



THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME (LGPS)

Internal Disputes Resolution Procedure

Introduction

1. Decisions regarding your membership of the LGPS will initially be made by your employing authority in respect of such matters as the amount of your pensionable earnings, date of scheme entry etc.
2. Other matters regarding your membership will then be determined by Durham County Council in its role as administrator of the LGPS, e.g. the amount of service transferred into the scheme from a previous employment.

Note: In the case of Durham County Council employees, both items (1) and (2) will be determined by the same authority. It will however be the responsibility of the employing service to determine issues under (1) and the Pensions Group to determine issues under (2).

What should you do if you are unhappy with any aspect of your pension scheme membership?

Initially you should contact the Durham County Council Pensions Team by telephoning 03000 264322, or by email at pensions@durham.gov.uk. They will be able to explain any questions you have about scheme membership and service, and, if necessary, direct you to the contact person within your employing authority.

If you are still unhappy with the explanation you have been given, or if you have not been provided with an explanation, you may refer the matter to the adjudicator.

You must apply to the adjudicator within six months of being notified of the decision which is the cause of your complaint.

Who is the adjudicator?

The adjudicator for Durham County Council Pension Fund is **Mr Yunus Gajra, Development Manager (Strategic), West Yorkshire Pension Fund, P.O. Box 67, Bradford, BD1 1UP**

When referring your complaint to the adjudicator, you must send a signed letter and include the following information:

- Your full name, address, date of birth, National Insurance number, the name of your employer and your job title (If your complaint is on behalf of another person, you must submit all of the above details in respect of that person and explain your relationship to them).
- A statement setting out the details of the disagreement, enclosing any relevant letters or documentation.

What happens next?

Within two months of receiving your complaint the adjudicator must reach a decision and confirm his decision in writing to you, your employer and Durham County Council Pension Fund.

If he is not able to reach a decision within two months he must write to you to tell you why this is the case and to give you an estimate of when he is likely to be able to reach a decision (the expected decision date).

What should I do if I am not satisfied with the findings of the adjudicator?

If you are not satisfied with the findings of the adjudicator you may refer the matter to the Administering Authority at the following address:

Pensions Group
Resources
County Hall
Durham
DH1 5UE

When referring your complaint to the Administering Authority you must send a signed letter which includes the information in section C2 and a statement that you wish the decision to be reconsidered by the Administering Authority.

Your application must be made by the relevant date as follows:

- Within six months of the date the adjudicator's decision was received.
- If the adjudicator was unable to reach a decision within two months and he wrote to you giving you an expected decision date, you must submit your application within seven months from the expected decision date.
- If the adjudicator did not make a decision and did not provide an expected decision date, you must submit your application within nine months from the date on which your application was made to the adjudicator.

Note: You may also refer your complaint to the Administering Authority should the adjudicator fail to reply to you within the timescales set out overleaf.

What happens next?

Within two months of receiving your complaint, the Administering Authority must confirm its decision in writing to you and to your employer. If it is not possible to reach a decision within two months it must write to you to tell you why this is the case and to give you an estimate of when a decision is likely to be made.

Is there anything else I can do after referring my complaint to the Administering Authority?

When the Administering Authority gives you its decision, it will also give you details about the services provided by TPAS and the Pensions Ombudsman.

What is TPAS?

The Pensions Advisory Service (**TPAS**) is an independent non-profit organisation that provides free information, advice and guidance on all types of pension schemes. You can contact TPAS through your local Citizens Advice Bureau or in writing to:

11 Belgrave Road,
London
SW1 1RB

Or by telephone on 08456012923 Or online at www.pensionsadvisoryservice.org.uk

Note: If you want the Pensions Ombudsman to consider your complaint, you should normally contact TPAS first. If TPAS is unable to resolve your complaint and believes that maladministration has occurred, or that the decision made by the Administering Authority is incorrect, they will recommend that you refer your complaint to the Ombudsman.

You can ask TPAS for help at any time if you are having difficulties in resolving your complaint under the dispute procedure.

What is the role of the Pensions Ombudsman?

The Pensions Ombudsman can investigate complaints of maladministration or disputes of fact or law relating to decisions made about your pension. Unless your complaint relates only to maladministration, you must follow the procedure set out in this leaflet before referring your complaint to the Ombudsman. This means that you must refer your complaint to the adjudicator and then to the Administering Authority before the Pensions Ombudsman will commence an investigation.

If, however, your complaint is about maladministration, i.e. the way your case has been handled by either the adjudicator or the Administering Authority, you do not need to wait until the Internal Disputes Resolution Procedure has been completed.

You can contact the Pensions Ombudsman in writing at:

11 Belgrave Road,
London
SW1 1RB

By telephone on 020 7630 2200 or email enquiries@pensions-ombudsman.org.uk

You can find out more about the Pensions Ombudsman by visiting their web site at:

www.pensions-ombudsman.gov.uk