



THE ROYAL COUNTY OF
BERKSHIRE
PENSION FUND

ADMINISTRATION REPORT

QUARTER 4 – 2023 (Q3 2023/24)

1 October 2023 to 31 December 2023

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1. ADMINISTRATION

1.1. Scheme Membership

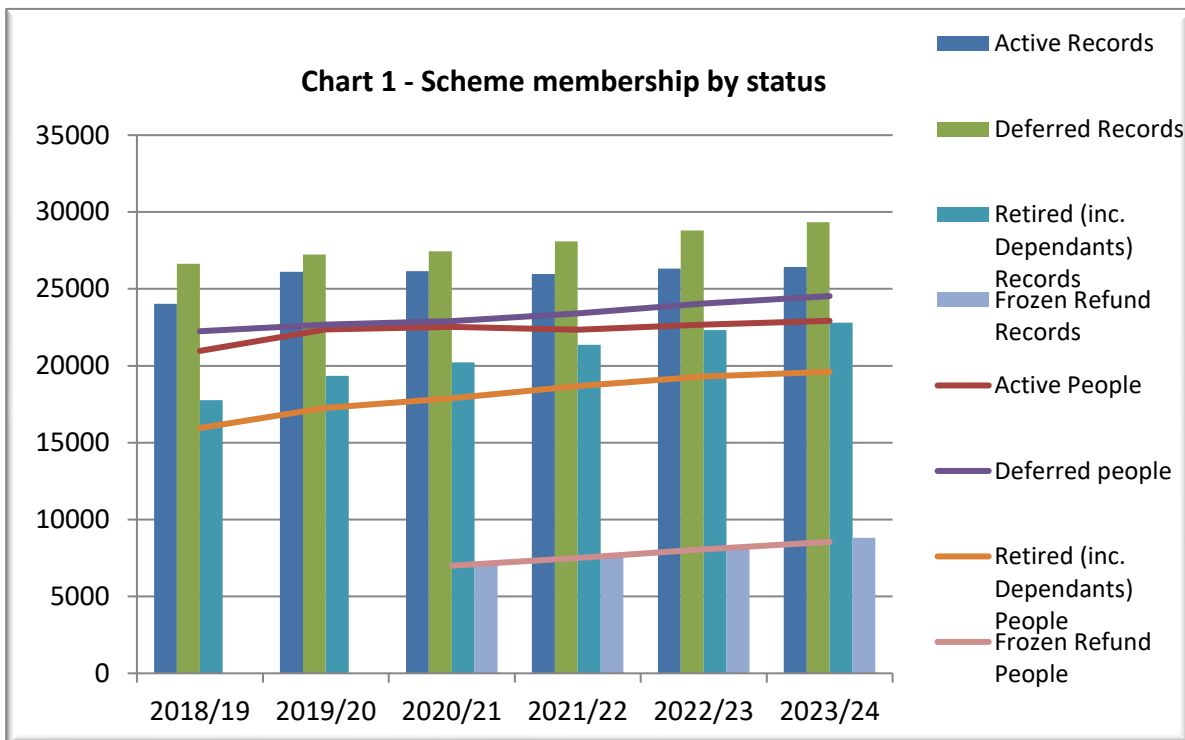


Table 1 – Total Membership as at 31 December 2023

Active Records	26,433	Active People	22,924
Deferred Records	29,338	Deferred People	24,532
Retired Records	22,797	Retired People	19,608
Frozen Refund Records	8,807	Frozen Refund People	8,551
TOTAL	87,375	TOTAL	75,615

