Local Pension Board Governance Report
for Employers

2025

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INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIR OF THE LOCAL PENSION BOARD

Welcome to the 2024/25 Annual Governance Report for employers of the Greater Manchester Pension Fund (GMPF).

In April 2025, I became the new Chair of the Local Board, and since then, I have been learning about the governance arrangements in place at GMPF and developing an understanding of the current challenges faced by the Fund.

2024/25 has been an interesting year, with the new General Code of Practice from the Pensions Regulator coming into force. A detailed gap analysis exercise was initially undertaken by officers, with an external assessment subsequently being obtained from our benefits consultant, Hymans Robertson. Their report provided the Local Board with assurance that GMPF complies with the requirements of the new General Code.

As the largest LGPS fund, we seek to work closely with the Pensions Regulator. We aim to be leaders in providing high-quality LGPS governance and administration, and to demonstrate the value of Local Pension Boards. Early last year, GMPF was part of the Pensions Regulator's relationship supervision programme for a few months, which was a hugely valuable experience. At the end of its engagement, the Regulator provided GMPF with a report providing the results of its high-level assessment of several areas of work. We have included some further information about this engagement in this report.

Over the last twelve months, the Local Board has received regular reports on member and employer performance, as well as preparations for the Pensions Dashboard and the triennial actuarial valuation. It also monitors the late payment of contributions, late submissions of data from employers, and reviews the Fund's risk register at every meeting. This work enables the Local Board to play a pivotal role in ensuring GMPF's governance is as effective and efficient as possible.

You may have seen in the news and through the Fund's communications that the Government is looking to make changes to the LGPS in the coming year. These changes will affect how funds manage their assets and provide further expectations on good governance. The Local Pension Board will take a keen interest in how GMPF implements these changes and in how it manages the significant risks arising from them.

Finally, I want to express my gratitude to you and all your colleagues for the roles you undertake in your duties as Fund employers. Your efforts do not go unnoticed or unappreciated, and your hard work enables GMPF to succeed in its core objective to pay pensions on time and accurately.

Cllr Joe Kitchen
Chair of the GMPF Local Pension Board

ROLE OF THE LOCAL PENSION BOARD

GMPF's Local Pension Board was established following the introduction of the 2013 Pensions Act, which required all public sector pension schemes to set up representative Local Pension Boards by 1 April 2015.

The makeup of the Board is determined by the Public Services Pensions Act 2013, which states that local pension boards are required to contain an equal number of employer and scheme member representatives. Due to the large number of members and employers participating in GMPF and the scale of assets that it holds, we have five scheme representatives and five employer representatives

The formal remit of the Local Pension Board is to:

- assist the administering authority in securing compliance with all regulations and legislation
- help ensure the effective and efficient governance and administration of the scheme
- scrutinise compliance with regulations and call GMPF Officers or the GMPF Management and Advisory Panel to account
- provide scrutiny to the Management Panel's decision making processes
- assist in the implementation of any new requirements imposed by the Pensions Regulator in relation to the scheme
- report any material breaches of law to the Pensions Regulator.

The Local Pension Board is committed to ensuring GMPF has the best standards of administration and governance.

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

The aim of this report is to assure GMPF's employers that GMPF's governance arrangements are robust and effective, and that proper oversight and accountability is in place from its Local Pension Board. This report aims to highlight how well GMPF is serving its members and contains key information about GMPF's performance. It also highlights some key learning points for you, its employers, that the Board has identified while carrying out its work.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

GMPF is the largest LGPS fund and the eleventh biggest defined benefit pension fund in the UK. It administers over 438,000 pensions with 124,610 contributing members. It provides help and support to over 733 active employers and has an asset value of £32.9 billion.

This report demonstrates the Local Pension Board's commitment to ensuring GMPF continues to administer the LGPS effectively and strives to provide both its employers and members with the best service possible.

KEY POINTS FROM THE REPORT

Vision and values

GMPF has a strong vision and a set of values and quality standards that underpins all its work.

Business planning

All items within the business plan link to one or more of GMPF's strategic objectives and the Local Pension Board monitors progress against this plan to ensure the objectives are being delivered as expected.

