



FPS Bulletin 37 – September 2020

Welcome to issue 37 of the Firefighters' Pensions Schemes bulletin.

We hope that readers remain safe and well.

Although restrictions on travel and social distancing are gradually easing, face-to-face meetings and training remain suspended for the time being. However, the Bluelight team are available at home by mobile, email or video (MS Teams, Skype, or Zoom).

If you are looking for information on a certain topic, issue and content indexes are held on the [main bulletin page](#) of the website and are updated following each new issue.

If you have any comments on this bulletin or suggested items for future issues, please email claire.hey@local.gov.uk.

Contents

Calendar of events	3
FPS	3
Home Office immediate detriment note update	3
Website and resources update	4
September query log	4
FPS England SAB updates	5
Template Pension Administration Strategy consultation response	5
Immediate detriment request for information	5
Other News and Updates	6
LGPS SAB draft McCloud response published	6
Update on the single TPR Code of Practice	6
Government confirms intention to increase minimum pension age	6
Events	7
FPS AGM 22 and 23 September 2020 – event summary	7
FPS coffee mornings	8
HMRC	8
HMRC newsletters/bulletins	8
Useful links	9
Contact details	9
Copyright	9
Disclaimer	9

Calendar of events

Please see below a calendar of upcoming events relevant to the Firefighters' Pension Schemes. Only those events which are hyperlinked are currently available to book. If you have any events you would like to be included in a future bulletin, please email claire.hey@local.gov.uk

Table 1: Calendar of events

Event	Date
FPS coffee and catch up	Every second Tuesday from 1 September 2020
South East regional FPOG	5 October 2020
Fire Finance Network conference	7-8 October 2020
Midlands regional FPOG - TBC	12 October 2020
Eastern regional FPOG	19 November 2020
SAB	10 December 2020

FPS

Home Office immediate detriment note update

We commented in [FPS Bulletin 36 – August 2020](#) on the [immediate detriment note](#) issued by the Home Office. We understand that the department will not be able to provide a response to the queries we have raised until October. However, in the meantime, we appreciate that FRAs are being encouraged to progress cases under the terms of the note.

We are working on providing further clarity to FRAs in three areas.

1. Legal status of the note.

We are seeking legal advice on behalf of FRAs including application to claimants and non-claimants, any consequences arising from incorrect payment of benefits, and any resulting unintended discriminatory treatment.

We understand that the Home Office and HMT are relying on Section 61 of the Equality Act to provide legal underpinning to the note for non-claimants. That power is currently being contested in the FRA's appeal under Schedule 22 of the same act, in which they argue that they were required by law to follow the pension regulations and so had no choice but to implement the transitional protections for older firefighters.

2. A general information note on the key issues.

We have drafted a note to provide additional information to FRAs on the key considerations of implementing the Home Office informal guidance.

This includes the legal considerations detailed above, the position of employer contributions, which we believe Home Office to be discussing with HMT, technical queries raised, and areas where we believe a policy steer would be helpful to enable more accurate payments to be made.

3. Support for practitioners, to include:

- 3.1. Supporting FRAs to evidence robust decision making on whether a case can proceed under the current guidance, and if not, why not;
- 3.2. Working with the [Fire Communications Working Group](#) to provide a consistent template on how a member may be provided with a choice and what this should include, using [documentation provided to support choice in 2006](#) as a guide;
- 3.3. Working with administrators to provide example calculations to assist with bringing benefits into payment where the guidance is not explicit.

The information note is currently being reviewed and will be issued as soon as possible.

Website and resources update

We have added the following page to the member-restricted section of the Firefighters' Pension Schemes Regulations and Guidance website this month:

[HMRC CLM queries](#). The page has been created to hold technical queries submitted to HMRC regarding the application of tax to the Firefighters' Pension Scheme.

If you require log-in details for this area, please email bluelight.pensions@local.gov.uk.

September query log

The current [log of queries and responses](#) is available on the FPS Regulations and Guidance website. The queries have been anonymised and divided into topics. The log will be updated on a monthly basis in line with the bulletin release dates.

We have not added any new queries this month.

FPS England SAB updates

Template Pension Administration Strategy consultation response

The SAB secretariat published a consultation on 30 June 2020 seeking views on the introduction of a [template pension administration strategy](#). The consultation closed on 31 August.

The consultation received 15 responses in total: twelve from Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) and three from scheme administrators.

The detailed consultation response can be read at [Appendix 1](#). One response was received late and is still to be incorporated into the document.

The strategy will be reviewed based on the responses to the consultation and any necessary amendments made. The organisations who responded to the consultation will be invited to comment on the revisions to ensure that their views have been suitably reflected.

Immediate detriment request for information

The SAB note the immediate detriment guidance issued by the Home Office and wish to encourage the payment of pensions to eligible members.

The SAB also want to understand what percentage of the FPS 2015 membership within the immediate detriment category are likely to be affected by complicating factors, such as divorce or transfers.

