



Training Policy

Approved by the Pensions Committee on

17th March 2023





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Introduction

This is the Training Policy of the Shropshire County Pension Fund, which is managed and administered by Shropshire Council. The Training Policy is established to aid all to whom this Policy applies in having sufficient knowledge and understanding ensuring that all decisions, actions, and other activities are carried out in an informed and appropriate way.

This means that advice and guidance from external bodies can be challenged and tested appropriately and that the fund's operational and strategic direction is in accordance with best practice and guidance. The Training Policy has the aim of ensuring that the Shropshire County Pension Fund is managed by individuals who have the appropriate levels of knowledge and skills.

Aims and objectives:

Shropshire Council recognises the importance of its role as Administering Authority of the Shropshire County Pension Fund on behalf of its stakeholders which include:

- Over 47,000 current and former members of the fund
- Over 145 employers

In relation to training, the Administering Authority's objectives are to ensure that:

- Those persons charged with the financial management and decision-making with regard to the LGPS Fund are fully equipped with the knowledge and skills required to discharge the duties and responsibilities allocated to them;
- Those persons responsible for the day-to-day administration and running of the fund are appropriately equipped with the knowledge and skills required to discharge their duties and responsibilities in relation to the fund;
- Those persons responsible for providing governance and assurance of the fund have sufficient expertise to be able to evaluate and challenge the advice they receive, to ensure their decisions are robust and soundly based, and to manage any potential conflicts of interest.

All to whom this policy applies are expected to continually demonstrate their own personal commitment to training and to ensuring that these objectives are met.



To assist in achieving these objectives and the creation of this policy, the fund adopts the following seven principles and the guidance included in the Chartered Institute of Public Finance (CIPFA) Code of Practice 2021:

1. This LGPS administering authority adopts the key principles of the Code of Practice on LGPS Knowledge and Skills.
2. This LGPS administering authority recognises that effective management, governance, decision making and other aspects of the delivery of the LGPS can only be achieved where those involved have the requisite knowledge and skills to discharge the duties and responsibilities allocated to them.
3. This administering authority has in place formal and comprehensive objectives, policies and practices, strategies and reporting arrangements for the effective acquisition and retention of LGPS knowledge and skills for those responsible for the management, delivery, governance, and decision making of the LGPS.
4. These policies and practices will be guided by reference to a comprehensive framework of knowledge and skills requirements such as those set down in the CIPFA LGPS Knowledge and Skills Framework.
5. This administering authority will ensure that it has adequate resources in place to ensure all staff, members, or other persons responsible for the management, decision making, governance and other aspects of the delivery of the LGPS acquire and retain the necessary LGPS knowledge and skills.
6. This administering authority will report annually on how its knowledge and skills policy has been put into practice throughout the financial year in the fund's annual report.
7. This administering authority has delegated the responsibility for the implementation of the requirements of the CIPFA Code of Practice to the appropriate officer, who will act in accordance with the administering authority's knowledge and skills policy statement, and, where they are a CIPFA member, with CIPFA Standards of Professional Practice (where relevant).



Relevant legislation and guidance

This policy has been prepared following the key areas of relevant legislation and guidance include the following:

- The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Knowledge and Skills framework for LGPS Committee members and LGPS Officers, Pension Board Members and the Code of Practice
- MiFID II
- Pensions Act 2004
- Public Service Pensions Act 2013
- Statutory Government guidance
- Guidance from England and Wales Scheme Advisory Board (SAB)
- The Pensions Regulator's (TPR) Code of Practice

CIPFA knowledge and skills framework

The CIPFA knowledge and skills framework identifies eight areas of knowledge and skills as the core technical requirements for those working in public sector pensions finance where appropriate knowledge and skills should be achieved and maintained. They are:

- pensions legislation and guidance
- pensions governance
- funding strategy and actuarial methods
- pensions administration and communication
- pensions financial strategy, management, accounting, reporting and auditing standards
- investment strategy, asset allocation, pooling, performance and risk management
- financial markets and products
- pension services procurement, contract management and relationship management.

The Head of Pensions – LGPS Senior Officer is the Fund's designated named individual responsible for ensuring that this Training Policy is implemented. This is in line with principle seven of the CIPFA Code of Practice.

To whom this policy applies



This training policy applies to all individuals that take on a decision making, scrutiny, operational, or oversight role in the fund. This includes:

- Officers of the administering authority involved in the management and administration of the fund
- Members of the Pension Fund committee, including scheme member and employer representatives
- Members of the pension board, including scheme member and employer representatives.

