Communication Policy Statement 2020

Introduction

This document outlines how we communicate with our stakeholders. To communicate effectively, we use different methods according to the need and the target audience.

We have five key stakeholder groups:

- Scheme members
- Prospective scheme members
- Employing authorities
- Pensions Services' staff
- Other bodies, for example the Pensions Fund Panel and Board, Scheme Advisory Board, prospective employing authorities.

We are committed to communicating clearly and effectively and we aim to provide a high-quality service to all our stakeholders. Our statement of service standards for employers and scheme members can be found on our website.

Methods of communication

Our long-term aim is to promote electronic communication with all stakeholders, and to remove paper wherever we can do so (the intention is to become paperless where this is possible). This will be achieved through the promotion of our online Member Portal which in association with our website should be the primary source of information for our members and employers.

Our communication with scheme members

Scheme members include current contributors, those with a deferred pension and those receiving a pension. All scheme members must be given clear but detailed information about the scheme and their own benefits.

Member Portal

We are continually working to add more facilities to our Member Portal and to promote its use by members. On joining the scheme, members are encouraged to register for the Portal to view their new starter information. Once in the scheme they can use the Portal to view their annual benefit statements, obtain estimates, complete a retirement declaration, send a secure message to Pension Services and update their personal information. Pensioner members can use the Portal to view payslips and P60s, update their bank details and view tax code changes.

Website

Our website offers extensive information for scheme members. It contains links to other relevant organisations and is updated with details of new legislation and relevant information. It offers a news feed for members, which is regularly updated.

The website provides timely, up-to-date and easy-to-access information for all our stakeholders as well as forms and guides for members and employers.

Scheme literature

The *Employee's Scheme Guide* is the main reference point for current scheme members. This and other scheme literature and forms are available on the Pension Services website. The website is updated regularly to reflect changes in regulations and relevant scheme news. Members may also obtain scheme literature from their employers.

Member support

We have a query call centre which operates during office hours. We aim to answer 95% of the incoming queries without the need to refer to our operational teams. We also have a general email address for all queries and at the bottom of each email we send there is a link to a feedback survey. All feedback is analysed and used to make improvements to communications where appropriate.

Correspondence

We use email and post for correspondence with scheme members. Annual Benefit Statements and letters to members can be viewed through the Member Portal. We also provide information to members via their employer.

We notify members of the details of any scheme changes within three months of the change.

Benefit statements

Each year, we produce an annual benefit statement for every current and deferred member, showing scheme benefits at 31 March, which is available via the Member Portal. If we hold an email address for a member, they will receive an email to advise when their statement is available on the Portal. Members have the choice to opt out of this online service and instead receive paper statements. All statements are made available by the end of August each year.

Pension saving statement

Each year, by 6 October, we send a pension saving statement to any member who may be affected by the annual allowance tax limit.

Pay advice slips and P60s

We send pay advice slips to pensioners for their April and May payments. We send a P60 in April if the pensioner has had income tax deducted during the year. We also send a payslip to pensioners if there has been a change of more than £5 in their monthly payment.

Newsletters

A newsletter is sent to pensioners each year in either March or April.

Declaration of Pension Entitlement

Every year, we send forms to pensioners that live overseas to verify their continuing entitlement to receive pension payments. These forms are also be sent when we have pensioner payments or mail returned.

Report and accounts

In the autumn, a summary of the accounts, investment management and administrative arrangements is made available to all members via our website. The annual report and full accounts are also available to members on our website or by request.

Our communication with prospective scheme members

We provide relevant information about the scheme to employers so they can ensure that eligible staff are aware of their pension options.

Scheme literature

We ask employers to signpost all new employees to our Member Portal where they will find pension information and a membership option form to make choices regarding previous LGPS membership. The Portal also allows members to make a death grant ‘expression of wish’. If they have previous pension benefits, they are directed to the pension transfer booklet on the Pension Services website. Further scheme literature is available directly from us or from our website.

Website

Our website contains extensive information about the scheme in a dedicated ‘About the Scheme’ section. This explains the scheme benefits and regulations and also provides information about scheme governance..

Our communication with employing authorities

We communicate with employing authorities in several ways to help them meet their responsibilities as scheme employers.

