

Jo Donnelly
Head of Pensions
Local Government Association
18 Smith Square
Westminster
London
SW1P 3HZ

29th April 2022

Dear Jo

M&G plc administration delays for Local Government AVCs

Further to our meetings and discussions in relation to administration performance for Local Government AVC schemes, I have provided some explanations below on this specific areas we have discussed.

Acknowledgement of delays

In reference to our recent conversations and feedback received from you, M&G acknowledge that the service provided to Local Government AVC pension schemes and members has not been meeting expectations and requirements. M&G apologises that the service has not been what members would expect and is committed to the improvement of service to Administering Authorities, employers and scheme members.

Description of problems

In late 2020 M&G migrated to an established administration platform. The platform is designed to offer M&G corporate pension customers and members greater digital capability and online access to their policies.

The approach to processing of contributions paid by employers was enhanced to introduce more controls. Historically, M&G have provided manual assistance to ensure contribution listings and payments were processed quickly (for instance where the payment and contribution listing amounts did not agree).

The enhanced system controls require the contribution listings and payments to agree. As this was not always the case, there were delays in the processing of contributions while discrepancies were addressed.

Contributions are a key dependency for all other administration processes. As a result of the processing delays, there was a collateral effect on the rest of the service that was initially experienced through increased call waiting times and delays in the processing of quotes and claims.

At the same time, as a result of the pandemic, there were restrictions in place that required colleagues to work from home. This had the effect of reducing operational efficiency which would not have been the case if colleagues had been co-located.

Actions taken to improve service

As the administration delays and extended call waiting times became apparent, M&G have been operating a Service Recovery Operation. This has facilitated:

- Recruitment of additional staff into the administration and voice functions
- Dedicated staff working with employer payroll teams to resolve file disparities
- Provision of an escalation route for urgent claims and complaints
- A fast-track complaint resolution process
- Upskilling completed in Annuities and Pensions servicing
- Embedding of improved training processes
- Enhanced contingency plans being put in place from both a people and system perspective

Where there have been delays in the processing of benefits and contributions, M&G have ensured that no member has suffered financial detriment as a result of a delay caused by M&G. M&G assess each case on its own merit paying the member compensation, where appropriate.

Expected timescales for resumption of normal service

Call waiting times

- Staffing in our Voice teams was increased by c.50% since the deterioration in performance and the impacts of both Covid and system migration. Continued recruitment and upskilling continues on a monthly basis to deliver both further and future improvements in performance
- Telephone call abandonment rates and call wait times improved significantly through the second half of 2021 and early 2022. Unfortunately, more recently, the abandonment rate and call waiting times have increased. A recovery plan has been put in place to improve performance.

M&G aim to have abandonment rate of less than 5% with a call wait time of less than 2 minutes.

Customer Journeys (including Bereavements, Claims, New Business, Servicing)

M&G is now processing the large majority of core transactions (e.g. retirement claims, transfers, bereavements, contribution changes, fund switches and new member applications) within normal service levels.

Performance is measured on an end to end journey basis. This means that all activities are joined together and the customer journey time is calculated from the first point of contact to the point of closure where no other activity is required to deliver the customer outcome.

The target is for more than 95% of work to be completed within a set number of days depending on the specific work required. For example we aim to have all claims and bereavements processed within 5 working days of receiving all of the relevant documentation.

For the quarter to December 2021, for Local Government AVCs in England and Wales, 90.2% of work was completed within this target. M&G continue to focus on improving performance to this target.

Annual Benefit Statements and Scheme Revisions

As a consequence of the servicing delays outlined above, the production of the 2020 / 2021 annual scheme revision information and Annual Benefit Statements has been delayed. The majority of schemes received their annual benefit statements within the regulatory deadline. M&G is in contact with any schemes where information is yet to be issued. Detailed planning for the distribution of 2021/22 year scheme revision information and Annual Benefit Statements is underway and expected turnaround times will be confirmed to individual Administering Authorities.

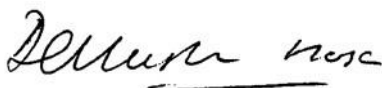
Scheme members can check the value of their AVC account through the online service. Members can login or register for the service at www.pru.co.uk/login

Existing AVC members can access additional support for any general enquiries through the AVC support team which is available Monday – Friday 8.30 - 6pm on 0800 6000 343. Secure messages can also be sent once you have registered for M&G online service.

The Pensions Regulator

M&G have continued to inform The Pensions Regulator about service performance and delays.

Yours sincerely



Alastair Hogg
Head of Corporate Pensions