

LGPS 2014

AGREEMENT AND ACTIONS

**Communications Working Group
11am to 2pm – 21 May 2014
Rooms A & B Layden House.**

Present

Antony Ellis (West Midlands Pension Fund)
Andy Brooks (Gwent (Torfaen) Pension Fund)
Ben Altoft (Avon Pension Fund)
Carol Haywood (Leicestershire Pension Fund)
Dave Hood (North Yorkshire Pension Fund)
David Williams (Environment Agency Pension Fund)
Dawn Muir (LPFA)
Guy Hayton (Merseyside Pension Fund)
Heather Chambers (Tyne and Wear Pension Fund)
Jenny Gregory (West Yorkshire Pension Fund)
Mandy Judd (Hampshire Pension Fund)
Martin Griffiths (Staffordshire Pension Fund)
Steve Makin (Avon Pension Fund)
Mary Lambe (LGPC Secretariat)

Apologies

Mathew James (Dyfed Pension Fund)
Rebecca Purfit (Shropshire Pension Fund)
Jenny Wylie (Oxfordshire Pension Fund)
Neil Lewins (LPFA)

1. Actions and agreements from last meeting 5 February 2014

- Pensions Ombudsman - Discretion Meeting

Steve Makin (SM) gave the group an update regarding meetings which the Avon Pension Fund organised and the Pensions Ombudsman (PO) attended. Meetings were well received with the PO giving real life examples when discretions policies go wrong, the various pitfalls which can happen and the appeals that can ensue. Avon's employers found it beneficial when thinking about formulating their own discretion policy. For details to organise something similar with the PO office its best to contact Avon for details. It's understood there was no cost (in addition to expenses) for this service.

- Resources Section - LGPSregs.org

Confirmed that assets (including avatar images, various images from 2014 videos, LGPS logos and branding guidelines) will soon be made available on a new resources section of the LGPSreg website - alongside the code for the APC Modeller. (section to be developed

<http://www.lgpsregs.org/index.php/resources>)

Action 1 - Mary Lambe (ML) to inform group when up and running

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- Employer Communications

CWG were very grateful for the information in both the HR and Payroll guides. It was noted that it was helpful when changes were being made that tracked changed version were made available. It was also noted that when updated versions were issued with further changes expected that it was very helpful when this information was also mentioned in covering emails.

2. LGPS 2014 Project Update

Project Review/Lessons learned

Overall CWG agreed that the project has gone well so far. The delays/slippage in regulations made the job of communicating with both members and employers very difficult however the group passed on their thanks to the LGPC secretariat for the central information made available to employers - this made the job of communicating with employers much simpler.

Employer Communications: Concern was raised that until we get returns from employers (it was noted that the first of the monthly returns are now being received by funds) that we won't know the full extent of how employers have managed with the changes. Jenny Gregory (JG) mentioned that West Yorkshire worked with monthly returns and would provide an update to the group in due course as to what they have found. In addition Dawn Muir (DM) mentioned that LPFA are also working with monthly returns.

Group felt that year-end information for 2014/15 will be a major communication exercise with a role for CWG to develop a template.

Agreed to look at this as work item in 2014/15.

Member Communications: Variations in experience of funds. Some funds had very little in terms of queries from members whilst other funds had a significant increase in queries from members regarding the new scheme. The topic that seemed to get the most queries was access to pensions from age 55.

This led to a discussion on themes for communication and Carol Haywood (CH) mentioned that Leicestershire were focusing on 'when can I afford to go' as a theme using the new 20 year window as the basis for a shift from date focus to financial focus.

The area of access to benefits from age 55 was discussed. Antony raised the point of transfers out and the area of pensions liberation. Group all agreed that adding details that pensions can be accessed in the LGPS from age 55 should be included in any transfer information to ensure those considering transferring out are fully informed.

Another area which may create queries in the coming weeks is the planned strike action. Andy mentioned that it would be helpful to have information from the centre to '2014' the circulars which the Secretariat normally issue on such occasions. **Action 2** - ML to confirm if intention is to update content of Circular 213 in advance of July 2014 and report back to group.

