



Policy statement

Communications policy statement

London Borough of Lewisham

April 2014

Appendix F Communications Policy Statement

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This is the Communications Policy Statement of the Local Government Pension Fund, administered by the London Borough of Lewisham.
- 1.2 The Fund liaises with more than 26 employers and approximately 22,000 scheme members in relation to the Local Government Pension Scheme. The delivery of the benefits involves communication with a number of other interested parties. This statement provides an overview of how we communicate and how we intend to measure whether our communications are successful.
- 1.3 It is effective from 1 April 2014.
- 1.4 Any enquiries in relation to this Communication Policy Statement should be sent to:
- 1.5 The Pensions Team, 5th Floor Laurence House, Town Hall, Catford, SE6 4RU
Tel: 020 8314 7277.

2. Regulatory framework

- 2.1 This policy statement is required by the provisions of Regulation 61 of the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013. The provision requires us to:

“prepare, maintain and publish a written statement setting out our policy concerning communications with:
(a) members
(b) representatives of members
(c) prospective members
(d) employing authorities.”
- 2.2 In addition it specifies that the statement must include information relating to:

(a) the provision of information and publicity about the Scheme to members, representatives of members and employing authorities;
(b) the format, frequency and method of distributing such information or publicity; and
(c) the promotion of the Scheme to prospective members and their employing authorities.’
- 2.3 As a provider of an occupational pension scheme, we are already obliged to satisfy the requirements of the Occupational Pension Schemes (Disclosure of Information) Regulations and other legislation.. A summary of our expected

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timescales for meeting the various disclosure of information requirements is set out in the Performance Measurement section of this document, alongside those proposed by the Pension Regulator in the regulators Code of Practice.

3. Responsibilities and resources

- 3.1 Within the Pensions Section the responsibility for communication material is performed by our Pensions Manager with the assistance of one of the Senior Pensions Officers.
- 3.2 The majority of communication material is produced within the section, however where generic communication is relevant we use sources like Hymans Robertson and the LPFA.. We carry out all the arrangements for forums, workshops and meetings covered within this statement.
- 3.3 Any printing is carried out following bids sought to do the work, this is managed by the Council's Communication team.

4. Communication with key audience groups

A. OUR AUDIENCE

- 4.1 We communicate with a number of stakeholders. For the purposes of this communication policy statement, we are considering our communications with the following audience groups:
 - active members
 - deferred members
 - pensioner members
 - pension credit members
 - prospective members
 - employing authorities (scheme employers and admission bodies)
 - senior managers
 - union representatives
 - elected members/the Pensions Committee
 - Pensions Section staff
- 4.2 In addition there are a number of other stakeholders with whom we communicate on a regular basis, such as Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, the Department for Communities and Local Government, solicitors, the Pensions Advisory Service, and other pension providers. We also consider as part of this policy how we communicate with these interested parties.

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B. HOW WE COMMUNICATE

General communication

- 4.3 Where possible we will communicate electronically, either by our intranet site or to individual email addresses. For large generic exercises we use the Council's 'News for You' section which appears on an employee's home page. The majority of the communication we receive is now electronic. Where possible we will respond electronically to communication but we will still send letters
- 4.4 Most pension staff can answer any query, but where staff are responsible for specific tasks any phone calls or visitors are passed to the relevant person within the section. In these cases direct line phone numbers are advertised to allow easier access to the correct person. We also have a 'golden number' which hunts around the team for a vacant phone in case the required number is engaged. This means the person gets to speak to somebody and if they cannot help, they take a message and ask the team member who was engaged to ring the person back.

Branding

- 4.5 As the Pension Fund is administered by Lewisham Council, all literature and communications will conform with the branding of the Council.

Accessibility

- 4.6 We recognise that individuals may have specific needs in relation to the format of our information or the language in which it is provided. Demand for alternative formats/languages is not high enough to allow us to prepare alternative format/language material automatically. However, we can provide all communications in large print or in another language on request.

C. POLICY ON COMMUNICATION WITH ACTIVE, DEFERRED AND PENSIONER MEMBERS

- 4.7 Our objectives with regard to communication with members are:
- for all members to understand their benefits and entitlements under the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).
 - to provide timely and accurate information
 - to deal with queries to the members satisfaction.
 - to minimise complaints
- 4.8 Our objectives will be met by providing the following communications, which are over and above individual communications with members (for example,

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the notifications of scheme benefits or responses to individual queries). The communications are explained in more detail beneath the table.

Method of communication	Media	Frequency of issue	Method of distribution	Audience group (active, deferred, pensioner or all)
Scheme booklet	Electronic or paper based and on intranet site	At joining and major scheme changes	Emailed to employees or posted to home address or via employers	Active
Pension Fund Report and Accounts	Paper based and on website	Annually	On request	All
Pension Fund Accounts – Summary	Paper based	Annually	Via employers for actives; post to home address for deferred and pensioner members	All
Benefit Statements	Paper based	Annually	Post to home address/via employers for active members; to home address for deferred members	Active and deferred
Factsheets	Paper based and on intranet	On request	On request	Active
Intranet site	Electronic	Continually available	Advertised on all communications	Active
'Open-door' policy	Face to face	On request	On request	All
Joiner packs	Paper based	On joining	Post to home address with contract of employment	Active members

Explanation of communications

- 4.9 Scheme booklet – A booklet providing a relatively detailed overview of the LGPS, including who can join, how much it costs, the retirement and death benefits and how to increase the value of benefits.