Performance

The Local Pension Board monitors service delivery performance for members and employers and provides the necessary challenge where it feels performance is not as expected.

Feedback

Feedback is seen as a valuable source of information that is acted upon and used to improve processes.

Independent assurance

The Local Pension Board gains independent assurance from several sources to assist with monitoring performance from a service delivery and regulatory perspective.

Managing complaints

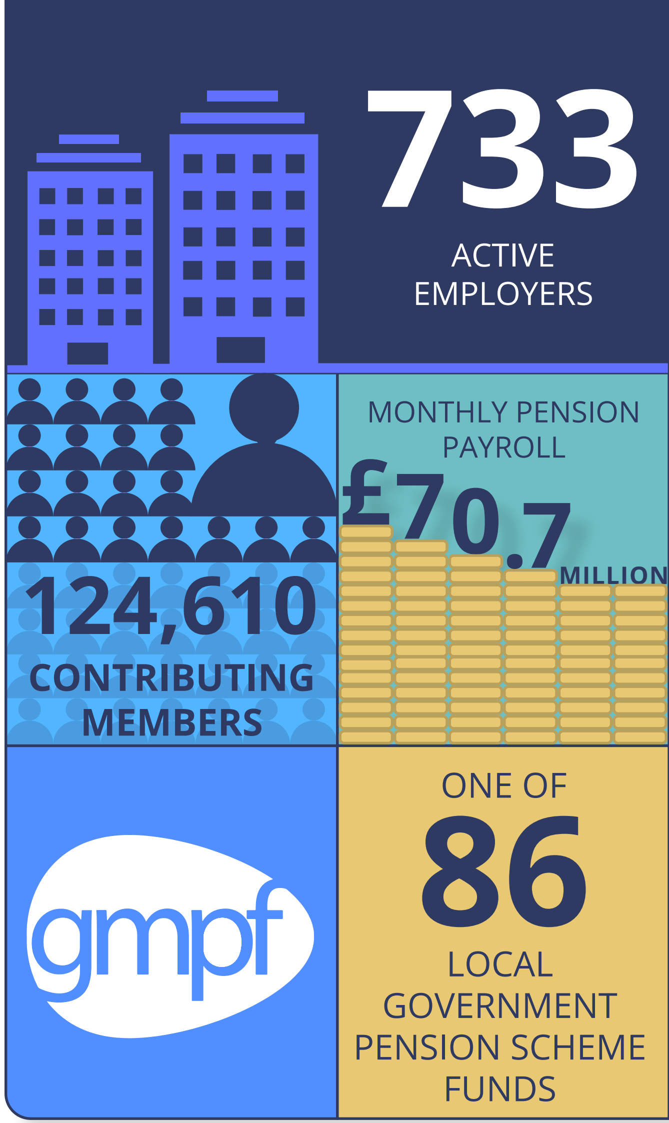
GMPF has a robust process in place for dealing with complaints and ensures that all learning points are captured to prevent or reduce the number of complaints received in the future.

Support

Support is available for both members and employers and GMPF is constantly striving to expand and improve what is available.

Looking to the future

GMPF continues to provide the necessary support and oversight to ensure that the ongoing challenges it faces are managed appropriately, so that future plans can be delivered effectively.



KEY RESOURCES

- Pension administration strategy
- Raise a dispute
- Information on the McCloud Remedy
- The Pensions Dashboard
- CEM Executive Summary
- Pensions Regulator's General Code
- Pension Administration Standard Association (PASA)
- Actuarial valuation - GMPF

GMPF'S VALUES, VISION AND QUALITY STANDARDS

GMPF's vision is to administer the Fund successfully, in a cost effective way, while meeting member expectations and ensuring statutory duties are met.

GMPF's mission, values and quality standards are therefore very important as these ensure that this vision is realised.

