

Happy New Year!

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Welcome to In-Form

Welcome to another issue of In-Form, the quarterly newsletter for Buckinghamshire Pension Fund employers. On behalf of the Pensions and Investments Team, I would like to take the opportunity to wish you a Happy New Year!

2023 was a busy year in pensions administration. In the first quarter of the year, we were working to complete the 2022 Fund valuation in time for 1 April. You worked hard to provide us with your year-end data which we processed over the Summer, and in the Autumn the McCloud regulations were issued. Throughout, our focus has been to ensure we continue to deliver a high standard of customer service to your LGPS employees. We were recently recognised for our efforts at Buckinghamshire Council's annual award ceremony by being given the 'highly commended' award for 'Team of the Year'. Thank you for all your support during 2023!

For some idea of what 2024 might have in store, take a look at this issue's [special feature](#). As always, please ensure you review our regular features, in particular the [Fund Updates section](#) which highlights some important actions you may need to take.

We hope you find this issue useful and informative. If you have any questions, please contact your Employer Liaison Officer (ELO). Their contact details can be found [on page 13](#).

Administration

Pension strain changing from 1 April 2024

Pension strain is an upfront cost you're required to pay to the Fund should there be a shortfall in the assumed level of funding needed to provide pension benefits to a scheme member. It can occur when someone over age 55 is made redundant or is retired due to business efficiency, when you award additional pension or agree to switch on the 85-year rule early. It can also apply to some flexible retirements. Pension strain costs are determined at a Fund level, and factors used to calculate the cost of pension strain are reviewed triennially. Following a review, we can confirm that updated factors will be in force from 1 April 2024 which may increase the value of pension strain payable. The new factors take greater account of local costs and the Fund's unique financial position which is essential for maintaining the Fund's financial solvency.

While it should be noted that we haven't changed strain costs since 2008, we understand that you may have budgeted based on the old factors. To enable you to take account of the change to pension strain factors in your forward planning, we will be issuing a communication in February which will feature illustrations of the new factors.

Action: Look out for further communication from us in February. General information about pension strain can be found in the [Roles and Responsibilities document](#).

McCloud project update

In each issue of In-Form we will provide an update on the McCloud project. For an overview of the project generally, please see [Issue 14, page 5-7](#).

➤ Data collection

We are pleased to confirm that the vast majority of employers have submitted their historic data. Of those, 116 have now progressed through data

validation (stage 1) and data comparison (stage 2). This data is now awaiting review by the McCloud project team for further checking. (See [issue 14, page 6](#) for an explanation of the stages)

Please be aware that you may receive queries from us at any stage of the data cleansing process. We may also request data for members that were not on the original data collection template. As explained in [issue 14](#), this is because upon receipt of the final the regulations, more people are in scope than before. Please ensure you are treating McCloud queries with the same level of priority you would for other pension queries. Thank you to those of you who are responding to our queries.

70 employers have yet to submit their McCloud data for the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2021. Since 1 October 2023, providing this data to us has been a regulatory requirement. Failing to do so could result in you being issued a charge under item 13 of the [Pensions Administration Strategy](#). If you haven't yet contacted us to explain the reason for the delay, please do so immediately.

➤ Communications

In the [previous issue of In-Form](#), we confirmed that we were required under [the Disclosure of Information](#) regulations, to write to affected Buckinghamshire LGPS members to inform them of the change to the regulations by 31 December. Accordingly, we have issued letters to all LGPS members we think may be affected. In an email sent to you on 20 December 2023, we asked you to help raise awareness of the letters to your employees by sharing the following:

On 1 October 2023, changes were made to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) regulations which could affect you. On 1 April 2014, the LGPS became a CARE scheme. As it had previously been a final salary scheme, this altered the way pensions were calculated. When this happened, a protection known as 'the underpin' was introduced for older members that were closer to retirement. However, in 2018 a court of

appeal ruling found that only providing protection to older members was age discrimination. The LGPS regulations have now been amended to remove age discrimination from the scheme by extending qualification for underpin protection to many more people. Letters have been sent out to all those that may be in scope. However, not everyone getting a letter will be affected. To find out more, read [the full news story](#).