1.2. Membership by Employer

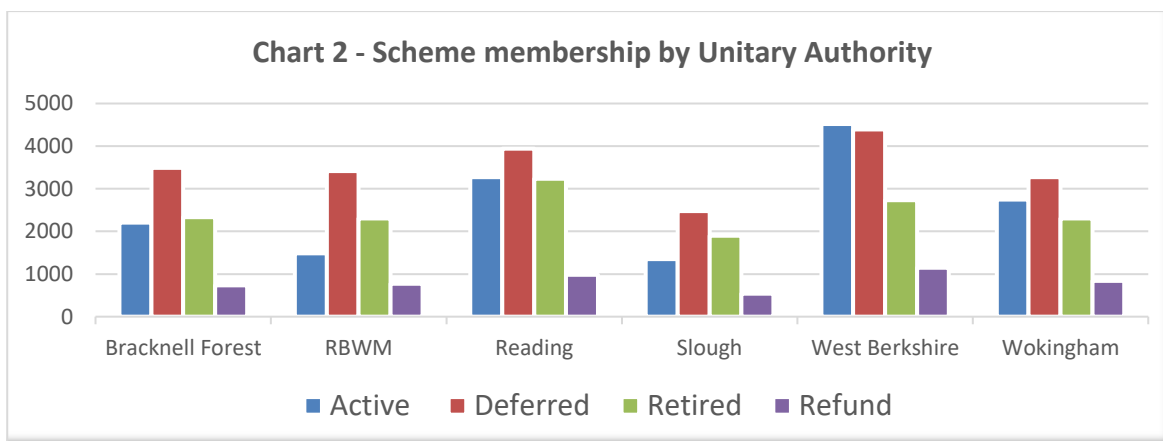
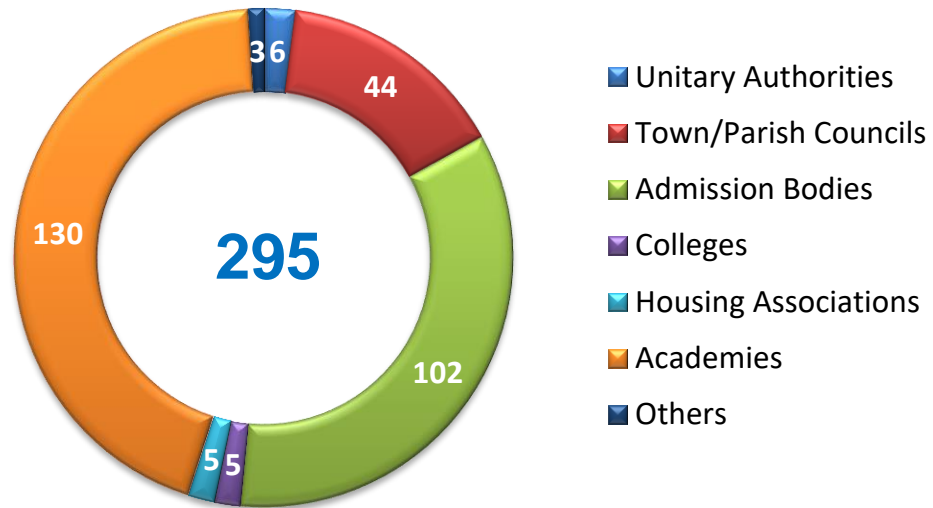


Table 2 - Membership movements in this Quarter (and previous Quarter)

	Bracknell	RBWM	Reading	Slough	W Berks	Wokingham
Active	-64 +4	+69 +35	+25 +13	+20 -16	+181 -6	+4 -87
Deferred	+5 +12	-6 -7	+2 +12	+20 -1	+78 +23	+23 +17
Retired	+22 +19	+10 +10	+19 +19	+6 +5	+28 +32	+15 +24
Refund	-1	-6	-6	-3	-5	+2

1.3. Scheme Employers

Chart 3 - Employers with active members



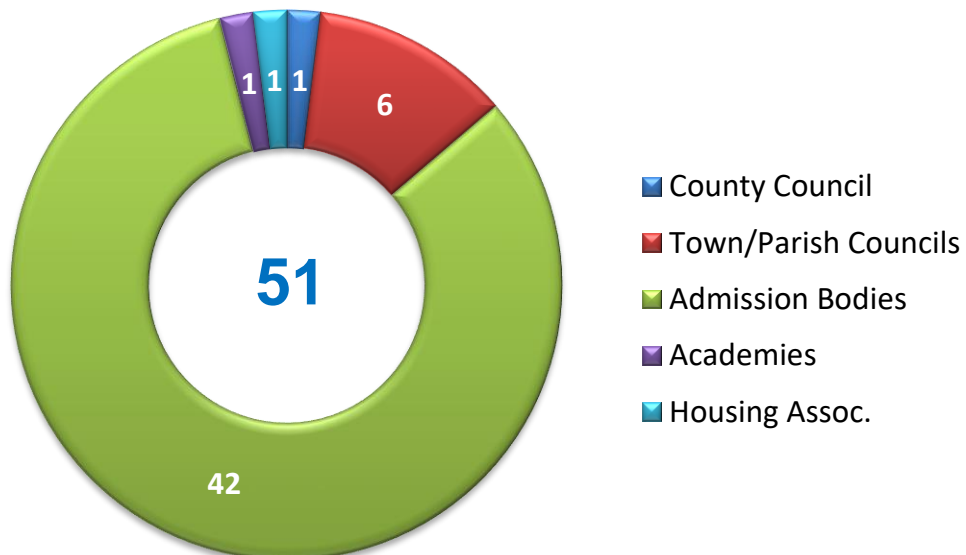
New employers since last report:

