

Report

2018 Annual Benefit Statement survey

January 2019

Research Report

**Prepared for the Firefighters' Pensions (England)
Scheme Advisory Board – Local Pension Board
effectiveness committee**

Contents

1. Executive Summary	3
2. Introduction	5
3. Methodology.....	5
3.1 Fieldwork.....	5
3.2 Respondent profile	6
4. Research findings	6
4.1 Data submission	6
4.2 Meeting the deadline	7
4.3 Deferred members	10
4.4 Internal controls	14
4.5 Administration and resources	15
5. Recommendations	19
Annex A: Survey questions	21
Annex B: Respondents	22
Annex C: Q25. What, if anything, do you plan to do differently next year to improve the ABS process?	23
Annex D: Q26. Is there anything the Scheme Advisory Board could do facilitate improvements to the ABS process?	25

1. Executive Summary

The ABS 2018 survey invitation was issued via FPS bulletin to all relevant stakeholders and was in the field from 28 September 2018 to 14 November 2018. During that time 42 total responses were received from 31 of the 47 FRAs in England and Wales, equating to an overall response rate of almost 66%.

1.1 Data submission

Around three-quarters (73.81%) of FRAs responding to the survey in their own right, or where an administrator had answered in respect of an FRA, submitted all year-end information by the deadline required by their administrator to carry out key processes, such as checking and validating data, and running provisional statements.

1.2 Meeting the deadline

Almost all (95%) respondents confirmed that they had met the statutory deadline of 31 August for active members, with just under half (42.86%) reporting that 100% of statements were produced and distributed by that date.

Where statements could not be issued by 31 August, the greatest proportion (57.69%) of those affected are special members of the FPS 2006. Over a quarter (26.92%) fell into more than one of the member categories listed in the drop-down response box.

The most common cause of delay, in almost two-thirds (62.96%) of cases, was software that was unable to perform the required calculations. Data conversion and late receipt of data accounted for 7.41% each, and a further 7.41% cited a combination of data conversion and software issues.

1.3 Deferred members

Despite there being no statutory requirement to send deferred benefit statements (DBS) to former members of the FPS 1992, 92.86% of participants provide this information as a matter of good practice. Of those, 90.48% reported a 100% distribution by the nominal deadline of 31 August, with delay being caused in one instance (2.38%) as the member had gone away.

Both the FPS 2006 and FPS 2015 regulations require that DBS are provided to relevant parties. Over 95% of respondents are compliant with this. All of those providing information were able to send over 90% of statements in respect of both schemes by the assumed deadline. Any delays were caused by data issues (FPS2006 - 16.67%; FPS2015 - 23.81%) or member gone away (FPS2006 - 2.38%).

1.4 Internal controls

Data relating to internal controls was more difficult to analyse due to lack of clarity in question wording and the pre-populated response choices given.

Over three-quarters (76.19%) of respondents indicated in relation to reporting ABS delays to the Local Pension Board that it was not applicable (where there was no delay) or not known (primarily administrators). The remaining responses were split evenly between “yes” and “no”, at 11.90% each.

In no cases was a material breach considered to have occurred, and subsequently referred to the Pensions Regulator.

1.5 Administration and resources

Just under 70% of those completing the survey use their own version of the ABS template, with almost one quarter (23.81%) choosing to proceed with their system providers.

Over three-quarters (76.19%) of respondents confirmed that they have already implemented online self-service for scheme members to access their ABS. Around 10% plan to do so within the next 12 months, and a further 10% within two years. The remaining 5% anticipate a slightly longer timescale.

Only three software suppliers offer pension administration systems for the Firefighters' pension schemes. Over half (59.52%) of those who responded use Universal Pension Management (UPM) system by Civica, with around one-third (38.10%) utilising Altair provided by Aquila Heywood. The remaining response noted "other", specifying Hartlink by Capita.

Outsourcing accounted for 61.90% of printed ABS, with approximately one quarter (26.19%) printing in-house. Almost 20% of respondents were unsure or did not answer.

Generally, the quality of ABS resources provided by LGA, the timeliness of communications from LGA, and the ABS process overall, were rated as satisfactory (four and above). The results indicate that the timescales for providing information and the process as a whole could be improved.

Time spent on the ABS cycle ranged from one week to eight months, although over a quarter (26.19%) of participants either did not specify a time period, or did not enter a response. The most common response at 30.95% was three months. Only one respondent (2.38%) indicated that additional resource was required to complete the process, in relation to special members of the FPS 2006.

Key themes relating to planned improvements for the 2019 cycle are increased and improved implementation of monthly pay postings, continual data cleansing, and running deferred statements earlier to allow more dedicated time for ABS. The area where respondents felt the Scheme Advisory Board (SAB) could most assist in facilitating improvement was through improving communications to members, including online provisions, and encouraging better data flow between FRAs and administrators.

2. Introduction

The introduction of the Public Service Pensions Act 2013¹ saw the requirement for Annual Benefit Statements (ABS) to be issued to all active scheme members by 31 August.

In 2017, the LGA team surveyed FRAs following the statutory deadline to measure the success of the ABS process. A ten question survey was developed using free Survey Monkey software and email invitations sent to Local Pension Board Chairs and Clerks with the instruction that one response per FRA should be completed by the board.

The invitation was issued to 110 individuals across the 44 English FRAs and the survey ran from 4 October 2017 to 14 November 2017. During that time 26 total responses were received, which included three duplicate replies. Of the 26 survey responses, 15 were fully completed and 11 only partially completed by answering just the first question. The analysis of the results was compromised by only 60% of respondents completing all of the questions. A summary of last year's survey findings is available [here](#).

The disappointingly low number of responses to the survey is believed to be attributable to technical or user difficulties with the free software.

At a meeting of 19 April 2018², the [Local Pension Board Effectiveness Committee](#) (the "Committee") agreed that a web-based survey should be commissioned for the 2018 ABS cycle to allow more in-depth analysis of the process and support provided.

3. Methodology

The survey was designed by the SAB secretariat in conjunction with the Committee. A list of questions is attached at Annex A.

The survey was launched in [FPS Bulletin 12 – September 2018](#), with a covering email stating that the questions should be completed by FRAs, administrators, those involved with Local Pension Boards, and any other stakeholders with an interest in the ABS process. Multiple replies from FRAs were welcomed to enable a comprehensive picture of the current landscape to be built up.

A reminder was issued in [FPS Bulletin 13 – October 2018](#).

3.1 Fieldwork

The survey was issued on 28 September 2018 with a closing date of 31 October 2018. The reminder issued on 31 October 2018 extended the deadline to 14 November 2018.

¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2013/25/section/14/enacted>

² <http://www.fpsboard.org/images/PDF/LPBsub/Minutes190418.pdf> [Item 5.6 - 5.9]

42 responses were received in respect of 31 of 47 FRAs (including England and Wales), equating to a response rate of almost 66% of Authorities. The information collected has been aggregated and no responses have been attributed to individual authorities within this report. A list of FRAs that completed the survey is attached at Annex B.

Throughout the report percentages in figures and tables may equate to more or less than 100 per cent due to rounding.

3.2 Respondent profile

Almost half (47.62%) of completed surveys were submitted by scheme administrators. FRA pension practitioners accounted for 21%, with scheme managers completing in nearly 17% of cases. Local Pension Board representatives accounted for only 7%.

Table 3.2.1 – Capacity in which survey completed

Role	Total (Percentage)
Administrator	47.62
FRA pension practitioner	21.43
Scheme manager	16.67
Local pension board representative	7.14
Finance Officer (FRA)	2.38
FRA HR representative	2.38
Other ³	2.38

4. Research findings

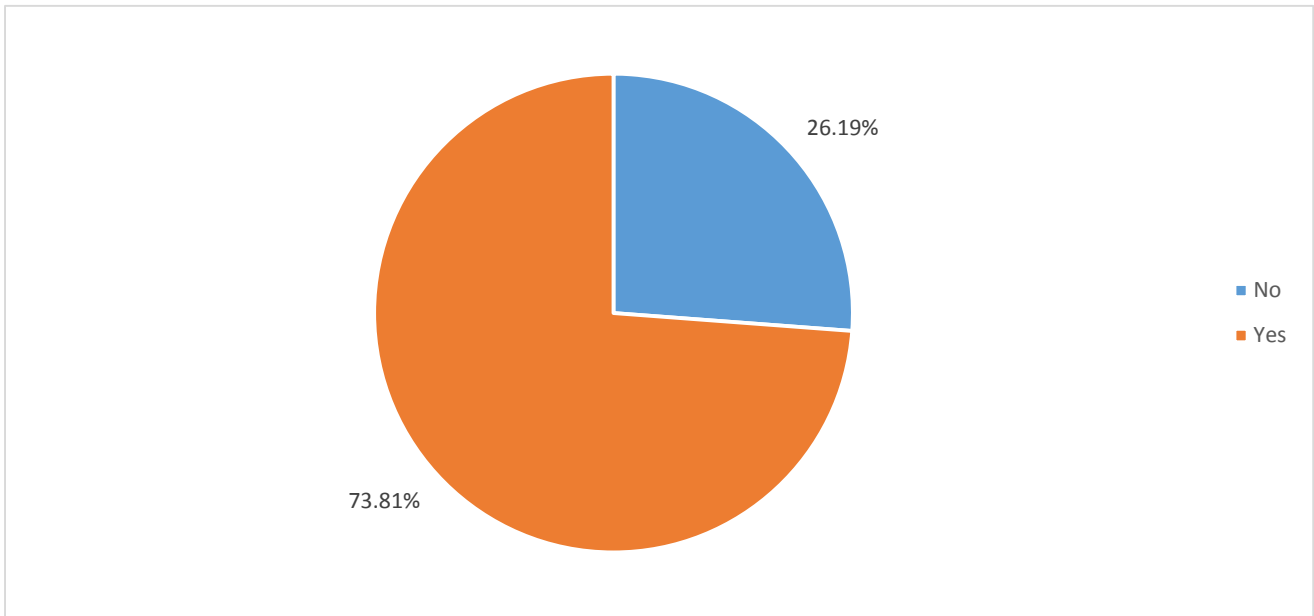
4.1 Data submission

Before ABS can be produced, year-end data must be provided by the employer (FRA) to the administrator. There are a number of checks that the administrator will need to carry out to validate this data and ensure it is as accurate as possible. Data can then be loaded into the system to initially generate the CARE element for FPS 2015 members, before further checks are carried out. Statements will finally be run, firstly in provisional and then in actual modes, prior to printing and distribution.