Action-

- If you have yet to supply your McCloud data to us, please do so as soon as possible
- If there is data you are unable to supply, please let us know what is missing and why
- Respond promptly to any queries you receive or requests for additional data and final pay calculations
- Share the communication about McCloud we sent to you on 20 December with your LGPS employees.

i-Connect changes

On 24 November, we emailed to make you aware of some improvements to i-Connect from 1 January 2024. We also attached the Employer Release Guide, which provided further details about these changes. We will also be introducing some changes to the i-Connect submission template which will be in place from 1 April. A copy of the template was issued to you alongside this issue of In-Form.

The following fields will be mandatory:

Payroll reference 3 – This must be completed by schools and their third-party payroll providers with the name of the school

Email address – You must provide an email address for each member. This should be a personal email address if you hold it, but a work email will suffice. You are required to provide us with an email address under auto-enrolment regulations. Please update your privacy policy if this requirement is not included

Reason for leaving – If the employee has left, a reason must be provided

Opt-out date – this field should be completed when someone opts out instead of the last day of service field

Please also note the following:

SMP indicator – This now features a choice of indicators which you must select

Opt-in date – Has been removed. For any opt-ins, you should populate the date joined scheme field

Additionally, please be reminded that:

- Annual pensionable salary is the Full Time Equivalent (FTE) salary
- Date joined scheme is the date the member joined the scheme and not the employment start date
- Once you complete your i-Connect submission, you should always email a copy of the template to: LGPSreturns@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

If you want to reduce your monthly queries, you could also consider populating the 'hours' field and the 'FTE final pay field'. (Please note that the latter is the final pay and not the FTE.)

Action - Please ensure that you have amended your procedures to use the new template from 1 April 2024. Please be reminded that we won't be able to accept incorrectly completed or old-style templates after this date. If you have any questions, please [contact us](#).



Opt-out forms and third-party payroll providers
We were recently made aware that some schools had entered into a Service Level Agreement with a third-party payroll provider without considering opt-out forms. These schools are now having to supply these to us directly which has caused additional work for both us and the schools.

Action

- If you are considering outsourcing your payroll, or changing payroll provider, please ensure that opt-out forms are factored into any Service Level Agreement you enter into. Please read our [‘thinking of outsourcing your payroll’ guide](#) first which explains what to look for when considering a third-party payroll provider.

If you’re a local authority or an academy trust, please ensure you share this guide with all your schools including those that don’t use your payroll services.

Don’t forget to review your Discretions Policy

All LGPS employers are required under the regulations to hold an LGPS Discretions Policy covering at least the 5 mandatory discretions. This policy should be reviewed at least every 12 months.

Action – Please read our bitesize training in [In-Form issue 11 \(page 11-13\)](#) which sets out some steps you may wish to take in reviewing your Discretions Policy. If you make changes to your policy, please ensure you provide us with the updated copy.

Previous employer webinar recordings

We run employer webinars regularly to support you in your role. We have recently uploaded some of the recordings to our private YouTube channel. They are available to access below:

[Assumed Pensionable Pay \(APP\)](#) – (13/12/23)
[An Overview of LGPS employer responsibilities](#) – (14/09/23)

[Absences from work](#) – (19/7/23)
[Processing retirements](#) – (5/6/23)

Webinar recording disclaimer: Please be aware that information contained in the webinars was correct to the best of our knowledge at the time of filming. Any changes would have been confirmed in subsequent communications. We ask that you please do not share recordings outside of your organisation.