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Update on statistics

LGPS 2014 member website:

April 2014 - 49,117 visits (29,134 new users)

March 2014 - 78,979 visits (51,253 new users)

February 2014 - 50,884 visits (31,807 new users)

Video Statistics (English)

Total views to 30 April - 47,540

Overview video = 24,119

Conts and flexibility to pay more or less video = 4,357

How is my pension worked out video? = 6,405

When can I take my pension? = 8,323

Paying in before April 2014 = 4,336

April in month plays - 2,820

March in month plays - 12,450

Video Statistics (Welsh)

Total views to 30 April - 156

Overview video = 51

Conts and flexibility to pay more or less video = 27

How is my pension worked out video? = 22

When can I take my pension? = 27

Paying in before April 2014 = 29

April in month plays - 42

March in month plays - 30

3. Future Communications Working Group - Discussion item

ML thanked the group for all their work and assistance in delivering communications for LGPS 2014. Furthermore now seemed the right time to review how the CWG will work going forward and what pieces of work the group will focus on.

A very beneficial discussion took place with CWG members confirming they found the group beneficial to them as individual funds as well as confirming they are very keen to work in collaboration to benefit communications for the LGPS in general.

The key points out of discussion include:

- Need for an annual plan to outline the areas of work which CWG will focus on
- Need to raise the profile of the group - publish our plan annually, publish the minutes of the groups meetings on the resources section of the LGPSregs website.
- Need to ensure other funds not involved in the group are aware of work we do - need to obtain ways to ensure CWG info is shared across all 89 funds, utilise monthly LGPC bulletin, updates via regional Pension

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Officer Group meetings as well as via regional communications groups
Action 3 - ML to include updates in Bulletins and add minutes to resource section of the LGPS regs website.

- Identify the role of the CWG alongside new structures with the Shadow Scheme Advisory Board - need to identify if CWG can have representation on the Administration and Communications sub-committee or if, where relevant, a representative from the CWG would be invited along in an observer capacity when items of communication are being discussed. **Action 4** - ML to liaise with Board secretariat regarding CWG link to these new structures
- Maintain the role of sub-groups from the full CWG to work on individual items of work - where members sign up to volunteer on such groups to move forward a piece of work **Action 5** - ML to liaise with CWG to set up various sub-groups for areas of work for 2014/15
- Other possible areas for consideration included possibly having a rotating chair (annually?) to oversee meetings, considering developing a terms of reference for the group and also thinking about the optimum size of the group and ensuring it reflects all types and sizes of funds
- Options also include running a survey to see what funds want centrally for communications as well as developing a database of all communication contacts in the 89 funds in England and Wales (as well as Scotland)

4. Post April 2014 - communicating with members and employers

Discussion took place about items of communication needed for 2014/15 which the CWG should allocate their time to developing.

Discussion took place about topics including, AVCs, APC Calculator, Aggregation/transfers, rule of 85/drawing benefits from 55-60, year-end processes 2014/15, annual benefit statements and the new member website.

Agreed that a plan be drafted to detail the communications being devised over the year. This plan should set out the objectives for the year alongside a timeframe for the development of communication items. The group felt that the following items need to be developed (in addition to the new scheme member website (see point 5 below):

a) Annual Benefit Statements

Need for the development of a template for the active Annual Benefit Statement for 31 March 2015. This would need to be developed in advance of March 2015 to ensure it could be shared with other funds and pensions administration software suppliers. In addition guidance notes for scheme members (to sit around the information on an ABS) was also seen as an item for development.

b) Year-end information 2014/15

Given the new information being required from payroll systems for the new LGPS 2014 scheme and the emphasis on the employer providing the information correctly (as the administering authority will be unable to reconcile pay figures with contributions paid) the CWG feel that there is a need for a centrally designed template alongside guidance notes

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for employers to assist them in supplying the first year of information in the CARE scheme.

c) Aggregation

Discussion took place surrounding the clarification being sought from HM Treasury by the LGPC secretariat regarding the position on the final salary link where a member elects not to allow automatic aggregation in the new scheme (i.e. that it should not exist if the member has made a positive election to keep separate records). CWG felt that there is a need for member communications e.g. an FAQ list etc. for the member to understand the choice they have. The result of the query to HM Treasury on the final salary link will go towards adding much needed clarity on any items of communication which are developed.