GMPF's values reflect how work is approached as well as shaping the Fund's beliefs and principles. They ensure that everyone is working towards the same goals. GMPF has two sets of values – a set of organisational values, plus a set of PRIDE service delivery values. There are four 'quality standards' to help GMPF's mission to be delivered. The quality standards enable GMPF to prioritise its objectives and to provide a consistent service to members. These standards are in priority order, so delivering on GMPF's statutory duties will always come first when deciding what is most important. All tasks performed link to one or more of these standards.

Mission Statement

GMPF's mission is to provide pensions, giving members a secure income and peace of mind when they retire.

GMPF has two core objectives that need to be achieved to do this successfully:

- to collect member and employer contributions and to invest them to generate an investment return, which can then be used to pay pensions.
- to calculate and pay benefits to members when they are due.

PRIDE values

- **P** – Being Professional
- **R** – Delivering Results
- **I** – Making Improvements
- **D** – Encouraging Diversity
- **E** – Striving for Excellence

Organisational values

- Excellence
- Legality
- Efficiency
- Prudence
- Collaboration
- Accountability
- Social responsibility
- Transparency

Quality standards

1. Lawful
2. Cost effective
3. Customer service
4. Efficient

BUSINESS PLANNING AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

GMPF prepares its business plan to provide strategic direction and assist with planning and monitoring of performance. The plan outlines several key objectives that require close monitoring. Officers provide quarterly updates on progress against these objectives to the Local Pension Board.

Over the last 12 months the teams have continued to deliver an effective service to members and employers despite the challenges faced with the delivery of the McCloud remedy, the large procurement exercise for the retendering of the administration system software and the preparation for the Pensions Dashboard. GMPF has been focusing on several service improvement projects. These include projects to improve its IT services, the quality of management information and analytics it produces, and enhance its recruitment, induction and training procedures.

IMPLEMENTING THE MCCLOUD REMEDY

The McCloud Remedy is the name given for changes made by the government to public service pension scheme rules to remove the age discrimination found in the McCloud court case. These changes, introduced in October 2023, provide younger members with protection equal to the underpin protection provided to older members to remove discrimination. The GMPF team completed data collection and analysis work and rectified pension records for those members affected.

RETENDERING THE CONTRACT FOR AN ADMINISTRATION SOFTWARE SYSTEM

Following public sector procurement rules, GMPF undertook a procurement exercise to appoint a pensions administration software provider. It also purchased licenses for several new pension software platforms to support its business plan ambitions. By undertaking this work, GMPF met its duty to test the market and secure the best possible supplier.

PREPARING FOR THE PENSIONS DASHBOARD

GMPF continued to prepare for connection to the Government's Pensions Dashboards initiative, appointing an Integrated Service Provider (ISP), which is needed to connect to the Dashboard IT ecosystem. It also progressed work linked to data accuracy and overall project management.

EXPANDING OUR IT FOOTPRINT

During the year, GMPF undertook projects to replace all user hardware and upgrade our Microsoft licenses. It continues to work on a project to improve file storage and security and expand its work on management information analytics.

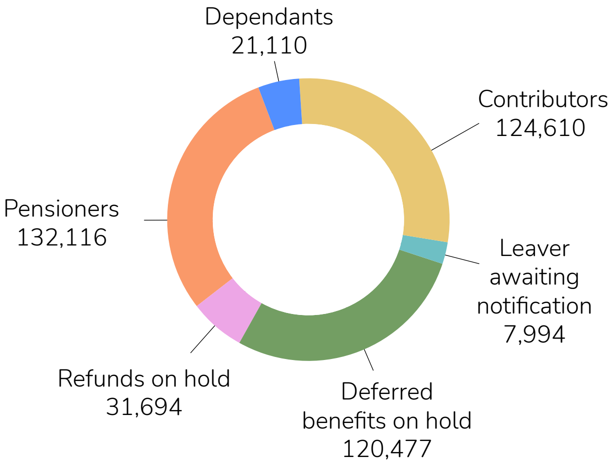
IMPROVING OUR RECRUITMENT AND INDUCTION PROCEDURES

GMPF has revised all its procedures relating to the recruitment and induction of all new colleagues. Managers have also developed a workforce development plan to provide clear objectives linked to training and development.