Action – Book your space on our next employer webinar taking place on 29 February 2024 10am-11am by using the following link: [Year-end](#)

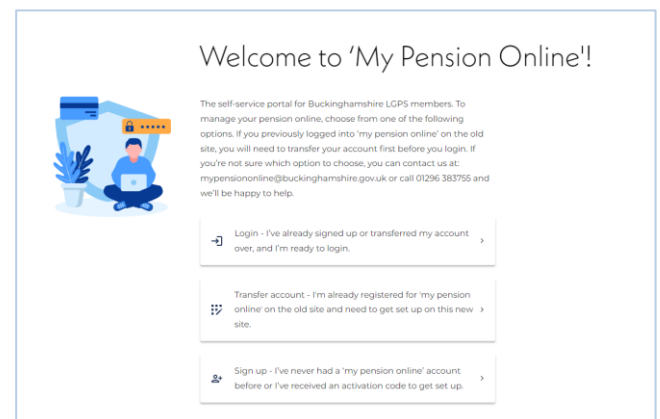
Buckinghamshire Pension Fund LIVE webinar

On 29 November 2023 we held our third annual webinar for all active LGPS employees and received excellent feedback from all who attended. Thank you to those of you who promoted the event. To ensure those who couldn’t attend don’t miss out, we emailed you on 4 December 2023 asking you to share the following with your LGPS staff:

If you were unable to attend the Buckinghamshire Pension Fund LIVE webinar, which took place on 29 November 2023, you can watch a recording of the event by visiting:

<https://youtu.be/eWRQib93XJc> The webinar covers some of the key benefits and features of the scheme and includes information about how you can manage and maximise your LGPS pension. If you would like to leave some feedback about the webinar, the team would be very grateful if you could complete this [very short survey](#). If you have any questions about your [Buckinghamshire LGPS pension](#), please contact the Pensions and Investments Team at: pensions@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

Action – If you haven’t already done so, please share the above information with your LGPS employees.



‘My pension Online’ upgrade

We’re pleased to announce that our self-service portal, [‘my pension online’](#) has had a makeover! The improved site has a fresh modern layout and features 2-step authentication to help keep pension accounts safe. We’ve also introduced some new features to help your LGPS employees manage their pension, including a retirement planner and a new annual benefit statement dashboard. The new platform offers more scope

for development and we're hoping to introduce more features in the future.

The URL for 'my pension online' has not changed. To register visit, ms.buckinghamshire.gov.uk and select 'Sign up'. Anyone who is already registered for '[my pension online](#)' on the old platform will need to complete a few simple steps to transfer their details over to the improved site. We have sent emails out to all registered members with instructions on how to do this.

Action: Please promote use of 'my pension online' to your LGPS employees. More information on the registration process can be found on [our website](#). If your employees have any issues accessing 'my pension online', they can call our helpline on 01296 383755 for assistance or email our dedicated inbox: mypensiononline@buckinghamshire.gov.uk.

Investments

Pension Fund performance summary

Quarter 2 2023/2024	Quarter %	Annual %	3 year %
Fund (excl private equity)	0.3	5.0	3.2
Benchmark	0.3	5.6	3.6
Out/Under performance	0.0	-0.6	-0.4
Market Value (£bn)	3,768		

Fund Annual Report 2022/2023

The [Buckinghamshire Pension Fund Annual Report 2022/2023](#) was published to our website on 1 December 2023. The Annual Report is a summary of the Fund's activities over the past year.

We have been unable to publish an auditor's opinion for annual reports since 2020/2021. This is due to delays to the auditing process of the Council's main accounts and is not reflective of the position of the Pension Fund. This issue has been experienced by many Funds and is not unique to Buckinghamshire. The Scheme Advisory Board (SAB) previously highlighted this issue in [a letter to ministers](#), however, there has been no further developments. [In bulletin 244](#), the Local Government Association (LGA) advised that Funds should publish the draft report based on the unaudited data. We will update you as soon as we have any further information.



Governance

The [Buckinghamshire Pension Board](#) met on 13 December 2023. Items discussed included the annual accounts, McCloud, and administration performance. The Board is due to meet again on 27 March 2024.

The [Pension Fund Committee](#) met on 15 November 2023. Items discussed including the statement of accounts and investments. The Committee is due to meet again on 13 March 2024.

The agenda and minutes for both the Buckinghamshire Pension Board and the Pension Fund Committee are made available in the [democratic services section](#) of the Buckinghamshire Council website.

Projects coming in 2024/2025

In this quarter's special feature, we're looking ahead at the projects you can expect to hear more about in 2024 and beyond.