Post meeting: Terry Edwards confirmed that as part of the work being undertaken by the Technical Group they have already identified that a piece of member related communication needs to also be developed - once HM Treasury clarification on the final salary link has been received.

d) Rule of 85 and the ability to draw pension from age 55

Many funds felt that this was one of the areas which obtained the most queries from scheme members since the inception of the new scheme. Trying to provide as much information on affordability to take benefits was seen as a key concept as the window to take benefits now spans 20 years. In addition to this the rule of 85 and its interaction for those members who elect to take their benefits before age 60 was seen as an area which whilst obviously complex would benefit in the development of an item of communication for members to assist them in making decisions on whether to consider accessing benefits. The idea of an online decision tree was discussed where a member can answer a few questions (e.g. were you a member before 1 October 2006, were you born before 31 March 1956, how many years have you been in the scheme etc.) and that this would deliver the member to the relevant information for the R85 group type they are.

Whilst discussion took place about AVCs it was felt that with the need for miscellaneous regulations (to provide for the policy intention regarding AVCs not to mention the possible impact the Budget 2014 proposals will have on AVCs to exist in legislation) in the future it was felt that the group hold back from devising any further detailed member information on this topic until further clarity is available.

Comments on the APC calculator were also shared. These are listed below. ML confirmed that feedback will continue to be reviewed and asked that any comments continue to be sent to the LGPC secretariat to ensure that for the next release (in line with the member website release) all possible improvements have been considered.

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APC calculator comments

- Too difficult for members to use
- Showing cost per £100 not required - many felt it was too much information for the member
- Could a story be added or examples such as avatars to explain if you've a baby or if you go on strike this is what you do. Humanising the experience more and explaining why a member might need to use it.
- Could the calculator become a quick quote facility only - rather than a facility to print off application forms - some funds noted they would not be using the modeller for this reason
- Could fund contact details link also be added underneath the signature section of the application form.

Action 6 - ML to develop plan for 2014/15 and share with CWG for comment. In addition it was felt that sub-groups tasked with developing the guidance above would be beneficial rather than pulling the full group together each time. ML to ask for interested parties to join various sub-groups and expect they may convene meetings or work electronically via email.

5. New Scheme Member website - post April 2014

ML updated the group on the member website. A domain name has been purchased www.lgpsmember.org. The first draft of a site map has been created and the team at the LGPC are working on further developing this.

A timeframe for development and details of the site-map will be shared with members of the group in due course via 2014/15 communications plan.

6. Update on Administration and Communication sub-committee

ML provided a verbal update to the group on the last Admin and Comms sub-committee which took place on the 8th May 2014 including:

- Progress on the review of ill-health retirement
- ABS paper to become Scheme Advisory Board guidance (once ratified)
- Sub-ctte to look at guidance on recording keeping and data cleansing and
- Sub-ctte to also look at work stemming from the abolition of contracting out from April 2016.

Action 7: As per action 4 above

7. Discussion items - New forms required for 2014

Member self-serve and disclosure requirements

- Discussion around experience of funds who have moved to self-serve. SM asked what pitfalls other funds came across. Discussion around the requirements of the Disclosure Regulations 2013 and whether it is necessary to obtain approval from members (pre 1 December 2010 members) by communicating with them on 3 separate occasions before moving to electronic communications. Group agreed that a document explicating stating what a fund must do in line with scheme and overriding legislation would be a beneficial document. **Action 7** - to be added to work items for CWG in 2014/15.

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8. AOB and Next Meeting

Next Meetings – Dates mentioned

w/c - 21 July 2014 and 3 November discuss as potential weeks when the next meetings.

Post Meeting: Having check room availability and to ensure we space meetings out by about 3 months I suggest the following meetings for the full CWG:

Wednesday 13th August - 11am - Local Government House

and

Wednesday 12th November - 11am - Local Government House

If you could confirm whether or not the above dates are suitable then ML will confirm dates to group.