

# Employers' Briefing Note

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## Important information and warnings

### 2019 Actuarial Valuation

Ahead of the Fund's 2019 actuarial valuation, we will be holding a series of multi-employer consultation meetings across the West Midlands area to discuss the actuarial valuation. They are scheduled for:

- 20 June 2019 – Mander House, Wolverhampton
- 4 July 2019 – The Hub at Walsall College, Walsall
- 8 July 2019 – Eversheds offices, 115 Colmore Row, Birmingham
- 11 July 2019 – Coventry University, Coventry

More information will be provided on these sessions in due course.

The Fund is also undergoing a contact list review and active member reconciliation, and will be contacting employers on an individual



basis to confirm that the contacts held by the Fund are correct and that the membership profile is correct. Please ensure that all leaver notifications for members who have left your employment before 1 April 2019 are submitted by the end of April 2019 to ensure that your membership profile is correct for the 2019 valuation.

### Internal Dispute Resolution Procedure (IDRP)

The West Midlands Pension Fund prides itself on the high-quality customer service it provides to members of the scheme. Part of that service involves ensuring that there is a formal procedure in place for when members feel unhappy about any aspect of their pension.

In accordance with The Pension Regulator's Code of Practice, the Fund has implemented a two-stage process for dealing with pension disputes when a member is unhappy with the first-instance decision.

#### First-Instance Decisions

Notification of a decision taken by an employer or the administering authority on matters relating to a member's pension rights.

#### IDRP Stage 1

If a member is dissatisfied with the first-stage decision, they can make a written application to the named adjudicator within six months from the date of the notification.

#### IDRP Stage 2

If a member is unhappy with the decision made by the adjudicator then can make a written application to the administering authority for reconsideration.

A summary of the process followed by an employer and the Fund can be found using the following links:

[Decision of Employer](#)

[Decision of Fund](#)

The full process is detailed in the [Internal Dispute Resolution Procedure](#) document.

## Accounting disclosure dates

Each year, the Fund invites employers to participate in the Fund's bulk arrangement in respect of the FRS102/IAS19 accounting disclosure. An FRS102/IAS19 accounting disclosure is used in your organisation's financial report and accounts. Participation in this exercise is optional and the timescale for the invitations is shown on the right.

Please be advised that if you have opted in to previous arrangements, you will be automatically enrolled in to this year's bulk arrangement. You will, however, still be given the opportunity to opt out.

Year-end date	Invite issued	Results to be issued
31 March 2019	February 2019	April to May 2019
30 April 2019	March 2019	June 2019
30 June 2019	May 2019	August 2019
31 July 2019	June 2019	September 2019
31 August 2019	June 2019	October 2019
30 September 2019	August 2019	November 2019
31 December 2019	November 2019	February 2019

## Be Aware – Spam Emails

Scammers are getting more sophisticated (impersonating many financial institutions and organisations that issue invoices). Unfortunately, an email address can be fraudulently 'lifted' from any contact that a member of staff has ever emailed or website they have registered for.

If any employer has inadvertently paid an invoice attached to a phishing email, then they should contact the National Fraud & Cyber Crime Reporting Centre: <https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/reporting-fraud>

Signs of fraudulent phishing emails are:



**The Fund has not changed its payment account details.**



- No personalised addressee (eg. Just 'Hi', 'Dear Customer')
- Notifying a change of bank details 'out of the blue'
- Receiving unexpected invoices (as attachments or links) even if the email address is known

## Fund Support and Guidance

### Employer Coaching Sessions 2019

Coaching sessions are available for all employers to assist the development of knowledge and understanding of the West Midlands Pension Fund, help with the navigation of the web portal facility, Fund administration requirements and a Fund employer's role and responsibilities.

These sessions are free of charge and take place in our offices at Mander House, Wolverhampton.