Year-end 2024

The end of the financial year is always a busy time in pensions administration. Some of the LGPS duties you will need to perform from 1 April will include applying the revised employee contribution rates which are updated at a scheme level annually. You will also need to review the revised [Roles and Responsibilities](#)

document issued to you for the new financial year, to check you are fully compliant. Another important task will be to ensure that by 30 April 2024 you have provided us with year-end data for all employees that were active during the previous scheme year. We will use the data you provide to calculate pension build-up for the 2022/2023 scheme year and issue [annual benefit statements](#) to your employees by the statutory deadline of 31 August.

Since the roll out of i-Connect, the year-end process has become steadily more efficient. Last year we managed to issue 100% of annual benefit statements by the deadline; the highest the Fund has ever achieved. During the past year we have been conducting monthly data reconciliation exercises which we hope will lead to a reduction in queries for you to respond to.

We are holding a webinar about the year-end project on 29 February from 10am-11am. If you're new to pensions administration, or you would just like a refresher, [book your place now](#). More information about year-end can also be found in the [Roles and Responsibilities document](#).



McCloud

On 1 October 2023, [the LGPS regulations](#) were amended to accommodate changes to a protection known as the underpin. When someone qualifies for the underpin, we can calculate pension benefits built up in the [CARE scheme](#) between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2022 as [final salary pension](#), if it results in a higher pension overall. To calculate final salary pension, we require hours and service break data for all members who paid in between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2022 (the remedy period). We began collecting this data from you in 2021.

McCloud kept us busy in 2023, particularly over the last months as the regulations were issued. We set up a subgroup to work specifically on the McCloud project, began checking your McCloud data and carried out software testing to ensure the data can be uploaded to records without affecting day-to-day processes. You have been working to get your data to us in the correct format and respond to our queries.

McCloud is a big project and it will be a key area of focus in 2024. There will be a higher volume of queries now the regulations are in force, and we may also request further data from you for members not previously in scope. The McCloud regulations apply retrospectively which means we also need to work through historic cases to ensure that anyone who has left, retired, transferred out or died, are put in the position they would have been had the regulations been

in place when they left. We will be following the final version of the [prioritisation policy \(which is currently in draft format\)](#) as we work through the project. We will also be applying the guidance issued by the LGA where data cannot be obtained or where we perceive the data provided is inaccurate. Please read through the [‘data issues guidance’](#) if you haven’t already done so. If you have queries about your McCloud data, please [contact your ELO](#).

Auto-enrolment expansion

It’s been more than 10 years since auto-enrolment was introduced and it’s clear the project has been successful in its aim to increase how many are saving towards a workplace pension. Active membership of workplace pension schemes has risen nationally from 0.9 million in 2011 to 10.6 million in 2019. Despite this success, [a review of the regulations in 2017](#) found that many were still not saving enough for retirement. The review recommended reducing the eligible age from 22 to 18 and removing the LEL (Lower Earnings Limit) with an aim to encourage younger and lower paid workers to save for retirement.

In 2023 the Pensions (Extensions of Automatic Enrolment) Act 2023 granted the Secretary of State the power to make these changes. In a [response to a written question](#) in October, the former Pensions Minister, Laura Trott, confirmed that the government would ‘consult on the detailed implementation of these changes at the earliest opportunity’. No date has been provided by the government yet, however, it’s important to begin taking steps to plan for the expansion of auto-enrolment. These changes will likely mean pensions administration will increase as will employer costs.

Pensions Dashboards

In [previous issues of In-Form](#) we confirmed the government’s intention to launch [pension dashboards](#) to the general public by 31 October 2026. Pension dashboards will allow members to view all their pension information across the UK in one place. This will include LGPS pensions, AVC Funds, and state pension. Funds will connect to a dashboard according to a staging timeline which is expected to be launched later this Spring. It’s thought that LGPS Funds will be expected to connect to the dashboard by Autumn 2025.



