



Shropshire
County
Pension Fund

Intouch

Autumn 2023

P8 | LGPS rule change the McCloud judgement. Don't miss the latest news about the McCloud court case.

P10 | Shropshire County Pension Fund needs you. Have you thought about joining our Pensions Board?

For retired members of the Shropshire County Pension Fund

Contents

Welcome by Debbie Sharp	3
Jean talking	5
Pete's corner	6
LGPS rule change the McCloud judgement	8
Shropshire County Pension Fund needs you!	10
Annual report	12
New General Code of Practice	13
'My Pension Online' are you registered?	14
Give your pension some attention	15
New connection date released for the Pensions Dashboard	16
Protecting our members from scams	17
National Fraud Initiative	18
Reporting the death of a member	19
Contact us	20

Future pay dates

When are pensions paid?

Your pension is normally paid on the 29th of each month unless that falls on a bank holiday or weekend, when it will be paid on the previous working day closest to the 29th.

2023/2024 pay dates

October	2023	Friday 27th
November	2023	Wednesday 29th
December	2023	Wednesday 20th
January	2024	Monday 29th
February	2024	Thursday 29th
March	2024	Friday 29th
April	2024	Monday 29th

Welcome



Welcome to the autumn 2023 issue of InTouch. I'm afraid I must open this issue with some sad news. After spending more than 40 years with Shropshire County Pension Fund, I will be moving on to pastures new. I have recently been appointed Assistant Director-Pensions, at South Yorkshire Pension Authority. While I am excited to take on this new challenge, I'm sad to be leaving you all and my team at Shropshire.

In previous editions of InTouch, we have mentioned the McCloud court case. I'm pleased to say that we have an update on the case on page 8.

The Pensions Board are looking for a new member representative. If you are interested in this opportunity, turn to page 10. This vacancy has opened up due to the resignation of long-standing member representative Mike Morris. Mike has served on the board since its creation back in 2015 and was chair of the board for six years. During his time on the board, Mike took a particular interest in advocating for the fund's most vulnerable scheme

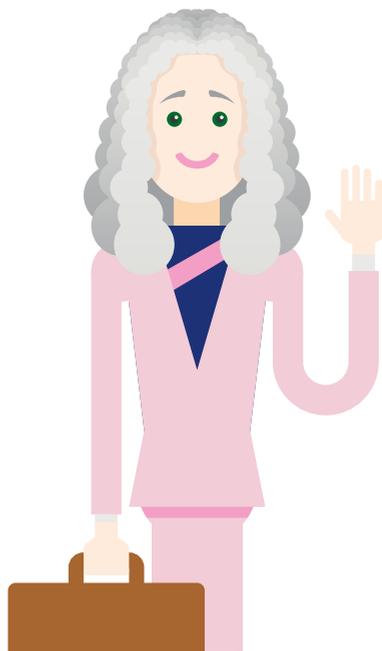
members and made sure that the fund has robust procedures in place to protect such members from financial exploitation. On behalf of the fund and our members, we would like to say a big thank you to Mike and send him our best wishes for the future.

You can read the latest update from Jean Smith, your pensioner representative on the Pension Committee, on page 5. If you have any questions for Jean, please contact the team and we will pass them on for you. If you would like to submit a question to the Pensions Committee or the Pensions Board, you can email: [*pensions@shropshire.gov.uk*](mailto:pensions@shropshire.gov.uk).

Before I sign off for the last time, I'd like to take the opportunity to thank you all for your support over the years. It's been a pleasure to meet so many of you at our fund events. Please accept my best wishes to you all for the future.

Debbie Sharp
Pension Administration Manager
Shropshire County Pension Fund

Questions for Debbie



Q: When did you first start working for Shropshire County Pension Fund and what first attracted you to the role?

A: Back in the late 1980's, I was working in the payroll office for the council and saw the opportunity to move to the pensions team.