Due to these processes, administrators will set deadlines for receipt of year-end information. Almost three-quarters (73.81%) of FRAs submitted all year-end information to their administrator by the required deadline, including where relevant Continual Professional Development (CPD) and Additional Pension Benefit (APB) data.

³ Data Manager of Administrating Authority

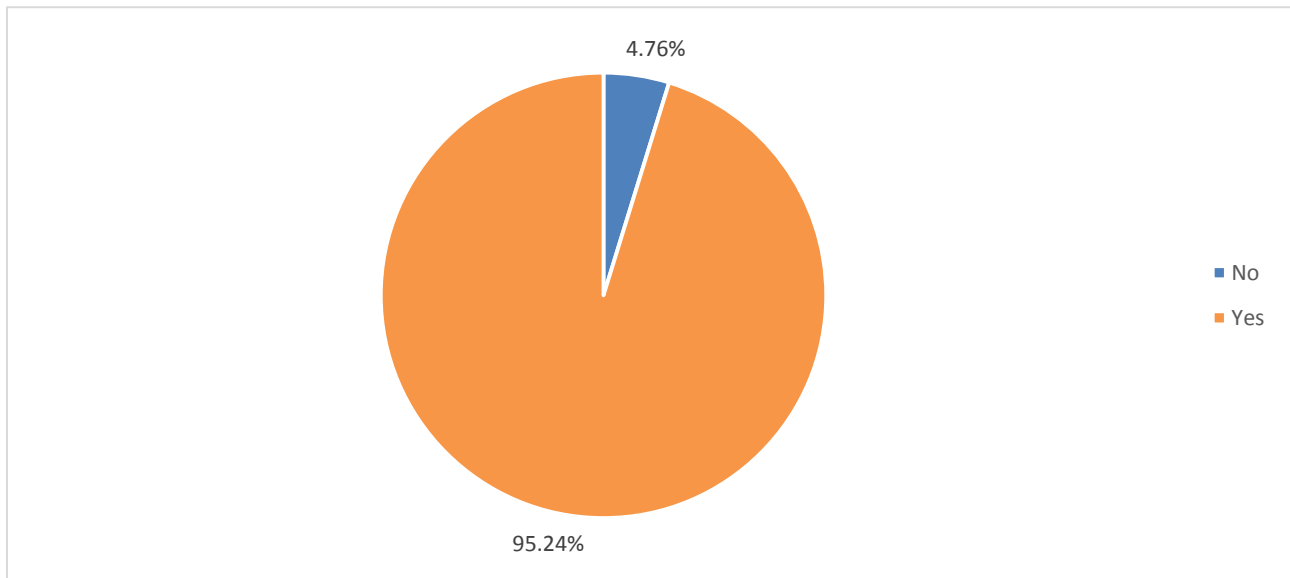
Figure 4.1.1 – Proportion of FRAs submitting all year-end information to their administrator by the required deadline (including CPD data).



4.2 Meeting the deadline

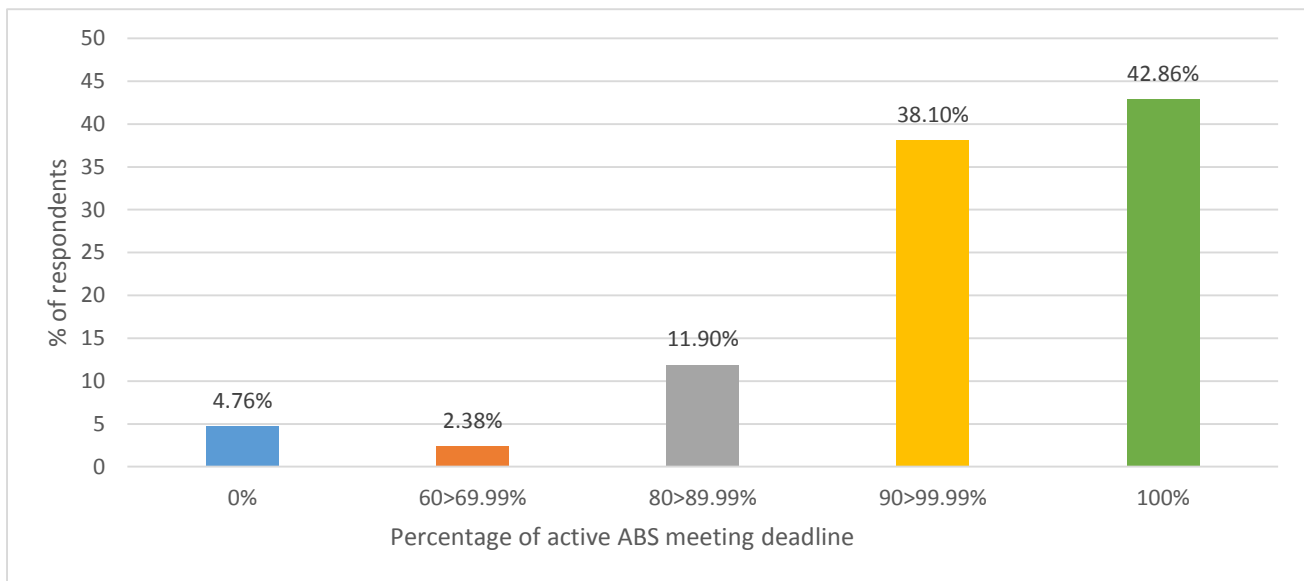
Despite a quarter of data not being provided on time, 95% of respondents indicated that they had met the statutory deadline for active members. This is an 11 point improvement on the percentage of those achieving the deadline in 2017 (84%).

Figure 4.2.1 – Proportion of respondents meeting the statutory ABS deadline of 31 August 2018.



Respondents were asked to specify what percentage of active member ABS were produced and distributed by 31 August 2018. The majority (92.86%) achieved over 80%, with just under half (42.86%) reporting a 100% success rate. The number in the 0% column correlates with Figure 4.2.1, as expected.

Figure 4.2.2 – Percentage of active member ABS produced and distributed by 31 August.



Where it was not possible to distribute all statements by the deadline, drop down lists were provided in order to establish whether any groups of member were particularly affected and what was the main cause of the delay.

Of the 26 responses received, the greatest proportion (57.69%) of members not receiving an ABS by 31 August fell into the “special members” category. Special members are retained firefighters who have been granted access to the Firefighters’ Pension Scheme 2006 (FPS 2006) with special provisions which broadly reflect the rules of the Firefighters’ Pension Scheme 1992 (FPS 1992). This follows the introduction of the Part-Time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000 and a subsequent court case which deemed that retained firefighters should receive equal treatment with full-time regular firefighters. This category of member is commonly held to be complex to administrate.

Over a quarter (26.92%) of those answering stated that members fell into more than one of the categories listed at Table 4.2.1, while the remaining respondents (15.38%) either felt that there was no particular pattern of affected members, or more likely, fell within the 100% bracket in Figure 4.2.2.

Figure 4.2.3 – Proportion of members falling into one or more category

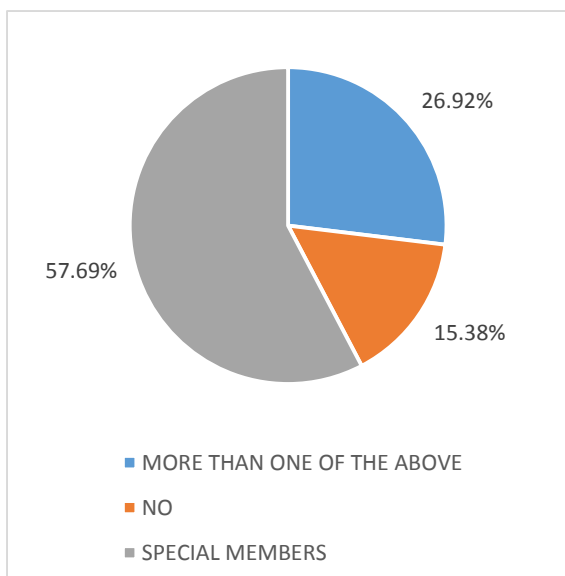


Table 4.2.1 – Drop down list of member categories.

DROP DOWN BOX
i) NO
ii) SPECIAL MEMBERS
iii) STANDARD RETAINED
iv) FPS 1992
v) FPS 2006
vi) FPS 2015
vii) HIGH EARNERS (AA/ LTA)
viii) MORE THAN ONE OF THE ABOVE

A drop down list of the most common reasons for not being able to meet the deadline was pre-populated at Q5.