While 2025 may seem like a long way away, there is a lot to do to ensure the Fund is compliant and ready to connect. To assist Funds in their preparation, the LGA has published a draft [Dashboard Connections guide](#). This guidance sets out some of the key considerations and actions Funds may need to take to prepare for dashboards.

Accurate employee data is going to be essential for the delivery of dashboards and incorrect or missing data is likely to generate an increase in queries from employees and ex-employees. TPR have new enforcement powers which will allow them to pursue third parties, including employers, who submit data late. We may need to make some changes to our administration practises; however, we will confirm any changes at a later date. We will keep you informed on developments in future issues.

LGPC Bulletins and circulars

The Local Government Pension Committee (LGPC) issue monthly bulletins updating administering authorities on scheme changes. This section provides a summary of these updates as well as news from the wider pensions sector. The full bulletins contain more detail and additional information and are available to read at the links below. More information for employers can be found at: www.lgpsregs.org

Bulletins this quarter	Minutes of meetings this quarter
Bulletin 243 October	Communications working group – 12 October
Bulletin 244 November	LGPC committee – 4 December
Bulletin 245 December	Technical group – 8 December

CPI rate announced

The ONS (Office of National Statistics) have confirmed the [CPI for September](#) as 6.7%. This is usually the figure used to revalue LGPS pensions in April. We are unable to confirm this until the government publishes the official orders nearer the time. State pensions will likely increase by the average earnings growth in April which [was announced as 8.5%](#).

LGPS statistics for 2022/2023 published

On 25 October 2023, DLUHC published [LGPS statistics for 2022/2023](#) using data submitted by LGPS Funds. The report revealed a decrease in Fund membership totals from the previous year. Retirements also decreased overall; however, flexible retirements have steadily risen.

HMRC McCloud guidance

HMRC have published a series of documents explaining how tax positions could be affected by McCloud for members of various public service pension schemes. Additionally, HMRC launched the [check if you're affected tool](#). These resources are explained in the [HMRC public service remedy newsletter](#) and include [Tax implications for members of the LGPS](#). It should be noted that unlike members of other public service pension schemes, McCloud will not affect the past tax position for LGPS members. Please refer anyone with concerns about their tax position due to McCloud to these resources.

LGA publishes McCloud info for members

The LGA have updated [timeline regulations](#) to reflect McCloud. They have also released the first instalment of the McCloud technical guide for administering authorities as well as a draft prioritisation policy setting out which McCloud cases should be dealt with first. Both of these can be found in the administrator's section of www.lgpsregs.org

The www.lgpsmember.org website has also been updated to include a number of resources to help members understand the implications of the McCloud remedy. This includes an [Am I affected? Tool](#) and a short [McCloud explained Video](#). We have updated our [McCloud webpage](#) with links to the new resources.

Teachers excess service

As confirmed in [previous issues of In-Form](#), due to McCloud, some teachers will have excess service that is not pensionable in the Teachers' Pension Scheme but may be pensionable in the LGPS. A consultation on implementing the remedy for these affected members is expected in the spring. In an [article published in October 2023](#), TPS have confirmed they will be contacting relevant schools individually about these members between January and July 2024. Please direct any members with queries about excess teachers service to the [member's section of the TPS website](#).

HMT confirms LTA abolition

In the Spring Budget, the government announced plans to remove the Lifetime Allowance – the limit on the amount that can be held in pension savings over a course of a lifetime. Between 18 July and 12 September 2023, HMRC issued a consultation setting out draft proposals for how this should be accomplished. On 22 November 2023, the Chancellor of the Exchequer presented his Autumn Statement to Parliament, and on the same day [a policy paper](#) was published setting out the government's position in response to the consultation. The draft [Finance Bill 2023](#) was presented to Parliament on 29 November. HMRC outlined these changes in their [December 2023 newsletter](#). We will update [our tax-controls webpages](#) in due course.

SAB guidance on academy conversions

On 19 October 2023, [SAB published guidance](#) which sets out actuarial approaches adopted by LGPS Funds when an LA school becomes an academy. The guidance does not suggest a unifying approach all LGPS Funds should adopt, but rather provides an overview of the various methodology and the implications of each. Our approach to academy conversions is set out on [page 16 of the Funding Strategy Statement](#).