Admission Bodies: None

Academies: None

Scheduled bodies: None

Chart 4 - Employers without active members



Exiting employers: None

1.4. Scheme Employer Key Performance Indicators

Table 3 – i-Connect users Quarter 3 (1 October 2023 to 31 December 2023)

Employer	Starters	Leavers	Changes	Total	Submission Received Within Specification
Bracknell Forest Council	170	185	331	686	100%
RBWM	119	63	232	414	100%
Reading BC	265	149	733	1,147	66.66%
Slough BC	95	45	168	418	100%
West Berks Council	298	166	543	1,007	100%
Wokingham BC	101	63	347	511	100%
Academy/ School	695	750	1,107	2,552	84.34%
Others	100	53	180	333	97.24%

NOTES: Table 1A above shows all transactions through i-Connect Software for the second quarter of 2023/2024. Changes include hours/weeks updates, address amendments and basic details updates.

The benefits of i-Connect are:

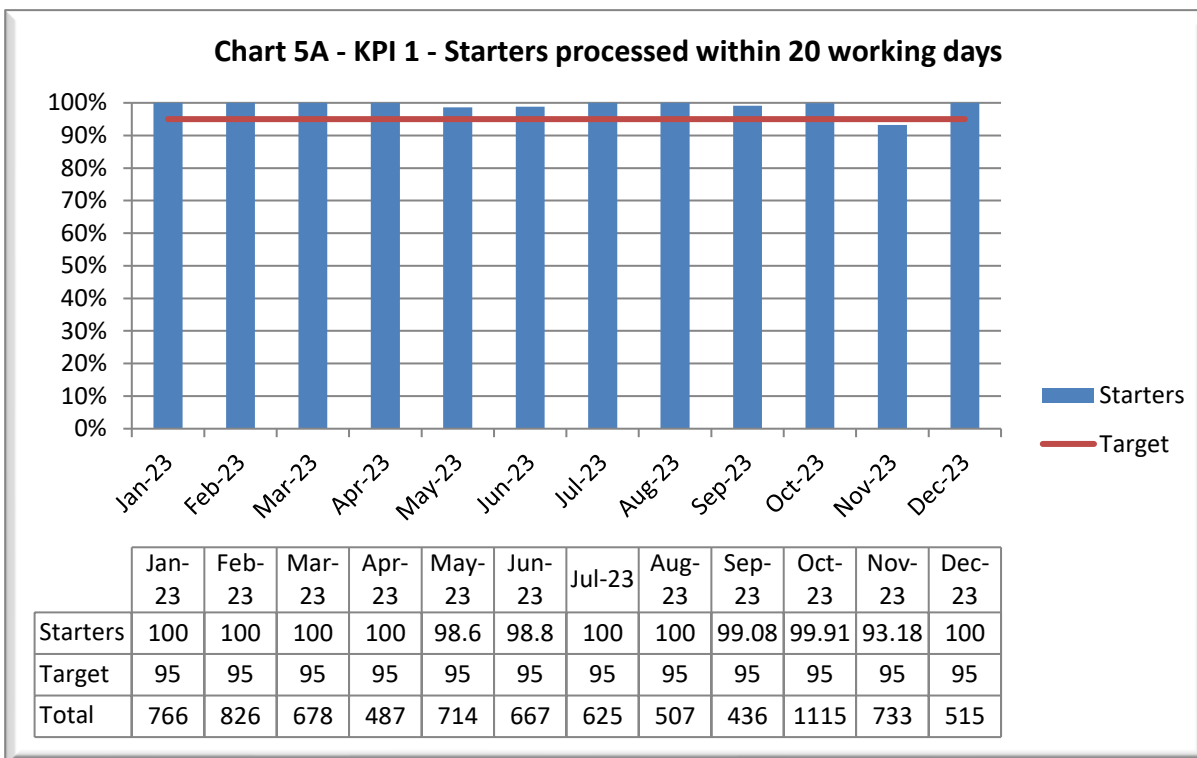
- Pension records are maintained in 'real-time';
- Scheme members are presented with the most up to date and accurate information through "my pension ONLINE" (Member self-service);
- Pension administration data matches employer payroll data;
- Discrepancies are dealt with as they arise each month;
- Employers are not required to complete year end returns;
- Manual completion of forms and input of data onto systems is eradicated removing the risk of human error.