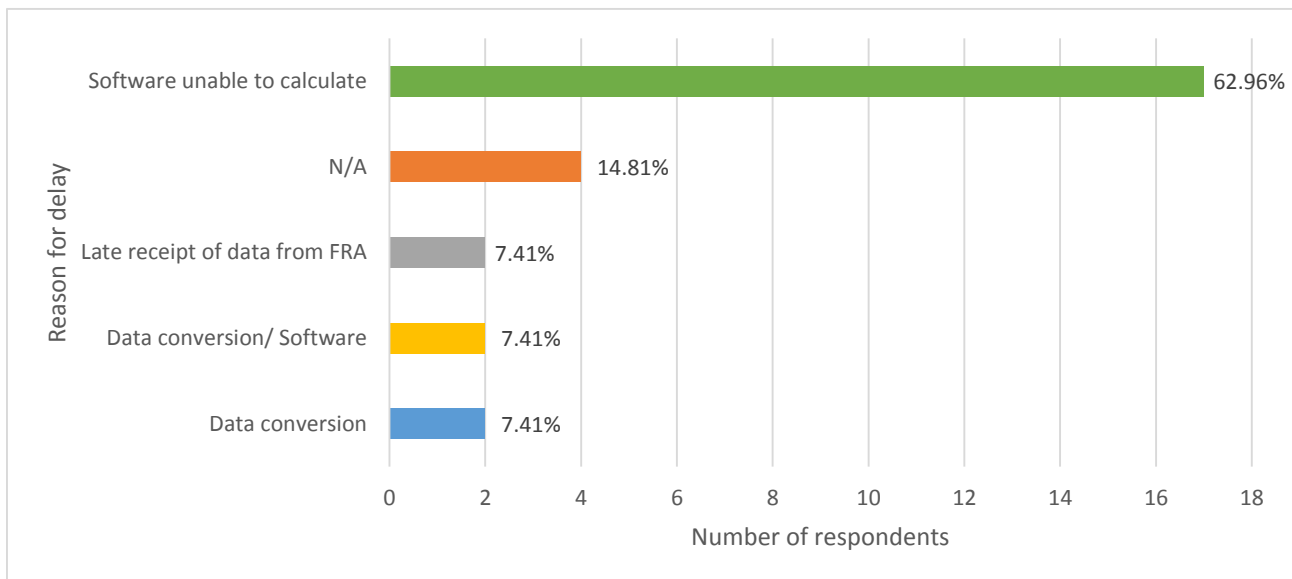
Table 4.2.2 – Drop down list of reasons for delay.

DROP DOWN BOX
i) LATE RECEIPT OF ACCURATE INFORMATION FROM FRA
ii) SOFTWARE UNABLE TO CALCULATE
iii) PRINTING ISSUES
iv) LACK OF RESOURCE
v) POSTAGE DELAY
vi) OTHER - PLEASE SPECIFY
vi) N/A

Of the options provided the most common cause of delay was software unable to calculate benefits, at almost 63%. This is reflective of the majority of cases falling under the special member category above. Excluding the N/A responses, there was then an even split at 7.41% between late receipt of data, data conversion (for administrators taking on new clients), and other. Where other had been selected in two cases, the respondents specified that the delay was caused by a combination of data conversion and software unable to perform calculations for special members.

In the 2017 survey, the most frequently occurring responses were late receipt of accurate payroll data and issues with software.

Figure 4.2.4 – Primary reason for any delay.

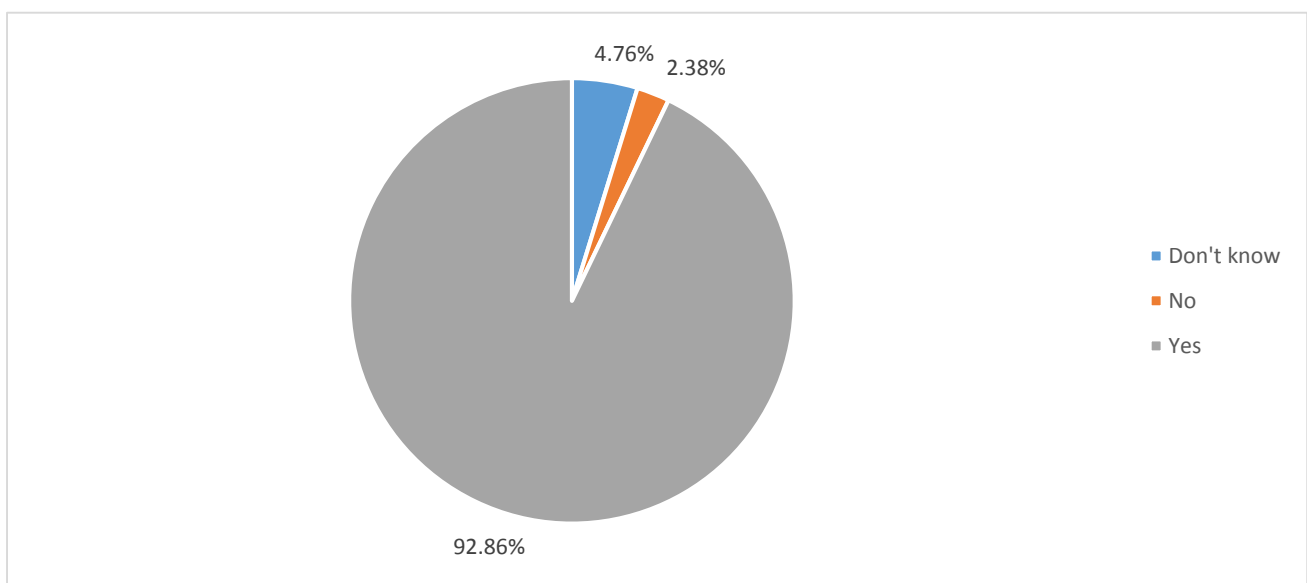


4.3 Deferred members

In an addition to last year's survey, the 2018 questionnaire proceeded to ask employers and administrators what arrangements are in place for members leaving service without an immediate entitlement to benefits. Under the regulations, there is a statutory requirement for deferred members of the FPS 2006⁴ and the Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2015⁵ (FPS 2015) to be sent a deferred benefit statement (DBS). No such provision exists in the FPS 1992, however, it is considered good practice to provide one under disclosure of information.

The vast majority (92.86%) of respondents indicated that annual statements are provided to deferred members of the FPS 1992. Only one FRA (2.38%) does not supply this information, and the remaining 4.76% were unsure.

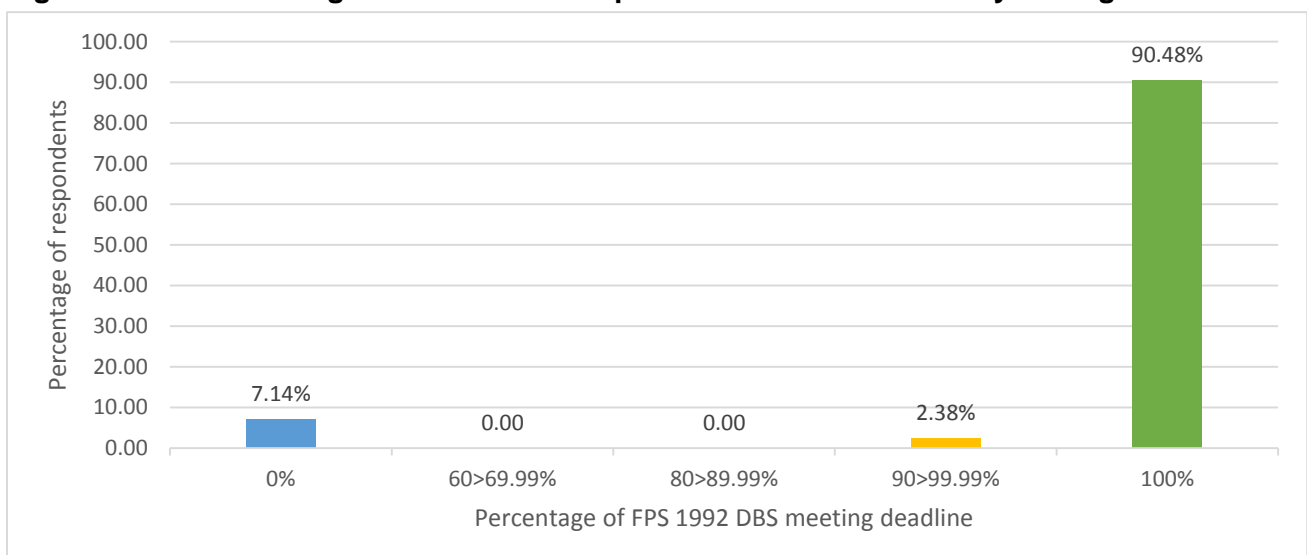
Figure 4.3.1 – Proportion of respondents providing FPS 1992 DBS.



Unlike active member ABS, there is no statutory deadline. Therefore, for the purposes of this survey, we have assumed the same deadline of 31 August.

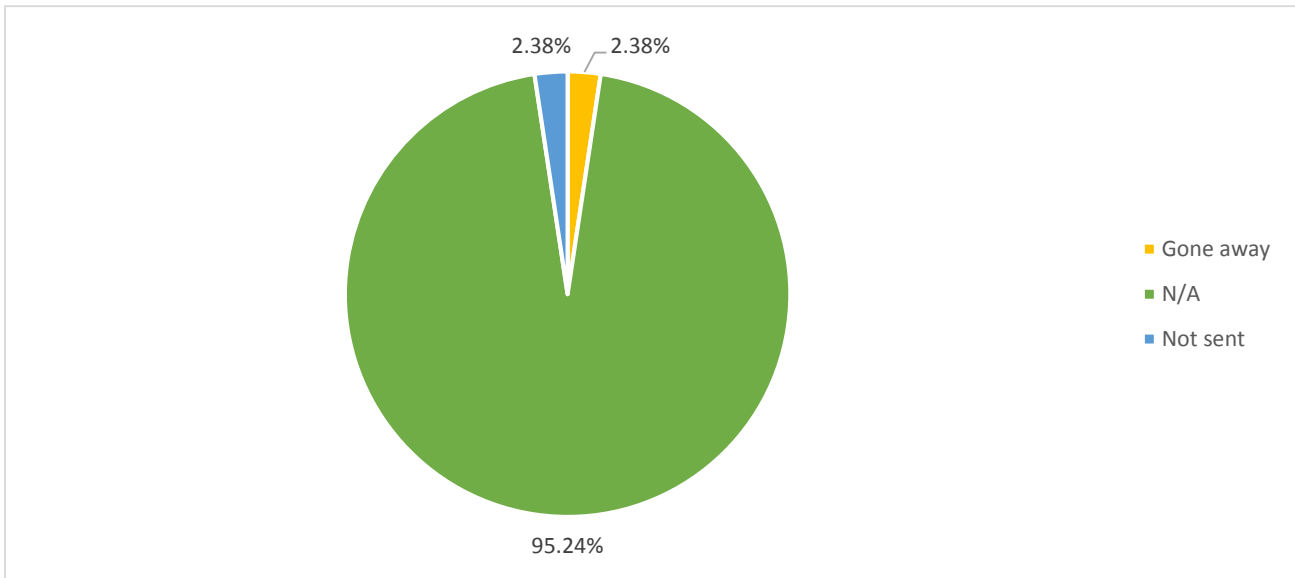
The category displayed as 0% in Figure 4.3.2 corresponds with an N/A or blank response, for those that answered "don't know" or "no" to the previous question. Of the remaining 39 responses, 38 (90.48%) of these achieved a 100% distribution.

