

The Local Government Pensions Committee
Secretary: Terry Edwards

CIRCULAR

Please pass on sufficient copies of this Circular to your Treasurer/Director of Finance and to your Personnel and Pensions Officer(s) as quickly as possible

No. 234 - FEBRUARY 2010

PRACTITIONER & EMPLOYER TRAINING EVENTS

(1) ADDITIONAL DATES FOR "UNDERSTANDING THE EMPLOYER ROLE AND THE LGPS" WORKSHOPS

(2) FORTHCOMING "UNDERSTANDING" WORKSHOPS IN 2010

(3) "INSIGHT" RESIDENTIAL TRAINING EVENTS IN 2010

Purpose of this circular:

1. This Circular has been issued to advise authorities of additional dates for "Understanding" workshops (as the original events, as announced in LGPC Circular 231 all sold out), to announce two further series of workshops to be held around the UK and to give details of the residential training opportunities in 2010.

ADDITIONAL DATES FOR "UNDERSTANDING THE EMPLOYER ROLE AND THE LGPS"

2. Announced in Circular 231, the six workshops currently in progress around England and Wales all sold out. To cater for the higher than expected demand, three further dates have been arranged in April 2010. Potential delegates who signed up on the on-line waiting list will have already received advance notification of these dates.

3. Full details of the course content can be found at Appendix A to Circular 231 which is available on line at <http://www.lge.gov.uk/lge/aio/2993062>. The additional dates and venues are as follows:

London	14 April 2010	Victoria Park Plaza Hotel
Cardiff	20 April 2010	Marriott Hotel
Leeds	22 April 2010	Marriott Hotel

4. At the *Understanding* workshops, delegates have the benefit of an experienced tutor and a detailed workbook they can take away for future reference. Each *Understanding* workshop will start at 10:00 a.m. and finish no later than 4:00 p.m., with lunch and refreshment breaks included. As the workshops are delivered "locally" this should avoid the time and expense of overnight stays for many delegates.

Cost and Booking

5. The delegate rate for each workshop, inclusive of lunch, refreshments and all delegate materials is £195 plus VAT at the standard rate.
6. Early booking is obviously highly recommended as places are limited. Bookings are made via the on-line events booking facility which is part of the Local Government Employers' website at www.lge.gov.uk. Please note our cancellation policy contained in our Terms and Conditions on the website. When booking, you will need full delegate details to hand including the address to which the invoice for payment is to be sent. Purchase order numbers must also be provided if required by your organisation to pay invoices.
7. If you experience any difficulties in using the on-line website booking facility, please contact Elaine English, LGPC Executive Officer, by email elaine.english@lge.gov.uk

FORTHCOMING "UNDERSTANDING" WORKSHOPS IN 2010

Background

8. For a number of years the LGPC has held numerous one-day topic-specific *Understanding* workshops covering various aspects of the Local Government Pension Scheme and associated Compensation provisions.
9. As many of these workshops are hands-on and contain practical exercises, the "class" size is usually kept to a maximum of 12-15 people to ensure that delegates get the most out of the learning experience.

Details of workshops

10. The next topic-specific *Understanding* workshops to be run in 2010 are 'Compensation, Augmentation, Injury Awards and Gratuities' and 'Employer Discretions and Policies'. There will be further Understanding workshops later in 2010, details of which will be announced in a future LGPC Circular.
11. Both of these workshops have been run previously but not since 2007 and early 2009 respectively. There is a significant overlap in the course material and, in an attempt to ensure attendance at the most suitable event, potential delegates' specific attention is drawn to the sections 'Intended Audience' below.
12. In order to continue the LGPC's plan to deliver training as locally as practicable, the forthcoming workshops are to be held in a number of locations across the country.
13. At the *Understanding* workshops, delegates have the benefit of an experienced tutor and a detailed workbook they can take away for future reference. Each workshop will involve several practical exercises and all necessary delegate material, including calculators, will be provided. The workshops will start at 10:00 a.m. and finish no later than 4:00 p.m., with lunch and refreshment breaks included as well as coffee/tea on arrival from 9:30 a.m. As the workshops are delivered "locally" this should avoid the time and expense of overnight stays for many delegates.
14. Further details on course content, locations and dates can be found in **Appendix A** attached to this Circular.