Since 1 October 2023, one scheme employer has on boarded i-connect Software – Mary Hare Grammar School - representing 118 scheme member records. Officers continue to work closely with Excalibur Academies Trust, Schelwood Academy Trust, The Arbib Education Trust, The Keys Academy Trust and The Pioneer Educational Trust which represents circa 820 scheme member records endeavouring to on board.

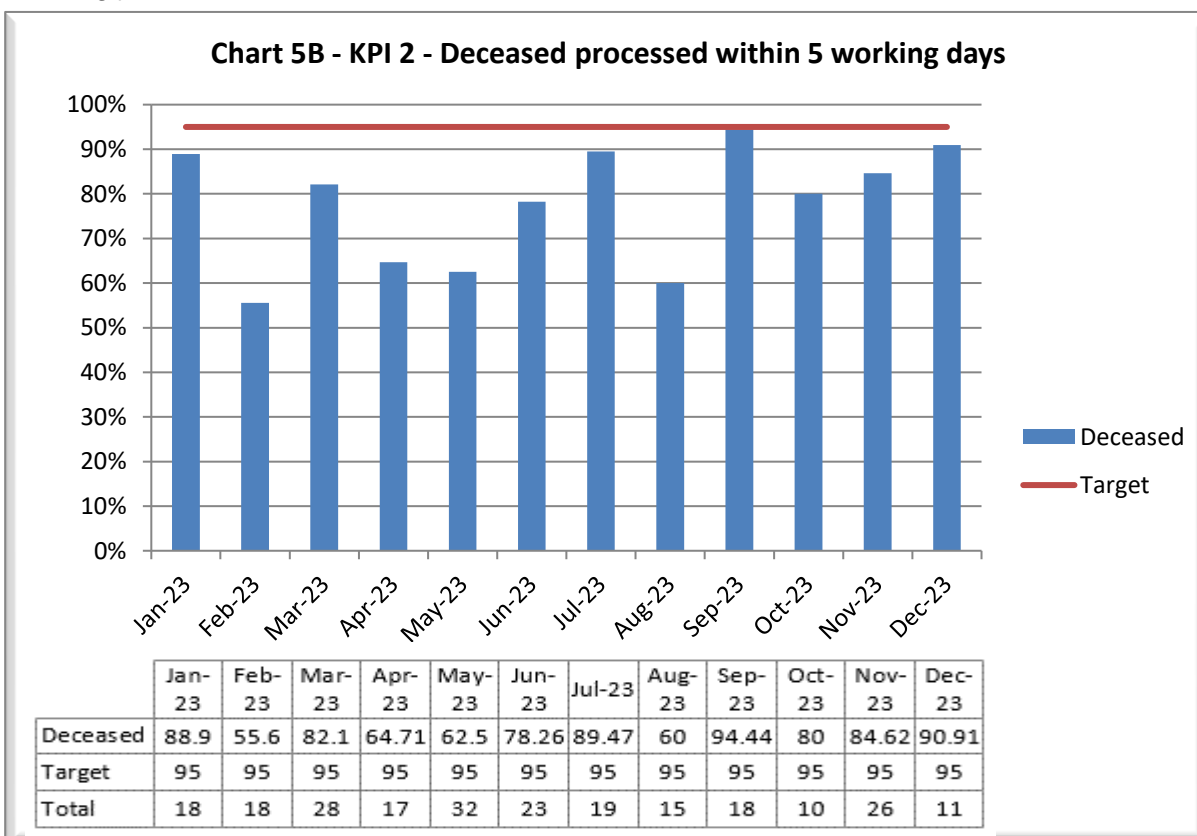
Overall, 131 scheme employers are yet to on board i-Connect Software which represents circa. 1,700 scheme member records (6.40% of total active scheme member records).

