



# Consultation & Communication Strategy

January 2020

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## What we are here for and what we need to do to achieve it

### Our mission, or what SYPA as an organisation is here for is

***“To deliver a sustainable and cost effective pension scheme for members and employers in South Yorkshire delivering high levels of customer service and strong investment returns which facilitate stable contributions.”***

We only exist because of our customers and given that we only do one thing, run the pension scheme, we owe it to them to provide the best possible performance while maintaining costs within reasonable levels.

In order to achieve this mission there are a number of things we need to do, namely our objectives, which are:

#### Customer Focus

*to design our services around the needs of our customers (whether scheme members or employers).*

#### Listening to our stakeholders

*to ensure that stakeholders’ views are heard within our decision making processes.*

#### Investment Returns

*to maintain an investment strategy which delivers the best financial return, commensurate with appropriate levels of risk, to ensure that the Fund can meet both its immediate and long term liabilities.*

#### Responsible Investment

*to develop our investment options within the context of a sustainable and responsible investment strategy.*

#### Effective and Transparent Governance

*to uphold effective governance showing prudence and propriety at all times.*

#### Valuing and engaging our Employees

*to ensure that all our employees are able to develop a career with SYPA and are actively engaged in improving our services.*

The achievement of our Mission and objectives will require the fulfilment of the respective responsibilities of the elected Members of the Pensions Authority and its officers.

In relation to consultation and communication, we both have responsibilities which contribute to the delivery of an improved service in this area. We intend to consult and communicate with all our stakeholders as set out in the document, and use those results to review our service delivery on a yearly basis.

The aim of this document is to explain our consultation and communication strategy, the various ways in which we consult and communicate, why and what happens with the results.



**George Graham**  
Fund Director  
South Yorkshire Pensions Authority



**Cllr M Stowe**  
Chair  
South Yorkshire Pensions Authority

## POLICY REVIEW DATES

| Date         | Version | Author         | Comment                                 |
|--------------|---------|----------------|---|
| January 2009 | V1.0    | Joanne Webster | Merge of service and authority policies |
| July 2010    | V2.0    | Gary Chapman   | Cosmetic changes                        |
| July 2011    | V2.1    | Joanne Webster | Change of personnel and group names     |
| June 2012    | V3.0    | Joanne Webster | Major revision                          |
| July 2013    | V3.1    | Karen Roberts  | Minor changes                           |
| June 2014    | V3.2    | Joanne Webster | Cosmetic changes                        |
| July 2015    | V3.3    | Joanne Webster | Minor changes                           |
| August 2016  | V3.4    | Joanne Webster | Minor changes                           |
| January 2019 | V3.5    | Joanne Webster | Minor changes                           |
| January 2020 | V3.6    | Joanne Webster | Minor changes                           |

### Date of next review June 2020

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## CONSULTATION STRATEGY

South Yorkshire Pensions Authority (SYPA) is committed to managing our resources wisely whilst at the same time delivering services that our stakeholders want and expect. Seeking the views of our stakeholders is consequently of utmost importance to us in order to ensure firstly, that priorities reflect members opinion and secondly, that the priorities are being achieved.

### Engagement as a clear, simple and transparent activity

Pension issues can be technical, legalistic and complex, and can work in a way that is very different from some other organisations and cultures.

This means that consultation exercises must be well planned and carefully delivered, allowing those outside the Authority to understand that there is a chance to participate in our work planning, helping them add to any discussions whilst at the same time appreciating the limitations of what can be done with their input.

The design of SYPA's consultation exercises should therefore feature:

- **Clarity** We will consider and state what the consultation exercise is about, what we hope to achieve by consulting, who the consultees are, and what impact the results of the consultation might have.
- **Simplicity** Issues and terminology must be explained in a simple and concise manner, making participation accessible and attractive.
- **Transparency** In line with our Freedom of Information responsibilities and other existing commitments, those wishing to participate or examine our consultation processes should have access to relevant supporting materials. These would include specific consultation documents, reports and papers, and records of subsequent decisions and actions.
- **Information** To enable those participating to make an informed contribution.

The following elements will assist in our strategy:

- **Inform** Providing stakeholders with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding issues, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.
- **Research** Seeking information and involving stakeholders in the decision making process.
- **Consult** Obtaining stakeholder feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.
- **Involve** To work directly with the stakeholders throughout the process to ensure that concerns and objectives are consistently understood and considered.
- **Collaborate** To work together with our stakeholders in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.

## STRATEGIC AIMS: where do we want to be?

This strategy seeks to build on the good practice we have already established over time.