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- 4.10 Pension Fund Report and Accounts – Details of the value of the Pension Fund during the financial year, income and expenditure as well as other related details, for example the current employing authorities and scheme membership numbers. This is a somewhat detailed and lengthy document and, therefore, it will not be routinely distributed except on request. A summary document, as detailed below, will be distributed.
- 4.11 Pension Fund Report and Accounts Summary – Provides a handy summary of the position of the Pension Fund during the financial year, income and expenditure as well as other related details.
- 4.12 Benefit Statements – For active members these include the current value of benefits as well as the projected benefits to normal retirement age.. In relation to deferred members, the benefit statement includes the current value of the deferred benefits as well as the associated death benefits.
- 4.13 Factsheets – These are leaflets that provide some detail in relation to specific topics, such as topping up pension rights, maternity leave, strike absences, death benefits, etc.
- 4.14 Intranet site – This provides scheme-specific information, forms that can be printed or downloaded, access to documents such as newsletters, reports, accounts, frequently asked questions and answers, links to related sites and contact information.
- 4.15 ‘Open-door’ policy – This provides the facility for members to call into the pensions office without a prior appointment. We guarantee that visitors will be seen by an experienced member of staff within five minutes of arrival.
- 4.16 Joiner packs – These compliment the scheme booklet and include the paperwork needed to join the scheme.

D. POLICY ON PROMOTION OF THE SCHEME TO PROSPECTIVE MEMBERS AND THEIR EMPLOYING AUTHORITIES

- 4.17 Our objectives with regard to communication with prospective members are:
- to improve take up of the LGPS
 - for the LGPS to be used as a tool in the attraction of employees
 - for our employers to be employers of choice
 - for public relations purposes.
- 4.18 As we in the Pensions Team do not have direct access to prospective members, we will work in partnership with HR and employing authorities in the Fund to meet these objectives. We will do this by providing the following communications:

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Method of communication	Media	Frequency of issue	Method of distribution	Audience group
Overview of the LGPS leaflet	Electronic or Paper based	On commencing employment	Via employers	New employees

Explanation of communications

4.19 Overview of the LGPS leaflet – A short leaflet that summarises the costs of joining the LGPS and the benefits of doing so.

E. POLICY ON COMMUNICATION WITH EMPLOYING AUTHORITIES

4.20 Our objectives with regard to communication with employers are:

- to improve relationships
- to assist them in understanding costs/funding issues
- to work together to maintain accurate data
- to ensure smooth transfers of staff
- to ensure they understand the benefits of being an LGPS employer
- to assist them in making the most of the discretionary areas within the LGPS.

4.21 Our objectives will be met by providing the following communications:

Method of communication	Media	Frequency of issue	Method of distribution	Audience group
Employers' Guide	Electronic or Paper based	At joining and updated as necessary	Post or via email	Main contact for all employers
Employer meetings	Face to face	As and when necessary	Post or via email	All contacts for all employers
Pension Fund Report and Accounts	Paper based and employer website	Annually	Post	Main contact for all employers
Meeting with adviser	Face to face	On request	Invite sent by post or email	Senior management involved in funding and HR issues

Explanation of communications

4.22 Employers' Guide – A detailed guide that provides guidance on the employer responsibilities, including the forms and other necessary communications with the Pensions Section and scheme members.

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- 4.23 Individual employer meetings – An informal event covering topical LGPS issues.
- 4.24 Pension Fund Report and Accounts – Details of the value of the Pension Fund during the financial year, income and expenditure as well as other related details, for example the current employing authorities and scheme membership numbers.
- 4.25 Adviser meeting – Gives employers the opportunity to discuss their involvement in the scheme with advisers.

F. POLICY ON COMMUNICATION WITH SENIOR MANAGERS

Method of communication	Media	Frequency of issue	Method of distribution	Audience group
4.26 Our objectives with regard to communication with senior managers are:				
Briefing papers	Paper based and electronic	As and when required	Email or hard copy	All
Committee papers	Paper based and electronic	In advance of committee or Pensions Panel	Email or hard copy	All
4.27 Our objectives will be met by providing the following communications:				

Explanation of communications

- 4.28 Briefing paper – A briefing that highlights key issues or developments relating to the LGPS and the Fund, which can be used by senior managers when attending meetings.
- 4.29 Committee paper – A formal document setting out relevant issues in respect of the LGPS, in many cases seeking specific decisions or directions from elected members or their representative.

G. POLICY ON COMMUNICATION WITH UNION REPRESENTATIVES

- 4.30 Our objectives with regard to communication with union representatives are:
- to foster close working relationships in communicating the benefits of the scheme to their members
 - to ensure they are aware of the Pension Fund's policy in relation to any decisions that need to be taken concerning the scheme
 - to engage in discussions over the future of the scheme
 - to provide opportunities to educate union representatives on the provisions of the scheme.