MONITORING GMPF'S PERFORMANCE - MEMBERS

GMPF is passionate about providing a quality, cost effective service to its members. The Local Pension Board receives several reports on a quarterly basis about the work undertaken by the Administration teams and the performance and engagement activities they are carrying out. The key focus this year has been to automate processes to improve system efficiencies and enhance the member experience.

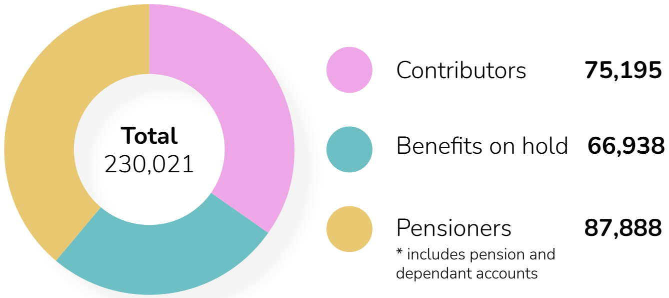
Membership



Key learning points for you

- **Outline the benefits of using My Pension to your members.**
- **Support your retiring members and manage their expectations regarding the timescales involved.**
- **Notify us of any communications that you are sending to your members that may impact on calls to our member helpline.**

My Pension registration



Bulk exercise delivery

	Percentage on time
Annual Benefit Statements	100%
Pension Savings Statements	100%
P60s	100%

Benefit caseloads

Joiners	26,541
Refunds	1,544
Benefits on hold	13,097
Bereavements	5,167
Retirements (contributors)	3,373
Retirements (benefits on hold)	5,723

Key documentation

The Local Pension Board reviews key documentation in respect of members and Fund management relating to:

- Cyber Security
- Risk Management
- Business Planning
- Business Continuity
- Performance Management
- Data Improvement
- Key projects, such as the McCloud Remedy and Pensions Dashboard.

Key performance indicators

GMPF uses processing target times to monitor casework performance.

High - within targets

Dependant benefits

Retirements

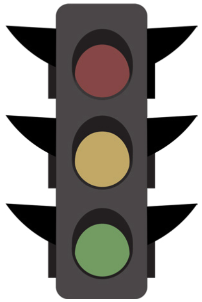
Divorce

New joiners

Medium - mostly within targets

Benefit estimates

Benefits on hold



Low - below targets

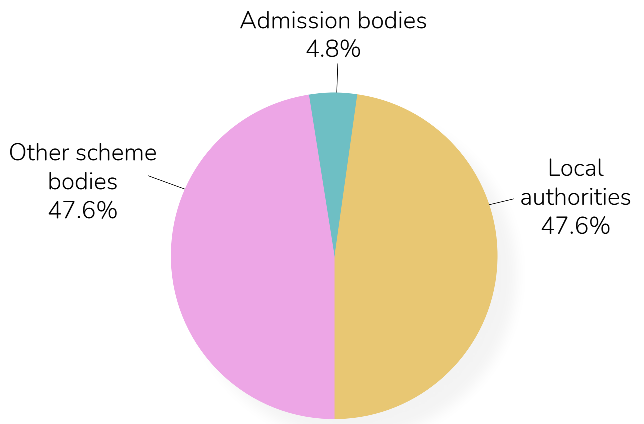
Recalculation of benefits due to revised pay (deaths)

Recalculation of benefits due to revised pay (immediate and benefits on hold into payment)

MONITORING GMPF'S PERFORMANCE - EMPLOYERS

The performance of GMPF's employers is central to the quality of service it can provide to its members. The Local Pension Board monitors employer performance closely to ensure GMPF is supporting its employers and that employers are not breaching the law or causing GMPF to breach the law. The Board receives regular updates about the work being undertaken by the Employer Services section as well as key statistics to demonstrate how well GMPF's employers are meeting the requirements of the Pension Administration Strategy. The Local Pension Board examines statistics each quarter on monthly data collection, payments, employer audit outcomes and similar metrics to make assessments about performance and to advise GMPF as to any steps it thinks the Fund should take to assist and support employers to improve. The key focus over the last 12 months has been expanding the employer performance framework to deliver performance statistics to a larger number of GMPF employers. The longer-term aim being to ensure all GMPF employers receive an annual statement about how well they are performing their employer role and their compliance with the Pension Administration Strategy.

