



Communications Strategy

Royal County of Berkshire Pension Fund

December 2025

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1. Introduction

This Communications Strategy ('the Strategy') is formulated by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead in its role as the Administering Authority for the Royal County of Berkshire Pension Fund in accordance with Regulation 61 of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) Regulations 2013.

This Strategy deals with the communication of all aspects of the scheme to both scheme employers and the individual scheme members (or their representatives). It should be noted for the purposes of clarification that the reference to 'scheme member' in this statement means an individual who by virtue of their employment is an active contributor, deferred beneficiary or retired scheme member of the Royal County of Berkshire Pension Fund (the Fund).

The aim of the Strategy is to provide clear and consistent information to all scheme members and scheme employers and to communicate this information effectively and accurately.

This Strategy shall be reviewed and published at least every three years or following any material change to:

- i) The provision of information and publicity about the scheme to scheme members, representatives of scheme members and scheme employers;
- ii) The format, frequency and method of distributing such information or publicity; and
- iii) The promotion of the scheme to prospective scheme members

2. Communication with Scheme Employers

The Fund has many scheme employers that satisfy the relevant membership conditions set out in the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013 (the regulations).

These scheme employers can be broadly split into 2 groups as follows:

Group 1: Scheduled Bodies, which can include both automatic employers and designating employers as defined in Schedule 2 (parts 1 and 2) of the Regulations. These include Borough, District, Town and Parish Councils, non-teaching employees of Academies, Colleges and Council maintained schools, non-uniform employees of Fire & Rescue Service and Housing Associations

Group 2: Admission Bodies as defined in Schedule 2 (part 3) of the regulations and are subject to an admission agreement, including scheme employers previously defined as Community Admission Bodies and Transferee Admission Bodies. This refers to all scheme employers admitted to the scheme other than those in group 1.

2.1 Decision Making Process

Scheme employers may be involved in the relevant governance and decision-making bodies (the Pension Fund Committee, the Pension Advisory Panel and the Local Pension Board). In addition to this, the Fund typically consults relevant scheme employers on any policy or strategy amendment required both under statute and as a matter of good governance.

2.2 Scheme Employer Meetings

An annual employer meeting will be held in a hybrid format in person and via Zoom to provide an update and an opportunity to discuss all current pension-related matters. This meeting is typically held in March and is attended by Fund Officers along with various professional advisers appointed by the Fund to explain the details of any relevant topic and receive questions. This meeting is typically chaired by the Head of Pension Fund.

Other employer meetings may be held periodically to discuss specific matters, for example the triennial valuation of the Fund.

2.3 Training for Scheme Employers

Scheme administration guidance is available to all the scheme employers within the Fund via the [Employers section](#) of the [Pension Fund website](#). In addition, training meetings may be arranged on an ad hoc basis with the relevant Officers within the pension administration team and individual scheme employers by way of supplementing the guidance provided via the website. These meetings are aimed at HR and payroll staff representing the scheme employer.

[Bitesize training modules](#) are provided by the Local Government Association (LGA) and updated on a regular basis. These modules are designed to assist scheme employers with the administration of the LGPS and are widely advertised to scheme employers.

2.4 Regular LGPS Updates

Regular updates are sent to each scheme employer by the Fund's Communication Manager regarding any changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme. These are mainly in the form

of [employer newsletters \('Inscribe'\)](#). *Inscribe* is a quarterly publication containing the latest news and updates relating to the LGPS. Previous copies of *Inscribe* are readily available in the [Communications section of the website](#). LGPS updates aimed at employers may also be provided in the form of letters or e-mails as required.

2.5. General Guidance and Assistance

The pension administration team can be contacted during normal office hours and are available to answer any questions raised by scheme employers. Ad hoc meetings can be arranged using Teams or in person. The pension administration team can be contacted by telephone on 01628 796 668 or by email at info@berkshirepensions.org.uk

2.6 Promotional Services

Promotional guides, factsheets and posters are produced by the Communication Manager and are available on the website. The Fund also commits to attending any events held by scheme employers where their input would be seen to be of value. For example – new starter inductions, financial wellbeing events and pension drop-in sessions.