Intended Audience for 'Compensation, Augmentation, Injury Awards and Gratuities'

15. These workshops are aimed at both Administering and Employing Authority staff who have operational responsibility under the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) and associated Compensation provisions. It is assumed that delegates will have some working knowledge of the basics of the LGPS and compensation. There are several mathematical exercises facing delegates and the workshop might be described as more detailed and hands-on and perhaps less strategic.
16. It should be noted that the workshop in Edinburgh on 9 June 2010 is intended for Scottish authorities only and will be based on the new-look local government pension scheme that came into effect from 1 April 2009 and revised discretionary payments legislation pertinent to Scotland.

Intended Audience for 'Employer Discretions and Policies'

17. These workshops are particularly aimed at Employing Authority staff who have responsibility for exercising the many discretions open to employers under the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) and associated Compensation provisions. It is assumed that delegates will have some working knowledge of the basics of the LGPS and compensation. There are no mathematical exercises but a series of discussion items for delegates to participate in. The course might be best described as more strategic than operational.
18. It should be noted that the workshop in Edinburgh on 8 July 2010 is intended for Scottish employers only and will be based on the new-look local government pension scheme that came into effect from 1 April 2009 and revised discretionary payments legislation pertinent to Scotland.

Cost and Booking

19. The delegate rate for each workshop, inclusive of lunch, refreshments and all delegate materials is £195 plus VAT at the standard rate.
20. Early booking is highly recommended as places are limited. Bookings are made via the on-line events booking facility which is part of the Local Government Employers' website at www.lge.gov.uk. Please note our cancellation policy contained in our Terms and Conditions on the website. When booking, you will need full delegate details to hand including the address to which the invoice for payment is to be sent. Purchase order numbers must also be provided if required by your organisation to pay invoices.
21. If the workshop at your preferred location is full and you do not wish to book on one at an alternative location, you are advised to enter your name on the reserves' list at your preferred location. It is important to do so as, not only will you have a priority warning should any cancellations occur, but it also enables the LGPC to consider increasing delegate places where possible or, on occasion, to organise overflow events.
22. If you experience any difficulties in using the on-line website booking facility, please contact Elaine English, LGPC Executive Officer, by email elaine.english@lge.gov.uk

'INSIGHT' RESIDENTIAL COURSE FOR PRACTITIONERS AND EMPLOYERS

Background

23. The way in which the pensions function is divided between administering and employing authorities varies significantly nationwide. Also, where the administering authority and employing authority are one and the same, which offices or individual officers within that authority have responsibility for what part of the pensions function, appears to vary too. Some employing authority staff (either Human Resources or Finance/Payroll) occupy posts that are mainly or wholly pension scheme related.
24. Although it was originally envisaged that there might be a need to devise separate training events for employing authority staff and staff in administering authority Pension Sections, we concluded that a foundation course for practitioners that was equally attractive to administering and employing authority staff could well meet the training needs of both sides whilst having the added advantage of fostering good working relationships and facilitating networking. Experience over the past six years has proved this to be the case.

Course Details

25. Two courses have been organized so far for 2010 as follows:
- | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| The Royal Hotel, Scarborough | 17 - 20 May 2010 |
| The Cavendish Hotel, Eastbourne | 20 - 23 September 2010 |
26. A full programme of events is attached as **Appendix B**, but highlights of the course are:
- A history of the Scheme and Current Developments
 - How membership counts in the calculation of benefits
 - The benefits the scheme provides and how they are calculated
 - Final Pay
 - Preserved Benefits
 - Retirement Benefits
 - Death Grants and Survivors' Benefits
 - Minimising and resolving disputes

Intended Audience

27. The residential courses are intended for all those involved in LGPS administration. It is suitable for Pensions Office staff and also HR/Finance/Payroll staff for whom the pensions function plays a significant part in their day-to-day and employing authority role. Being a foundation course, the course is aimed at staff who are either relatively new to the pensions scene, or have some experience but want to better understand their own and others' responsibilities under the terms of the scheme.