Contributors



Key employer data

New employers during the year	108
Employers that exited during the year	37
New employer admissions completed in timescale	58%
Employers that we received data from	733
Employers sending data monthly	100%
Employers meeting the required data submission date	93%
Employers paying their contribution payments on time	74%
Year in Review feedback reports (issued to GMPF's largest employers)	91

Key documentation

The Local Pension Board reviews the following key documents relating to employers:

- Pension Administration Strategy
- Breaches of Law Policy
- Performance Management
- Valuation information

Key learning points for you

!

- **Ensure that you understand your employer responsibilities and are aware of and comply with the Pension Administration Strategy.**
- **If you are experiencing any issues with your pensions administration reach out to our dedicated Employer Support team who can provide you with the help and support that you need.**
- **Ensure your iConnect submission and contribution payment are made by the first working day of the month following deduction.**
- **Check the quality of data submitted to GMPF – the provision of incorrect data can have a detrimental financial impact on your members and you as the employer.**

Breaches of law

The Local Pension Board is responsible for monitoring breaches of the law and the materiality assessment of the breach. A Breaches of Law log is maintained and is reviewed by the Local Pension Board quarterly to enable the Board to make effective decisions about if and when it needs report a breach to the Pensions Regulator. The Breaches of Law log includes details of late payment of contributions, late submission of iConnect returns, employer data quality issues and any individual employer concerns.

Breaches of Law	10	**Breaches of Law reported to TPR**	0

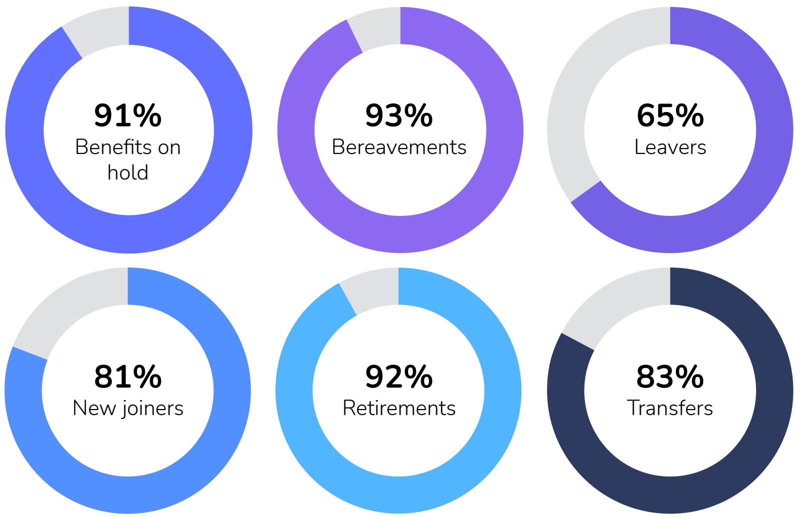
FEEDBACK AND SURVEYS

Member and employer feedback is a valuable source of information as this helps GMPF to determine how well it is serving its members and employers. It helps identify what is being done well and areas where improvements can be made because it promotes oversight and continual improvement across all processes.

Data is collected in many ways including through GMPF's online feedback zone, surveys, training feedback and from its employer engagement panel. This year feedback has also been received from the Pensions Regulator as part of their supervision process. The feedback received is used to improve processes and inform future plans.

The member and employers websites have a "you said, so we did" section that outline some of the improvements and changes that have been made as a result of feedback.

Member survey satisfaction



Pensions Regulator Relationship Supervision

As a large public sector pension fund, GMPF was part of the Pensions Regulator's relationship supervision programme that concluded in Spring 2024. Relationship supervision enables the Pensions Regulator to gain an understanding of how a pension fund operates on a day-to-day basis and build a strong relationship with it. The Pensions Regulator assessed the Fund by reviewing at a high level its management and governance, systems and processes. This process also provided GMPF with the opportunity to showcase how it complies with legislation, adheres to codes of practice, and applies good industry practice. At the end of the process, GMPF received a report from the Regulator which highlighted a small number of actions for GMPF to complete to improve compliance, which have since been fully implemented or are underway.