Q: Over your career with the fund, what are some of the biggest changes you've experienced?

A: The technology advancement. When I started the team shared one computer between the whole office.

Q: What is your favourite memory of working for the fund?

A: Not just one memory but it's the many memories of meeting and chatting with members over the years.

Q: Most of our readers will know you from the annual meeting. Is there a particular meeting or member event that stands out for you?

A: I remember many years ago we were able to run a pensioner event in the Music Hall. The rooms were fantastic. Of course, you can still see them in the Museum Halls.

Q: What will you miss the most about your current job?

My team.

Q: Do you have any thoughts you would like to leave our readers with?

A: The Shropshire County Pension Fund is looked after by a great team. I wish them well under a new manager.



Jean talking

Here is your autumn update. I do hope you have managed to enjoy some of the summer despite lots of rain and sometimes too much sunshine. This should, however, have helped the gardeners among you to have a successful harvest and flower display.

Since I last spoke to you in Spring, I've attended two committee meetings and several training sessions. The committee has undertaken a series of investment strategy workshops, before implementing a revised investment strategy in June 2023. This has now started to be carried out and once new private market funds are launched by LGPS Central later this year, or early 2024, the remainder of the strategy will be implemented. The key objectives of LGPS Central are to deliver cost savings and improve risk adjusted investment returns after costs, enabling access to a wider range of asset classes. I am pleased to let you know that Justin Bridges, Head of Pension - LGPS Senior Officer is currently Chair of the Practitioners Advisory Forum (PAF) which supports the Joint Committee and Shareholders Forum. A training session specifically on climate change, achieving net zero, climate risk reporting and changes expected in the next version of the fund's climate risk and TCFD reports was also delivered during September, by LGPS Central's responsible investment team and Aon.

The pension fund has increased in value by £82 million in the last quarter to end of June 23 and continues to perform well over the longer term. Since the end of the quarter, the fund has continued to increase and is now valued just below £2.35 billion. The fund is invested in a range of asset classes to diversify risk and provide stable returns, and this has certainly helped during the difficult period for financial markets in 2022.

Debbie Sharp, Pension Administration Manager and her team have continued to work well, processing all pensions administration related workload, while mainly working from home. Once again, I would like to remind those of you who do not have access to "My Pension Online" that it can be very useful when you have any queries or need to amend details or view details of your pension.

Finally, I am sure you will all want to join me in wishing Debbie Sharp all the best in her new role as Assistant Director – Pensions at South Yorkshire Pension Authority. She will be a great loss to Shropshire County Pension Fund, but she has trained an excellent team, who will continue to work hard for us all. Her replacement is due to start on the 19th December 2023. Take care and have a Happy Christmas.

Jean Smith
Pensioner Representative
Pensions Committee

Pete's corner



As I approach a year in post, it doesn't seem five minutes since I introduced myself in the Spring Newsletter and it's great to have this opportunity to let you know about a few of the exciting things that have happened in the last six months.

Firstly, I confirm that in August the fund was accepted as a signatory to the UK Stewardship Code, which is an excellent achievement.

The fund remains one of less than twenty pension funds in England and Wales that have achieved this status and we will be continuing the hard work to ensure we continue to meet the required level at our annual assessments.

This is a rigorous evidence-based assessment by the Financial Reporting Council of the fund's stewardship activities across 12 principles and confirms the fund's commitment to the highest standards of governance in our investment portfolio. Good stewardship is essential to creating long-term value for both the fund and you as beneficiaries, as well as sustainable benefits for the economy, environment, and society as a whole.



During my time in post, it feels like the macro-economic data has been dominated by interest rates and inflation figures, together with the potential for a global recession, and it was against this backdrop that the fund agreed its revised strategic asset allocation in June of this year. The main changes are around the absolute return elements of the fund's investment portfolio, with the fund making an allocation to investment grade credit bonds to capture the increased yields currently available due to the change in the interest rate environment. The fund continues to hold a diversified asset base on a global basis, covering both private and public markets, to protect existing funding levels and to drive opportunities for future growth. Full details of the changes can be found in the fund's investment strategy statement on our website.