Cost and Booking

28. The cost of each residential course is £725 (plus VAT at the standard rate) per delegate. This includes full board accommodation throughout the course, all delegate material, refreshments throughout the day and a course certificate.
29. Bookings are made via the on-line events booking facility on the Local Government Employers' website at www.lge.gov.uk. When booking, you will need full delegate details to hand including the address to which the invoice for payment is to be sent. Early booking is highly recommended as places are limited to 15 at each event. Please note that if the event is fully booked you will be advised to enter your name on the reserves' list. This will ensure you are given priority should any delegate cancellations occur but will also help us to judge demand for further events.
30. If you experience any difficulties in using the on-line website booking facility, please contact Elaine English, LGPC Executive Officer, by email elaine.english@lge.gov.uk

ACTIONS FOR ADMINISTERING AUTHORITIES

31. All Administering Authorities are urged to copy this Circular to all employers in their Fund or bring the Circular to the attention of employers by directing them to it on the LGE website.

Tim Hazlewood
LGPC Training and Development Manager
12 February 2010

**UNDERSTANDING... COMPENSATION, AUGMENTATION,
INJURY AWARDS & GRATUITIES**

Course content covers:

- 1) Discretionary Redundancy Payments
- 2) Additional Lump Sum Compensation Payments
- 3) Early Retirement
 - Pension Fund Benefits
 - Compensatory Added Years (CAY) – Scotland only
- 4) Augmentation of Scheme Membership
- 5) Tax Liability
- 6) Effects of Re-employment
- 7) Requirement to Publish a Policy Statement
- 8) Injury Awards
 - Loss of Employment through Incapacity
 - Reduction in Remuneration
 - Death Benefits
 - Allowances for Pensioners
- 9) Gratuities
 - In respect of non-pensionable service
 - In respect of ill-health – Scotland only

Workshop dates, locations & venues:

28 April	Maidstone	Ramada Hotel
6 May	London	Victoria Park Plaza
11 May	Liverpool	Marriott Hotel
13 May	Leeds	Marriott Hotel
25 May	Birmingham	Jurys Inn Hotel
27 May	Exeter	Thistle Hotel
8 June	Edinburgh	Apex City Hotel
10 June	Durham	Cricket Club
15 June	Cardiff	Marriott Hotel

UNDERSTANDING...EMPLOYER DISCRETIONS AND POLICIES

Course content covers:

- 1) Background to Discretions
 - Why are there any discretions in a Statutory Scheme?
 - How many there are
 - Which ones are subject to a written policy

- 2) Writing Policies
 - Why "Follow the Leader" isn't necessarily sensible*
 - Things for Employers to consider whilst setting/amending policies (cost, anti-discrimination laws etc) in respect of the "Big Ones":
 - Augmentation
 - Additional Pension
 - Full or Partial Flexible Retirement
 - Requests to retire pre-60
 - Release of Deferred Benefits early
 - Compensation (Discretionary Payments)

- 3) The other areas subject to written policies
 - Under the new-look LGPS
 - Retained ones under the old-look LGPS
 - And some you probably thought dead and buried!

- 4) Other Discretions
 - Not subject to a policy doesn't infer "no-cost"
 - LGPS - A look at some of the many discretions available
 - LGPS - Maybe why you should / maybe why you shouldn't
 - Compensation – Injury Awards / Gratuities

* The LGE/LGPC do not (and will not at these workshops) issue policy templates for employers to use but rather give suggestions as to matters to consider together with some suggested wording.

Workshop dates, locations & venues:

17 June	London 1	Victoria Park Plaza
22 June	Peterborough	Marriott Hotel
24 June	Cardiff	Marriott Hotel
1 July	Leeds	Marriott Hotel
6 July	Liverpool	Marriott Hotel
8 July	Edinburgh	Apex City Hotel
13 July	London 2	Victoria Park Plaza
15 July	Durham	Cricket Club
20 July	Exeter	Thistel Hotel

“INSIGHT” Course Programme

Day One

- 6:00 p.m. **Introduction to the Course / Icebreaker**
An opportunity for the delegates to introduce themselves, this short session includes a non-physical team-building exercise that attempts to prove that co-operation and team-work do produce better results.
- Includes evening meal at 7:00 p.m.

