

Pensions for Councillors in Wales

The Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) is available to all councillors of a Welsh county council or county borough council who are offered membership of the scheme under their council's scheme of allowances and who are under age 75.

This leaflet gives you a brief outline of the main benefits of the scheme and explains what you pay in and what you can expect in return.

The LGPS is a secure scheme because the benefits are guaranteed by law. The benefits you get when you retire are based on the number of years you have been a member of the scheme and your average pay as a councillor. The benefits are not dependent on share prices and are not affected by stock market fluctuations.

How do I join the LGPS?

It will be up to you to decide whether or not to join the scheme, although you have to be under age 75. To secure your entitlement to the scheme benefits it is important that you complete and return a joining form. On receipt of your form, relevant records will be set up and an official notification of your membership of the scheme will be sent to you.

Can I join if I already pay into another pension?

Yes - you can pay into as many different pension schemes as you want. You can pay up to 100% of your UK taxable earnings in any one tax year into any number of pension arrangements of your choice (or, if greater, £3,600 to a "tax relief at source" arrangement, such as a personal pension or stakeholder pension scheme) and be eligible for tax relief.

What do I pay?

You currently pay 6% of your allowances¹ as a councillor into the LGPS. If you pay tax you will get tax relief² on your contributions at the time they are deducted from your allowances. Your council pays the rest of the cost of providing your LGPS benefits, which costs the council about double the amount you pay.

What are the benefits?

Life cover from the moment you join, with a lump sum of 2 times your career average pay being paid if you die in service under the age of 75.

Cover for your family with a pension for your spouse or civil partner³ and for eligible children should you die.

Retirement Benefits after 3 months membership:

You can retire from office and draw your pension from age 55⁴, even though the scheme's normal pension age is 65.

Immediate benefits are payable at any age if you have to retire because of permanent ill health.

When you retire you can look forward to:

A **tax-free lump sum**, and

A **pension for life** that increases each year in line with the appropriate cost of living index.

How are benefits worked out?

Your LGPS retirement pension when you retire is calculated as 1/80th of your career average pay for each year of membership of the LGPS i.e.:

$$\text{Annual Pension} = \frac{\text{Membership in the LGPS}}{80} \times \text{Career Average Pay}$$

Plus you get a lump sum of 3 times that amount i.e.:

$$\text{Lump Sum} = 3 \times \text{Annual Pension}$$

You can, if you wish, give up some of the pension when you draw your benefits in order to get a bigger lump sum. Up to 25% of the capital value of your pension benefits may be taken as a lump sum. You receive £12 lump sum for each £1 of pension given up.

What is career average pay?

This is your allowances¹ as a councillor for each year or part year ending 31 March adjusted (other than the final years pay) by the change in the cost of living, as measured by the appropriate index(es), between the end of the relevant year and the end of the month in which you leave the scheme.

The aggregate of each year's revalued pay is then divided by the total number of years and part years you have been a member of the LGPS to arrive at a career average pay. This is used in the calculation of your LGPS benefits.

Can I transfer previous pension rights into the LGPS?

You cannot transfer previous pension rights into the LGPS from another pension scheme, personal pension plan, another LGPS fund or from LGPS membership as an employee. If you have LGPS pension rights from a previous period of councillor membership in the same LGPS Fund you can join them to your current councillor membership but only within 12 months of rejoining the scheme, or longer if your council allows.

What happens if I leave before retiring?

If you have at least 3 months' membership and you leave before becoming entitled to the immediate payment of your benefits, they will be deferred for payment, normally until age 65.

You may be able to transfer your LGPS benefits to another pension scheme, although you cannot transfer them to another LGPS Fund in Wales or join them to any membership of the LGPS you might take up as an employee in England or Wales.

If you have less than 3 months' membership you may be able to claim a return of contributions less tax and an amount for National Insurance.

Can I pay more to improve my pension benefits?

You can increase your benefits by making additional voluntary contributions (AVCs).

Also, you may be able to pay contributions into a personal pension plan or stakeholder pension scheme.

How do I join the LGPS?

If you are under age 75 and you wish to join the LGPS:

Administering Authorities to insert their own information about joining / forms.

If you opt to join the scheme you should check your payslip details to make sure contributions are being collected from your allowances.

Want to know more?

This leaflet gives a brief outline of the LGPS. You can find more information at <https://www.lgpsmember.org/ats/about-council.php> where you can view a copy of the full scheme guide.

This leaflet is for councillors in Wales and reflects the provisions of the LGPS and overriding legislation at the time of publication. The Government may make changes to overriding legislation and, after consultation with interested parties, may make changes in the future to the LGPS.

This leaflet is a brief guide to the Local Government Pension Scheme for Councillors in Wales and cannot cover every personal circumstance. In the event of any dispute over your pension benefits, the appropriate legislation will prevail. This leaflet does not confer any contractual or statutory rights and is provided for information purposes only.

¹ This is your basic and special responsibility allowance. It does not include any dependants' carers allowance, travelling and subsistence allowance, or co-optees allowance.

² There are restrictions on the amount of tax relief available on pension contributions. If the value of your pension savings increase in any one year by more than the annual allowance you may have to pay a tax charge. Most people will not be affected by the annual allowance.

³ A civil partnership is a relationship between two people of the same sex ("civil partners") which is formed when they register as civil partners of each other.

⁴ Benefits payable before age 65 will normally be paid at a reduced rate.