Figure 4.3.2 – Percentage of FPS 1992 DBS produced and distributed by 31 August.



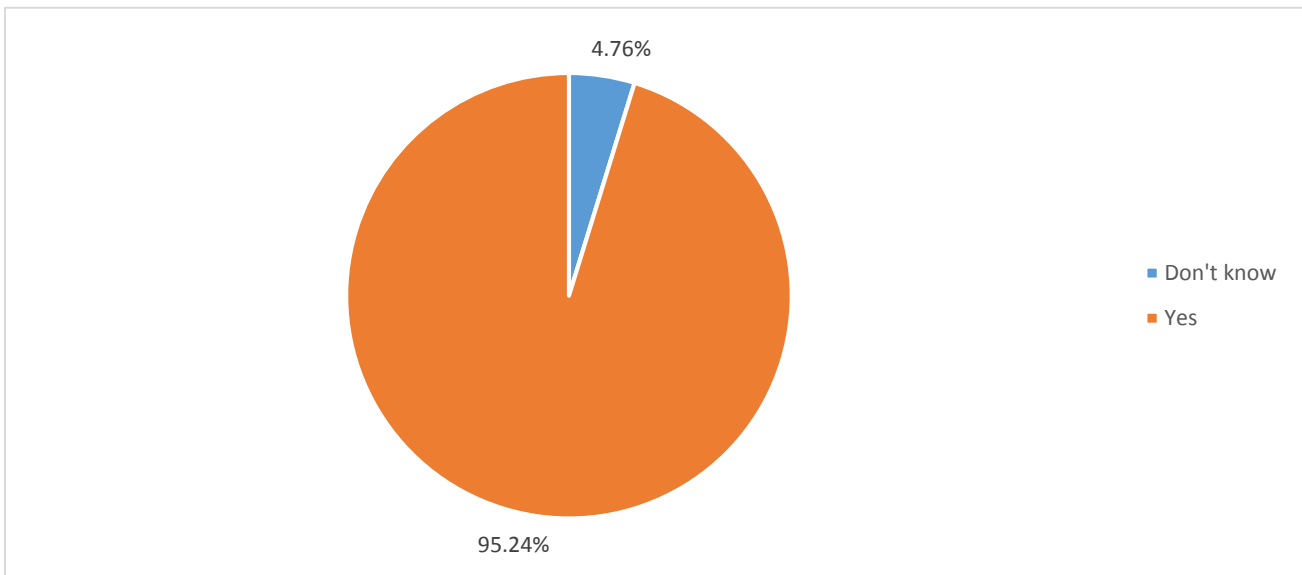
As such a high proportion of DBS were produced and distributed by 31 August, the subsequent question regarding the cause of any delay to timescale was largely obsolete. Of the two respondents that did not answer "N/A", one (2.38%) reported that the member had gone away and the other (2.38%) had not sent statements as it is not a statutory requirement.

Figure 4.3.3 – Primary reason for any delay.



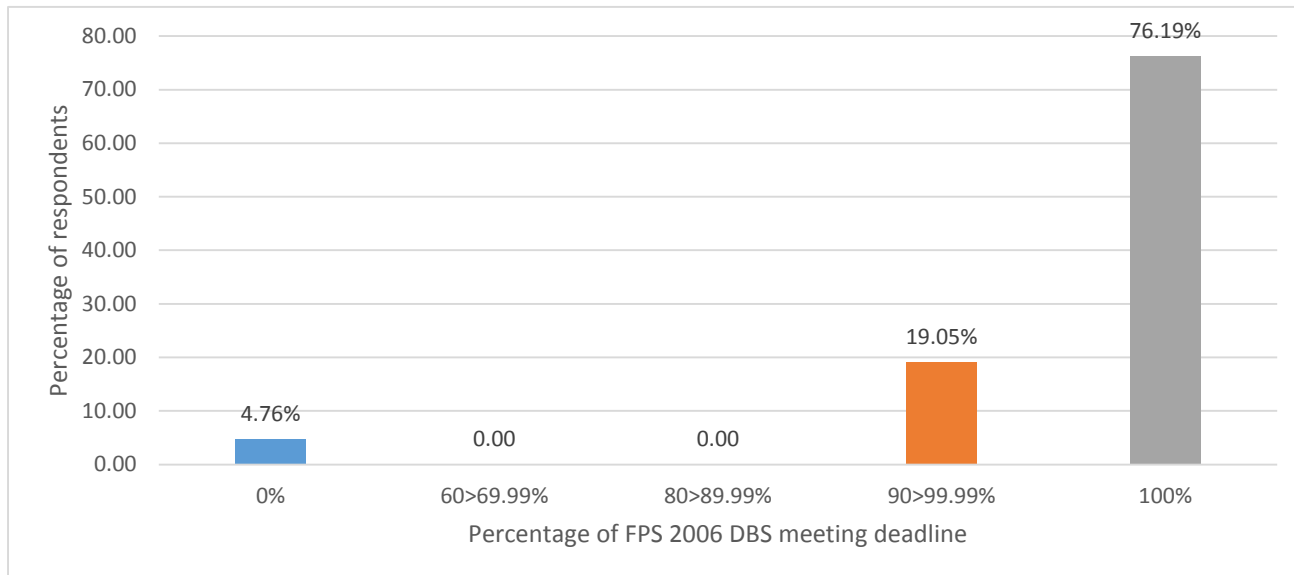
Due to the legislative requirement to send statements to deferred members of the FPS 2006, a slight increase in percentage can be seen in the number of respondents providing DBS, to 95.24%. The remaining 4.76% did not know and these responses correlate with the previous question.

Figure 4.3.4 – Proportion of respondents providing FPS 2006 DBS.



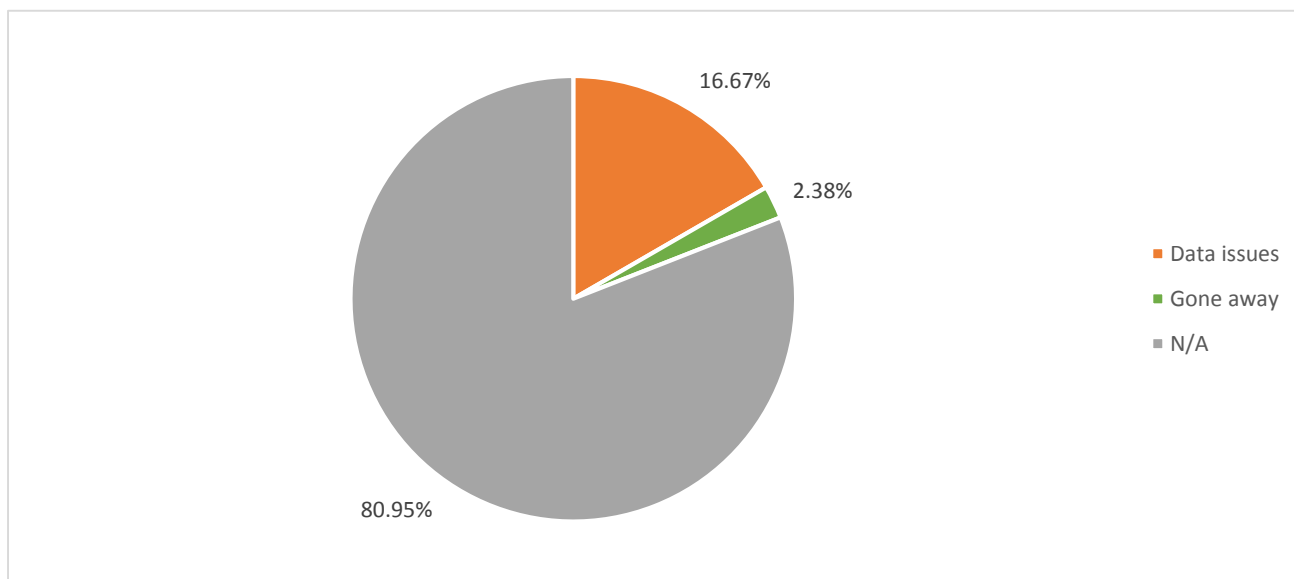
While all of those providing information were able to send over 90% of statements by the assumed deadline, around three quarters of respondents (76.19%) achieved 100% of DBS produced and distributed by 31 August for former members of the FPS 2006. The category displayed as 0% (4.76%) corresponds with a blank response, for those answering “don’t know” to the previous question.

Figure 4.3.5 – Percentage of FPS 2006 DBS produced and distributed by 31 August.