- 4.31 Our objectives will be met by providing the following communications:

Method of communication	Media	Frequency of issue	Method of distribution	Audience group
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Briefing papers	Paper based and electronic	As and when required	Email or hard copy	All
Face to face education sessions	Face to face	On request	On request	All

Explanation of communications

4.32 Briefing paper – A briefing that highlights key issues and developments relating to the LGPS and the Fund.

4.33 Face to face education sessions – These are education sessions that are available on request for union representatives and activists, for example to improve their understanding of the basic principles of the scheme, or to explain possible changes to policies.

F. POLICY ON COMMUNICATION WITH ELECTED MEMBERS/THE PENSIONS COMMITTEE				
Method of communication	Media	Frequency of issue	Method of distribution	Audience group
4.34 Training sessions	Training courses available from LGA or scheme actuaries	When there is a new Pensions Panel and as and when required (Delegated to executive Director of resources)	Face to face by actuary or via the Local Government Association	All members of the Pensions Panel as well as other elected members
Briefing papers	Paper based and electronic	As and when required (Delegated to executive Director of resources)	Email or hard copy	All members of the Pensions Panel –delegated to Executive Director of Resources
4.35	Our objectives will be met by providing the following communications:			

Explanation of communications

4.36 Training sessions – The training provides a broad overview of the main provisions of the LGPS, and elected members' responsibilities within it.

4.37 Briefing paper – A briefing that highlights key issues and developments to the LGPS and the Fund.

4.38 Pensions Committee meeting – A formal meeting of elected members, attended by senior managers, at which local decisions in relation to scheme investments are taken.

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I. POLICY ON COMMUNICATION WITH PENSIONS SECTION STAFF

4.39 Our objectives with regard to communication with Pensions Section staff are:

- to ensure they are aware of changes and proposed changes to the

Method of communication	Media	Frequency of Issue	Method of distribution	Audience group
Face to face training sessions	Face to face	As required	By arrangement	All
Staff meetings	Face to face	As required	By arrangement	All
Attendance at seminars	Externally provided	As and when advertised	By email, paper based	All

Explanation of communications

4.41 Face to face training sessions – Enable new staff to understand the basics of the scheme, or provide more in depth training to existing staff, either as part of their career development or to explain changes to the provisions of the scheme.

4.42 Staff meetings – To discuss any matters concerning the local administration of the scheme, including, for example, improvements to services or timescales.

4.43 Attendance at seminars – To provide more tailored training on specific issues.

J. POLICY ON COMMUNICATION WITH OTHER STAKEHOLDERS/INTERESTED PARTIES

4.44 Our objectives with regard to communication with other stakeholders/interested parties are:

- to meet our obligations under various legislative requirements
- to ensure the proper administration of the scheme
- to deal with the resolution of pension disputes
- to administer the Fund's AVC scheme.

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Completion of questionnaires	Electronic or hard copy	As and when required	Via email or post	DCLG/HMRC/the Pensions Regulator

Explanation of communications

- 4.45 Our objectives will be met by providing the following communications:
- 4.46 Pension Fund valuation report – A report issued every three years setting out the estimated assets and liabilities of the Fund as a whole, as well as setting out individual employer contribution rates for a three-year period commencing one year from the valuation date.
- 4.47 Details of new employers – A legal requirement to notify both organisations of the name and type of employer entered into the Fund (i.e. following the admission of third party service providers into the scheme).
- 4.48 Resolution of pension disputes – A formal notification of pension dispute resolution, together with any additional correspondence relating to the dispute.
- 4.49 Completion of questionnaires – Various questionnaires that may be received, requesting specific information in relation to the structure of the LGPS or the make up of the Fund.

6. Performance measurement

- 6.1 So as to measure the success of our communications with active, deferred and pensioner members, we will use the following methods:

A. TIMELINESS

- 6.2 We will measure against the following target delivery timescales:

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Communication	Audience	Statutory delivery period	Target delivery period
Scheme booklet	New joiners to the LGPS	Within two months of joining	Within six weeks of joining the LGPS
Estimated Benefit Statements as at 31 March	Active members	On request	30 September
Telephone calls	All	Not applicable	95% of phone calls to be answered within 10 seconds
Issue of retirement benefits	Active and deferred members retiring	Within two months of retirement	95% of retirement benefits to be issued within five working days of retirement
Issue of deferred benefits	Leavers	Within two months of withdrawal	Within six weeks
Transfers in	Joiners/active members	Within two months of request	Within two weeks
Issue of forms, i.e. expression of wish	Active/deferred members	N/A	Within five working days
Changes to scheme rules	Active/deferred and pensioner members, as required	Within two months of the change coming into effect	Within one month of change coming into effect
Annual Pension Fund Report and Accounts	All	Within two months of request	Within five working days

B. RESULTS

6.3 We will publish an overview of how we are performing within our annual report. Full details will be reported to our Pensions Committee and will be available for viewing on our intranet site.

7. Review process

7.1 We will review our communications policy annually to ensure it meets audience needs and regulatory requirements. A current version of the policy statement will always be available on our intranet site; paper copies will be available on request.