

Cleveland Fire Authority

Local Pension Board Training Strategy



Introduction

It is appropriate for the Cleveland Fire Authority (the Authority) to establish and maintain policies and arrangements for acquiring and retaining knowledge and understanding to support the Local Pension Board (LPB) and supporting officers. The responsibility for ensuring that a framework is developed and implemented is ultimately the Scheme Manager (Chief Fire Officer- Cleveland Fire Brigade (CFO)).

Notwithstanding the above, it is ultimately the members' responsibility to ensure that they have the appropriate degree of knowledge and understanding to enable them to properly exercise their function as a member of the LPB.

Strategy Objectives

Cleveland Fire Authority's objectives relating to knowledge and skills are to:

- Ensure that the Pension Scheme is managed, and its services delivered by people who have the appropriate knowledge and expertise;
- Ensure the Pension Scheme is effectively governed and administered; and
- Ensure decisions are robust, are well founded and comply with regulatory requirements or guidance from the Pensions Regulator, the Scheme Advisory Board and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

To assist in achieving these objectives, the Authority will aim for full compliance with the areas of knowledge and understanding set out by:

- the Pensions Regulator in their [Knowledge and Understanding Requirements](#) section of the [General Code](#),
- [Section 5](#) of the [Public Service Pensions Act 2013](#)
- the [Firefighters' Pension Scheme \(Governance\) Regulations 2015](#) (as amended).

Attention will also be given to the guidance issued by [the Firefighters' Pension Scheme \(England\) Scheme Advisory Board](#) (SAB) and guidance issued by MHCLG.

Members of the LPB and Officers require a knowledge and understanding of:

- The [relevant Pensions Regulations](#) including Firefighters' Pension Scheme (FPS 1992), Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2006 (FPS 2006/Special FPS 2006), Firefighters Compensation Scheme (as amended) (FCS 2006) and Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2015 (FPS 2015) Regulations and any other regulations governing the Firefighters' Pension Schemes;
- Public Sector **governance** including responsibilities delegated by the Authority, the roles and responsibilities and duties of the scheme manager and other committees and effective decisions in the management of the Pension Scheme including risk assessments / management and risk registers.

- The **operation and administration** of the Pension Scheme including any document recording policy / scheme-approved policy about the administration of the Pension Scheme;
- Such other matters as may be prescribed.
- To support this, members of the LPB and Officers will:
 - Have their knowledge measured and assessed;
 - Receive appropriate training to fill any knowledge gaps identified; and
 - Seek to maintain their knowledge.

Further details on how this will be achieved are set out in the [Delivery of Training](#) section below.

Given the importance of the roles of Chair of the LPB in leading and shaping the direction of their respective bodies, it is expected that they will be able to demonstrate an additional level of knowledge and skills to that required by the other members of the LPB.

In addition to the core knowledge and understanding requirements expected of all Local Pension Board members, the Chair should seek to maintain an enhanced understanding of:

- governance and assurance frameworks;
- risk management and scrutiny;
- administration performance and reporting;
- meeting management and facilitation;
- stakeholder engagement;
- escalation and reporting mechanisms; and
- emerging developments affecting public service pension schemes.

The Scheme Manager should support the Chair in accessing additional learning opportunities where appropriate.

Delivery of Training

Training Plans and Resources

To be effective, training must be recognised as a continual process.

All members and officers should commit sufficient time in their learning and development and be aware of their responsibilities immediately when they take up their position.

To support compliance with statutory knowledge and understanding requirements, all Local Pension Board members and supporting officers are expected to:

- Complete an induction programme upon appointment.
- Complete The Pensions Regulator's Public Service Toolkit within six months of appointment.

- Attend a full Local Pension Board training programme within 12 months of appointment.
- Attend refresher training on a regular basis, including training on emerging risks and regulatory developments.
- Maintain an individual training record.
- Participate in the annual Training Needs Analysis process.

Additional learning requirements may be identified through individual Training Needs Analysis assessments, changes in legislation or scheme developments

Members of the LPB and Officers will have their knowledge measured and assessed at least annually via a Training Need Analysis (TNA) form, as illustrated in [Appendix A](#).

Training plans will be developed by officers at least on an annual basis following a review of the above assessments to ensure as far as possible individual members receive appropriate training to fill any knowledge gaps identified. These will be updated as required taking account of the identification of any knowledge gaps, changes in legislation, key events (e.g. the valuation) and receipt of updated guidance. However, it is recognised that a rigid training plan can be detrimental. Learning programmes will therefore be flexible to deliver the appropriate level of detail required.