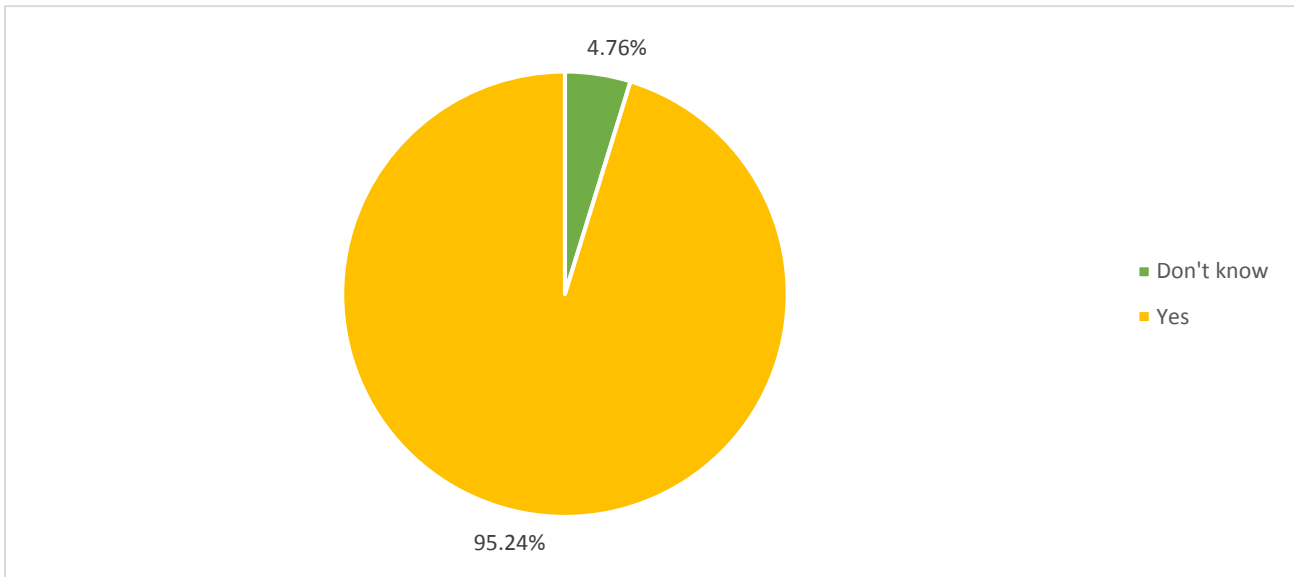
In relation to the primary reason for any delay, a high proportion (80.95%) of “N/A” responses were received; the total of the “100%” and “don’t know” categories in the previous question. However, a variety of different free text replies were submitted under the “other” option within the drop down list. These fell primarily under the broad title of data issues (16.67%), including problems with data conversion or additional checking, with one (2.38%) reporting that the member had gone away.

Figure 4.3.6 – Primary reason for any delay.



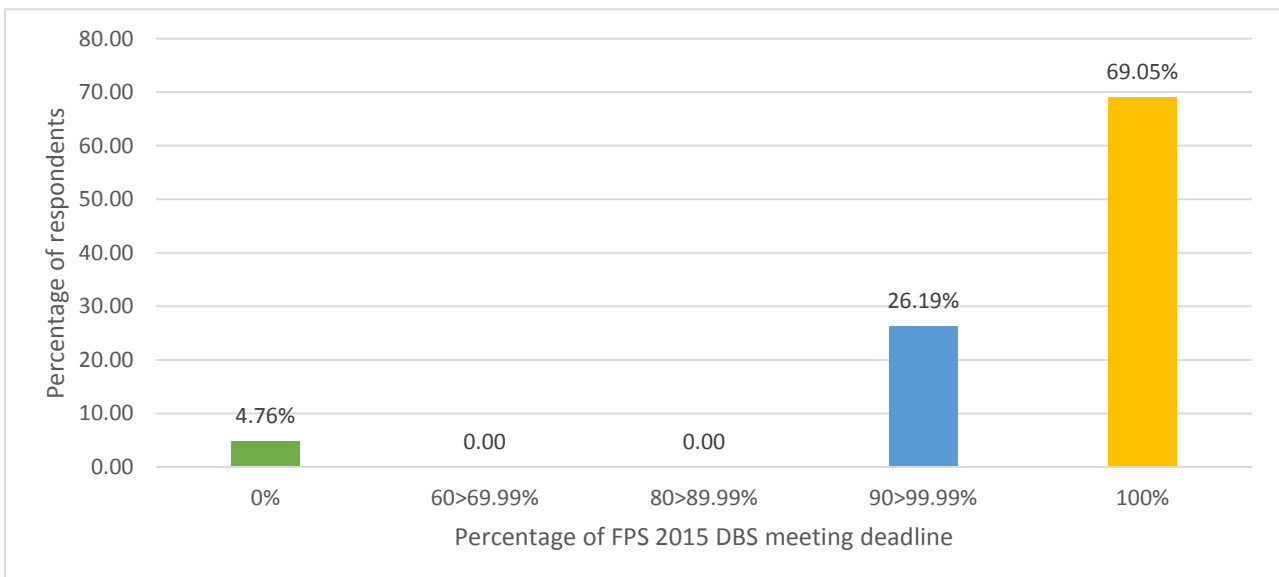
The response for the number of those sending DBS in respect of the FPS 2015 mirrored the response for the same question of the FPS 2006, with 95.24% producing statements and the same 4.76% who were unsure.

Figure 4.3.7 – Proportion of respondents providing FPS 2015 DBS.



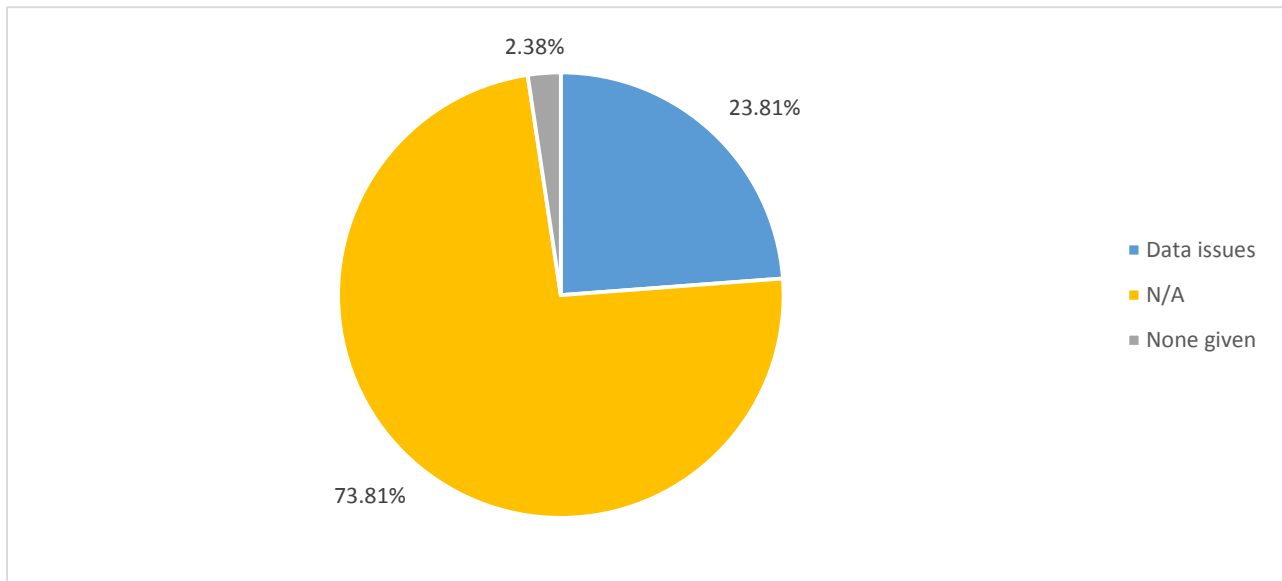
All respondents sending DBS to deferred FPS 2015 members were able to produce and distribute over 90% of statements, with a slightly lower ratio realising a full 100% than for the FPS 2006, at 69.05%. Again, 4.76% were unsure and are indicated as a 0% response below.

Figure 4.3.8 – Percentage of FPS 2015 DBS produced and distributed by 31 August.



Interestingly, the number of occurrences (23.81%) of delay due to reasons broadly categorised as data issues was higher than for the FPS 2006. One respondent (2.38%) did not give a reason for any delay; that is for not reaching the 100% target. The remaining “N/A” responses (73.81%) equate to the sum of “0%” plus “100%” columns above.

Figure 4.3.9 – Primary reason for any delay.

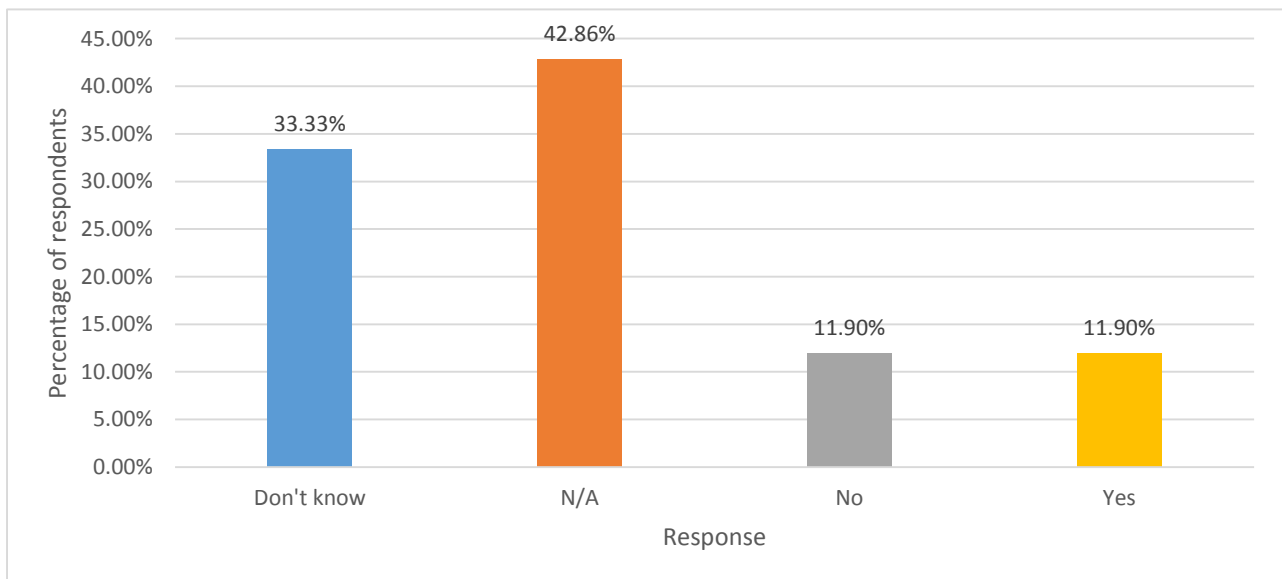


4.4 Internal controls

Stakeholders were asked whether any ABS not provided by 31 August were reported to the Local Pension Board. Unfortunately an “N/A” option was excluded from the drop list of responses, so the data has been manipulated to fetch N/A for all blank responses where 100% of statements had been despatched on time. A third (33.33%) of respondents answered “don’t know”, these relate solely to administrators. The remaining responses were split equally between “yes” and “no” at 11.90% each.

