



**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 October 2023**

## **Are you interested in becoming a representative on the Employer Focus Peer Group (EFPG)?**

This informal group consists of representatives from across the Fund's Scheme Employer base e.g. District Councils, educational establishments\*, private companies and other participating organisations. The group meets quarterly, to discuss a range of issues relating to pensions which impact the work of Scheme Employers and Fund Officers.

The primary purpose of the Group is:

- to enable the Fund Officers to work collaboratively with Scheme Employers
- to share best practice
- to discuss current pensions issues and their impact on the Staffordshire Pension Fund, Scheme Employers and the LGPS and the wider pensions industry
- to encourage engagement between the peer group members (representing the Scheme Employers) and Fund Officers, to improve the exchange of information, accurate data and communication
- to provide feedback to the Fund Officers to assist them when implementing improvements
- to agree on ideas for future Scheme Employer training events.

\*Although we have room for several new members of the group, we are very keen to encourage Academy Representatives to put their names forward as currently they do not have any representation.



If you are interested in joining our Employer Focus Peer Group and are able to represent your Scheme Employer, please contact Simon Jackson (01785) 276450 or email [simon.jackson@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:simon.jackson@staffordshire.gov.uk)

## Save the date Monday 13 November 2023

### Pension Fund Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Along with all the Fund's participating Scheme Employers, you are invited to attend our Fund's AGM on Monday 13 November 2023, commencing at 2.00pm and concluding around 4.00pm. As well as an update on the administration and investment of the Fund, the agenda will provide time for the Fund Actuary to speak to you about the challenges facing the LGPS and the wider pensions industry that may impact you or your organisation.

We would be delighted for as many representatives as possible from the Fund's participating Scheme Employers to join the meeting, so please forward this information to anyone else that you think might be interested.

In order for us to plan for the day we would be grateful if you could confirm your attendance by emailing:

[pensions.comms@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:pensions.comms@staffordshire.gov.uk) by 7 November 2023.

Please also confirm if you plan to attend in person or via Microsoft Teams, so we can email you the link.

For those attending in person, light refreshments will be provided from 1.30pm.

### New Joiners to the Pension Fund

The Fund's [Pension Administration Strategy](#) (PAS) sets out requirements for liaison and communication between Scheme Employers and Staffordshire Pension Fund, thus ensuring regulatory compliance is achieved and best value service standards are delivered to scheme members and other parties to meet their statutory obligations.

One of the key responsibilities is the requirement for Scheme Employers to notify the Fund of any new starters to the pension scheme within 4 weeks of the member joining the scheme or shorter periods as required



by auto-enrolment obligations. Unfortunately, at times Scheme Employers are not notifying the Fund until much later.

Failure to obtain new starter information promptly and in accordance with agreed timescales increases the risk of non-compliance with service standards and the Pensions Regulator disclosure requirements.

## **Ill Health Retirement – Independent Registered Medical Practitioner (IRMP).**

**IMPORTANT - Under Staffordshire Pension Fund's Administering Authority Discretionary Policy we can only accept a Medical Certificate for Ill Health Retirement signed by an IRMP on the Fund's approved list.**

You can obtain an up to date [list of the current panel of approved independent Doctors](#) the Fund uses on our web site (Employer password required) or by contacting [pensions.comms@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:pensions.comms@staffordshire.gov.uk)

Scheme Employers will be aware that an independent doctor must complete a Medical Certificate stating whether, in his or her opinion, the Scheme Member meets the ill health criteria or not.

The IRMP must be qualified in occupational health medicine and be approved by Staffordshire Pension Fund. They must also certify that they have not previously been involved or advised on the case.

Unfortunately, the Fund has experienced a handful of cases where Scheme Employers have submitted a Medical Certificate signed by a doctor who is not on the Fund's approved IRMP list. When this happens, the Fund cannot accept the application and it is returned to the Scheme Employer to obtain a further Medical Certificate signed by an IRMP approved by the Fund.

This causes delays in process, additional work (and costs) for Scheme Employers and the medical profession and also complaints from the individual Scheme Members.



## Ill Health Retirement bite-size training for Scheme Employers

The Local Government Association (LGA) have recently published ill health bite-size training. This free, interactive training is aimed at Scheme Employers. It covers retirement process including the criteria, the decision-making process and the benefits payable. There are separate courses covering active members and deferred members.

You can find the ill health retirement bite-size training on the [employer bite-size training page](#) of [www.lgpsregs.org](http://www.lgpsregs.org).

## Members Ill Health Guide

Scheme members sometimes contact us seeking help and guidance on the pension benefits due should they have to leave their employment due to ill health. To assist Scheme Members, we have a dedicated ill health webpage. The webpage provides members with a [step-by-step](#) guide which includes:

- What is the ill health pension criteria?
- What level of ill health pension can be awarded?
- How to apply for an ill health pension.
- Medical assessment process.
- Employers' decision.
- The process if an ill health pension is approved.

## LGPS Scheme Advisory Board (SAB) – 2022 Scheme Valuation Report

On 10 August 2023, the SAB published its [2022 Scheme valuation report](#). The report is compiled from data drawn from local fund valuation reports. It shows:

- the average funding level has improved from 98 per cent in 2019 to 107 per cent in 2022 (on local funding bases) – all fund valuation reports show an improvement since 2019.



- the average contribution rate to meet future service costs rose from 18.6 per cent of payroll in 2019 to 19.8 per cent of payroll in 2022.
- overall contribution rates fell from 22.9 per cent of payroll in 2019 to 21.1 per cent of payroll in 2022 – this reflects lower deficit contributions.
- employee contribution rates marginally increased from 6.5 per cent of pay to 6.6 per cent.

The report also looks at the main assumptions used by administering authorities in their 2022 valuations, looking at trends around the setting of the discount rate, life expectancy and future expectations for inflation and salary increases.

The SAB thanked Barnett Waddingham for its help in drafting the report.

If you require any further information or clarification on the content on this Newsletter, please do not hesitate to contact [pensions.comms@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:pensions.comms@staffordshire.gov.uk)