Training Plan

The fund recognizes the importance of training in ensuring pension fund committee members, pension board members and officers attain, and then maintain, the relevant knowledge and skills.

The fund's approach to training will be supportive with the intention of providing pension fund committee members, pension board members and officers with regular sessions that will contribute to their level of skills and knowledge. The fund will develop a rolling Training Plan, which takes account the level of knowledge and understanding of technical pensions topics required according to the role of the individual.

Training requirements for key individuals will be identified having regard for:

- topics identified in relevant frameworks or in publications by relevant bodies (e.g. CIPFA, TPR, Government Guidance etc)
- the workplan of the fund; and
- current or topical issues.

Training plans should include the competencies highlighted in relevant frameworks as well as special topics – for example:

- a focus on decisions to be made in the forward plan of committee business
- those relating to areas of change or special interest.

Individual training needs



A training needs analysis will be developed for committee members, pension board members and officers to identify the key areas in which training is required. This evaluation will be undertaken on an annual basis. Training on the identified areas will be provided as necessary and on an ongoing refresher basis. The fund's rolling Training Plan will ensure these training requirements are met and maintain training records of key individuals against the training plan.

Topic based training

The need for appropriately timed training in relation to current topics, such as when decisions are required in relation to complex issues or in new areas not previously considered will be provided as required.

General awareness

There is an expectation on those to which this policy applies that they should maintain a reasonable knowledge of ongoing developments and current issues and have a good level of general awareness of pension related matters appropriate for their roles.

How training will be provided

Training will be delivered through a variety of methods including:

- in-house training sessions provided by officers and/or external providers;
- virtually using webinars, online conferences and e-learning platforms
- shared training with other LGPS Funds or framework arrangements
- training at meetings (e.g. committee or pension board) provided by officers and/or external advisers;
- external training events, such as those organised by the Local Government Association (LGA), CIPFA, or Pensions and Lifetime Saving Association (PLSA)
- attendance at seminars and conferences offered by industry-wide bodies, such as those organised by the LGA, LGC Pension Investment Seminars, CIPFA, Local Authority Pension Fund Forum or PLSA
- circulation of reading material, including Fund committee reports and minutes from attendance at seminars and conferences;



- attendance at meetings and events with the fund's investment managers and advisors
- links to on-line training such as that provided by The Pensions Regulator;
- the fund's website www.shropshirecountypensionfund.co.uk and national LGPS websites where scheme information is available.
- fund policies and documents such as the Annual Report, Governance Compliance Statement, Administration Strategy, Funding Strategy Statement and Investment Strategy Statement.
- Telephone conference briefings
- Qualifications, particularly those relevant to senior officers

Induction process

On joining either as an officer, a pension committee, or pensions board member, the fund will provide induction training in a timely manner. This should also include, where appropriate, access to any induction information which forms part of the administering authorities' corporate induction be provided with documentation that would provide a basic understanding of the fund (i.e. Introduction to the LGPS guide). Guidance from The Pensions Regulator states newly appointed members of committees should attain the required level of knowledge within six months of being appointed. The fund will aim to comply with this recommendation. An evaluation will be undertaken in the form of a short self-assessment questionnaire to develop an appropriate individual training plan.

Monitoring knowledge and skills

To identify whether the objectives of this policy are being met, the fund will maintain a training log which records attendance at training and compare this to the Training Plan. An assessment will be made on whether committee and pension board members and senior officers have the required knowledge and skills required to undertake their role. As a minimum, the fund will carry out the following to monitor and review knowledge and skills:

- record attendance at training and ensure action is taken where poor attendance is identified
- prepare training plans for committee members and officers
- require members and officers to undertake self-assessment against the required competencies



- communicate regularly with members and officers, encouraging them to highlight training needs on an ongoing basis.

A record of training and meetings attended will be kept up-to-date and made available to stakeholders in the fund's annual report and accounts each year. Individuals are responsible for ensuring their training record is up-to-date and accurate.

Key risks

The key risks to the delivery of this policy are outlined below. The pension fund committee members, with the assistance of the pension board and officers, will monitor these and other key risks and consider how to respond to them.

- Changes to the committee and/or pension board membership and/or officer's potentially diminishing knowledge and understanding.
- Poor attendance and/or a lack of engagement at training and/or formal meetings by committee members, pension board members and/or other officers resulting in a poor standard of decision making, administration and/or monitoring.
- Insufficient resources being available to deliver or arrange the required training.
- The quality of advice or training provided not being of an acceptable standard.