A further question could be considered for the 2019 survey to establish reasons for this.

Figure 4.4.1 – Reporting of delayed ABS to Local Pension Board.



In all cases where statements had been delayed, therefore excluding the “N/A” responses, there were no breaches that were considered to be material. Subsequently no breaches were reported to the Pensions Regulator.

When considering whether a material breach has occurred, individuals should take into account how the error came about, what action was taken to resolve it, and whether similar errors of this nature have occurred previously. The effect of an error might be minor as a single event, but could be major if it occurs frequently or processes/ work flows are flawed. A [breach assessment template](http://www.fpsboard.org) is available from www.fpsboard.org to record the decision making process.

Figure 4.4.2 – Proportion of breaches considered to be material.

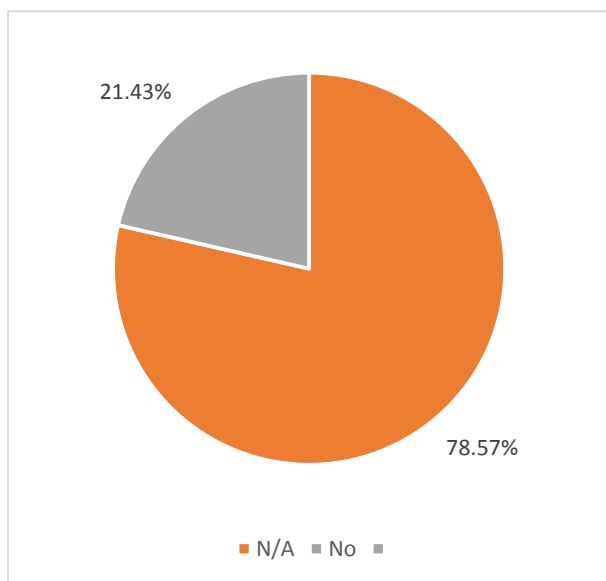
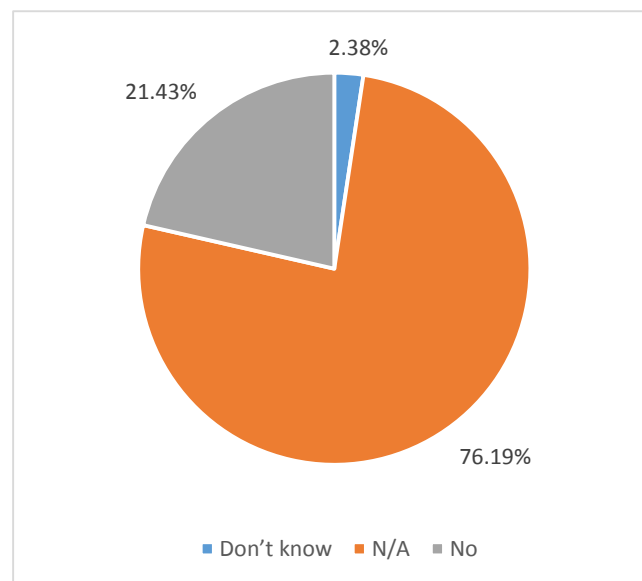


Figure 4.4.3 – Proportion of breaches reported to the Pensions Regulator.



4.5 Administration and resources

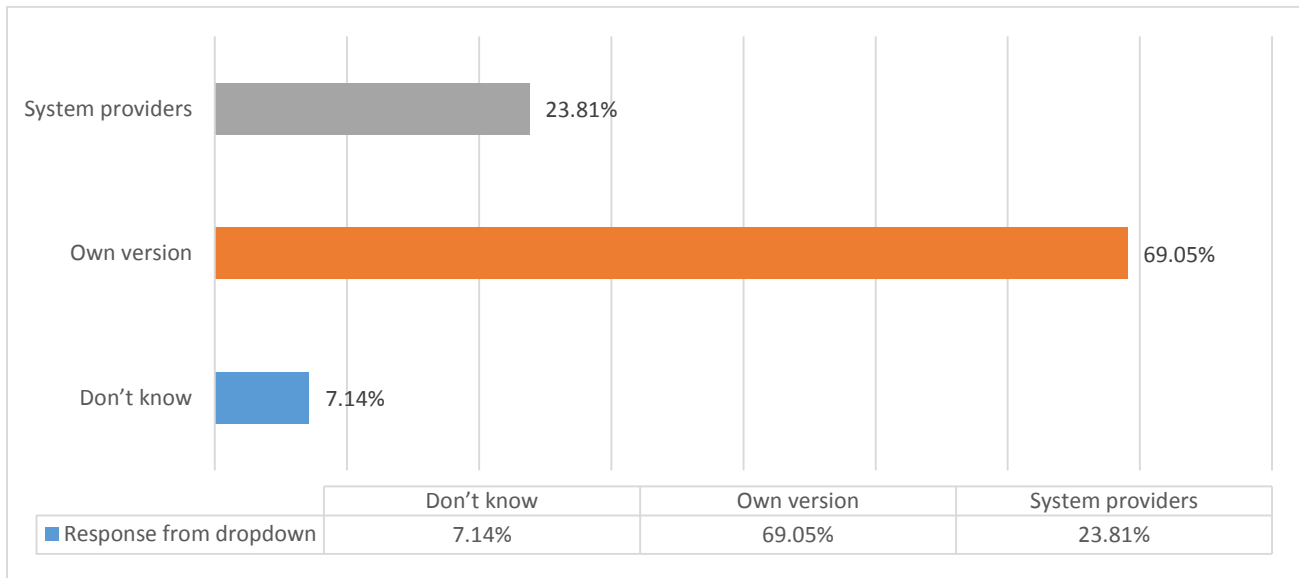
Each year the SAB secretariat issues a revised ABS template with explanatory notes⁶. In 2018, the example calculations were brought up to date, and the document was assessed at cost by the Plain English Campaign and awarded a Crystal Mark. It is, however, appreciated that administrators may prefer to use alternative formats, therefore respondents were asked which template their administrator used, to gain insight on the value of providing a standard document.

From the multiple choice list of options, over two-thirds (69.05%) of respondents selected “Own version”, with almost a quarter (23.81%) using their system providers. The remaining 7.14% did not know, equating to three responses.

Unfortunately, from the options provided, it is not possible to ascertain whether the in-house versions or system providers’ versions are based on the LGA template. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the majority of administrators utilise the LGA version in some form with adjustments to achieve compatibility with their systems and processes. However, this is an area of the survey which can be improved for the 2019 cycle.

⁶ <http://fpsregs.org/images/ABS/2018ABS.docx>

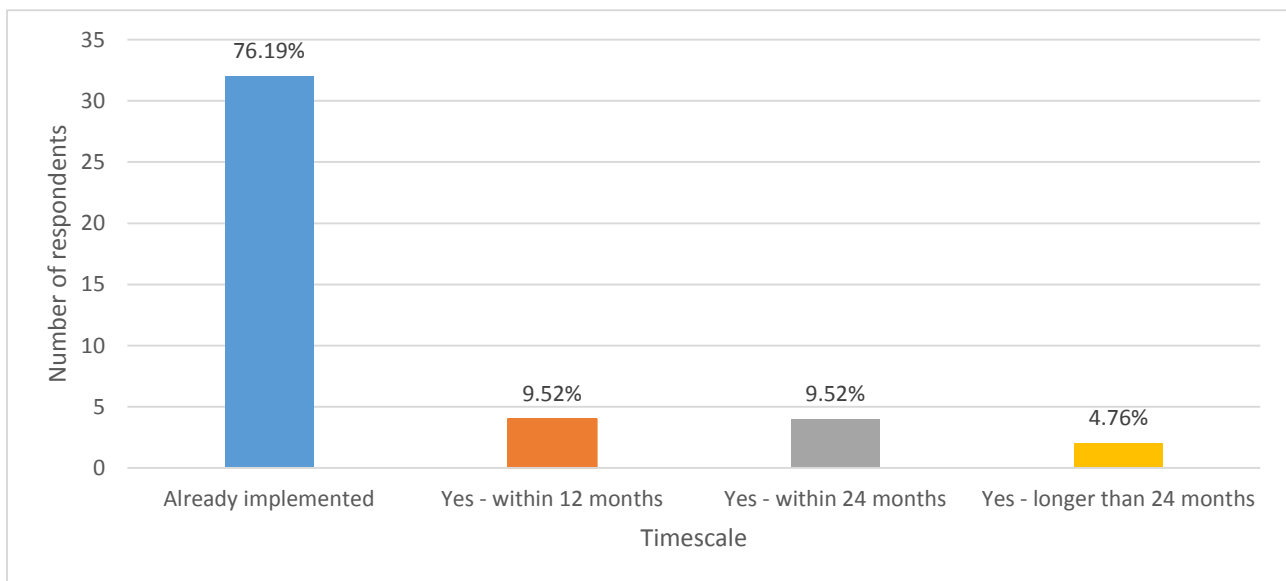
Figure 4.5.1 – ABS template used.



With the forthcoming introduction of pensions dashboards, expectations for digital solutions and instant online access to benefit information are ever going to increase. Correspondingly, over three-quarters (76.19%) of respondents confirmed that they have already implemented online self-service for scheme members to access their ABS. Around 10% plan to do so within the next 12 months, and a further 10% within two years. The remaining 5% anticipate a slightly longer timescale. No submissions selected the final option within the drop down list of “No plans”.

