lpfa

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London Pensions Fund Authority

Communications Policy & Practice

lgps

2005

Introduction

LGPS Regulations

By 1 April 2006, every Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) administering authority must prepare, publish and maintain a new policy statement on communication strategy. The details of this new legal requirement are contained in point 106B of Regulation 4 of the Local Government Pension Scheme (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2005.

The Communications Policy Statement must set out the administering authority's policy concerning communications with members, representatives of members, prospective members and employing authorities. The policy statement must set out (a) the policies on 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.

Policy

The LPFA communication policy aims to achieve:

Clarity of message

- Avoid any potential confusion/ misunderstandings
- Communicate clearly and effectively with all audiences
- Communicate consistently to all audiences and across all media

Accuracy and timeliness

- Deliver well prepared communications in a timely fashion
- Make sure all information is accurate
- Provide a proactive information service that is factual and precise

Feedback and comment

- Provide all scheme employers, members and other audiences with an effective channel for feedback
- Encourage comment about the LPFA and the LGPS

Targeted information

- Deliver communications appropriate to their target audience in terms of verbal and visual style, content, medium and delivery
- Provide easy access to information which is relevant and material to the user's situation

Equality of access

- Address, where possible, the requirements of diverse audiences
- Make sure communications reach as many people as is possible, regardless of their situation

"An effective communications strategy is vital for any organisation which strives to provide high quality and consistent services to its customers."

~ Chris Batts

Business Development Manager

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Audiences

The audiences for LPFA Communications fall into the following broad headings each with their own appropriate 'messages and media'.

Scheme Members (current & perspective)

- Messages must be clear and easily understandable: timing is often more important than complexity
- Mass market media (e.g. internet, newsletters) tend to be more appropriate for regular communication
- A 'personal touch' is needed for direct contact (e.g. letters, telephone calls)
- Information should be concise, clear and, above all, accurate.

Scheme Employers

- LPFA should deliver a proactive and accurate flow of clear and unambiguous information
- Communications should be short, timely and to the point
- Personal contact, via telephone and face-to-face is encouraged to develop strong relationships and trust

Internal (board)

- Board members need accurate data and clear messages from officers in order to form appropriate opinions and to make informed decisions
- Communications should be consistent and unambiguous format and content
- Committee structures, reporting lines and responsibilities should be designed to create an effective flow of information to Board members at all times
- Priorities should be set out clearly – delayed messages cause problems

Internal (staff)

- Effective communication encourages staff to own and contribute to the aims of the Authority
- Good communication is not only produced and distributed but also received and understood
- Feedback and follow-up is an important element of internal communication

Wider Audiences

LPFA also has a number of other audiences, each having its own requirements in terms of communication. These include:

- Investment Managers
- The GLA family
- Central Government
- Consultants
- Other pension funds
- The pensions marketplace
- The media
- Industry bodies/associations

LPFA's aims when communicating with these audiences are to:

- Address the diverse needs of these audiences when designing and distributing communications
- Make sure messages are relevant and understood

Practice

Scheme Members

Access to Information

Internet website www.yourpension.org.uk
- News
- Guides to the scheme and its administration
- Copies of all scheme publications
- Personal details via a secure site

LPFA's Annual Report
- Distributed automatically to all members and available on the LPFA website

Scheme Literature
- Printed Scheme guides available from employers or direct from LPFA
- Downloadeable versions available from the website

Correspondence and Advice

Annual Benefit Statements
- Current and prospective value of members' benefits in the scheme
- Issued to current and deferred scheme members
- Sent to members' home addresses

Newsletters
- To scheme members, pensioner members and leavers with a deferred pension
- Includes details of any changes to the scheme
- Sent to members' home addresses at least once a year

Pensioner Pay Advice
- Issued every time pension changes by plus or minus 50p (three payslips a year for most pensioners)
- Monthly pay advice available to view on the secure members' website
- P60s sent to pensioners' home addresses annually

E-mail, telephone and postal correspondence
- Available to all scheme members at any time

Forums and Panels

Fund Member Panel - a forum for Fund members to:
- Identify areas for improvement and strengths that LPFA can build upon
- Comment on any new service developments and how best to communicate these to the Fund membership
- Meets following Board Meetings

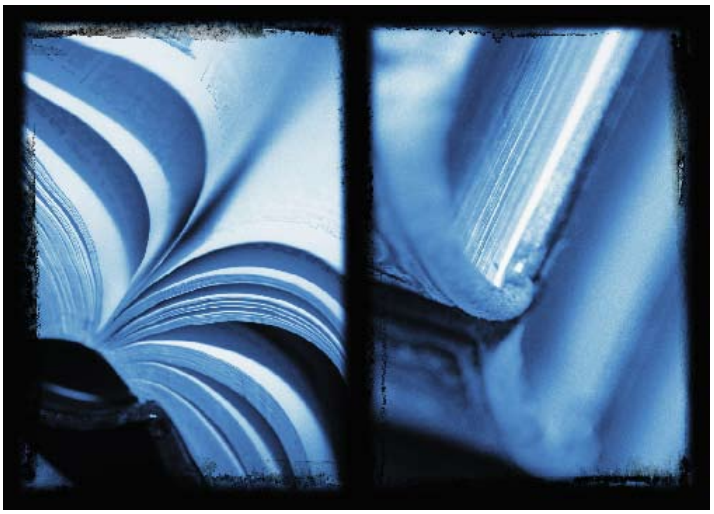
Annual Fund Members Forum
- For all members
- A review of the year
- Guest speakers
- Board members and senior management available to answer questions
- Information centre and exhibition