2.7 Scheme Member Data

As defined in the Fund's Pension Administration Strategy, the Fund's approach to sharing member data between scheme employers and the Fund is via "i-Connect", a General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) compliant electronic data interface between the scheme employer's payroll system and the Fund's pension administration system. Utilising 'i-Connect' to its full potential ensures that scheme members have access to the most up to date membership information via their member self-service account, data errors are eliminated, and scheme administration is maintained to the highest possible standards of accuracy and security.

The Administering Authority will continue to engage and work with scheme employers in implementing i-Connect but until such time as a scheme employer contracts to use i-Connect, the Fund will continue to receive pension data from a scheme employer via either a pre-formatted excel spreadsheet or by the completion of standard forms as made available from the scheme employers' section of the Fund's [website](#).

With the exception of scheme employers who use i-Connect, all other scheme employers are required to supply a 'year-end' return (31 March) to the Administering Authority by 30 April in a specified format to enable Annual Benefits Statements to be produced and supplied to active contributors and deferred scheme members within the statutory deadlines set out in scheme regulations.

2.8 General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

GDPR came into force on 25 May 2018 and requires Privacy Notices to be published showing transparency on how personal data is used. The Administering Authority has produced and published on the website a [Privacy Notice](#) explaining how the Fund collects personal data, what that data is used for, with whom that data is shared and the rights of individuals with regard to their data. In addition, a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) regarding compliance with data protection law has been produced and published on the website and scheme employers and scheme members have been advised through their respective newsletters.

2.9 Employer Communication Resources

A series of [communication resources](#) is made available for scheme employers to use and distribute to their staff to promote the LGPS. The resources available include promotional posters and literature to advertise Pension Awareness Week which is an annual national campaign.

2.10 Communications Email Inbox

An e-mail address has been set up specifically for communication enquiries from scheme employers and scheme members - pension.comms@rbwm.gov.uk

This email account is also used to manage pension surgery enquiries and appointment requests.

3. Communication with Individual Scheme Members

Membership of the Fund covers the active contributors, those members who have left employment but still have a deferred pension awaiting payment, and retired members including their dependants.

3.1 Paperless Policy

The preferred method of communication with scheme members is via our online pension portal which is our secure member self-service facility provided as part of the pension administration software.

The online pension portal is available to all scheme members and enables the scheme member to update certain personal details online and provides each scheme member with access to their Annual Benefit Statements, Membership Certificates and guides/leaflets relevant to their membership type.

Where possible, electronic communication will be prioritised. Scheme members may opt in to receiving paperless communications at any point and shall be reminded of this through the regular communication channels. Take-up of paperless communications is expected to increase over time.

Due to the demographic profile of the Fund's membership and the assessment of equalities impacts, the Fund will make every effort to provide paper communications sent to a scheme member's home address where a scheme member (or their dependant) specifically requests this.

Since implementing a paperless policy in 2022/23, including regular updates to scheme members to confirm communication preferences, the Fund has significantly reduced the environmental impact and financial implications associated with providing paper communications which is broadly recognised as a positive sustainability result.

3.2 Welcome Letter

Upon receipt of a new starter notification from a scheme employer, a letter is issued to the scheme member containing an activation code to enable them to register for our online pension portal. The letter also contains a short guide to the LGPS. If a scheme member prefers not to use the online pension portal, they may request further information about the scheme by post.

3.3 Annual Benefit Statements

Each active contributor and deferred beneficiary has an Annual Benefit Statement made available via the 'My Documents' section of the online pension portal. If a scheme member prefers not to view their Annual Benefit Statements online, we can issue a paper copy by post or email.

3.4 Pension Surgeries

One to one meetings are available by appointment at the Fund's offices for any scheme member and formal pension surgeries are held at least twice annually at the six Unitary Authorities. Pension surgeries are held hybrid, using Microsoft Teams and in person. We also offer pension surgeries on an ad hoc basis for scheme employers upon request.

3.5 Pension Surgeries for School Staff

It is recognised that school staff are often unable to attend pension surgeries during term-time, we have therefore introduced online pension surgeries for school support staff to attending during the school holidays across the six Unitary Authorities.

Additional ad hoc school pension surgeries can be arranged on request.

3.6 Scheme Member Presentations

We can support our scheme employers with presentations to their staff upon request, tailoring the presentation to their requirements. Presentations can be delivered hybrid using Microsoft Teams and in person.

3.7 Newsletters

Newsletters are produced at regular intervals for active, deferred, retired and dependant scheme members. These are available via our website and online pension portal.