Employer surveys

- Third Party Payroll Providers
- Admission survey
- Training survey

Member feedback

Compliments	47
Complaints	86
Suggestions	18

Key learning points for you

- **Submit information about your leavers on time, ensuring you send us all the information we need to provide benefit on hold information to these members.**
- **Use our Employer Liaison team - they are there to help and support you.**
- **Attend the training GMPF provides as this will assist you with your pension administration.**

Key learning and improvements made

Employer surveys

- Improved admission process.
- More interactive and engaging training sessions.
- Bespoke training sessions.
- Improved training and support for third party payroll providers and their employers.

Member surveys

- A full review of the notification of death benefits and the payment process.
- A review and update of letters and guidance for interfund transfers.
- Improved processes introduced for new starters, including a review of the letters and surveys.

AUDIT AND ASSURANCE

The Local Pension Board gains independent assurance from several sources to ensure standards are maintained and improved where necessary. This year key sources of assurance have been received from the independent CEM Global Benchmarking report and Tameside MBC's Internal Audit team.

CEM Benchmarking

CEM benchmarking has shown that GMPF is a low cost, high service administrator compared to its peers.

GMPF took part in administration benchmarking with CEM for the sixth year running. CEM Benchmarking is an organisation that provides investments and administration benchmarking services to pension funds across the globe and provides insight into how to maximise value for money in pension administration. It compares both costs and member service, with cost per member and member service score being the two key indicators of comparison.

The results of the benchmarking are reported to the Local Pension Board to provide external assurance that GMPF provides value for money to Stakeholders and to help identify areas where changes could be made to the way services are provided that might enhance the member and employer experience.

Key result

- GMPF's total cost per member was **£20.23**. This was **£8.42 below the weighted peer average of £28.65**.

Key result

- The member service score was **71** which was **8 points above the peer median of 63**.

GMPF scored well for service in several areas, particularly around surveying membership, contact centre functionality and My Pension online capabilities.

The main area where GMPF scores lower than its peers is linked to telephone call answering and response times and improving the telephone helpline service continues to be an area of focus for GMPF.

Internal Audit

Planned employer audits	Planned assurance audits
10	8

Independent assurance

- Internal Audit
- External Audit
- CEM Benchmarking
- PASA

A comprehensive risk based Internal Audit Plan is agreed with Tameside MBC's Internal Audit team annually. It covers the main administration, finance, and investment systems on a cyclical basis. The Internal Audit Plan also makes provision for auditing our employers. This is a valuable resource as it provides assurance to GMPF and the employer that their pension fund responsibilities are being discharged correctly. Common themes are identified as part of these audits, which are shared across all employers and are used to enable improvements to be made where necessary across GMPF's processes.

Key learning points for you

The employer audits highlighted some recurring issues that you need to be mindful of:

- **Calculating assumed pensionable pay correctly.**
- **Paying your contribution payments on time.**
- **Submitting your iConnect submissions on time.**
- **Checking the quality and accuracy of member data before submission.**
- **Calculating final pay correctly.**
- **Ensuring that you notify GMPF of retirements promptly.**
- **Ensuring that your contribution payment matches the value of data on your iConnect return.**
- **Responding to tasks/queries promptly.**
- **Sending data to GMPF securely.**
- **Ensuring staff are trained in respect of LGPS Pension Administration.**

INTERNAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCEDURES

Internal dispute resolution arrangements play an important part in pension scheme management. They enable someone with an interest in the scheme to ask for a matter in dispute to be resolved.

GMPF reviews all complaints by way of its internal Complaints and Issues Board, which focusses on understanding if each complaint has been resolved and whether all learning points for employers and GMPF have been captured.

The LGPS dispute procedure is a two-stage process.

Stage one

Each scheme employer and administering authority must appoint at least one person to consider disputes arising from a disputed decision or act, or omission. If the appellant is not satisfied with the stage one determination, they can make a stage two appeal.

