



# South Tyneside Council

## Local Pension Board

Date: 27<sup>th</sup> March 2024

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## Employer Engagement Strategy (for information and discussion)

Report of the Head of Pensions

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### **Purpose of Report**

1. In administering the Local Government Pension Scheme there is a need for employers to exchange information with administering authorities. There are number of statutory requirements placed on both parties in respect of this.
2. To ensure effective service delivery, clear communications with and quality training tools for employers, the Fund has developed an 'Employer Engagement Strategy'.
3. The Board is recommended to review and comment on the draft Strategy.

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Contact Officer:

Paul McCann, Head of Pensions

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## **Background**

4. In administering the Local Government Pension Scheme there is a need for employers to exchange information with administering authorities. There are number of statutory requirements placed on both parties in respect of this. Especially around the exchange of member data.
5. The Fund is required to publish and maintain a Pensions Administration Strategy (PAS) which sets out how the Fund and employers will work together effectively to fulfil their joint responsibilities in administering the Scheme. The PAS is reviewed regularly, circulated to employers and published on the Fund's website.
6. Whilst the PAS is important, it does not fully expand into how the Fund engages with its employers in respect of service delivery.
7. Historically, the Fund has worked with employers through newsletters, dedicated client managers, presentations, webinars and annual surveys.
8. Over recent years, the Fund has increased its focus on service delivery. In October 2022, a new team structure was implemented in the Pensions Administration Office. Within the new structure, an 'Employer Services Team' was created. This team is responsible for all aspects of collecting and verifying member data and for most aspects of service delivery to employers.
9. To enhance the Fund's communications and engagement with employers and ensure quality in service delivery, an action was included in the Fund's Service Plan develop an 'Employer Engagement Strategy'.

## **Employer Engagement Strategy**

10. The Fund has now developed a draft Employer Engagement Strategy which is attached in Appendix A.
11. The purpose of the Strategy is to outline how the Fund will actively engage with its employers. This will ensure greater focus on service delivery, improvements to data exchanges communications, training and enhancements to our digital solutions.
12. Employers who are engaged with the Fund will have a better understanding of their responsibilities and will therefore be able to provide data in a timely manner.
13. The Fund has committed to engaging with employers through the following channels:
  - Surveys
  - Video tutorials

- Webinars and training sessions
- Enhancement of digital solutions

14. The Strategy also outlines how the Fund will monitor and review engagement with employers to ensure continuous improvement.

15. The Strategy will be kept under review.

### **Recommendation**

16. The Board is asked to review and provide comment on the draft Employer Engagement Strategy.

### **Reason for Recommendations**

17. To ensure the Fund has a mechanism in place to engage and communicate effectively with its employers.

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## Employer Engagement Strategy

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**The following is a list of the background papers (excluding exempt papers) relied upon in the preparation of the above report:**

<b>Background Paper</b>	<b>File Ref:</b>	<b>File Location</b>
None		

# TWPF

## Tyne and Wear Pension Fund



# Employer Engagement Strategy



# TWPF

## Tyne and Wear Pension Fund



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## Introduction

South Tyneside Council is the Administering Authority and Scheme Manager for the Local Government Pension Scheme in the Tyne and Wear and the Northumberland County areas. Tyne and Wear Pension Fund (TWPF) is open to the five district councils in Tyne and Wear, Northumberland County Council and a wide range of other bodies that provide a service in these administrative areas.

TWPF is responsible for administering the pension interests of over **173,000 members**.

Our employers' voice is of fundamental importance to us, and we have embedded this into our governance arrangements by having employer representatives on both Pensions Committee and the Local Pension Board.

### Our Goal

To provide an **efficient, affordable** and **attractive** pension arrangement that is regarded by employers and members as being an important and valued part of the employment package.

### Our Aim

We aim to make pensions issues understandable to all and to promote membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme through the TWPF.

This strategy sets out how we will involve and consult with our employers in line with TWPF's Service Plan and Communications Policy. It outlines how we will engage with our employers in a cost-efficient way.

## Aims of the Strategy

Our aim is to improve and develop our digital platforms, processes and working practices to enhance our employer experience and knowledge, giving employers more confidence in interacting with TWPF. This will involve the review and monitoring of our service effectiveness, communication channels and performance, whilst creating efficiencies within ongoing development of our systems.