After a very difficult 2022/2023 across most asset classes, the fund has seen recoveries in the first two quarters of 2023/2024 driven in the main by strong performance in equity markets.

We expect investment conditions to remain uncertain in the short term but strongly believe that the new strategic asset allocation will deliver the appropriate long-term returns for all parties.

LGPS rule change – the McCloud judgement

What is McCloud?

When the Government reformed public service pension schemes in 2014 and 2015, older members were protected from the changes. In December 2018, the courts ruled that younger members of the judges' and firefighters' pension schemes had been discriminated against because the protections did not apply to them. This ruling is called the McCloud judgment after a member of the judge's pension scheme, involved in the case.

The rules of all public service pension schemes, including the LGPS, changed from 1 October 2023 because of the ruling. The changes are known as the McCloud remedy, and they remove the age discrimination found in the McCloud judgment.

In the LGPS, older members were protected by the underpin. When a protected member retired, their pension in the career average scheme was compared with the pension they would have built up in the final salary scheme. If the final salary pension would have been higher, their pension increased.

From 1 October 2023, eligible younger members are also protected by the underpin. Not all LGPS members are eligible for protection. The underpin will protect the pensions of eligible members that they built up in the remedy period. The remedy period is from 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2022. Underpin protection stopped earlier if you left the LGPS or reached your final salary normal pension age before 31 March 2022.



What do you need to do?

You do not need to take any action. We will work out if you are protected. If you are, when you take your pension, we will work out if it will increase because of the underpin. Any increase is known as a 'final guarantee amount'.

Not many members will get a final guarantee amount because, for most members, the pension they built up in the career average scheme is higher than they would have built up in the final salary scheme.

Retired members

If you are protected and your LGPS pension is already being paid to you, we will work out if your pension will increase. We will do this as soon as we can, but reviewing all pensions in payment will take some time.

You do not need to contact us. Please be assured that we will contact anyone whose pension in payment will increase because of the McCloud remedy. We will only write to you if the new rules mean that your pension will increase.

Find out more

You can find out more about the judgment by reading our McCloud updates on our website at:
www.shropshirecountypensionfund.co.uk

And the McCloud pages of the national LGPS member website:
www.lgpsmember.org/mccloud-remedy/

Shropshire County Pension Fund needs you!



We're looking for a new scheme member representative to join the Pensions Board.

The role of the Pensions Board is to help the Scheme Manager secure compliance with the LGPS regulations and help to ensure effective and efficient governance and administration of the LGPS for the Shropshire County Pension Fund.

The board meets four times a year and all meetings are open to the public. The agendas and minutes of the Pensions Board meetings are published on the Shropshire Council website: www.shropshire.gov.uk

To be a scheme member representative you need to be a member of the Shropshire County Pension Fund and be able to represent other scheme members in the fund. Currently, the board is made up of three employer representatives and two other scheme member representatives.

If successful in your application, you will join current board members:

- **Dave Wright**
Chair and Member Representative
- **John Hall**
Member Representative
- **Liz Furey**
Employer Representative
(Harper Adams University College)
- **Helen Woodvine**
Employer Representative
(Coverage Care)
- **Madeline Murphy**
Employer Representative
(Wrekin Housing Trust)

If you think this position may be for you, then you can apply using the form on page 11 of this magazine. For more information about the Pensions Board, including the person specification and terms of reference, visit: www.shropshirecountypensionfund.co.uk



Application form:



Name:

NI number:

Email address:

Home address:

On a separate sheet of paper, please tell us in no more than 500 words why you want to be a member of the Shropshire County Pension Fund Pensions Board.

Please also tell us in no more than 500 words about your experience, knowledge and understanding of public sector pensions and the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). You should try to relate your answer to the person specification and refer to your capacity to take on the duties outlined.