The strategy aims to:

- Strengthen strategic planning and co-ordination of consultation activities and demonstrate how consultation fits into the Authority's decision-making processes;
- Ensure the effective use of consultation to improve services and policy by supporting officers and elected Members to help them make informed choices on appropriate consultation methods and delivery;
- Improve equality of opportunity in consultation using a wide range of methods and technologies to enable participation in consultation especially from 'harder to engage' groups;
- Make our consultation processes more meaningful for stakeholders through better communication about the purpose, topics and outcomes of consultation.

### Why Consult?

To ensure that the Authority provides the services that people want in the way they want them.

Consultation is used to:

- Involve users to advise the decision making process relating to priorities, policies, projects, and strategies.
- Target areas more closely by providing what people say they need and want.
- Monitor user satisfaction with services over time.
- Improve the quality of services.
- Improve the take up of services.
- Address issues arising from proposed changes to services.

### Who does SYPA consult with?

We have an established range of mechanisms to support consultation activities.

The people that we are committed to consult with fall into a number of 'stakeholder' categories:

#### Scheme Member Consultation Groups

These groups are made up of volunteers from each of our main membership categories.

Representing current, deferred and pensioner members each group is consulted on a range of issues as the need arises and provide written feedback on those issues. There is a limit of 200 members on each group. The role of these groups is to provide information to:

- Inform the decision-making process surrounding service delivery;
- Improve local systems and processes;
- Improve customer satisfaction.

The results of each group are analysed and reported to officers. Any immediate actions resulting from this process are fed back for implementation. All other information is used to shape the future service delivery and forms part of the Authority's corporate planning and prioritisation process.

The results of consultation and what will happen will be reported in member newsletters. Changes that have been implemented as a result of consultation will have the effect monitored and will be consulted upon in the future to ensure continued satisfaction. The results of this will also be reported to elected Members.

## Local Pension Board

The Local Pension Board became a Statutory requirement from April 2015 and is made up of equal numbers of employer and scheme member representatives. The Board's responsibility is to ensure that the Fund is managed and administered effectively and efficiently and complies with the code of practice on governance and administration. The Board meets at least quarterly, has its own terms of reference and in addition to reviewing all authority business is able to commission reports and request updates as and when necessary.

### Types of Consultation

#### 1. Regular Consultation

##### Employee Satisfaction

This is issued to all South Yorkshire Pensions Authority personnel every two years. Its purpose is to monitor staff morale and provide information to managers and supervisors to maintain high levels of customer service.

##### Scheme Member Satisfaction

Focused surveys are carried out annually with a sample of members taken from the range of stakeholder groups. The minimum number of surveys throughout a twelve month period will be two.

The results will be used to:

- Inform the decision-making process surrounding service delivery;
- Improve local systems and processes;
- Improve customer satisfaction;
- Involve our customers in the provision of the services they receive;
- Ensure that our service has our members' approval.

##### Scheme Employer Satisfaction

Focused surveys are carried out every two years with all our employers.

The results will be used to:

- Inform the decision-making process surrounding service delivery;
- Improve local systems and processes;
- Improve employer satisfaction.

#### 2. Ad-Hoc Consultation

In addition to the timetabled surveys there will be occasions when it will be appropriate to consult our stakeholders on an ad-hoc basis. SYPA will take every opportunity to seek the opinions of its stakeholders to continually assess and improve the service provided.

## COMMUNICATION

SYPA recognises that in fulfilling its objectives, and in order to be fully effective, it has a duty to communicate with all its stakeholders about its actions, views, policies and service standards. Our Communication Strategy sets out how we intend to do this.

### AIMS

The aims of this communication element of SYPA's Consultation and Communication Strategy is to ensure that the SYPA's role, achievements and effectiveness are widely understood, and that we have a positive image with our stakeholders. This complements the consultation element of the overall strategy, so that there is an effective two-way dialogue in place.

### COMMUNICATION PRINCIPLES

#### Stakeholders first

Putting stakeholders at the heart of everything we do.

#### Open and honest

Giving honest, open and evidence-based messages and be open to debate and questions.

#### Timely and relevant

Communicating proactively with our stakeholders with relevant targeted messages - the right message to the right people at the right time.

#### Accessible for all

Offering an appropriate choice of communications methods to help ensure that no one in our scheme is disadvantaged, for example large print audio and braille.

#### Feedback

Facilitating two-way communications and encouraging participation and feedback.

#### Listening

Proactively seeking opinions, acknowledging them and responding quickly, helpfully, honestly and consistently.

#### Value for money

Making the best possible use of resources and budgets by working with colleagues and employers to share best practice.