New minister for the LGPS

Following the cabinet reshuffle, it has been announced that [Simon Hoare](#), MP for North Dorset, will take over from Lee Rowley as Local Government minister.

LGA announces 2024 training programme

The Local Government Association (LGA) has published the [2024 dates for Employer Role training](#) featuring various online dates and an in-person session in August. To find out more and to book, visit: www.local.gov.uk/events

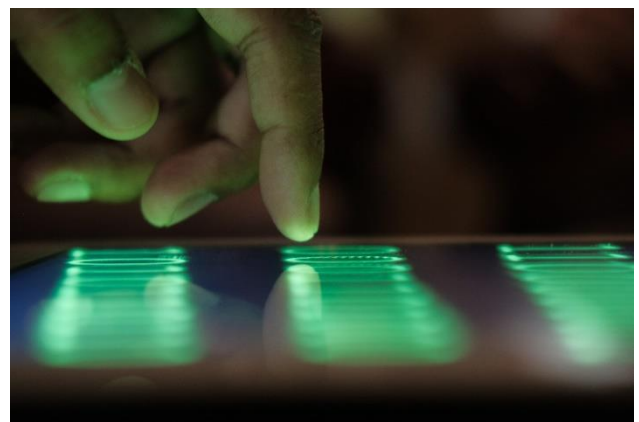
Action – Decide if you or your staff could benefit from training and book your place. Contact the LGA directly if you have questions.

Response to investment consultation published

The government has issued [a response](#) to the consultation concerning LGPS investments which closed on 2 October 2023. The response sets out a number of new measures related to investments, including private equity, pooling and governance. The government has confirmed that LGPS Funds will need to comply with the requirements by 2025.

TPR asks Funds to report cyber attacks

The Pensions Regulator (TPR) has revised its [cyber security guidance](#) to ask Funds to report any incidents of cyber security to them. The aim is to help TPR build a better picture of the cyber risk facing the pensions industry.



TPR Code of Practice

On 10 January 2023, [TPR's General Code of Practice](#) (previously known as the Single Code) was laid in Parliament. The General Code merges 10 of the [existing Codes](#) and provides practical guidelines on how to comply with the legal requirements of pensions regulations. The new Code will come into force on 27 March.

Good results for LGPS Funds in TPR research

The Pensions Regulator published its ['Public Service Pension Schemes Government and Administration Research for 2022/2023'](#). The researchers surveyed public service pension Funds in 6 key areas which included 'managing conflicts of interest', 'risk assessment and risk management', and 'monitoring accuracy and completeness of records.' 81% of LGPS Funds were found to have all six processes in place, placing them ahead of other public service pension schemes. Details of all our governance and administration policies can be found on our website

Bitesize training: Processing a death in service

LGPS members are entitled to death in service benefits which can provide vital financial support to a family coping with the loss of a loved one. To avoid unnecessary stress to the bereaved family, it's important that we do our utmost to ensure these cases are processed as accurately and quickly as possible. In this quarter's bitesize training, we review what information should be provided to us.

What is payable when someone dies?

If a member dies in service, there is a [death in service grant](#) payable of three times their annual pensionable pay. The Fund has sole discretion over who the death grant is paid to. If the member has made a death grant nomination, we will try and follow their wishes, though there are some circumstances where that may not be practicable. A nomination can be made quickly and easily using ['my pension online'](#) or by completing an [expression of wish form](#).

In addition to [the death in service grant](#), which is a one-off lump sum, ongoing dependant pensions may be payable if there was a spouse, civil partner, or eligible cohabiting partner and/or eligible children.



Who is entitled to receive death in service benefits

An active member is entitled to death in service benefits from the date they enrol in the scheme. Unlike other LGPS benefits, they don't need to have met the 2-year vesting period. If the member moved to the [50/50 section](#), they are still entitled to death in service benefits at the same rate as someone in the main section. If one of your employees [opted out](#) of the scheme, but previously met the vesting period, they will not be entitled to the death in service grant. However, you should still ensure you notify us as they may have other death benefits payable.