Stage two

Stage two appeals are considered by pensions referees that are appointed by Tameside MBC in its capacity as the administering authority for GMPF.

Members are encouraged to contact GMPF initially to see if the dispute can be resolved without the need to move to stage one. Information about the process is also included on the GMPF website, where there is a factsheet that provides members with guidance about how to raise a dispute.

The Pensions Administration Working Group receives copies of the complaints dashboard each month at its quarterly meetings, together with information about all work carried out relating to improving service and reducing complaints.

Year	2024-25
IDRPs	15
Stage 1 against GMPF	4
Stage 2 against GMPF	2
Stage 2 against employers	8
Stage 2 against Prudential (AVC provider)	1
GMPF cases with the Ombudsman	4
Ombudsman findings against GMPF and/or employers	0

! Learning and Improvement

A dedicated IDRP training session is to be created for employers to better support the employer to respond to complaints.

When a complaint is received the Employer Liaison team will be working more closely with the employer to bring the complaint to a satisfactory resolution for the member.

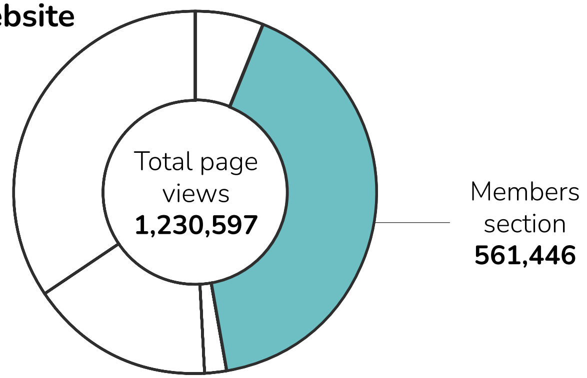
! Key learning points for you

- **Ensure that you have a clear published complaints process and all staff are signposted to it.**
- **Ensure all information and communications are clear and unambiguous.**
- **Demonstrate that you have considered all the member's concerns.**
- **Avoid any delays and ensure that you keep the member informed.**
- **Accept responsibility if you are at fault.**
- **Use the information on the GMPF employer website and reach out to the Employer Liaison team if you need any help or support.**

SUPPORT AVAILABLE FOR MEMBERS

One of GMPF's key aims is to ensure that members receive the necessary help and support they need. GMPF has a dedicated Communications and Engagement team that manages and updates the GMPF website and social media accounts as well as managing bespoke member training, member events and the Customer Helpline.

Website



Top five visited pages

1. Receiving benefits - How your pension keeps pace with inflation
2. Retiring - When and how can you retire
3. Retiring - Access your benefits on hold
4. Receiving benefits - When and how we pay your pension
5. Help with 'My Pension'

Other areas of support

- Annual newsletter
- Face to face appointments
- Video appointments
- Dedicated support for members who need extra help
- Online capabilities of the My Pension system

Member helpline

Total calls received	**85,819**
Average wait time	**9 minutes 5 seconds**

Top reasons for contact

1. Retirement query - Chasing/checking status
2. My Pension - Registration issues
3. Reporting an event/change - Address change
4. Retirement query - Retirement process
5. Retirement query – Obtaining figures

Events

Events held	**28**
Attendees	**1658**

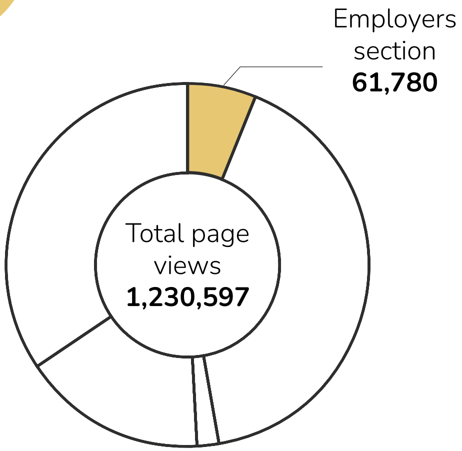
Event types

1. Pre-retirement
2. Overview of the LGPS
3. Topping up your benefits
4. Annual Benefit Statements
5. Topping up/Basics

SUPPORT AVAILABLE FOR EMPLOYERS

GMPF has a dedicated Employer Liaison team whose key focus is supporting employers. The team provides regular communications and training for all employers as well as holding bespoke training or support sessions, where requested. The team is currently working on improving the support and training for third party payroll providers and the employers that use them.