Signature:

Date:

Please return this slip to: Pensions, PO Box 4826, Shrewsbury, SY1 9LJ

Or, you can send this to us as a photocopy, or an image if it's clear and of good quality, to: pensions@shropshire.gov.uk

Annual report

Shropshire County Pension Fund produce an annual report each year under the LGPS rules.

The annual report explains in detail, the different areas involved in both the pensions administration and pensions investment process.

The annual report includes the following:

- Review of the year
- Fund accounts
- Investment performance
- Corporate governance and socially responsible engagement
- Statement of consulting actuary
- Statement by fund auditors

As well as making sure we're following the regulations, the annual report is one of the most important ways in which we communicate with our members, employers and stakeholders.

In particular, it's a valuable communications resource, explaining what actions we've taken over the year to improve our impact on the environment and other important social issues. This year's corporate governance and socially responsible engagement statement explains how the fund has been involved in protecting biodiversity, reducing emissions and plastic waste and shedding a spotlight on responsible mineral resourcing.



The fund's annual report for 2022/2023 will be available on our website from 30th November, detailing performance over the last financial year. You will find this report on our website:

www.shropshirecountypensionfund.co.uk along with reports from previous years.

New General Code of Practice



The Pensions Regulator’s (TPR) New General Code (formerly referred to as the Single Code of Practice) was first published as a draft version in March 2021, and aimed to bring together and simplify 10 of the existing separate 15 Codes of Practice.

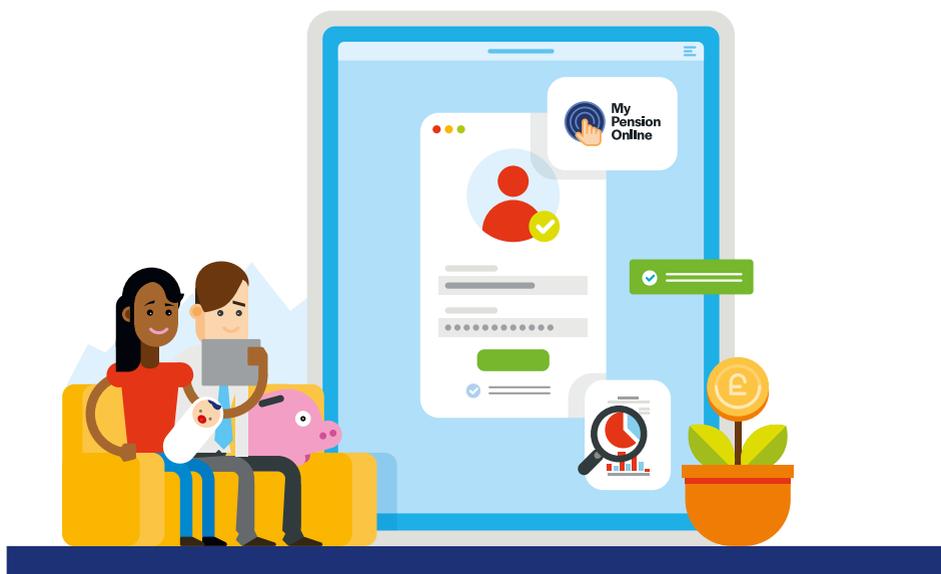
It would create a new single online code giving funds one up-to-date and consistent source of information on scheme governance and management. It would also introduce the new own risk assessment, new actuarial, internal audit and risk functions. Cyber risk, stewardship and climate change will be included in a code of practice for the first time.

In its early development, David Fairs, TPR’s Executive Director for Regulatory Policy, Analysis and Advice, said:

“[The New General Code] will determine how governing bodies should approach governance and administration and provide consistent expectations across different types of scheme set at a level we consider appropriate for any well-run scheme. This user-friendly new code should make it easier for governing bodies, and those providing them with professional services, to distinguish between legal duties they must meet and what we expect should be done to comply with those duties”.