The newsletters are tailored to the recipient according to their membership status and contain an update of matters relating to the LGPS and the Fund.

Retired and dependant scheme members receive '*The Scribe*' and there are significant benefits associated with keeping this as a paper communication (namely the returns we receive for information on the passing of a scheme member or change of address or bank or building society account details). The intention is to continue to send these communications to home addresses unless the scheme member has opted for paperless communications. All new retired or dependant scheme members are asked for their communication preference at the point their monthly pension payments commence.

Active and deferred scheme members receive '*The Quill*', with separate sections tailored to each membership type. Many active and deferred scheme members now receive paperless

newsletters following a communication preference exercise through 2022/23, and at any point may request to receive this newsletter in the post should that be their preference.

3.8 Pension Fund Website

All scheme members and scheme employers within the Fund have access to a dedicated website: <http://www.berkshirepensions.org.uk/>

The website is continually reviewed and updated. Specific sections of the website have been designed for each membership type with downloadable forms, guides, videos and online modellers made available. Access to the online pension portal is also available via the [Pension Fund website](#).

3.9 Member Online Pension Portal

Active, Deferred, Retired and Dependant scheme members have access to a secure online pension portal. Active contributors and deferred scheme members can calculate their own pension estimates, update their home address, update their 'Expression of Wish' nomination and view their Annual Benefit Statements. Retired and dependant scheme members can view their monthly payslips and annual P60 information.

3.10 Pension Payslips

Current and previous monthly pension payslips are available to view online via our online pension portal.

A [guide to viewing pension payslips](#) online is available on our website.

3.11 P60s

P60 information for current and previous years is available to view via our online pension portal.

Every retired scheme member and their dependants can access their P60 each year before the statutory deadline of 31 May.

3.12 Annual Pension Increase Letter

Annual pensions increase letters are posted to scheme members' home addresses by 30 April each year. The letter confirms the monetary value of the scheme member's annual pension including (where applicable) pensions increase applied.

3.13 Annual Meeting

An Annual Meeting of the Fund is held in November every year and is open to all scheme members and scheme employers to attend.

These meetings are held as a hybrid event giving attendees the option of viewing the meeting over Zoom or in person. The main purpose of the meeting is to give an overview of the last financial year and may cover various other topical matters not limited to the Fund's Annual Report & Accounts, Investment Strategy, Administration and changes to the LGPS Regulations.

3.14 Ad Hoc Meetings

Ad hoc meetings may be held from time to time for various groups of scheme members. These may be defined by type of scheme member (active contributor or retired scheme member) or location (for a specific scheme employer or group of scheme employers). The timing of these meetings will be dictated either by requests from scheme employers or the need to consult and notify scheme members of any changes that might have occurred.

3.15 Dedicated Helpdesk Telephone Numbers

Dedicated helpdesk telephone numbers are available for all enquiries:

Active and deferred scheme member enquiries - 01628 796 668

Retired and dependant scheme member enquiries - 01628 796 670

4. Communication with Prospective Scheme Members and Employers

A brief guide to the scheme is available to all prospective scheme members and must be provided to all new employees by their scheme employer as part of their contract of employment.

The brief guide is available from the Fund [website](#) and is shared with scheme employers on a regular basis. The brief guide is reviewed and kept up to date with current scheme regulations.

We also provide a 'Non-Scheme Members' section on our website containing information for prospective scheme members who are considering opting in: [Non Members | Berkshire Pension Fund](#)

A guide for admission bodies is available on the [website](#) for all prospective scheme employers considering admission to the Fund and is available as a hard copy on request, including a template admission agreement under the new pass-through policy from 1 April 2023 as ratified in the Fund's [Funding Strategy Statement](#).

The Administering Authority has the power to accept various types of scheme employers into the Fund but will only do so subject to a full and open discussion taking place between the parties to any admission agreement and that the final admission agreement (including any covenants, guarantees, pass-through provisions etc.) has been completed in advance of the agreed admission date.

5. Communication with other interested parties

Enquiries from related parties shall be dealt with on a best endeavours basis on a reasonable timeframe and subject to resource constraints.

Enquiries from members of the public should be delivered through formal channels as specified under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act. The Fund maintains a policy of adopting the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead's approach to dealing with FOI requests and Subject Access Requests (SARs).