The Board are seeking information similar to that requested in [FPS Bulletin 28 - January 2020](#) on the number of members who are likely to become eligible for immediate detriment between now and 31 March 2022. This should include:

- Any member refused ill-health retirement under the FPS 2015 as the lower ill-health criteria was not met.
- 1992 transition members of FPS 2015 who reach age 55 before 31 March 2022.
- 1992 transition members of FPS 2015 who reach 30 years' service before 31 March 2022.
- 1992 transition members of FPS 2015 who will have 25 years+ service and be over 50 by 31 March 2022.

The Board request that you complete the information sheet at [Appendix 2](#) by 31 October 2020. Please note that clicking the link downloads an Excel spreadsheet.

Other News and Updates

LGPS SAB draft McCloud response published

FRAAs will have employees who are members of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). As the LGPS is a funded scheme and members within 10 years of retirement at 2012 were protected in a different way, the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) are consulting separately on changes to address age discrimination. The consultation closes on 8 October 2020.

On 28 September 2020, the LGPS SAB published [a draft version of its response to the McCloud consultation](#).

You are welcome to use the content to help with your own responses. The LGA will not be submitting a separate response.

Update on the single TPR Code of Practice

On 1 September 2020, the Pensions Regulator (TPR) confirmed that it now intends to launch the formal consultation on a single Code of Practice in late 2020 or early 2021.

TPR provides [15 codes of practice](#), covering topics such as early leavers, internal controls and governance and administration of public service pension schemes.

In July 2019, TPR confirmed, in a statement on its website, that it planned to review and combine the content of the 15 codes to form a single, shorter code. The statement originally set out plans to launch a consultation later in 2019.

Government confirms intention to increase minimum pension age

In [an answer to a parliamentary question](#) on 3 September 2020, the Government confirmed that it still plans to increase the minimum pension age from 55 to 57 in 2028 and will legislate in due course.

The Government confirmed in 2014 in [its response to the consultation 'Freedom and choice in pensions'](#) that it intends to increase the minimum age from 55 to 57 in 2028 and that the change will apply to all schemes, aside from those in the public sector that do not link their normal pension age to State Pension age, namely Firefighters, Police and the Armed Forces.

Events

FPS AGM 22 and 23 September 2020 – event summary

We were delighted to offer our fire pensions annual conference in a virtual format this year. In long-standing tradition, the event was preceded by a meeting of the regional chairs, followed by the technical community.

Day 1 had a governance focus and following a brief introduction from the [new chair of the England Scheme Advisory Board](#), Joanne Livingstone, we were pleased to welcome Nick Gannon from TPR. Nick delivered an in-depth session on breaches of the law – considering the who, how, what, and when of recording and reporting. During the Q&A after the presentation, Nick highlighted the administrative challenges of implementing remedy and the importance of good data and communication.

[Please view the AGM 2020 day 1 presentations here.](#)

We were back online for the full technical/ administration AGM on day 2, with a full roster of guest speakers.

Joanne Livingstone welcomed approximately 100 delegates from across the FPS sector, with a more detailed introduction to herself and the role of the SAB. Joanne highlighted that the Board will seek to provide assurance rather than reassurance to stakeholders and continue to operate in a role of scrutiny and engagement on an evidence basis during her four-year term.



Senior pension adviser, Clair Alcock, then took to the “stage” to give an update from the Bluelight team at the LGA. In an event dedicated to remedy, Clair was not afraid to address the elephant in the room and provided a brief recap on the background to the age-discrimination case and the HM Treasury consultation proposals. The session concluded with a quick look at projects on the horizon.

Des Prichard, chair of the [SAB administration and benchmarking committee](#), led the last morning session with an update on the work of the committee. In particular, the session focused on the draft template administration strategy and the future of scheme administration and management. Des was keen to promote the importance of replying to SAB-issued consultations and surveys in order for the Board to deliver improvements to the sector.

[Click here to return to Contents](#)

After a brief pause for refreshment, we welcomed guest speakers from Eversheds Sutherland and the Government Actuary's Department, to provide our regular case law update and information about the FPS valuation and cost-cap, respectively.

Peter Spreadbury from the Home Office joined us to outline how the department intended to engage with stakeholders in dealing with remedy. Peter emphasised the importance of taking a professional, constructive, and forward-looking approach to working together and noted a commitment to working with stakeholders to reach a lasting resolution.

Delegates were then "zoomed" randomly into one of three breakout rooms to take part in an interactive workshop session. The workshops looked at themes underpinning the delivery of remedy, including [technical issues](#), [data](#), and [communications](#). After a 45-minute discussion, participants returned to the main room to hear feedback from each of the sessions.

[Please view the AGM 2020 day 2 presentations here.](#)

As always, we would like to thank all presenters and delegates for their participation and support. We have received some great feedback from the event and hope that we will be able to host next year's AGM live and in person in London.

FPS coffee mornings

We are continuing to run our MS Teams coffee mornings every second Tuesday while social distancing measures remain in place. These informal sessions lasting up to an hour allow practitioners to catch up with colleagues and hear a brief update on FPS issues from the LGA Bluelight team.

The next event is scheduled to take place on 13 October 2020.

If you would like to join us, please email bluelight.pensions@local.gov.uk and we will add you to the invite list for the sessions.