The code, expected to be published in June 2023, has not yet been released. Industry feedback on the draft code may be one possible explanation for this delay but, as it stands, it didn’t reach parliament before the summer recess. We will keep you up to date with its progress as it passes into law.

'My Pension Online' – are you registered?



Did you know that Shropshire County Pension Fund has a useful members' portal called 'My Pension Online'?

Our services and communications have moved mostly online, so the best way to keep up to date is by signing up. The process is simple and by registering to view your 'My Pension Online' account, it's easier than ever for you to find the information you need and to view your pension.

You can also update personal information, such as bank details or change of address without the need to call the helpdesk.

But, don't worry, we're still on hand if you need any help or information by email, phone our new Digital Assistant or send us a letter.

Give your pension some attention!

With many of us facing financial difficulties due to the cost-of-living crisis, it's never been more important for people to understand their finances. Pension Awareness Week, and the Pension Attention Campaign, which both took place recently, hope to make the topic of pensions less intimidating for members of the public.

Pension Awareness Week 11th – 15th September 2023

Celebrating its tenth year in 2023, Pensions Awareness week was a series of live online broadcasts that aimed to tackle the biggest pension questions, such as; 'What is a pension' and 'How do pensions work?'. Handy videos, articles and helpful resources were released, to give the public the tools needed to grow their pension their way. Assistance was also given to help track down forgotten pensions from previous jobs.

As well as teaching people to be more pension-savvy, the campaign was about mindful money, budgeting hacks and overall financial wellbeing.

Pension Attention 20th September 2023

The Pensions and Lifetime Savings Association (PLSA) and Association of British Insurers (ABI) are running a three-year campaign to make pensions a talking point and encourage people to appreciate the value of pensions. They want to encourage members to ask questions, make connections and think about their future.



Last year, PLSA teamed up with grime artist and TV star Big Zuu to boost engagement with pensions across the UK. He produced a track and accompanying video calling on people to 'pay your pension some attention.' The celebrity for this year was TV presenter and broadcaster Timmy Mallet. With help from the Pension Attention team, Timmy encouraged people to trace any lost pensions they may have and to take steps towards creating a retirement plan.

New connection date released for the Pensions Dashboard



Over the past year we've been keeping you informed about the future of 'Pensions Dashboard'.

This government-led programme is designed to give you quick, easy and secure online access to information about your pension savings. The hope is that, by having all your pension information in one place, it will be easier for you to plan for your retirement. It may also help you find any lost pensions and will be free to use.

In June, the Minister of Pensions laid the Pensions Dashboard (Amendment) Regulations 2023. These regulations came into force officially on 9th August 2023.

They confirm that all pension schemes will need to connect to the Pensions Dashboard by 31st October 2026.

An updated staging timetable with this deadline in mind has been set out in the guidance and has given a better indication of the schedule for connecting.

The team running the Pensions Dashboard Programme (PDP) has created a website with useful resources, helpful FAQ videos and a latest news page.

For more information, go to: <https://www.pensionsdashboardsprogramme.org.uk>

Protecting our members from scams

One in four savers could be at risk of a pension scam, recent analysis has found. A HelpandAdvice.co.uk study has revealed that a quarter of the 1,562 respondents of their Pension scam assessment had shown red flags.

Just under one in five respondents were told that they could achieve higher investment returns if they transferred. Pressuring people to make a quick decision was also noted as a common red flag, with 15 percent of respondents experiencing this. Scammers have used market volatility to mislead vulnerable savers and disguise their true intentions.

Nearly one in ten respondents to the study were told there were loopholes to gain access to more tax-free cash. Pension scammers are very efficient at quickly changing their tactics to match the current economic climate. With increased financial concern amongst the public, it pays to be extra cautious when something sounds too good to be true.