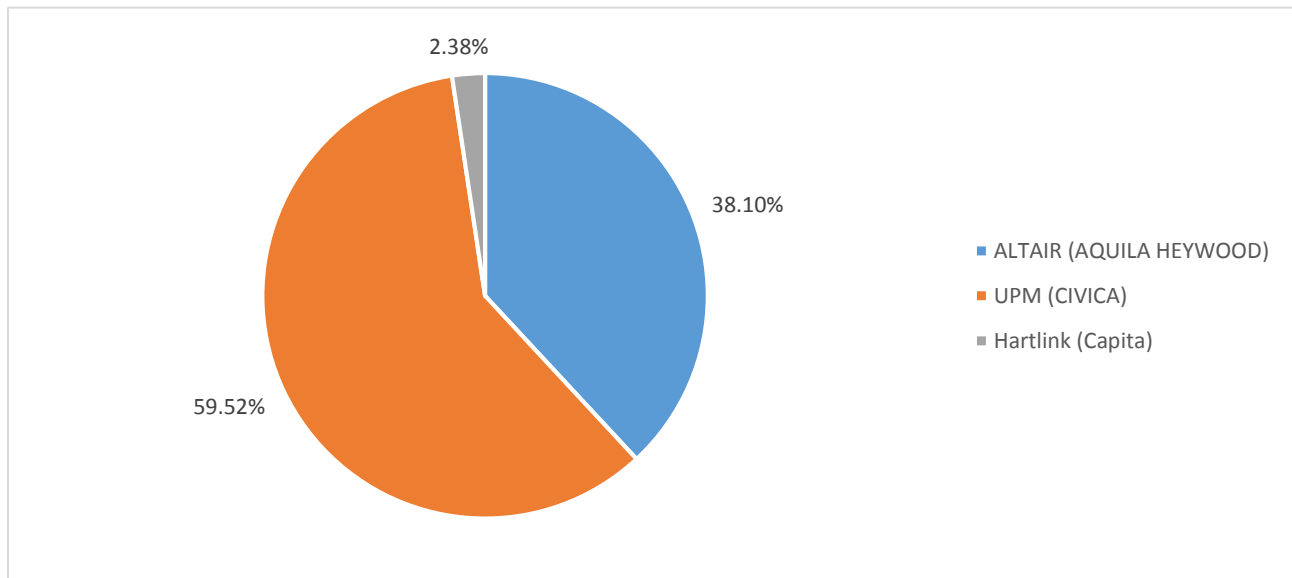
While these results are encouraging, it is not clear whether online functionality has been extended in order for members to carry out other self-service tasks such as running projections or amending their personal details.

Figure 4.5.2 – Implementation of online member self-service.



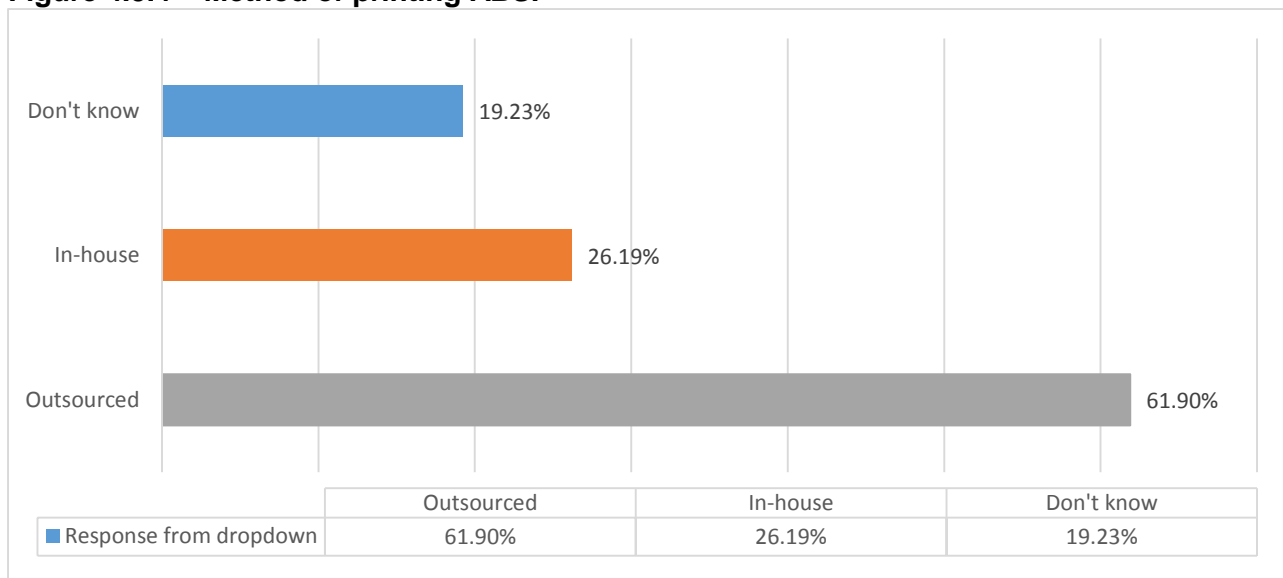
Over half (59.52%) of those completing the survey use Civica’s Universal Pension Management (UPM) system, with around one-third (38.10%) utilising Altair provided by Aquila Heywood. One respondent selected “other”, specifying Hartlink by Capita. The split is not necessarily reflective of the known landscape, rather that a response was submitted for some FRAs by both an employer representative and the administrator, thereby skewing the figures.

Figure 4.5.3 – Pension administration system used.



The most common method of printing ABS was to outsource, at 61.90%, with over a quarter (26.19%) printing in-house. This is a slight reversal in trend from the 2017 results. A relatively high proportion of respondents to this question didn’t know how the statements were printed: 19.23% or five FRAs. However, this figure has been artificially inflated by three blank responses.

Figure 4.5.4 – Method of printing ABS.



Stakeholders were asked to evaluate their satisfaction with: the quality of ABS resources provided by LGA, the timeliness of communications from LGA, and the ABS process overall, using a 1-5 scale (where 1 was ‘very dissatisfied’ and 5 was ‘highly satisfied’).

While all categories rate towards the higher end of the scale, with a mean score of 4 or above in each category, the results show room for improvement in the timescales for providing information and the process as a whole.

Table 4.5.1 – Evaluation of satisfaction with... – mean ratings.

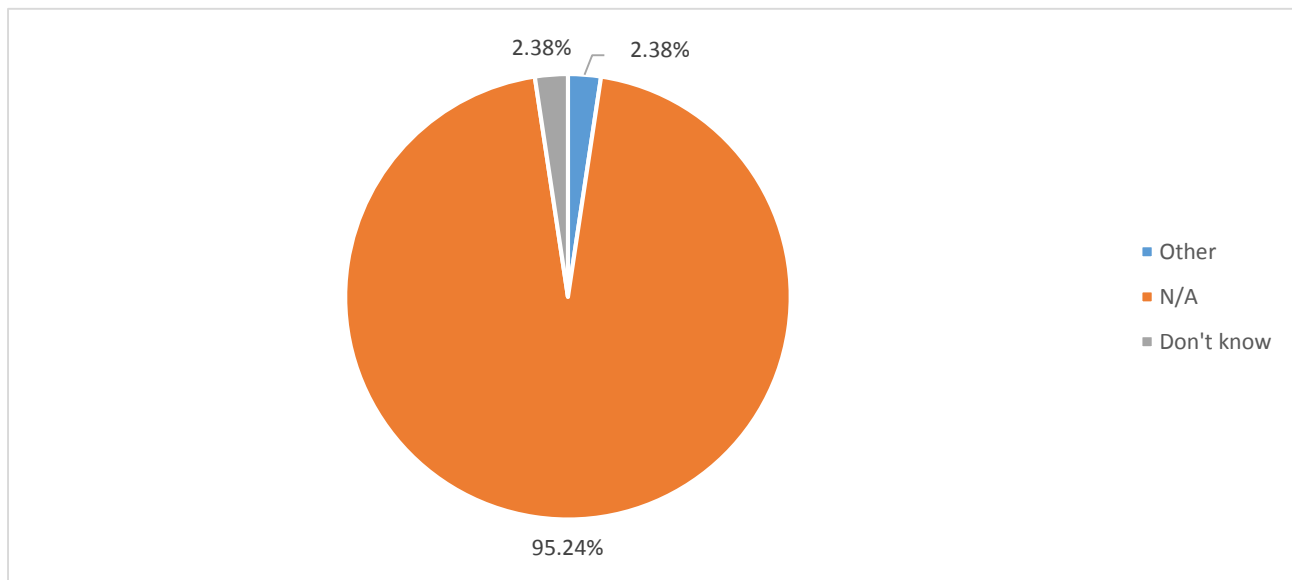
Process	Rating (mean value)
Quality of ABS resources provided by LGA	4.5
Timeliness of communications from LGA	4.1
ABS process overall	4.0

A free text box was provided for respondents to give an estimate of time spent on the ABS cycle, from start to finish. The varying format and content of replies has made the data difficult to collate and evaluate. Answers ranged between five days, or one week, at the lower end, to eight months at the highest. However, the most common response at 30.95% was three months; over a quarter (26.19%) either did not specify a time period, or did not enter a response at all.

It may be helpful for future surveys to include a list of parameters for respondents to choose from.

Over 95% of participants confirmed that no additional resource was required to complete the ABS process. One (2.38%) did not know and one (2.38%) stated that manual ABS had to be created for special members of the FPS 2006, as the data generated by the administration software was often incorrect. This also necessitated a comprehensive checking and testing process.

Figure 4.5.5 – Additional resource required.



Finally, respondents were asked to describe any plans for improvement to the ABS process next year, and comment on any action the SAB could take to facilitate those improvements.

This was captured verbatim and full details of the responses are attached at Annex C and D respectively. The following key themes were identified and have been summarised below. One response has been

deleted from Annex C where it was not possible to desensitise the text without removing the meaning.

Table 4.5.2 – Key themes relating to plans to improve the ABS process in 2019.

Move to, or improvement of, monthly postings
Data cleansing
Running DBS earlier to allow more time for ABS

Fewer responses were received to the question of the SAB supporting improvements to the process, however, the main theme was around improving information that is provided to members to help them understand the statement. A selection of other comments are noted below.

Table 4.5.3 – Comments relating SAB support to facilitate improvements.

Encourage software provider to account for PSO debits and AA Scheme Pays Debits in calculations.
Encourage FRAs / Scheme Administrators to work more collaboratively.
Template changes need to be issued as early as possible to enable them to be incorporated.