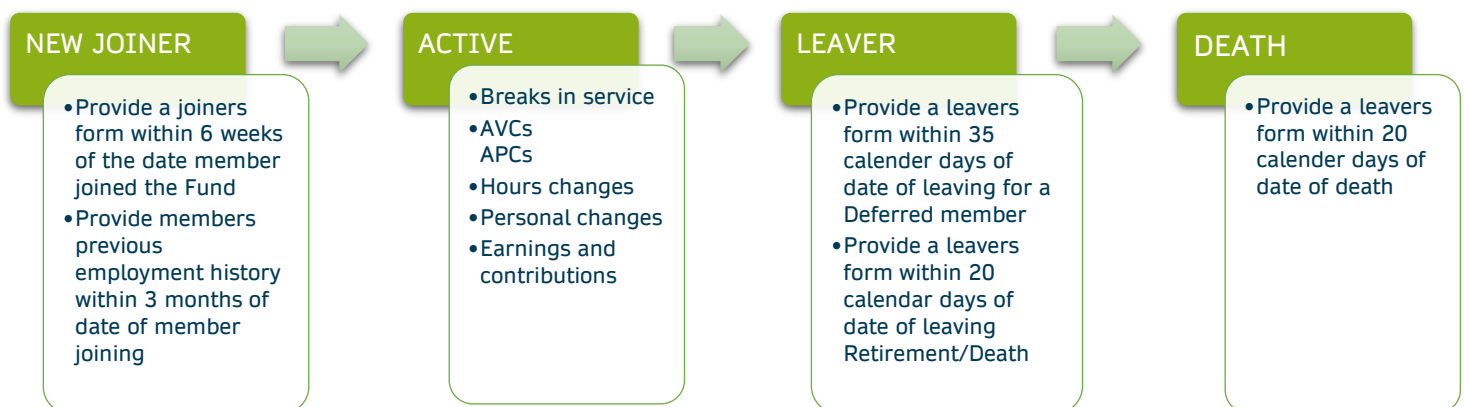
We also want employers to be confident in promoting TWPF to their employees as part of the employment benefits package. Taking part in a pension scheme is one of the most important financial decisions employees will make in their lifetime. We want employers to be confident in letting their employees know what the long-term benefits of this are, how rewarding it will be and how they can take part.

Being part of one of the largest pension schemes in the United Kingdom is a big benefit to employees joining or remaining with employers. The Local Government Pension Scheme provides a secure and guaranteed income every year to employees when they reach the qualifying age and the main Scheme benefits are not affected by how well investments do or do not perform.

We would like employers to be able to interact seamlessly with us and be part of the ongoing development of TWPF's digital platforms and processes to continually enhance their experience

## Membership/Employer Journey

TWPF has over **173,000 members**, all at different stages of their membership within the Fund. These members have joined the Fund working for at least one of over 300 employers participating in the TWPF. Employers in TWPF include local authorities, educational establishments, emergency services and many other local employers. Our employers are largely based across Tyne and Wear, and Northumberland. Further information about our membership and employers can be found at <https://www.twpf.info/article/10992/Full-annual-reports-and-accounts>.



## How Employers Engage with The Fund

### Employer Services Team

TWPF has a dedicated Employer Services Team which is made up of pension officers who have extensive knowledge and experience of the Local Government Pension Scheme. The team supports employers by providing information regarding the pension scheme. There is a dedicated section of the TWPF website where employers can find access to information, guides and additional resources.



## Governance and Funding Team

Our Governance and Funding Team have oversight and co-ordination of the overall governance and employer funding framework for TWPF. This includes managing the admission and withdrawal of employers, including academy and admission bodies, as well as overseeing procedures relating to transfers of staff between employers.

The Governance and Funding Team are responsible for managing the funding strategy and actuarial valuations and work closely with TWPF's actuary in many other situations that will have an impact on employer funding, such as calculating individual employer contribution rates, appropriate bond cover or exit valuations. To carry out regular monitoring of employer covenant strength, the team maintain a database of employers and carry out annual surveys with our employers to understand any issues that may have an impact on their ongoing participation in TWPF.

For enquires about admissions and exits contact [AdmissionsTWPF@southtyneside.gov.uk](mailto:AdmissionsTWPF@southtyneside.gov.uk)

## Pension Fund Finance Team

The Pension Fund Finance Team deals with the receipt and reconciliation of pension contributions from all employers on a monthly basis. This involves reviewing the Care16 form submitted by each employer and ensuring the correct payment is received within the deadline of 14 days from the end of the month. Any late or missing payments will be followed up with the employer and may be reported to the Pensions Regulator.