In developing training plans, consideration should also be given to succession planning for the LPB. This should include identifying potential knowledge and skills gaps arising from anticipated changes in Board membership, retirement or turnover of members, and ensuring that appropriate training and development opportunities are available to support continuity of knowledge and effective governance. Where practicable, learning activities may be extended to prospective Board members, substitute members or officers who may support the Board in future, to help maintain organisational knowledge and strengthen long-term governance arrangements.

In addition to individual training needs identified through the annual Training Needs Analysis (TNA), the LPB Effectiveness Committee will annually review emerging sector-wide governance, administration and regulatory issues affecting Local Pension Boards. The Committee may identify priority knowledge areas which will inform the development of the national Local Pension Board training programme and future training topics delivered by the Scheme Advisory Board Secretariat. This approach will ensure that training provision reflects both individual learning requirements and emerging sector risks and challenges.

In addition, the Committee may consider emerging succession planning challenges and skills requirements across LPBs to help inform future national training priorities and support the development of effective governance arrangements.

Officers will prepare an annual training report for the Local Pension Board summarising training undertaken, completion rates, outstanding training requirements, common knowledge gaps identified through the Training Needs Analysis process, and proposed training priorities for the forthcoming year. The report should be used to support the Local Pension Board's assessment of its knowledge and understanding requirements and to inform future training plans.

Members of the LPB and Officers will be expected to maintain their knowledge through continuing attendance at training events, reading material and conferences as appropriate.

Consideration will be given to various training resources available in delivering training to the LPB and officers. These may include but are not restricted to those illustrated in [Appendix B](#):

Risk

Risk Management

The compliance and delivery of this training strategy is at risk in the event of:

- Frequent changes in membership of the Local Pension Board;
- Poor individual commitment;
- Resources not being available;
- Poor standards of training;
- Inappropriate training plans.

Failure to maintain appropriate knowledge and understanding may represent a governance risk to the Local Pension Board and should be considered as part of the Authority's pension governance risk management arrangements.

These risks will be monitored by officers within the scope of this training strategy and be reported where appropriate.

Reference sources and documents

Further information is published in the [Knowledge and Understanding](#) section of the [FPS Board](#) website.

Appendix A



CLEVELAND FIRE AUTHORITY

LOCAL PENSION BOARD

Training Needs Analysis

To: Local Pension Board members,

Please complete this questionnaire to help us assess current knowledge and skills and direct future training.

The training needs analysis (TNA) is based on the CIPFA knowledge and skills framework, adapted for the Firefighters' Pension Scheme – in total there are three areas of knowledge and skills that have been identified as the core technical requirements for those working in public sector pensions. The questionnaire has been split into the following areas.

- pension legislation and governance
- pension administration
- risk management and internal controls

Please rate your knowledge and understanding using the scale below:

1. No or very little knowledge and understanding
2. Little knowledge and understanding
3. Some knowledge and understanding
4. Good knowledge and understanding
5. Very good knowledge and understanding

Please return the completed forms by **email** to the Executive Leadership Support Team at:

cfa@clevelandfire.gov.uk

Name:	
-------	--

1. Pensions legislation and governance		Score				
		1	2	3	4	5
a.	The pensions legislative framework in the UK.					
b.	Legislation specific to the scheme and the main features relating to benefits and administration.					
c.	FPS discretions and how the formulation of the discretionary policies impacts on the pension scheme, the Fire Service (as employer) and local taxpayers.					
d.	The latest changes to the scheme rules.					
e.	The role of the Scheme Manager in relation to the FPS.					
f.	The roles and powers of the Pensions Regulator, the Money Helper and the Pensions Ombudsman					
g.	The role of the Scheme Advisory Board and how it interacts with other bodies in the governance structure.					
h.	The role of Pension Board in relation to the scheme, scheme manager, scheme members and taxpayers.					
i.	The duties and responsibilities of pension board members					
j.	How conflicts of interest are identified and managed.					
k.	How breaches in law are reported.					
l.	Consultation, communication and involvement options relevant to the stakeholders.					