The current schedule for 2019 is as follows:



Please look out for further communications regarding a series of short workshops the Fund intends to pilot during 2019 on a number of topics including:

#### Coaching sessions for all Fund employers

- 5 June
- 11 September
- 13 November

#### Coaching session for payroll providers only

- 24 July

- Discretionary statements
- Flexible retirement
- Early retirement costings
- TUPE and pensions
- Calculating pay

For more information about the sessions or to book yourself a place, please email the team at: [wmpfemployerliaison2@wolverhampton.gov.uk](mailto:wmpfemployerliaison2@wolverhampton.gov.uk)

# Notifying the Fund of a Leaver

## Opt-Out Member completes opt-out form

### Immediate opt-out (in the same month)

- Notify the Fund using the 'Immediate Opt-Out Flag' on the *monthly submission file*
- Member deemed never to have been in scheme

### Opt-out less than three months' service (in second or third month)

- Notify the Fund via a *web portal query* on the member's record once it has been set up by the Fund
- Refund member contributions through your payroll
- Member deemed never to have been in scheme

### Opt-out after three months or more, but less than two years

- Notify the Fund via *S4EL/OPT* from member's record
- Fund will refund member contributions where appropriate\*

### Opt-out two years or more

- Notify the Fund via *S4EL/OPT* from member's record
- Member's benefits will become deferred

## Leaver

(not entitled to immediate payment of benefits)

## Member leaves employment

### Leavers with less than three months' service

- Notify the Fund via *S4EL/OPT* from member's record
- Fund will refund member contributions where appropriate\*

### Leavers after three months or more, but less than two years

- Notify the Fund via *S4EL/OPT* from member's record
- Fund will refund member contributions where appropriate\*

### Leaver two years or more

- Notify the Fund via *S4EL/OPT* from member's record
- Member's benefits will become deferred

**If member is 55 or over, please check if the member wishes to access their benefits (reduced for early access)\*\***

\* Members are not eligible for a refund if:

- They have an existing deferred record
- They have an existing pensioner record
- They have aggregated/transferred in service that amounts to more than two years
- They have another active/concurrent record
- They become active again within one month and one day of their previous leaving date

\*\*If member is 55 or over and they wish to access their reduced benefits, please submit a *S4/RB* via the member's record on web portal, along with the relevant documentation

**Remember:** statutory notifications must be issued by employers to all members joining or leaving the scheme (not opting out). Samples are available here: [West Midlands Pension Fund - Forms and data submission](#)

## Events in 2019

**SAVE  
THE DATE**

The West Midlands Pension Fund's Mid-Year Review is on Wednesday 3 July 2019

### Employer Peer Group

The Employer Peer Group consists of a group of representatives from across the Fund's employer base including district councils, educational establishments, private companies and other participating organisations, with the aim of discussing a range of topics such as the legal obligations of scheme employers, current issues and upcoming events.

These sessions enable the Fund to work collaboratively with employers and gain valued and helpful feedback to help shape its future services.

A number of topical issues were discussed in the February session, including:

- **New Employer Hub** – Further planned improvements were discussed to obtain employer feedback. A subsequent demonstration took place on 21 February 2019 to members of the Peer Group.
- **Webinar demonstration** – In addition to the face-to-face support offered to members, the Fund is reviewing the possibility of offering webinar demonstrations to raise pension awareness with members and to support the Fund's employer

coaching programme. A trial took place with Peer Group attendees on 26 February 2019.

- **Consultations** – Peer Group provided feedback on the Customer Engagement Strategy and the monthly submission process. Comments to be reviewed by the Fund.
- **Actuarial valuation** – As part of the Fund's triennial valuation, a discussion took place regarding the initial consultation meetings. Invitations to be circulated to all employers in due course. See front page for dates.

We would like to extend our thanks to those employers who currently sit on this group as we appreciate the time commitments during your busy schedules particularly in consideration of the many other duties and obligations you have.

An invite has recently been issued to all Fund employers requesting confirmation of interest to be part of the Peer Group. If you have not received the email but would like to express an interest, please contact Employer Services.

The dates for the 2019/2020 are currently:

- Wednesday 15 May 2019
- Friday 20 September 2019
- Thursday 12 December 2019
- Wednesday 5 February 2020

### DMT Email Inbox



**Please note that if you send an email to the DMT ([DMT@wolverhampton.gov.uk](mailto:DMT@wolverhampton.gov.uk)) email inbox, you will receive an automatic response confirming receipt of your email.**

The Fund will no longer issue individual responses to emails received to this email inbox. Please accept the automatic response as confirmation of receipt of your email and associated documents.