The Pension Fund remains committed to continuing to work with these scheme employers to help them to onboard, where it is possible for them to do so. Scheme employers with fewer than 10 scheme members (81 employers) have the option of using an on-line portal version of i-Connect Software rather than submitting via ".csv".

1.5. Key Performance Indicators

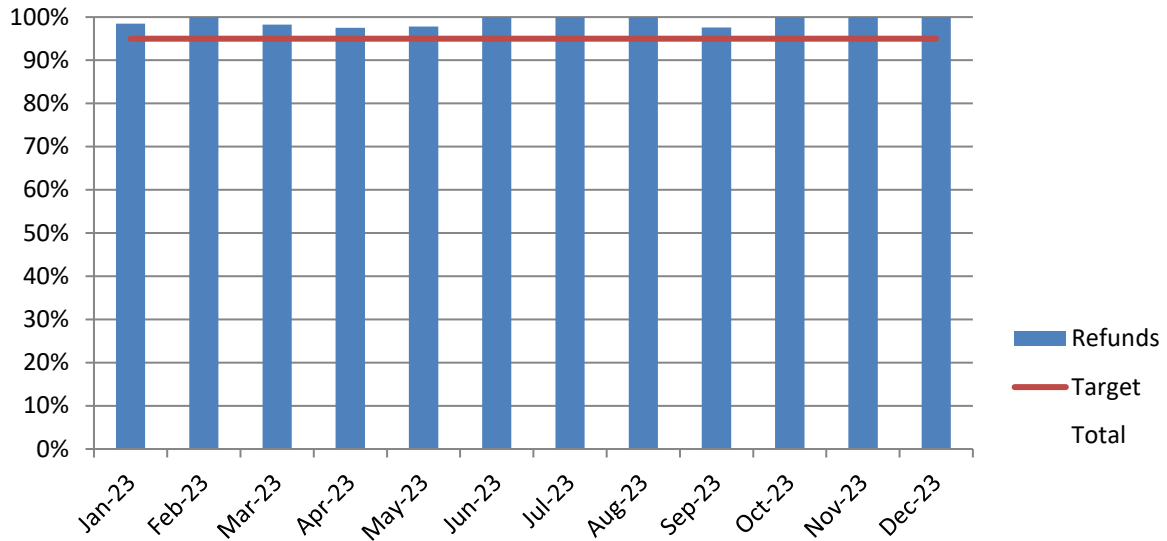


CIPFA Benchmark: Two months from date of joining the scheme or if earlier within one month of receiving jobholder information.



CIPFA Benchmark: As soon as practicable and no more than two months from date of notification of death from scheme employer or deceased's representative.

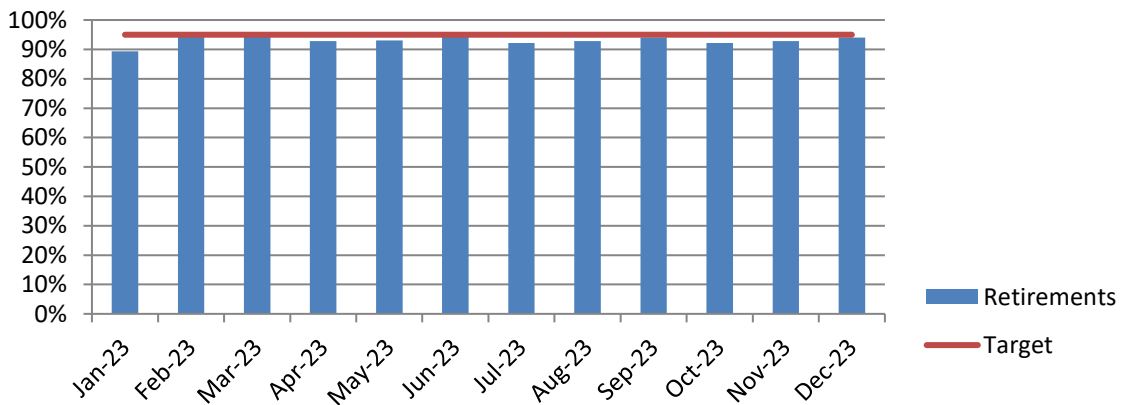
Chart 5C - KPI 3 - Refunds processed within 10 working days



	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23	Dec-23
Refunds	98.5	100	98.25	97.5	97.78	100	100	100	97.56	100	100	100
Target	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95
Total	68	63	57	40	45	66	49	54	41	37	61	31

CIPFA Benchmark: No more than two months from date of receiving the scheme members signed declaration requesting to receive a refund of employee pension contributions.

