handouts build up into a substantial guide to the LGPS and its administration, which is intended not just as an aide memoir but also as future reference material.

Intended Audience

11. The residential courses are intended for all those involved in LGPS administration. It is suitable for Pensions Office staff and also HR/Finance/Payroll staff for whom the pensions function plays a significant part in their day-to-day and employing authority role.
12. Being a foundation course, the course is aimed at staff who are either relatively new to the pensions scene, or have some experience but want to better understand their own and others' responsibilities under the terms of the scheme. The material is quite detailed though as this is unavoidable due to the design of the scheme.

Cost and Booking

13. The cost of each residential course is £745 (plus VAT at the standard rate) per delegate. This includes full board accommodation throughout the course, all delegate material, refreshments throughout the day and a course certificate.
14. Early booking is highly recommended as places are normally limited to 15 at each event. Bookings are made via the on-line events booking facility <http://www.lge.gov.uk/lge/events/events-list.do> which is part of the Local Government Employers' website at www.local.gov.uk. Please note our cancellation policy contained in our Terms and Conditions on the website. When booking, you will need full delegate details to hand including the address to which the invoice for payment is to be sent. Purchase order numbers must also be provided if required by your organisation to pay invoices.
15. If the course at your preferred location is full and you do not wish to book on the course at the other location, you are advised to enter your name on the reserves' list at your preferred location. It is important to do so as, not only will you have a priority warning should any cancellations occur, but it also enables the LGPC to consider increasing delegate places where possible or, on occasion, to organise an overflow event.
16. If you experience any difficulties in using the on-line website booking facility, please contact Elaine English, LGPC Executive Officer, by email elaine.english@local.gov.uk

ACTIONS FOR ADMINISTERING AUTHORITIES

17. All Administering Authorities are urged to copy this Circular to all employers in their Fund or bring the Circular to the attention of employers by directing them to it on the LGE website.

Tim Hazlewood
LGPC Training and Development Manager
3 February 2011

“INSIGHT” Course Programme

Day One

- 6:00 p.m. **Introduction to the Course / Icebreaker**
An opportunity for the delegates to introduce themselves, this short session includes a non-physical team-building exercise that attempts to prove that co-operation and team-work do produce better results.
- Followed by evening meal at 7:00 p.m.

Day Two

- 9:15 a.m. **Perspective**
A look at the history of state and private pension provision in the UK, with an emphasis on the LGPS and how it has changed over the decades and is still changing. The session concludes with an exploration of the relative roles of employing and administering authorities.
- 10:15 a.m. **To join or not to join (that is the question)**
With membership being voluntary and take-up in some local authorities reportedly as low as 50 to 60% of those eligible to join the scheme, we take a look at the choices facing each and every employee. We look at the effects not only on the employee but the impact on the employing authority and the Pension Fund itself.
- 11:00 a.m. Refreshment Break
- 11:30 a.m. **A Great British Scheme?**
An overview of the current scheme, a look at how it is funded (employee and employer contributions and the concept of “cap and share”) and a look at the valuation process. We will look at the discretions available to employing authorities and administering authorities, how the exercise of those discretions can impact on both workloads and employers’ contribution rates. This session includes a discussion on the importance of accurate and timely information.
- 12:30 p.m. Lunch

- 2:00 p.m. **How membership counts**
A look at the way in which membership counts in the calculation of benefits, including an examination of the differences between whole-time, part-time and term-time scheme members, together with casual employees. With mandatory annual benefit statements being issued, we will take a close look at the need for up-to-date and accurate records for scheme members.
- 3:30 p.m. Refreshment Break
- 4:00 p.m. **Improving the benefits**
A look at the options available to the employee and a weigh-up of the relative merits of paying Additional Regular Contributions, paying in-house or free-standing AVCs and using alternative tax-efficient saving vehicles. The employer options are explored also.
- 5:00 p.m. Session closes
- 7:00 p.m. Evening Meal

Day Three

- 9:15 a.m. **Early Leavers' benefits**
A look at the range of options available including refunds, preserved benefits, and "inter-fund" transfers. This will be supplemented by a close look at what needs to be done, and when, as required by the pension scheme regulations and other, overriding legislation.
- 10:30 a.m. Refreshment Break
- 11:00 a.m. **Transfer Values**
We take a look at transferring into and out of the LGPS and give an explanation of the methodology, both club and non-club, and what scheme members should take into account when making their decision whether to transfer or not. We also look at the potential effect transfers may have on employers' funding levels and contribution rates.
- 12:30 p.m. Lunch
- 2:00 p.m. **Retirement Benefits – Part 1**
A look at all the various retirement benefits available including ill-health retirement, flexible retirement and an explanation of actuarial reductions.
- 3:30 p.m. Refreshment Break.

- 4:00 p.m. **Retirement Benefits – Part 2**
A continuation of the types of retirement benefits, including redundancy and efficiency retirement, together with a look at the member's option to convert retirement pension into extra tax-free lump sum.
- 5:00 p.m. Close
- 7:00 p.m. Evening Meal

Day Four

- 9:15 a.m. **Survivors' benefits**
A look at widow's, widower's, civil partners', nominated cohabiting partners' and children's pension provision in the LGPS. We also look at death grants and how they are calculated and hear of the absolute discretion the administering authority has in making the payment.
- 10:45 a.m. Refreshment Break
- 11:15 a.m. **It'll be alright on the night**
A look at the dispute resolution procedures contained in the LGPS, what can go wrong and how all parties in the pensions function can work effectively, both individually and collectively, in order that mistakes can be minimised. This session includes an important look at effective communication.
- 12:15 p.m. **What's happening now – and what happens next?**
An insight into current developments and an exploration of possible futures for the LGPS.
- 12:55 p.m. **Course Certificates**
The award of course certificates.
- 13:00 p.m. **Course ends with Lunch**

PLEASE NOTE:

1. All timings are approximate
2. There are no significant dress codes imposed by either hotel.

Distribution sheet

Local authorities who have registered for notification of Circulars
Pension managers (internal) of administering authorities
Pension managers (outsourced) and administering authority client managers
Officer advisory group
Local Government Pensions Committee
Trade unions
DCLG
COSLA
SPPA
Regional Directors
Private clients

Website

Visit the LGE's website at: www.local.gov.uk

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LGPC
Local Government House
Smith Square
London
SW1P 3HZ

or email: tim.hazlewood@local.gov.uk

or telephone: 01455 824850