A close-up photograph of a young woman with long, wavy reddish-brown hair, wearing a brown tweed flat cap and a colorful, multi-colored knit scarf. She is smiling broadly, showing her teeth. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people in a public setting. A diagonal teal overlay covers the left side of the image.

What does 'good administration' look like? From TPR's expectations to real practice

PMI's Insight Partner



BARNETT
WADDINGHAM

Part of **HOWDEN**

By Sharon Khan, Partner, Pension Administration, Barnett Waddingham



Good administration isn't just about meeting deadlines or ticking off compliance tasks. It's about making sure members get the right benefits, at the right time, and that they understand what's happening. Members should feel confident that their pension is being looked after properly.



The Pensions Regulator (TPR) sets out clear expectations for schemes – things like keeping data accurate, having strong governance, and completing core transactions on time. But TPR doesn't define exactly what 'good' looks like day to day. Many schemes still focus mainly on service level agreements (SLAs), such as how quickly tasks are completed. However, speed alone doesn't mean success – a fast process that's wrong, unclear, or stressful for members can do more harm than good.

What good administration really means

Good administration strikes a balance between several key areas:

- **Member experience** – showing empathy, being accessible and offering real support.
- **Accuracy** – getting things right the first time.
- **Timeliness** – working to sensible turnaround times without cutting corners.
- **Clarity** – using plain, friendly language that members can easily understand.
- **Governance** – having clear oversight, accountability and risk management.

When these elements come together, administration becomes more than just a process – it becomes a valuable service that builds confidence and trust.

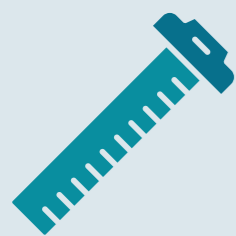


Looking beyond speed

Many schemes still rely heavily on SLAs to measure success, but these only show part of the picture. To really understand performance, schemes should use broader management information, such as:

- **Accuracy rates** – how often tasks are done correctly first time.
- **Member satisfaction** – how members feel about the service they receive.
- **Timeliness** – working to sensible turnaround times without cutting corners.
- **Data quality** – whether member records are becoming cleaner and more reliable over time.

This combination of measures helps administrators and trustees see what's working well and where improvements are needed.



The challenges administrators face

Even with clear goals, administrators face real challenges every day. Pension rules and legislation are complex and change often, making it hard to stay fully up to date. Many schemes also rely on older systems or incomplete data, which slows down processes and increases the risk of mistakes.

Workloads can be heavy, especially during peak times such as annual benefit statements or project work like GMP equalisation or dashboard preparation. At the same time, members expect fast, digital, and personalised service similar to what they get from banks or online retailers. Meeting these high expectations while maintaining accuracy and security can be difficult.

Recruiting and retaining skilled administrators is another challenge. The work requires technical knowledge, attention to detail and strong communication skills – a rare mix, and a craft that takes time to develop.



Building the foundations of good administration

Ultimately, good administration depends on three things: skilled people, effective systems, and a culture of collaboration and transparency. When these are in place, schemes can move beyond compliance and focus on what truly matters – helping members feel informed, supported and secure about their pensions.

That's what 'good administration' looks like in practice.



pensions-pmi.org.uk



PMI's Insight Partner



Part of **HOWDEN**