Scheme literature

On our website employing authorities can access an Employer Manual, along with technical information and scheme news. The Employer Manual contains details of procedures and employer responsibilities. Copies of leaflets and forms are also available to employers from the website or on request from Pension Services.

Correspondence

We send a regular electronic newsletter, “Pensions Matters”, to employing authorities to keep them up to date with the latest regulation changes and proposals, as well as any changes in administration.

We also send ad hoc email communications to advise employers of any changes or information they should be aware of or would find useful.

Website

The website has a dedicated section for employers. It provides access to an employer hub where employers who have registered for this service can access some details of their own employee’s records. The employer section of the website also contains technical information, the latest news, details of training courses and an electronic version of the *Employer Manual*.

Employer training

We hold regular employer training days, and offer targeted training on request from employers, in addition to dealing with queries via email or phone.

Administration strategy

We publish an administration strategy which sets out the roles and responsibilities of the Hampshire Pension Fund and the employers.

Employer liaison meetings

All employers may request a meeting with us, and we attend established employer forums such as the Payroll Officers' Group. We also hold six-monthly meetings with an employer focus group.

Reports and accounts

We send an electronic copy of the annual report and accounts to each employer. We publish an updated Statement of Investment Principles and make it available to employers within three months of the Joint Pension Fund Panel and Board approving any significant amendment(s).

Valuation report

We send the provisional outcome and the full actuarial report on the triennial valuation to employers when they are available.

Pension Fund Annual Employers Meeting (AEM)

We invite all our employing authorities to attend the Pension Fund Annual Employers Meeting. As well as providing information on issues such as the annual report, scheme changes and investment managers' performance results, the Annual Employers Meeting provides formal and informal opportunities for employers to ask questions of the Joint Pension Fund Panel and Board or those presenting.

Our communication with Pensions Services staff

It is vital that our staff are kept up to date with all changes to the scheme so that they can continue to administer it effectively and offer a high-quality service to members and employers.

Email

Latest news and other information is available on the staff webpages. In addition, we may send key information via the group email distribution list.

"Pensworld"

We send a weekly email to all staff called Pensworld, which provides updates on regulation changes, internal processes, pensions software updates and other news.

Suggestion box

We have a staff suggestion box, accessible online, for staff to submit suggestions which may improve our processing and customer service.

Internet access

All staff have internet access, allowing access to a wide range of pension information.

Employer contact information

A database of contact information for all employing authorities is kept up to date and is available for use by our staff.

Meetings

Regular meetings are held, both informal and formal, within teams and across groups of staff.

Regular section briefings are held to share information across the whole of our section.

Staff training

We undertake regular staff training to ensure that our staff have the relevant knowledge and skills to undertake their role. This includes staff workshops and supporting staff taking any relevant professional qualifications. All new staff undertake a structured development programme.

Our communication with other bodies

Members' representatives

We provide information to members' representatives on request. Any issues that need consultation with members' representatives are referred to the regular meetings held with the Head of Human Resources, Operations.

Joint Pension Fund Panel and Board

The Joint Pension Fund Panel and Board receive reports from the Director of Corporate Resources. Although these usually concern investment issues, they also advise the Panel and Board on changes to administrative arrangements or scheme rules where relevant.

Prospective employing authorities

New employers receive information about the responsibilities and costs of joining the scheme and are invited to attend employer training sessions as well as having access to the employer website.

Complaints and appeals

We have a comprehensive process for dealing with complaints and appeals. Full details of the Internal Dispute Resolution Procedure is available on our website:

https://www.hants.gov.uk/hampshire-services/pensions/local-government/contact-and-resources/customer-service/complaints-procedure

Publications matrix

Document	*Format*			*Available to*					Published	Reviewed
	Paper	Website	Portal	Prospective members	Current members	Deferred members	Pensioners	Employers		
Scheme Guide	X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	Always available	As regulations change
Employer Manual	X	✓	X	X	X	X	X	✓	Always available	As regulations change
Reports and accounts	X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Annually	Annually
Benefit statements	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓	X	X	Annually	Annually
Pension Saving Statements	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	X	X	Annually	Annually
Pensioners' newsletter	✓	✓	X	X	X	X	✓	X	Always available	Annually
Service standards	X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Always available	Annually
Complaints and appeals process	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Always available	Annually