5. Recommendations

The Committee would like to thank all those that were able to submit a response for their participation in the survey, and for continuing to support the work of the SAB.

5.1 Data submission

The Committee consider that migration to monthly posting of pay and contributions would expedite the collection of required data for the ABS process following year-end, allowing validation and data cleansing to take place on a monthly basis and queries to be addressed in real time.

This is evidently high on administrators' agendas and functionality already exists within pension administration software.

Communication between the employer and administrator is key. Deadlines and format for receipt of data should be clearly stated, along with any procedures the administrator has in place for data collection and validation.

5.2 Meeting the deadline

While the majority of administrators were able to meet their statutory requirements, concern remains around the reasons for those that are not compliant with the deadline.

Special members of the FPS 2006 continue to present a problem, with software capability in some cases unfit for purpose. The Committee would encourage software providers to ensure that functionality exists within their programmes to carry out the complex calculations that this category of member necessitates. While understandably this comes at a cost, the cost must be offset against the value of being able to

supply timely and accurate benefit information to all members.

Boards may wish to consider adding this as a specific element to their risk register to ensure mitigation processes can be put in place.

Data conversion is also evidently an issue for those FRAs entering into new administration contracts. Therefore, the Committee recommend that timescales are taken into account when tendering for a new administration provider and ensure all ABS related processes are built into a robust SLA.

5.3 Deferred members

An encouraging number of administrators provide DBS to deferred members of all schemes. Where delay in distribution has been caused by data issues, this may correlate to the statement above concerning those FRAs procuring a new administration provider and the same recommendation will apply.

Tracing services can be utilised for members who are no longer resident at their last known address.

5.4 Internal controls

To facilitate a good understanding of the ABS cycle, it is recommended that the outcome of the exercise is reported annually to the Local Pension Board, whether or not any delay or breach has occurred. In instances where it is unclear whether a reportable material breach has taken place, authorities should consider completing the [breach assessment template](#).

Stakeholders are reminded that any person involved with a scheme (excluding members) has a duty to report an identified breach.

The questions and responses in this section will be refined for the 2019 survey to allow more detailed analysis.

5.5 Administration and resources

The Committee do not wish to make recommendations on the mechanics of the ABS process, such as software and printing solutions. This is clearly a commercial decision for administrators. Therefore the recommendations in this section reflect actions that the SAB and secretariat can take.

The SAB secretariat will continue to provide a revised standard template annually and in good time. The sample calculations will be updated every two years and resubmission to the Plain English campaign considered if there have been substantial material changes to content. Statement annexes will be added to the member-area of www.fpsregs.org to be used as standalone documents as required.

Further thought will be given to improving the flow of data between employers and administrators, and simplifying the information that is provided to members.

The Committee and the wider SAB will continue to champion the use of online technology to provide statements to members, with the facility for individuals to carry out further calculations. The majority of administrators and FRAs have demonstrated a solid commitment in this regard.

The outcome of the administration and management benchmarking review will be considered in conjunction with this report to establish whether further improvements can be suggested.

Annex A: Survey questions

- 1 Did your administrator receive all year-end information from your FRA by their required deadline (including CPD data?)
- 2 Did you meet the statutory ABS deadline of 31 August 2018?
- 3 What percentage of active member ABSs were produced and distributed by 31 August?
- 4 If any were not produced and distributed by this date, did they fall into a particular category?
- 5 What was the main cause of the delay?
- 6 Did your administrator provide FPS 1992 deferred ABSs (Noting this is not a statutory requirement)?
- 7 What percentage of FPS 1992 deferred member ABSs were produced and distributed by 31 August?
- 8 If any were not produced and distributed by this date, what was the main cause of the delay?
- 9 Did your administrator provide FPS 2006 deferred ABSs (Noting this is a statutory requirement)?
- 10 What percentage of FPS 2006 deferred member ABSs were produced and distributed by 31 August?
- 11 If any were not produced and distributed by this date, what was the main cause of the delay?
- 12 Did your administrator provide FPS 2015 deferred ABSs (Noting this is a statutory requirement)?
- 13 What percentage of FPS 2015 deferred member ABSs were produced and distributed by 31 August?
- 14 If any were not produced and distributed by this date, what was the main cause of the delay?
- 15 If any ABSs were not provided by 31 August, was this reported to your Local Pension Board?
- 16 If so, was the breach considered material?
- 17 Was any breach reported to The Pensions Regulator?
- 18 Did your administrator use their system provider's template or their own version?
- 19 Do you have any plans to introduce online self service for members to access their ABS?
- 20 Which pension administration system do you use?
- 21 Did you use an outsourced printing provider or print your statements in-house?
- 22 i) the quality of ABS resources provided by LGA
- 23 ii) the timeliness of communications from LGA
- 24 iii) the ABS process overall
- 25 Please provide an estimate of time spent on the ABS cycle, from start to finish
- 26 If any additional resource was required, please list it here:
- 27 What, if anything, do you plan to do differently next year to improve the ABS process?
- 28 Is there anything the Scheme Advisory Board could do facilitate improvements to the ABS process?
- 29 In what capacity are you completing the survey?
- 30 Which FRA are you completing the survey in relation to?

Annex B: Respondents

(Number of responses received in brackets)

Avon Fire and Rescue Service (1)
Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (2)
Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Service (2)
Cleveland Fire Brigade (1)
Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service (1)
County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (1)
Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service (1)
Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service (2)
Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service (1)
Essex County Fire and Rescue Service (1)
Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (1)
Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service (1)
Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (1)
Humberside Fire and Rescue Service (2)
Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service (1)
Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue (2)
London Fire Brigade (1)
Mid & West Wales Fire and Rescue Service (1)
Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service (1)
North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (1)
North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service (1)
Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service (2)
Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (1)
Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (1)
Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (2)
Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (2)
South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service (2)
Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service (1)
Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service (2)
West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service (1)
West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service (2)

Annex C: Q25. What, if anything, do you plan to do differently next year to improve the ABS process?

Online ABS next year may negate the need to provide printed/posted versions.
We provide 100% of all benefit statements to both active and deferred members via Member Self Service. Members have the option to opt out of online communications and these are produced in house using the standard Heywoods ABS stationary.
Don't know at this stage
Try to get final month 12 return from FRA earlier in the process Streamline Monthly Postings process Continual data cleansing
Look at feedback and address any issues
Identified a few shortcuts from this year which we will carry forward. Nothing major, just internal processes which could have been streamlined with hindsight.
Run deferred ABS earlier to concentrate on active ABS.
This was a new client from 1 April 2018 so we had a lot of data issues to resolve. This should not be a problem next year Hope to get the month 12 return from the FRA in a more timely manner Continuous data cleansing
The final return wasn't received until 20/08/2018 so we need to receive this much earlier to be able to meet the deadline New Client from 1 April 2018 with a lot of data conversion issues. These should all be resolved before next years production Streamline the monthly postings process to make it more efficient
Reconcile year end data earlier
test the ABS' in a live environment rather than just with test cases. This ensure that the software works as expected in the live environment with real data.
Streamline Monthly Postings process Continual Data cleansing
Run deferred ABS as early as possible.
To try & get the Month 12 return from the FRA in a more timely manner Improvements to the Monthly Postings process Continual data cleansing
Monthly returns to be implemented to make data more timely and prevent lots of year end queries.
Continue to encourage use of electronic communications with members
Streamline monthly postings process to make it more efficient Continual Data Cleansing
Issue an accompanying FAQ sheet
More streamlined Monthly Postings process Continuous data cleansing

Data conversion issues have been resolved so the process should be smoother and quicker next year Streamline the monthly Postings process Continual Data Cleansing
Data issues arising from the transition of pensions administration will have been resolved.
Run deferred ABS earlier so can concentrate on active ABS
Looking at implementing I-Connect to help the data loading issues
Fully implemented Monthly Returns process
check accuracy of payroll data earlier to minimise late checking
Improvements have been made over the last few years and with the system now fully online the ABS process runs very smoothly. We are therefore not planning any further improvements for the coming year.
Monthly Postings process to be more streamlined Data Cleansing to be a continuous process
Already report data on a monthly basis to our pension administrators, work with regional groups to simplify the ABS where possible, therefore easier to understand by members and reduce queries.
Streamline Monthly Postings process so it is more efficient Continual Data cleansing Start Special member production earlier if month 12 return received in a timely manner
We are continuing to work on the data so that production next year will be possible within the deadline We will be working on streamlining the monthly postings process so that it is more efficient
N/A The service will be handled by a different provider for 2019.
Improvements to Monthly postings process Continual data cleansing
We are now using monthly postings

Annex D: Q26. Is there anything the Scheme Advisory Board could do facilitate improvements to the ABS process?

Encourage software provider to account for PSO debits and AA Scheme Pays Debits in calculations.
Provide training/communication to enable members to understand the ABS
We have had a problem with staff who are special members of the 2006 scheme. Once this is resolved we would anticipate that ABS can then all be produced in a timely manner. The feedback from staff has been that the ABS doesn't provide estimates for age 55 and 30 years service and instead only provides an estimate for normal retirement age. We know this is the requirement but this information was provided by our previous provider who use the Heywood system which can automatically provide these estimates. This has led to an increased number of enquiries from staff seeking further estimates.
Encourage FRAs / Scheme Administrators to work more collaboratively - but to make this happen this would have to start very early in the year to allow time for consultation etc.
Allow these surveys to be saved in draft form so can print and circulate to stakeholders for agreement before submitting
Template changes need to be issued as early as possible to enable them to be incorporated. Notes are really good, but separate set of notes for each scheme may make them more readable, and reduce the size of the notes
SAB could assist the Pensions' administrators by reminding Services of their responsibility to get pay details to their administrators in a timely manner. For those who have not gone across to the online statements, SAB could also try and encourage Services to move across as quickly as possible. SAB could also support and encourage LGA in reviewing the current ABS notes that go out to members, to ensure these are simplified in a way that makes these rather technical notes, easier to read by the average member.
If any of the statements can be simplified, easy to follow example flow charts to aid members understand their statements, especially for members that have transitioned into 2015 scheme, so have 2 different calculations to understand, any help to facilitate this would be useful.