Day Two

- 9:15 a.m. **Perspective**
A look at the history of state and private pension provision in the UK, with an emphasis on the LGPS and how it has changed over the decades and is still changing. The session concludes with an exploration of the relative roles of employing and administering authorities.
- 10:15 a.m. **To join or not to join – that is the question**
With membership being voluntary and take-up in some local authorities reportedly as low as 50 to 60% of those eligible to join the scheme, we take a look at the choices facing each and every employee. We look at the effects not only on the employee but the impact on the employing authority and the Pension Fund itself.
- 11:00 a.m. Refreshment Break
- 11:30 a.m. **A Great British Scheme?**
An overview of the current scheme, a look at how it is funded (employee and employer contributions and, new for 2009, the concept of “cost-sharing”) and a look at the valuation process. We will look at the discretions available to employing authorities and administering authorities, how the exercise of those discretions can impact on both workloads and employers’ contribution rates. This session includes a discussion on the importance of accurate and timely information.
- 12:30 p.m. Lunch

- 2:00 p.m. **How membership counts**
A look at the way in which membership counts in the calculation of benefits, including an examination of the differences between whole-time, part-time and term-time scheme members, together with casual employees. With mandatory annual benefit statements being issued, we will take a close look at the need for up-to-date and accurate records for scheme members.
- 3:30 p.m. Refreshment Break
- 4:00 p.m. **Improving the benefits**
A look at the options available to the employee and a weigh-up of the relative merits of paying Additional Regular Contributions, paying in-house or free-standing AVCs and using alternative tax-efficient saving vehicles. The employer options are explored also.
- 5:00 p.m. Session closes
- 7:00 p.m. Evening Meal

Day Three

- 9:15 a.m. **Early Leavers' benefits**
A look at the range of options available including refunds, preserved benefits, and "inter-fund" transfers. This will be supplemented by a close look at what needs to be done, and when, as required by the pension scheme regulations and other, overriding legislation.
- 10:30 a.m. Refreshment Break
- 11:00 a.m. **Transfer Values**
We take a look at transferring into and out of the LGPS and give an explanation of the methodology, both club and non-club, and what scheme members should take into account when making their decision whether to transfer or not. We also look at the potential effect transfers may have on employers' funding levels and contribution rates.
- 12:30 p.m. Lunch
- 2:00 p.m. **Retirement Benefits – Part 1**
A look at all the various retirement benefits available including ill-health retirement, flexible retirement and an explanation of actuarial reductions.
- 3:30 p.m. Refreshment Break.

- 4:00 p.m. **Retirement Benefits – Part 2**
A continuation of the types of retirement benefits, including redundancy and efficiency retirement, together with a look at the member's option to convert retirement pension into extra tax-free lump sum.
- 5:00 p.m. Close
- 7:00 p.m. Evening Meal

Day Four

- 9:15 a.m. **Survivors' benefits**
A look at widow's, widower's, civil partners', nominated cohabiting partners' and children's pension provision in the LGPS. We also look at death grants and how they are calculated and hear of the absolute discretion the administering authority has in making the payment.
- 10:45 a.m. Refreshment Break
- 11:15 a.m. **It'll be alright on the night**
A look at the dispute resolution procedures contained in the LGPS, what can go wrong and how all parties in the pensions function can work effectively, both individually and collectively, in order that mistakes can be minimised. This session includes an important look at effective communication.
- 12:15 p.m. **What's happening now – and what happens next?**
An insight into current developments and an exploration of possible futures for the LGPS.
- 12:55 p.m. **Course Certificates**
The award of course certificates.
- 13:00 p.m. **Course ends with Lunch**

PLEASE NOTE:

1. All timings are approximate
2. There are no significant dress codes imposed by either hotel.

Distribution sheet

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Officer advisory group
Local Government Pensions Committee
Trade unions
CLG
COSLA
SPPA
Private clients

Website

Visit the LGE's website at: www.lge.gov.uk

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