Chart 5D - KPI 4 - Retirements processed within 5 working days

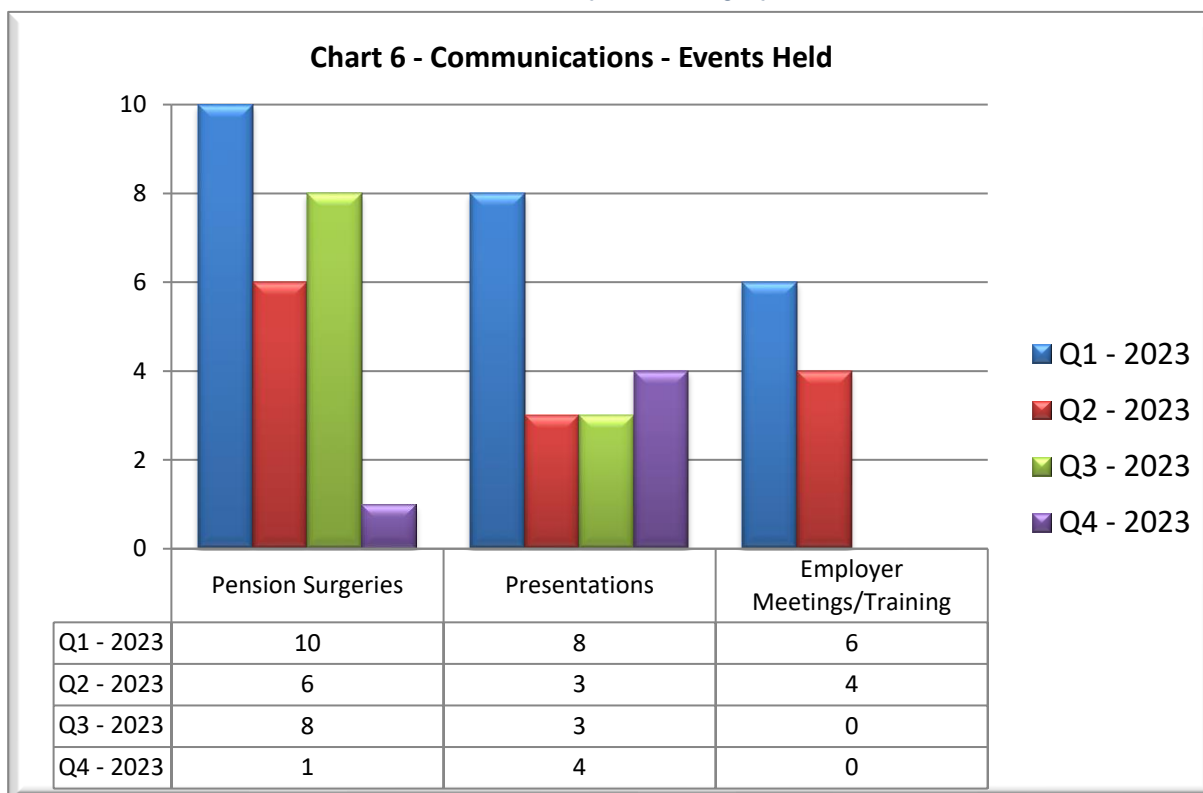


	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23	Dec-23
Retirements	89.3	95.1	95.4	92.86	93.04	94.49	92.16	92.79	94.02	92.16	92.79	94.02
Target	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95
Total	140	101	87	112	115	127	102	111	117	95	111	64

CIPFA Benchmark: One month from date of retirement if on or after normal pension age or two months from date of retirement if before normal pension age.

1.6. Communications

Events shown have been held remotely, including hybrid.