### Overriding Principles

The main aim of this Communications Strategy is to review and develop current methods of communications, introduce new methods appropriately and continually measure impact.

This will mean that:

- All members, employers and organisations involved with SYPA in the delivery of our services will have a clear, consistent and positive perception of SYPA's values, services and achievements.
- Communication messages will be devised, tailored and targeted at specific audience sectors. It's important to know your audience - one size doesn't fit all. We will target the content and method of delivery to our audience to ensure that we engage our members and they relate to what we are saying.
- Communications will support consultation and, in turn, be informed by the views expressed through consultation.
- Measurement and evaluation will be an integral part of all communication activity.

Good communications will:

- Be clear about key messages to be communicated;
- Help to deliver member/corporate priorities;
- Be of a high standard and effective;
- Develop a clear brand across the organisation, including publications, presentation slides, email formats, letters and other forms of communication, under our SYPA style guidelines;
- Set out the principles that underpin all communications including press, web, email, letter, presentation template, consultation exercises;
- Identify the most effective methods of communicating with members, employers and stakeholders;
- Co-ordinate communications activity across the Authority with accepted strategic communications objectives;
- Identify an action plan and methods of monitoring performance/effectiveness.

### Targeted Audiences and Methods of Communication

The principal audiences with whom SYPA wishes to communicate are set out below. The nature of the message which the Authority wants to communicate varies between audiences.

Section 1: **Contributing Members**

Section 2: **Deferred Beneficiary Members**

Section 3: **Pensioner Members**

Section 4: **Employing Authorities**

Section 5: **Other interested parties**



## Section 1: COMMUNICATING WITH CONTRIBUTING MEMBERS

### Pension Forecasts

Annual pension forecasts are made available on our secure online portal 'mypension'. Notifications to inform members their forecasts are available to view are issued by email and text. If we don't hold either of these details notification will be made by post.

### Pension Planning Newsletter

At least annually we will publish a newsletter. The main purpose is to keep members informed about changes in the pension scheme that may affect them. The newsletter is not produced at fixed times and is driven by the timeliness of the content. Newsletters will be digital by default. We live in a digital age, and while paper versions will be made available on request, our digital by default position recognises that the vast majority of our members now have access to the internet. We will also produce online only newsletters aimed at different age groups. Young people who may have recently joined the scheme and older members planning for retirement are interested in different aspects of the scheme and may warm to a different style of delivery. The type of publication being issued will determine the intended audience; however we will be looking to target, younger members, mid-life and pre-retirement.

In addition to pension scheme content we aim to include lifestyle articles and ensure the newsletter is interesting to read and visually stimulating.

### Presentations

We deliver group information sessions in members' places of work. These are provided on demand in conjunction with employers. We deliver more specialist sessions for members affected by issues such as a public services transferring to a private organisation. We also participate in induction, mid-life and pre-retirement courses, which are organised by a number of our employers, and providing there is sufficient interest.

## Section 2: COMMUNICATING WITH DEFERRED BENEFIT MEMBERS

### Deferred Benefit Statements

Annual deferred benefit statements are made available on our secure online portal 'mypension'. Notifications to inform members their statements are available to view are issued by email and text. If we don't hold either of these details notification will be made by post.

### Your Past is Your Future Newsletter

Annually we produce a newsletter. The main purpose is to keep in contact with our deferred benefit members. A deferred beneficiary is usually no longer in employment within the pension fund and as they are not in receipt of their pension and without regular contact it is easy to lose touch. The content of the newsletter will inform members of changes to the pension scheme and include lifestyle articles of interest. There is no fixed time for issue but it is usually linked with the annual report summary and deferred benefit statements.

Newsletters will be digital by default. We live in a digital age, and while paper versions will be made available on request, our digital by default position recognises that the vast majority of our members now have access to the internet.

## Section 3: COMMUNICATING WITH PENSIONER MEMBERS

### Retirement Insight

Bi-annually we produce a newsletter, the main purpose is to inform retired members about issues that affect them such as annual cost of living increases. This newsletter is generally produced at fixed times in the spring and autumn to coincide with pensions increase and annual report content. Despite our increasing focus on e-communication channels, the twice-yearly Retirement Insight newsletter will still be issued to pensioner members in hard copy form, if we don't hold an email address. All new pensioners will be digital by default, with the exception of members who aren't online, and request a hard copy.

The spring issue of the newsletter will be issued with the members' April pay advice and P60.

### Payslips

Payslips are available on our secure online portal 'mypension'. Members who retired before July 2019 will receive a payslip if their net pay varies by more than £5.

