Pension Fund Transformation Training Course: Reform, Member Engagement and Scenarios

4 – 8 January 2027
Rome

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Programme Summary

Pension fund transformation is the subject of this one-week training course for fund executives, scheme sponsors and trustees, ending in a change roadmap for one scheme. Retirement systems are moving from defined benefit towards defined contribution, members expect digital service, and boards face new risk and sustainability expectations. Leaders who handle these pressures one project at a time often meet resistance and rework. The programme moves from trends and the case for change, through the defined contribution transition and member engagement, to consolidation, scenarios and a tested roadmap. Mars Training Centre UK delivers this programme on pension fund transformation to mixed-organisation cohorts.

The Business Case

Pension funds, employer schemes and national retirement institutions all carry long-dated promises while their members, markets and technology shift beneath them. Change led without a clear case, a sequence and member evidence tends to stall, and delay raises cost and weakens trust. A structured approach gives sponsors a way to choose, sequence and explain change.

- Reform Delivery: Steadies when changes are sequenced against capacity, dependencies and stakeholder readiness.
- Member Trust: Strengthens when communication and service changes are tested with members before launch.
- Administrative Cost: Falls when processes, providers and scheme structures are reviewed for consolidation and automation.

Principles and Evidence Base

- OECD Pension Markets in Focus: Tracks assets, the balance of defined benefit and defined contribution arrangements and reform across countries, applied in Sessions 1 and 2 to the trend and case-for-change pack.
- ADKAR Model: Describes awareness, desire, knowledge, ability and reinforcement in individual change, applied in Session 3 to member and staff engagement plans.
- Kotter's Eight-Step Model: Sets out the stages of leading organisational change, applied in Sessions 2 and 5 to the roadmap and sponsor coalition.
- Scenario Planning: Tests plans against several plausible futures, applied in Session 4 to the outlook scenarios.

Intended Participants

- Fund executives who must decide which reforms to lead and in what order.
- Scheme sponsors who fund a pension arrangement and answer for its direction.
- Trustees and board members who challenge and approve change proposals.
- Operations and member service leaders who will deliver the new model.

Typical settings include corporate pension schemes, public retirement funds, master trusts and social insurance bodies.

Learning Outcomes

1. Participants will be able to evaluate demographic, market and policy trends for their effect on a pension arrangement.
2. Participants will be able to construct a case for change that a board and sponsor can test.
3. Participants will be able to diagnose the risks and member effects of a move from defined benefit to defined contribution.
4. Participants will be able to design a member engagement and digital administration plan.
5. Participants will be able to prioritise consolidation and sustainability options against cost and risk.
6. Participants will be able to justify a sequenced change roadmap to trustees and sponsors.

Programme Structure

Day 1: Pension Fund Transformation Trends and the Case for Change

Which forces are reshaping this arrangement, and why must it change?

- Demographic and Market Trend Brief
- OECD Pension Markets in Focus Reading Guide
- Stakeholder Pressure Map
- Burning Platform Statement
- Change Appetite Assessment

Day 2: The Defined Contribution Transition

What happens to members, risk and governance when the arrangement shifts?

- Defined Benefit to Defined Contribution Option Comparison
- Member Outcome Risk Register
- Sponsor Coalition Canvas
- Kotter Eight-Step Mapping
- Transition Impact Matrix

Day 3: Member Engagement and Digital Administration

How do members and staff come to accept and use the new model?

- ADKAR Readiness Assessment
- Member Journey Map
- Communication Plan Template
- Digital Service Capability Review
- Administration Process Redesign Sheet

Day 4: Consolidation, Sustainability and Outlook Scenarios

Which structures and futures should the roadmap be tested against?

- Consolidation Options Appraisal
- Provider and Scheme Structure Review
- Sustainability Integration Checklist
- Scenario Planning Grid
- Roadmap Stress Test Sheet

Day 5: Change Roadmap for One Scheme

Do the earlier tools join into a roadmap a board can approve?

- Applying the Session 1 Burning Platform Statement
- Using the Session 2 Transition Impact Matrix
- Testing the Session 3 Member Journey Map
- Checking the Session 4 Scenario Planning Grid
- Completing the Change Roadmap

Methodology

The programme uses case analysis on prepared material for two schemes, one a corporate scheme closing a defined benefit section and one a public retirement fund modernising its member service, each with membership data, board papers and service reports. Participants work in groups, challenge each other's assumptions and defend their roadmap to peers acting as trustees.

- Suggested activity: Rewriting a case for change that a sceptical sponsor has rejected.
- Suggested activity: Mapping a member's experience of a new online service and finding the failure points.
- Suggested activity: Stress testing a roadmap against a low-growth scenario.

Capstone Output

Each participant completes a change roadmap for one scheme. It holds a trend brief, a case for change, a transition impact matrix, an engagement and digital plan, a scenario test and a sequenced list of actions with owners. The roadmap is used at work to brief trustees, to secure sponsor support and to guide the first phase of delivery.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is pension fund transformation training suitable for leaders new to reform programmes?

Yes. Pension fund transformation is taught through prepared cases and templates. The programme assumes you have responsibility for, or oversight of, a pension arrangement, but needs no earlier change management training.

Which models does pension fund transformation rest on?

Pension fund transformation rests on OECD trend evidence, the ADKAR model, Kotter's eight-step model and scenario planning, each applied to prepared scheme cases.

How is the roadmap from pension fund transformation used at work?

You use the pension fund transformation roadmap to brief trustees, win sponsor support, sequence reforms and guide the first phase of delivery.

How does pension fund transformation differ from a pension governance programme?

Pension fund transformation concentrates on leading change in structure, service and member experience, while a pension governance programme concentrates on trustee duties, oversight and control.