1.7. Stakeholder Feedback

As part of the Pension Fund's aim to achieve Pension Administration Standards Association (PASA) accreditation it is a requirement to report to Members the comments and complaints received from scheme employers and their scheme members on a periodic basis. Please see below feedback received from stakeholders during the second quarter:

Date Received	Method	Feedback
07/11/2023	Telephone	You have such a reassuring voice and answered so quickly giving me so much information.
08/11/2023	E-mail	Great, thank you for being so helpful. Kind regards [NAME]
08/11/2023	E-mail	Thanks [NAME], you are a star!
13/11/2023	Telephone	You are an amazing team in that office.
30/11/2023	E-mail	Whoopee! And once again my thanks to you, [NAME] and anyone else who has worked on my 'never ending story' with kindness and professional efficiency - I am grateful to you all!
19/12/2023	E-mail	Many thanks for all your help. Superb service if only the other pension provider was so easy and efficient.

2. SPECIAL PROJECTS

2.1. *McCloud Judgement*

In 2014 and 2015 the Government introduced changes to public service pension schemes, including the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS), for future service, moving from providing Final Salary to Career Average Revalued Earnings (CARE) benefits and increasing normal pension age to be in line with state pension age.

The changes to the LGPS in England and Wales, effective from 1 April 2014, applied to existing scheme members as well as new scheme members, but older scheme members were given protection against the changes.

As a result, two employment tribunal cases were brought against the Government, the claimants arguing that the underpin protection introduced amounted to unlawful discrimination as the protection only applied to certain older scheme members. The Court of Appeal ruled in the claimant's favour that these changes were discriminatory to younger scheme members leading the Government to commit to make changes to all public sector pension schemes to remove discrimination.

The changes to regulations are effective from 1 October 2023 and present a significant administrative burden to all LGPS Pension Funds. Scheme members in the scope of the protection will have their post 31 March 2014 benefits calculated as the best of CARE and Final Salary in line with a revised underpin protection. The effect will be retrospective; further data for calculating benefits for current contributing scheme members needs to be collated from scheme employers dating back to 1 April 2014 and benefits will need to be recalculated for qualifying scheme members who have left since 1 April 2014. Those older scheme members who were already given protection may also be affected given changes to the methodology of the underpin that was originally introduced when the LGPS changed to CARE in April 2014.

At a fund level Officers will need to identify those scheme members in scope of the extended underpin protection, obtain the data needed to calculate a scheme member's post 31 March 2014 benefits from scheme employers, update all scheme member records, calculate retrospective benefits, pay any underpayments, communicate with scheme members and scheme employers and make changes to administration systems and processes to carry out ongoing administration under the new regulations.

Following a review of the changes to regulations effective from 1 October 2023 Officers drafted and finalised a budgeted project plan on 3 October 2023 that includes the project criteria, project resources, project stakeholders, project structure and project milestones. The project plan includes a detailed project-specific risk analysis in support of the Pension Fund's risk management process, risks will be identified and mitigations will be put in place in minimise the likelihood and impact of risks materialising and all risks will be monitored regularly.

Pensions Dashboard Programme

A national pensions dashboard has been on the horizon for some time, but now the Pension Schemes Act 2021 has received Royal Assent it is anticipated the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will begin to consult on detailed dashboards regulations and work with regulators to begin supporting both private and public sector pension providers and pension schemes to comply with their dashboards compulsion duties. It is anticipated the Pensions Dashboards Programme (PDP) will publish further detailed instructions on how a scheme administrator must operate with the dashboards ecosystem.

The DWP announced on 2 March 2023 a significant delay to the Pensions Dashboards Programme. The statement released explained that the Pensions Dashboards Programme will be unable to meet the connection deadlines set out in legislation, and the timeline will need to be revised. The framework for dashboards will remain unchanged, but DWP will now legislate to provide new deadlines. It is anticipated public sector pension scheme administrators will now begin onboarding during quarter four of 2025 rather than 2024.

Officers recognise it is important not to wait. Almost every aspect of administering a pension scheme is easier to achieve if data is actively managed and incorporates both Common and Scheme Specific data activities, an area officers have successfully improved over the last three years. Officers acknowledge Pensions Dashboards, if done well, could be a game changer in getting individuals to better engage with their pensions and a better efficiency of pension scheme management.