What information do we need?

To process death in service benefits, you must supply us with the following:

- The completed ['notification of employee leaving form'](#)
- Next of kin details including full name, address, email address, and telephone number
- The death certificate, and a copy of a date of birth verification document if you hold this. This could be a copy of a passport, birth certificate or the photocard portion of a driver's licence, and if applicable, the marriage certificate or deed poll document (if applicable)

Additionally, we may also require:

- Final pay calculations
- Certification from an IRMP if applicable (read on for further information)

You must provide all information to us as soon as possible and within 5 days of the date you received notification of the death. If you supply us with information after this date, you may be issued a charge for late notification under the [Pensions Administration Strategy](#). It's important you have an efficient procedure in place for processing a death in service, even if your organisation is relatively small. Ensure everyone involved is aware of the timeframe and that they know what to do should the event arise. If you anticipate any delays, please get in [contact with your ELO](#) to let us know. You should also ensure you communicate with the next of kin so they are kept informed of any delays.

Completing the 'notification of employee leaving' form.

The last day of service for a death in service is the date of the member's death, even if you continued to deduct contributions after this date. The date you were notified about the death must also be entered into the box on page 1.

You will need to calculate an annual Assumed Pensionable Pay (APP) and input this in box 14. This figure and is separate to any APP you may have calculated for box 9 or 11.

It can be quite simple if the employee is paid the same amount every month and doesn't have any lump sums or regular payments to consider. However, where the employee's pay fluctuates, you should ensure you use the correct methodology as set out in [regulation 21](#).

Here is a simple example of calculating the annual APP for the death in service of a monthly paid employee. However, more complex examples can be found in the resources at the end of this feature.

An employee died on 20 August 2023. To work out the APP for a monthly paid employee, we need to use 3 complete pay periods in our calculation. This employee did not receive any regular lump sums in the previous 3 months and the employee has not received any regular lump sums in the previous 12 months to consider. The pay we need to use for the calculation is May, June and July as shown in the box below.

We can begin by adding these three pay figures together:

$$\pounds 1,290 + \pounds 1,260 + \pounds 1,233 = \pounds 3,783$$

Then divide this figure to get a monthly average:

$$\pounds 3,783 \div 3 = \pounds 1,261$$

Finally, we can gross this up to a yearly figure:

$$\pounds 1,261 \times 12 = \pounds 15,132$$

This is the figure we need to enter into box 14.

Employee's pay:

May: £1,290

June: £1,260

July: £1,233

August: £938

We use this annual APP figure to work out the value of the death in service grant. We would work out the death in service grant for the above employee as:

$$\pounds 15,132 \times 3 = \pounds 45,396 \text{ (death in service grant)}$$

Ignoring a reduction in contractual hours

According to regulation 40 (3), when calculating the APP for a death in service, if an IRMP (Independently Registered Medical Practitioner) certifies that the member reduced their hours due in any part to the illness which led to their death, this reduction can be ignored. It is best practice when someone's hours change to record the reason for the change in full. This will ensure that should a death occur; you can evidence that you have considered this. This rule applies to the APP for box 14 only and does not apply to any CPP you have worked out to report in either box 9 or 11. You should ensure you check if they reduced their hours prior to death, as part of your standard procedure.

Substituting an APP for a higher figure

According to [regulation 21 \(5a-c\)](#) you can choose to substitute a higher pay figure for the APP where it is, in your employer, materially lower than the pay the employee would normally receive. You may deem it appropriate to use this regulation for example where an employee was due a pay rise but died before this was awarded. You could also decide to do this when someone was on long term sick leave and an APP is used that was based on pay that would have increased had the employee been at work.

It is entirely your decision to substitute a higher pay, and if so, what circumstances you would do so and what you consider to be 'materially lower pay'. This is listed as a non-mandatory discretion. We recommend you consider putting a policy in place. This will ensure you have clearly communicated your position and ensures consistency in your approach. More information can be found in the [discretions technical guide](#).