Employers can engage with the TWPF in several ways:

Employers can access the pension portal via our website

By engaging in our webinars & online workshops

By responding to our employer surveys

By calling the Employer Services Team on:  
**0191 424 6399**

By emailing the Employer Services Team at their dedicated email address:  
[twpfemployers@southtyneside.gov.uk](mailto:twpfemployers@southtyneside.gov.uk)

## What TWPF Expects from Employers

TWPF does have some expectations of its employers and we want to ensure employers remain compliant in terms of the legal requirements they must follow. Our Pensions Administration Strategy helps employers and TWPF to work together more effectively in fulfilling their joint responsibilities in administering the Scheme. The Pensions Administration Strategy will let you know what things an employer must do by law and what they should do, where there is some discretion. The Pensions Administration Strategy can be viewed on TWPF website [www.twpf.info/article/10178/Plans-and-policies](http://www.twpf.info/article/10178/Plans-and-policies)

We would expect all employers to communicate with us as described in the Pensions Administration Strategy and Communications Policy, but also engage with us at the earliest stage where any issues are identified that may impact performance or data quality.

We would also ask that employers contact us as soon as they feel there may be an impact on them which would stop them performing their statutory functions, such as an organisational change or financial difficulties.

Overall, we would ask employers to embrace the TWPF's provision of support and participate in our engagement activities. Employers within the TWPF can help shape the future of our service and how we develop it. Successful partnership will lead to a strong working practice and procedures that will benefit everyone.

## Employer Feedback

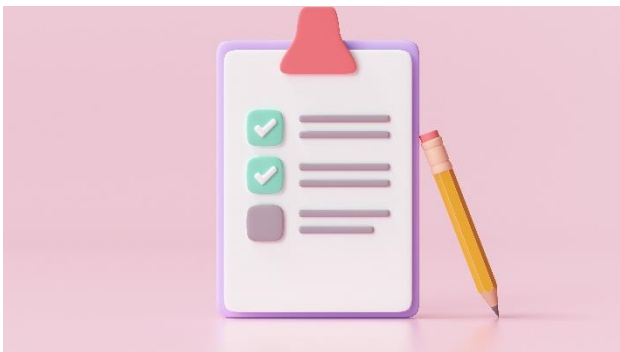
Employers told us the areas that they would like us to focus on are:

- ✓ Improve the employer portal.
- ✓ Make more training available for them.
- ✓ Improve response times to their queries.

We hope that by pursuing the goals in this strategy we will be working towards improving those areas for our employers.

## Engagement Goals

We will engage with our employers by:



### Annual survey

We conduct a survey annually to ensure that we are aware of employers' views on the service we offer.



### Monthly data collection

We will introduce monthly data collection for all employers to replace our year end data collection. Receiving data monthly will bring efficiencies to both TWPF and the employer, and will ensure member records are kept up to date in a more timely manner



### Training videos & process guides

We provide training videos and process guides on our website so that employers have a guide on hand to help them through any process they must complete and to keep them up to date with legislative changes.



### Webinars, workshops & meetings

We will increase our online webinars, workshops and meetings to increase engagement between TWPF and employers.

## Engagement Schedule

ACTIVITIES
Year End Training/ Monthly Data
Webinar: Communication with the Fund and Information Services
Webinar: Employer Roles and Responsibilities
Annual General Meeting

## Measurement and Review

We measure and review our goals by asking our employers for feedback via surveys, at webinars, at meetings and by giving employers the opportunity to feedback each time they interact with us.

We will know when we are achieving our engagement goals when: -

- **We receive positive feedback from our employers**
- **We are meeting our key performance indicators**
- **Data received from employers is of good quality**
- **Data is received from employers within statutory time limits**

## Employer Strategy and Our Service Plan

TWPF's service plan explains that we will work with our partners to provide a high-quality service to employers. We will do this by devising and delivering training, consultation and developing communication with the employers.

We have committed to gathering feedback from the employers by conducting an initial survey and to repeat this annually. We will also increase our interaction with employers by using online options such as Teams meetings, webinars and workshops, whilst also providing employers the opportunity of face-to-face interaction with our employer's team.

We are reviewing our training programme for our employers and will communicate this shortly.

We believe that this engagement strategy will demonstrate our commitment to improving and developing services, help establish better relationships and have a positive impact on our employers.



South Tyneside Council

**T W P F**

**Tyne and Wear  
Pension Fund**



**Employer Services helpline:**

0191 424 6399

**Employer Services email:**

[twpfemployers@southtyneside.gov.uk](mailto:twpfemployers@southtyneside.gov.uk)

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