## Focus on Member Services

### Informing Our Members to Support Employers

Being a member of the LGPS is an integral part of working in local government, and the Fund understands that pensions can seem complicated – that's why with over 75 years of combined pensions' experience, the team is here to support and give guidance to members who could have important financial decisions to make now or in the near future.

We have a variety of communication methods, supplied free of charge, to provide support to members including presentations, one to one sessions and roadshows. We can also tailor our existing support to provide specific bespoke events to meet your organisational needs.

The team consists of Communications & Events Officer Andy Hemming, Member Relationship Officers Alison Rees and Andy Booth, Member Support Officer Ruth Worsey and Member Support Assistant James Roper.

If you are interested to know more about our services or wish to book an event, please call 01902 551869 or email [wmpfevents@wolverhampton.gov.uk](mailto:wmpfevents@wolverhampton.gov.uk)



# Industry Updates

## New Fair Deal Consultation – Ending Soon

Please find a communication from the LGA below regarding the 'New Fair Deal consultation', we recently shared with all employers. The consultation aims to obtain the views of those who deal with HR and contract management issues. This was previously circulated to Fund employers on 16 January 2019.

*Please see the consultation on the proposed amendments to the LGPS that are intended to implement the New Fair Deal Policy protecting the pensions position of local government workers who are compulsorily transferred as part of an outsourcing arrangement.*

*In addition, we (MHCLG) are proposing mechanisms regarding the transfer of assets and liabilities when LGPS employers merge.*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/local-government-pension-scheme-fair-deal-strengthening-pension-protection>

Your comments on the proposals are sought by the 4 April, to the following address [lgpensions@communities.gov.uk](mailto:lgpensions@communities.gov.uk)

Yours

Robert Ellis

Local Government Pensions Team

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

## Cost Management



Many of you may have seen a letter from the LGPS Scheme Advisory Board (SAB), headed "SAB Cost Management", dated 21 December 2018. SAB is responsible for reviewing the Local Government Pension Scheme and for advising the Secretary of State on any proposed changes to the scheme which would benefit employers and members while ensuring its overall sustainability in providing pensions.

One of the Board's statutory duties, under regulations, is to introduce and maintain a process to manage costs in the scheme alongside the process introduced by HM

Treasury for all public service schemes. In line with the process, in December 2018 changes were proposed to the benefit structure of the LGPS which would take effect from 1 April 2019.

On 30 January 2019, the Government announced a pause in the HM Treasury cost cap process due to uncertainty caused by a court ruling on elements of the 2014/15 scheme reforms (the McCloud case). Following this, SAB has paused the LGPS cost management process pending the outcome of the case. As a result, there are currently no benefit changes planned in respect of the cost cap and the situation will be reviewed once McCloud is resolved which is not expected to be for some months. It is unknown at this time whether any benefit changes agreed in future will be backdated to April 2019 and SAB have requested views from administering authorities on whether guidance from SAB on the valuation approach would be welcome ahead of the 2019 actuarial valuation. It is recognised that backdating scheme changes over a potentially significant period would be a huge challenge for administering authorities and scheme employers.

## Further Information Available to Employers and Members

Further information on the LGPS can be found on the Fund's website at [wmpfonline.com](http://wmpfonline.com)

The website can also be used to provide information to members or as signposting for them to access information about the scheme and web portal.

**We always welcome feedback on our services. If you would like to make any further suggestions for improvement, please email: [wmpfemployerliaison2@wolverhampton.gov.uk](mailto:wmpfemployerliaison2@wolverhampton.gov.uk) or via the feedback form [www.wmpfonline.com/feedback](http://www.wmpfonline.com/feedback)**

**Website:** [wmpfonline.com](http://wmpfonline.com)

**Web portal:** <https://portal.wmpfonline.com/UPMWebApp/home.page>

**Employer helpline:** 0300 111 6516

**Please only give members the Customer Service telephone number 0300 111 1665, not the employer helpline telephone number.**