



# Staffordshire Pension Fund

Local Government Pension Scheme

## Employer Focus

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**This bulletin from the Staffordshire Pension Fund, focuses on the current issues that you should be aware of relating to the Local Government Pension Scheme.**

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**Issue April 2024**

### **Local Government Association (LGA) Bulletin 248 Annual Update**

The LGA have issued a bulletin aimed at Scheme Employers who participate in the LGPS. The [bulletin](#) sets out the rates and bands that apply from April 2024 for various purposes including automatic enrolment earnings bands, national insurance thresholds, redundancy payments and Member contribution rates.

### **Deadline for Employer's Year End submissions (except Employers using i-Connect)**

We would like to remind all Scheme Employers that the submission of data for the financial year ending 31 March 2024 **must** be received by Pensions Services no later than **19 April 2024**, in order that we can comply with the requirement to issue annual benefits statements within statutory time limits.

This deadline will allow for data validation processes to be completed and any necessary data cleansing to be performed prior to the issue of our Scheme Members' annual benefit statements.

### **Scheme Employer guidance**

To assist Scheme Employers with completing their annual return we have a dedicated area of the Pension Fund's website, [which contains all the necessary documentation for completion including guidelines and supporting information.](#)

**Please note** failure to respond by 19 April 2024 will result in the late issue of Members' annual benefit statements, which constitutes a breach of law and which further invokes a legal requirement for the breach to be reported to the Pensions Regulator, exposing both the Scheme Employer and the administrator to the risk of censure and financial penalty.

Please contact us immediately if you cannot comply in the current circumstances or foresee any problems with meeting this deadline.

Email: [SPFData@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:SPFData@staffordshire.gov.uk)

### **National Pensions Dashboard – Update**

The National Pensions Dashboard is being implemented to allow all pension savers in the UK access to view the values of all their pension pots, including state pension, through one central platform. All pension schemes must connect to the dashboard infrastructure by their “staging date” as determined by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) with the dashboards made publicly available shortly after schemes have onboarded. The staging date for all public sector pension schemes including the LGPS is 31 October 2025.

As part of this Project, we will continue to undertake the work required for the Fund to ensure we meet the onboarding date. We have recently commissioned Heywood’s (the administration software provider) to install an Integrated Service Provider (ISP) which will enable the Fund to connect to the Government Pension Dashboard platform.

### **Further legal advice following Sharia Law / LGPS report**

In December 2023, the Board asked Lydia Seymour (Counsel) to update her [initial legal advice](#) to address the outstanding questions from her earlier advice. This follows receipt of a report into the relationship between Sharia Law and the LGPS written by Mufti Faraz Adam of Amanah Advisors. The key message from her updated advice is that the legal risk of a case being successfully brought against a Scheme Employer in an Employment Tribunal on the basis of indirect discrimination, or a judicial review being brought against an Administering Authority or DLUHC for breach of the public sector equality duty, remains extremely low.

The summary of Counsel’s advice is on the [Legal Opinions and Summaries page of the Board's website](#).

## **The Pensions Regulator (TPR) – Blog on automatic enrolment**

TPR published a [blog on automatic enrolment](#) on 4 March 2024. The blog provides updates on the progress of automatic enrolment and highlights the efforts to ensure compliance with pension duties. The blog emphasises the importance of re-enrolment and compliance for Scheme Employers, as well as the support available through the improved online service.

## **Employer Role Training**

Throughout this year the Local Government Association (LGA) will be holding Employer Role training workshops.

The workshops are aimed primarily at staff working for Scheme Employers who have operational responsibilities under the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). Delegates do not need a thorough working knowledge of the LGPS, but some experience of the scheme and its provisions would be useful.

You can enrol on to these workshops by accessing the following link to the [LGA website](#).

## **Women's State Pension age**

The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman has [published its conclusions about the DWP's communication of changes to State Pension age for women born after 5 April 1950](#). In short, it has found that there was maladministration resulting in lost opportunities (but no direct financial losses) and has asked Parliament to intervene to provide a suitable remedy (at level 4 in its severity of injustice scale: £1,000 to £2,950, reflecting 'significant and/or lasting injustice').

## **Employer designated pensions contacts**

To ensure that the Fund and Scheme Employers are able to work together closely and in partnership, it is important to keep us updated with any changes to staff responsible for sending and signing off pensions data and who we can contact with any queries (authorised contacts). Key employer contacts include:

- Director of Finance
- Head of Human Resources
- Head of Payroll

If you believe your organisation's contact details are incomplete or out of date, please complete the employer contact details template form. The form can be downloaded from the Employers' area of our website:

<https://www.staffspf.org.uk/Employers/Forms-Documents/All-Employers/All-Employers.aspx>

Please note, you will need a username and password in order to access the forms and documents. If you have not previously registered, you should contact [pensions.employers@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:pensions.employers@staffordshire.gov.uk) to request access.

### **Circulating the Newsletter within your organisation.**

We would be grateful if you could continue to circulate this Newsletter to appropriate staff in your organisation for example, Human Resources, Payroll and Finance Department or alternatively provide us with their email address, so we can add them to our distribution list.

**If you require any further information or clarification, please do not hesitate to email the Fund at [pensions.comms@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:pensions.comms@staffordshire.gov.uk)**