Scheme Employers

Access to Information

Internet website www.yourpension.org.uk
- News
- Guides to the scheme and its administration
- Copies of all scheme publications
- The option to view employee personal details via a secure site
- Secure data transmission and online processing are being tested currently

Employer's Guide
- Available to all scheme employers in hard copy or via the employer website



Correspondence and Advice

Employer 'Account Managers'
- Dedicated contacts to improve communication with employers

Monthly Employer Newsletter
- Scheme changes
- Investment data
- Other items of interest to employers
- Delivered by e-mail to employers

E-mail, telephone and postal correspondence
- Available to all scheme employers at any time

Forums and Panels

Employer Panel
- Panel makes sure that the Authority is delivering a service compatible with the needs of participating employers and their current and former employees
- Meets regularly (at least twice a year)

Annual Employer Forum - a forum for employers to:
- Learn about Scheme changes and other relevant topics
- Ask questions of Board members

Prospective Members

Short Guide to the Scheme
- Available from employers and, in many cases, in information packs for prospective employees

Internet website
www.yourpension.org.uk
- Information on joining the LGPS
- Information on opting out

Leaflet
- '10 Reasons to Join the LGPS' for employers to send to prospective employees and existing non-members

Staff

Induction
- All new staff receive an induction and a copy of the Staff Handbook

Training
- All pensions administration staff are encouraged to take the in-house Certificate and the Diploma in Pensions Administration qualification

Meetings
- Managers are encouraged to hold regular meetings with staff to cover both day-to-day and equality issues
- Senior Management meet on a weekly basis to discuss strategy

Chief Executive's Briefings
- Held following every quarterly Board meeting to brief staff on the outcome of recent Board and Committee meetings
- All managers and representatives from each team attend

Staff forum
- Takes place following Board Meetings and on an ad hoc basis
- Brings all staff together to update them on current issues and future plans

Appraisal and Assessment - for all LPFA staff:
- Twice yearly appraisals
- Annual assessments
- Open discussion of work issues and areas for development

Intranet
- Available to all staff
- Contains news, guides, codes of practice, procedures and information on current initiatives

LPFA Board

Internet
- http://www.lpfa.org.uk/about/board

Reporting
- Regular performance (investment, financial and administrative) reports

Committees - regular meetings of:
- Investment Strategy Committee
- Performance Committee
- Audit Committee
- Remuneration Committee

Briefings
- The Chairman meets regularly with the Chief Executive for updates on current issues related both to the Authority and the LGPS

Forums
- Board members attend both the Employer and Member Forums and are available for formal questions and less formal discussions over coffee

Equality of Access

Meeting Special Requirements
- Communications in large print, Braille and in audio format where possible

Language
- LPFA works with employers, trade unions, charities and other appropriate organisations to make information available to scheme members and pensioners where English is not their first language, in a practical and cost-effective way

The Wider Audiences

Internet
- A LPFA corporate site
  http://www.lpfa.org.uk
- A scheme member site
  http://www.lpfa.org.uk/members/index.aspx
- A scheme employer site
  http://www.lpfa.org.uk/employers
- A training site
  http://www.lpfa.org.uk/about/training

LPFA membership of local and national bodies includes:
- The local London Pensions Officers Group
- The National Association of Pensions Funds (NAPF)
- The National Information Forum hosted by the West Midlands Pensions Authority

The Press
- LPFA's Chief Executive contributes to articles in the trade and national press on a regular basis

Consultation
- LPFA responds to Government and other industry consultation on relevant position issues

Direct Communication
- Via phone, letter or e-mail

Rights to Information and Data Protection

Rights to Information

Nothing within this Policy Statement affects your rights to access or receive information under the Freedom of Information Act or the Disclosure requirements of the Local Government Pension Scheme.

The LPFA corporate website contains our Freedom of Information Statement and links to information available.

http://www.lpfa.org.uk/about/publications/foi/index.aspx

Data Protection

LPFA is registered under the Data Protection Act of 1998 and is therefore required to protect all personal information for which it is responsible. You have the right to check that the details we hold on you are accurate. LPFA may only pass your details to named third parties under strictly controlled conditions and for very specific purposes. Members who wish to apply to access their data under the Data Protection Act should contact us on the e-mail given in the contacts list.

Review

We will monitor the effective application of this policy and report to the Board annually. The policy will be subject to revision in the light of significant changes to the LGPS or the Authority's structures or procedures.

Contact

Please contact the LPFA at
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2 Royal Mint Court
London
EC3N 4LP

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tel: 020 7639 6118 e-mail: enquiries@lpfa.org.uk

Pensioner members
tel: 0845 3030335 e-mail: payroll@lpfa.org.uk

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