Substitute members who may not have the same level of knowledge, skills and access to training as the main committee members. Substitute members should ideally have sufficient knowledge and skills to fulfil the role effectively and be provided with access to training as required.

Success measures and reporting

Knowledge gaps will be identified in annual assessment with success measured against the previous year and whether the knowledge gap has been fulfilled. The training record will record attendance and when available training evaluation forms should be kept, and results analysed to evaluate the training undertaken.

A report will be presented to the committee and the pension board on an annual basis setting out:

- the training provided/attended in the previous year at an individual level;
- commentary on how this compares to the Training Plan; and
- any actions required, such as a review of the Training Plan.



This information will also be included in the fund's Annual Report and Accounts. The fund's committee members and pension board members will be provided with details of forthcoming seminars, conferences and other relevant training events.

The information will report on meeting the objectives within their policy and will include how the fund is complying with CIPFA's Code of Practice, the CIPFA Framework and statutory government guidance.

Costs

Where there is a cost involved in providing the training this will be met directly by the fund. However, training provided by Investment Managers and some of the training events are provided at no cost.

The relevant competencies and degree of knowledge and understanding required

To ensure all individuals to whom this policy applies work towards what is required a knowledge matrix has been developed, which is shown below. The matrix determines the level of knowledge required of the eight core technical areas highlighted by the CIPFA guidance for officers, committee and the pension board. The core areas listed below have been identified as the key skills that lie at the core in the training for those involved in public sector pension's finance. The knowledge matrix is not exhaustive and other technical or non-pensions related skills will be identified on an individual basis within job descriptions or via annual assessment.

Key roles in the LGPS - Degree of knowledge and understanding required

The arrangements for the governance and delegation of responsibilities are outlined in the Governance Compliance Statement and Shropshire Council's constitution (where appropriate). In line with principle two of the CIPFA Code of Practice, the degree of knowledge and understanding required is that which is appropriate for the purposes of enabling the individual to properly exercise their delegated responsibility on behalf of the administering authority. The guidance outlined in CIPFA's Code of Practice on Knowledge and Skills 2021 will be used to ensure the relevant competencies apply to specific responsibilities.



Accordingly, regardless of the range of responsibilities, those exercising a delegated responsibility on behalf of the administering authority and to whom this policy applies must be conversant with:

- the rules of the LGPS, and
- any document recording policy about the funding, investment, administration, communications or governance which is for the time being adopted in relation to the scheme.
- Such persons must have knowledge and understanding of:
- the law relating to pensions, and
- such other matters as may be prescribed in legislation and guidance.

The degree of knowledge and understanding required is that which is appropriate for the purposes of enabling the individual to properly exercise their delegated responsibility on behalf of the administering authority.



Knowledge Matrix

| Core technical area | Officers (Job description) | Pensions Committee | Pension Board |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| Pensions Legislation/ LGPS Regulations | C | A | C* |
| Public Sector Pensions Governance | C | A | C* |
| Pensions Administration | E | A | C* |
| Pensions Accounting and Auditing Standards | E | C | C |
| Financial services procurement and relationship management | E | C | A |
| Investment performance and risk management | E | C | A |
| Financial Markets and Product Knowledge | C | C | A |
| Actuarial methods, Standards and Practices | C | C | A |

- A = Awareness of
- C = Conversant (i.e. working knowledge)
- E = Expert

*Statutory requirement (Paragraphs 34-36 of the Pensions Regulator’s Code of Practice state that: *A member of the Pensions Board of a public sector pension scheme must be conversant with the rules of the scheme. Any document recording policy about the administration of the scheme which is for the time being adopted in relation to the scheme and must also have a knowledge and understanding of the law relating).*



Contact details

The Shropshire County Pension Fund is a data controller under data-protection law. This means we store, hold and manage your personal information in line with statutory requirements to enable us to provide you with pension administration services. To enable us to carry out our statutory duty, we must share your information with certain bodies, but will only do so in limited circumstances. For more information about how we hold your information, who we share it with and what rights you have, you can ask for this information from the fund, please visit www.shropshirecountypensionfund.co.uk

If you can read this but know someone who cannot, please contact us on 01743 252130 so we can provide this information in a more suitable format.

Office hours

Monday to Thursday 8.45am to 5.00pm
Friday 8.45am to 4.00pm

Contact details

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Administered by