Website



Top five visited pages

1. Forms - Immediate retirement form
2. Forms - Index
3. Forms - Leavers
4. Employer processes - I have a member who wants to retire
5. Employer processes - A member is leaving

Employer helpline

Total calls received	**1,533**
Average wait time	**35 seconds**

Top reasons for contact

1. Individual member query - Retirement
2. Individual member query - Membership history
3. Individual member query - Other
4. Admissions and terminations - Other
5. Ill health query - Procedure help

Focus groups

Number held **2**

Topics discussed

- Employer Year in Review reports
- Employer Performance Statements

Events

Events held	**53**
Attendees	**572**

Event types

- Managing Year End queries
- iConnect
- Pensionable pay
- Ill health
- Retirements and leavers
- Assumed Pensionable Pay
- Employer Discretions
- How to use Altair
- An overview of the LGPS
- Pensions Tax

Other areas of support

- Attendance at employer roadshows
- Monthly employer bulletins
- Employer meetings
- Live training sessions on a variety of topics
- Recorded training sessions on the employer website
- Bespoke training and support sessions

STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES, AND FUTURE PLANS

Strengths

It is important that GMPF recognises and harnesses its key strengths and abilities to ensure that it is best placed to handle any difficult situations and challenges that it faces as a Fund. Understanding its strengths enables effective planning for the future. We believe some of our main strengths are:

- Ensuring the member and employer experience is at the forefront of everything we do.
- Reacting positively to legislative changes, using a planned proactive approach.
- Continually updating and improving our technology for security purposes and to make processes more efficient.
- Providing colleagues with a wide range of opportunities and training to develop their skills.
- Having a valued workforce built on mutual trust.

Challenges

2024/25 has been a challenging year with the delivery of the McCloud remedy, preparing for the Pensions Dashboard and the 2025 triennial actuarial valuation.

Call volumes continue to be high, however extra customer services agents have now been recruited and are already having a positive effect on call wait times and abandonment rates.

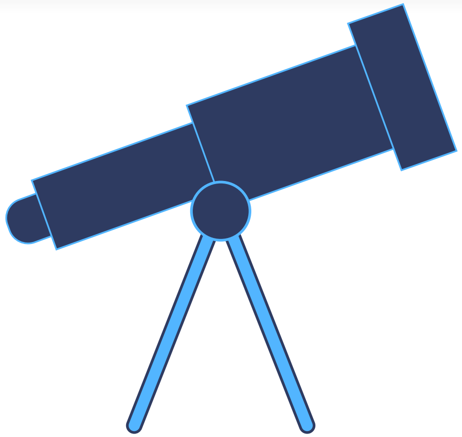
There have also been many changes made to our technological solutions to ensure that we keep up with industry standards and best practice. As well as the growth of a dedicated Management Information team.

Despite the challenges, the teams continue to deliver an outstanding service to our members and other stakeholders, with the help of the technological and service improvements that are being made.

Future plans

GMPF includes all plans and future objectives within its Business Plan. All items within the plan link to one or more of GMPF's strategic objectives. Current objectives that will further improve the member and employer experience include:

- Valuation and funding review.
- Preparing our data and connecting to the ISP in readiness for the introduction of the Pensions Dashboard.
- Updating our member and employer website.
- Transferring our member portal to a new platform.
- Improving the member benefit payment processes by increasing the use of automation.
- Continually improving cyber security resilience.



Staff survey

84% of employees are satisfied with their current job.

91% of employees agreed that they had trust and confidence in their line manager.

84% of employees feel that their views are listened to.

90% of employees feel supported to develop and attend relevant training.

79% of employees feel that there are opportunities for career progression.