## Section 4: COMMUNICATING WITH EMPLOYERS

### Support and Engagement

SYPA have dedicated staff to assist employers with all aspects of their pension duties. Our engagement officers will be employers' first port of call for any staff training and presentation requests for both Payroll and HR issues to help them administer the scheme effectively. They will also offer a range of presentations to scheme members to help them understand their pension benefits. Handover meetings will be provided from the point employers are admitted to the scheme, where our team will explain the services we provide and cover the responsibilities of the employer. We offer seminars aimed primarily at topical and administrative issues as well as one to one meetings to help with any issues that may arise.

### Employers Pensions Information Centre (EPIC)

The authority provides a central information centre where registered employers are able to access a whole range of information online including news and links to important documents. EPIC also provides statistical information to assist employers in understanding their scheme responsibilities.

### Employer Web

The authority also provides secure access to relevant scheme member information and allows employers to upload monthly data submissions and produce retirement quotes. Employer web is also used as a platform to contact and query member data securely.

## Section 5: COMMUNICATING WITH ALL VIA:

### Website

**www.sypensions.org.uk** This is the scheme members' website which is an information source on all aspects of the scheme. Simply set out with quick links and a comprehensive A-Z, the website also contains booklets and publications together with the link to our secure online portal (mypension).

**Secure Online Portal - 'mypension'** Members can register to gain access to their secure online account. Once registered for my pension it's a great way for members to keep track of their pension account, view and amend personal details, make and update death grant nomination details as well as active and deferred members having the facility to produce retirement quotes. Annual benefit statements will be available for both active and deferred members. For retired members monthly payslips and P60s are available to view.

**www.southyorks.gov.uk** This is the website relating to business of the Elected Members. Here you will find the calendar of Authority meetings along with agenda, minutes and reports. This site also provides access to the Webcast area that will allow you to watch Authority meetings as they happen.

### Special Requests

We offer an appropriate choice of communication methods to help ensure that no one in our scheme is disadvantaged. To assist members with special needs when communicating we can make arrangements to have a signer or interpreter present should a member wish to attend an information appointment. We can also provide communication material in large print, audio CD and braille.

### Literature

The main point of reference for members to find out about the key aspects of the LGPS is our *Employee Guide*. This is supported by a range of literature, on the various aspects of the Scheme.

### Annual Fund Meeting

This event is usually held in October. The AFM is an opportunity to meet the Chair/Vice Chair of the authority and senior management face to face. Presentations usually focus on fund performance and topical events followed by questions from attendees. To allow members who aren't able to attend the AFM we will record the meeting and upload the event to our YouTube account.

### By Telephone - Customer Centre

The Customer Centre is the main communications channel between members/employers within the Authority. The Customer Centre will play an important role in delivering a reliable customer experience on a daily basis. Members and employers can contact us by telephone which is prominently advertised on all our literature.

### Email

Members can contact us by email which is prominently advertised on all our literature. A secure e-mail service is in operation to allow personal information to be included in e-mail responses.

### Pensions Information Service

A comprehensive pensions information service on pension matters is provided by the Authority at all our four offices across the county. Appointments are made online at [www.sypensions.org.uk/advisory](http://www.sypensions.org.uk/advisory).

### Text Messaging

Our preferred method of communication is email however in the absence of an email address, where appropriate we will use text messaging. SMS messages are ideal for reminders and simple instructions and announcements.

### You Tube

Video recording opens the door to new opportunities to interact with members. Recording of events such as the AFM will be uploaded to YouTube to give members who couldn't attend on the day a chance to view the meeting.

### Social Networking Sites

People of all ages are using social media. Our aim is to connect with as many of our members as possible, deepening relationships and engagement. We currently have a Facebook page and members can follow us on Twitter and LinkedIn.

### Annual Report

Provides a comprehensive report on the authority's activities throughout the preceding year.

### Meetings/Presentations

Our staff are available to attend meetings and deliver presentations on a range of topics upon request.

## CUSTOMER CENTRE

Getting customer service right in an organisation, and continually improving it, is a long term commitment. Our customer centre will be the first point of contact for all scheme members and employers whether it's by telephone, email, letter or live chat. The main aim is to provide excellent customer service whilst promoting our online services.

The Customer Centre will welcome feedback. We will resolve any problems to the best of our ability, we will stop them being repeated and learn lessons. We will measure our performance making sure we measure the right things, making sure it's relevant and taking any necessary action. Benchmarking will be a key part of our measurement programme.

### Customer Centre Contact Details

Telephone: 01226 772923

Email: [customerservices@sypa.org.uk](mailto:customerservices@sypa.org.uk)

# Consultation & Communication Strategy



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