2. Pension Administration		Score				
		1	2	3	4	5
a.	Best practice in pensions administration e.g. performance and cost measures					
b.	The required and adopted scheme policies and procedures relating to: ▪ member data maintenance and record-keeping processes ▪ internal dispute resolution ▪ contributions collection					

	▪ scheme communications and materials. This includes what information is provided to members, how it is provided and who is involved in member communication					
c.	The pension board's role in record-keeping					
d.	The pension board's role in maintaining contributions and notifying the regulator of late or failed payments					
e.	The pensions board's role in member communications					
f.	How discretionary powers operate					
g.	The Pension Board's role in the resolution of issues and disputes.					
h.	The pensions administration service and delivery (including, where applicable, the use of third party suppliers, their selection, performance management and processes)					
i.	How the pension scheme interacts with the taxation system in the UK and overseas in relation to benefits administration					

3. Emerging Issues and Current Developments		Score				
		1	2	3	4	5
a.	Pensions Dashboards					
b.	Member Self Service (MSS)					
c.	Data Quality and Data Improvement Plans					
d.	Cyber Security and Pension Administration Systems					
e.	Third Party Administration Oversight and Performance Monitoring					
f.	Sargeant Remedy					
g.	Matthews Remedy					
h.	Pension Scams and Fraud Prevention					

4. Risk management and internal controls		Score				
		1	2	3	4	5
a.	How risk will be identified and assessed					
b.	How internal controls will be set up					
c.	How risk assessments will be documented					

d.	How possible fraudulent activity will be identified and investigated					
e.	Who is involved in internal controls and risk management and their role					
f.	The pension board's role in internal control and risk management					

Are there any specific areas of interests that you feel you and other members would benefit from receiving training. Please complete the box on the next page.

Responses will be collated and reviewed alongside feedback from the LPB Effectiveness Committee to help inform future national and local LPB training programmes.

Specific topics for training

Please also indicate below the most relevant learning methods that may be applicable to you.

Information	Yes	No	Not sure
In-house training			
E-learning			
External training			
Books, journals, guidance			
Conferences			
Other – please specify			

Appendix B

Delivery	Commentary	LPB	Officers
Induction training	This will involve covering the requirements of the training strategy alongside guidance and information on the requirements of their roles.	Yes	Yes
The Pension Regulator's e-learning programme	Online tool covering seven short modules: 1. Conflicts of Interests; 2. Managing Risk and Internal Controls; 3. Maintaining Accurate Member Data; 4. Maintaining Member Contributions; 5. Providing Information to Members and Others; 6. Resolving Internal Disputes; 7. Reporting Breaches of the Law. The toolkit is designed specifically with Local Pension Board members in mind but the material covered is of equal relevance to Officers. It is expected that all modules are covered.	Yes	Yes
Local Government Association (LGA) Pension Board Training	The LGA provide the LPB with training. Further details of this are available in the Knowledge and Understanding section of the FPS Board website. It is expected that all Board members attend the initial full training, and then an annual refresher training session.	Yes	Yes
Attending courses, seminars and external events	Notification of appropriate training events will be sent on receipt and a log will be included within the training log to each of the relevant meetings. After attendance at an external event, Members and Officers will be asked to provide feedback which will be issued by Officers covering the following points: • Their view on the value of the event and the merit, if any, of attendance; • A summary of the key learning points gained from attending the event; and • Recommendations of any subject matters at the event in relation to which training would be beneficial to other LPB members or other Officers. This will assist with ensuring relevant training is offered in the future and enable Officers to ensure that the Scheme is meeting the requirements of the Pension Regulator.	Yes	Yes

Internally developed training days and pre/post meeting sessions or in collaboration with other Regional Fire and Rescue Services	Owing to the changing world of pensions, it will also be necessary to have ad hoc training on emerging issues or on a specific subject on which a decision is to be made or is subject to review by the LPB. Shared learning events may be organised with other FRAs to meet learning needs across Board members from a range of Authorities. Each Board meeting will have an hour's training session booked immediately following to capture any ad hoc training. All LPB members are required to attend.	Yes	Yes
Regular updates from officers and/or advisers including circulated reading material	This can be provided as necessary depending on the topical issues arising which the Scheme is facing, to ensure up to date knowledge.	Yes	Yes
Self-improvement and familiarisation with regulations and documents	Formal training can be used to highlight sources of further information for supplementary reading. Information held on the internet – such as webinars – can be used as a source of further information.	Yes	Yes
Training for qualifications from recognised professional bodies (e.g. CIPFA).	As agreed by the Scheme Manager, to meet the needs of the service and where necessary in keeping with the requirements of apprenticeship training.	Yes	Yes
Mentoring	Once a LPB is in operation and new appointments are made in the future, mentoring by existing members could also be considered. This can also help to ensure that historical and scheme specific knowledge is retained when members of a LPB change.	Yes	Yes