Shropshire County Pension Fund has self-certified itself as meeting the standards of The Pensions Regulator's pledge to combat pension scams. This is an industry standard pledge asking trustees, providers and administrators of pension schemes to do what they can to protect scheme members.

The Pensions Regulator recommends four simple steps:

- 1. Reject unexpected offers:**
Spontaneous calls are high-risk and potentially spam.
- 2. Check who you're dealing with:**
Browse the Financial Services Register to be sure that anyone offering advice or financial services is FCA authorised.
- 3. Don't be rushed or pressured:**
Make the decision that's right for you.
- 4. Get impartial information and advice:**
Consider the services of a financial advisor.

Find out more, visit the Financial Conduct Authority's website: www.fca.org.uk

If you've received a phone call or email which you think may be from us but you're unsure, don't give out your details. Please call or email our helpdesk to confirm.

Telephone: 01743 252130

Email: pensions@shropshire.gov.uk



National Fraud Initiative



Shropshire County Pension Fund participates in the National Fraud Initiative.

More Information on the National Fraud Initiative can be obtained by visiting the Shropshire Council website:
www.shropshire.gov.uk/privacy

This initiative requires that particular types of data are provided to the Minister for the Cabinet Office for matching for each exercise and this includes payroll and pensions data.

The use of data by the Cabinet Office in a data matching exercise is carried out with statutory authority under Part 6 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. It does not require the consent of individuals concerned under the Data Protection Act 2018. Data matching by the Cabinet Office is subject to a Code of Practice.

Reporting the death of a member

As a retired member of the LGPS, it's important to know that benefits may be due to your loved ones after your death.

What benefits could be due?

- A pension to your husband or wife, civil partner, co-habiting partner and eligible children.
- A lump sum death grant.

These benefits only apply if you're a retired member of the LGPS in your own right. If you're paid a survivors' pension linked to your former husband, wife or partner's pension, no further benefits are due.

Survivors' pension

A survivors' pension is due after your death and is paid for the life of your husband or wife, registered civil partner or, eligible cohabiting partner (if you were a member of the LGPS on or after 1st April 2008 and meet certain rules). A survivor's pension may also be paid to a child or children who meet certain rules. It increases every year in line with the cost of living.

Lump sum death grant

A lump death grant may be due after your death. This depends on when you retired and if you're under the age of 75.

Retired between 1st April 1998 to 31st March 2008?

A death grant was due for deaths within

five years of retirement. This five-year period has now passed.

Retired between 1st April 2008 to 31st March 2014?

A lump sum death grant will be paid if you die within ten years of retirement. This death grant would be ten times your pension, less the amount of pension already paid out to you up to your date of death.

Retired on, or after, 1st April 2014?

- If you have post-2014 benefits only, the death grant would be ten times your pension (not including any pension given up to increase a retirement grant), less the amount of pension already paid to you at the date of death and any retirement grant taken.
- If you have benefits from both the 2008 and 2014 schemes, the death grant would be worked out for each period of membership.

Updating your death grant expression of wish

Please take this opportunity to check your 'expression of wish' information and make sure that any death grant that may be due goes to the right person. You can update this online; simply follow our website to 'My Pension Online', register or log in. Or, if you don't have online access, you can ask our helpdesk to send you our 'expression of wish' form, which you can fill in and return.



**Shropshire
County
Pension Fund**

Contact us

If you want to contact us about this magazine or have a question about your pension, our contact details are below.

Office hours

Monday to Thursday: 8.45am to 5pm

Friday: 8.45am to 4pm.

Contact details

Email: pensions@shropshire.gov.uk

Website: www.shropshirecountypensionfund.co.uk

Tel: 01743 252130

Write: Pensions, PO Box 4826, Shrewsbury, SY1 9LJ

Other useful contacts

Tax Office

Tel: 0300 200 3300

Outside the UK: +44 135 535 9022

Department for Work and Pensions

Tel: 0800 731 0469

(For State Pension queries.)

Website: www.gov.uk

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