Find out more:

Watch our APP webinar held on 13 December 2023: [Assumed Pensionable Pay \(APP\)](#)

Complete the LGA's [free APP bitesize training](#)

See the HR/Payroll guide in the employer's section of www.lapsregs.org

Take look at the [Roles and Responsibilities document](#).

If you need any further clarification or require training, [contact your ELO](#)

Employer FAQs

Answers to your questions

You have asked for a copy of an opt-out form that we have already processed. I don't have a copy and this person has already left their employment; do you still need it?

Yes. Under auto-enrolment regulations, the decision to opt out must be taken freely by the employee without influence by the employer. The opt-out form, signed by the member, confirms the decision was theirs to make and that they understand the implications. Having a copy of this form on record is a legal requirement. It also protects you as the employer, should a later complaint be made by the member. If you don't have a copy, you will need to write to the member and request that they complete it, even if they have already left. We cannot accept unsigned opt-out forms or those signed by you on behalf of the member.

A member of staff was acting up for a period of time, after which their final pay decreased, would they qualify for a 'three in ten'?

No. They would not qualify for a three in ten under the regulations. A best of last three will apply if either of the three year's preceding is higher though.

When calculating an APP, what do we do if we don't have complete pay periods to use?

The regulations state that you should use the 3 complete months prior to the APP period in the calculation of APP for a monthly paid employee, or 12 complete weeks prior to the APP period for an employee paid other than weekly. For a fee paid employee, you should use the average of 3 years. However, where complete pay periods are not available, you should use the complete pay periods you have available. You should ensure you can evidence that the APP has been calculated based on the pay information you had available at the time.

Do I have to pay for an ill-health assessment for an ex-employee who is a deferred member?

Yes - it is the employer's responsibility to arrange, oversee and make a decision about any application for early release of deferred benefits under [regulation 38](#). You must also inform the member of the outcome and provide us with the correct paperwork so we can pay the pension.

Do you have any ideas for what you would like to see covered in our bitesize training or a question for our Employer FAQ? [Get in touch](#)

Employer Liaison Team contacts

Your Employer Liaison Officer (ELO) is there to answer your questions, provide training, support and guidance. **The contact details for your ELO can be found in the table below.** ELOs operate an alphabetical split between employers.

Please ensure that the ELO you contact is the correct point of contact for your organisation.

Employer by initial	Employer Liaison Officer (ELO)
A-BI	Karen Hemming 01296 382371 karen.hemming@buckinghamshire.gov.uk
Bm-Ch	Summar Akram 01494 475797 summar.Akram@buckinghamshire.gov.uk
Ci-He	Megan Spurrier 01296 382719 megan.spurrier@buckinghamshire.gov.uk
Hf-Ne	Georgia Keen 01296 382719 georgia.keen@buckinghamshire.gov.uk
Nf-Si	Jan Bennion 01296 382242 jan.bennion@buckinghamshire.gov.uk
Sj-Z	Teresa Webb 01296 382382 teresa.webb@buckinghamshire.gov.uk
BC & MKC	Please email: employers@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

Other contacts

Senior Employer Liaison Officer: Hannah Corigliano	hannah.corigliano@buckinghamshire.gov.uk
TUPE Liaison Officer: Marie Dunbar	marie.dunbar@buckinghamshire.gov.uk
Employers General Inbox	employers@buckinghamshire.gov.uk
LGPS Monthly Returns Inbox	LGPSreturns@buckinghamshire.gov.uk
Annual Returns/SUP52	lgsystems@buckinghamshire.gov.uk
Pensions Finance	pensionfinance@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

If you are responding to an administration query you should send these to our main pensions inbox pensions@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

Member contacts

Please refer members to our contact details below:

Member helpline number	01296 383755
Member email	pensions@buckinghamshire.gov.uk
Member self-service portal	https://ms.buckinghamshire.gov.uk
Member technical support for 'My pension online'	mypensiononline@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

Thanks for reading. We hope you found this issue of In-Form, useful and informative.

We welcome your feedback on this issue of In-Form. If you have any comments or suggestions please email pension.feedback@buckinghamshire.gov.uk