There is a dedicated page in the [Communications section of our website](#) detailing the process for submitting FOI and SARs requests. The page also includes a link to previous FOI requests contained on the [RBWM website](#).

6. Useful Links and Contact Details

- [Berkshire Pension Fund website](#)
 - [Members](#)
 - [Employers](#)
 - [Investments](#)
 - [Communications](#)
 - [Governance](#)
 - [Non-members](#)
- [Pension Portal](#)

Royal County of Berkshire Pension Fund

Zone C, Town Hall, St Ives Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire, SL6 1RF

General Administration queries: 01628 796 668

Pension Payroll queries: 01628 796 670

Telephone lines are open:

Monday to Thursday: 8:30am to 5:00pm

Friday: 8:30am to 4:30pm

Email: info@berkshirepensions.org.uk

Website: www.berkshirepensions.org.uk

Appendix 1: Communication Types and Frequency

The table below summarises our regular communications with our stakeholders. It details the type of communication, intended audience, frequency, and delivery method:

Type of Communication	Media Source	Frequency of Issue	Intended Audience	Notes
General enquiries	Email, telephone, online via pension portal	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All scheme members Non scheme members Scheme employers Third party organisations 	General enquiries answered within 10 working days.
Scheme Employer Newsletter	Online	Quarterly – Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scheme employers 	
Active and Deferred Scheme Member Newsletter	Online and paper format	Bi-annual Spring (April) Autumn (October)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active scheme members Deferred scheme members 	Newsletter accessed online and posted in paper format on request. Scheme members choice to opt-in to paper communications.
Retired and Dependant Scheme Member Newsletter	Online and paper format	Bi-annual Spring (April) Autumn (October)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retired scheme members Dependant scheme members 	Newsletter posted in paper format or accessed online. Scheme members choice to opt out of paper communications.
Pensions Increase letter	Paper format	By 30 April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retired scheme members Dependant scheme members 	
Payslips	Online	Monthly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retired scheme members Dependant scheme members 	Payslips available via scheme member's online account.
P60s	Online	By 31 May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retired scheme members Dependant scheme members 	

Type of Communication	Media Source	Frequency of Issue	Intended Audience	Notes
Active Annual Benefit (ABS) Statements	Online and paper based	By 31 August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active scheme members 	Active ABS accessed online and posted in paper format on request. Scheme member's choice to opt-in to paper communications.
Deferred Annual Benefit Statements (ABS)	Online and paper based	By 31 August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deferred scheme members 	Deferred ABS accessed online and posted in paper format on request. Scheme member's choice to opt-in to paper communications.
Scheme Member Presentations	In person and via Microsoft Teams	As and when requested	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active scheme members 	Presentations tailored to scheme employer's requirements. Advertised by relevant scheme employer.
Scheme Member Induction Presentations	In person and via Microsoft Teams	As and when requested	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active scheme members 	Induction presentations for new employees organised via scheme employers on request.
Pension Surgeries (Non School Support staff)	In person and via Microsoft Teams	2 pension surgeries held each year for the 6 Unitary Authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active scheme members Non scheme members 	First half of each calendar year pension surgeries held via Microsoft Teams. Second half of each calendar year pension surgeries held in person for six Unitary Authorities.
Pension Surgeries (School Support staff)	Via Microsoft Teams	1 pension surgery held each year for the 6 Unitary Authorities (during school holidays)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active scheme members Non scheme members 	School support staff pension surgeries held in school holidays.
Drop-in events	In person	As and when requested by scheme employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active scheme members Non scheme members 	Support provided for all scheme employers upon request.
Employer Meeting	In person and via Zoom	Held annually in March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scheme employers 	
Annual Meeting	In person and via Zoom	Held annually in November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All scheme members Scheme employers 	

Type of Communication	Media Source	Frequency of Issue	Intended Audience	Notes
Promotional material	Online	As needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All scheme members and scheme employers 	Posters, adverts and guides provided and updated.
Engagement with New Scheme Members	Online and paper format	As needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New scheme members 	Welcome letter issued to all new scheme members. Welcome letter includes activation key to access online pension portal and a factsheet outlining the main benefits of the LGPS.
Website	Online	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All scheme members Non scheme members Scheme employers Local Pension Board Members Pension Fund Committee Members and Pension Advisory Panel Members 	