HMRC

HMRC newsletters/bulletins

HMRC has published the following newsletter containing important updates and guidance on pension schemes:

[Pension schemes newsletter 124 – 29 September 2020](#)

- Temporary changes to pension processes as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19)
- Relief at source
- Managing Pension Schemes service

Useful links

- [The Firefighters' Pensions \(England\) Scheme Advisory Board](#)
- [FPS Regulations and Guidance](#)
- [Khub Firefighters Pensions Discussion Forum](#)
- [FPS1992 guidance and commentary](#)
- [The Pensions Regulator Public Service Schemes](#)
- [The Pensions Ombudsman](#)
- [HMRC Pensions Tax Manual](#)
- [LGA pensions website](#)
- [LGPS Regulations and Guidance](#)
- [LGPS member site](#)

Contact details

Clair Alcock (Senior Pension Adviser)

Telephone: 020 7664 3189

Email: clair.alcock@local.gov.uk

Kevin Courtney (NPCC Pensions Adviser)

Telephone: 020 7664 3202

Email: kevin.courtney@local.gov.uk

Claire Hey (Firefighters' Pension Adviser)

Telephone: 020 7664 3205

Email: claire.hey@local.gov.uk

Copyright

Copyright remains with Local Government Association (LGA). This bulletin may be reproduced without the prior permission of LGA provided it is not used for commercial gain, the source is acknowledged and, if regulations are reproduced, the Crown Copyright Policy Guidance issued by HMSO is adhered to.

Disclaimer

The information contained in this bulletin has been prepared by the Bluelight Pensions team, part of the Local Government Association (LGA). It represents the views of the team and should not be treated as a complete and authoritative statement of the law. Readers may wish, or will need, to take their own legal advice on the interpretation of legislation. No responsibility whatsoever will be assumed by the LGA for any direct or consequential loss, financial or otherwise, damage or inconvenience, or any other obligation or liability incurred by readers relying on information contained in this bulletin.

[Click here to return to Contents](#)

While every attempt is made to ensure the accuracy of the bulletin, it would be helpful if readers could bring any perceived errors or omissions to the attention of the Bluelight team by emailing bluelight.pensions@local.gov.uk.



FPS Bulletin 38 – October 2020

Welcome to issue 38 of the Firefighters' Pensions Schemes bulletin.

We hope that readers remain safe and well.

Face-to-face meetings and training remain suspended for the time being due to restrictions on travel and social distancing. However, the Bluelight team are available at home by mobile, email or video (MS Teams, Skype, or Zoom).

If you are looking for information on a certain topic, issue and content indexes are held on the [main bulletin page](#) of the website and are updated following each new issue.

If you have any comments on this bulletin or suggested items for future issues, please email claire.hey@local.gov.uk.

Contents

Calendar of events	3
Actions arising	3
FPS	3
Age discrimination consultation responses	3
Immediate detriment information note	4
Special Members of FPS 2006 - Second options exercise	4
Scheme sanction charge	5
Medical retirement IQMP certificates	5
Fire and Rescue workforce and pensions statistics published	6
Website and resources update	6
October query log	7
FPS England SAB updates	7
Immediate detriment request for information - reminder	7
SAB levy 2020-21 update	7
Other News and Updates	8
Restriction of exit payments in the public sector	8
Public Service Pensions GMP indexation consultation	8
Update on TPR scheme return 2019-20	8
TPO factsheet: Complaining to TPO on behalf of a deceased's estate	9
Pensions Dashboard Programme update	9
Events	9
Local Pension Board virtual training	9
FPS coffee mornings	9
HMRC	9
HMRC newsletters/bulletins	9
Legislation	10
Useful links	10
Contact details	10
Copyright	10
Disclaimer	11

Calendar of events

Please see below a calendar of upcoming events relevant to the Firefighters' Pension Schemes. Only those events which are hyperlinked are currently available to book. If you have any events you would like to be included in a future bulletin, please email claire.hey@local.gov.uk

Table 1: Calendar of events

Event	Date
FPS coffee and catch up	Every second Tuesday from 3 November 2020
Eastern regional FPOG	19 November 2020
SAB	10 December 2020
North East regional group	17 February 2021
SAB	11 March 2021
SAB	24 June 2021
SAB	9 September 2021
SAB	9 December 2021

Actions arising

Readers are asked to note the following actions arising from the bulletin:

[Immediate detriment request for information](#): FRAs in England to submit numbers of members who qualify for immediate detriment.

FPS

Age discrimination consultation responses

Between 16 July and 11 October 2020, HM Treasury (HMT) consulted on changes to the transitional arrangements of the unfunded public service pension schemes introduced in 2015.

On 9 October, responses were submitted by the LGA and Scheme Advisory Board (SAB). These responses can be found on our dedicated [age discrimination remedy webpage](#), along with the submissions from the Wales and Scotland SABs.

Immediate detriment information note

We advised in [FPS Bulletin 37 – September 2020](#) that we had drafted a note to provide additional information to FRAs on the key considerations on implementing the Home Office informal guidance on immediate detriment.

The [LGA immediate detriment information note](#) and accompanying [template matrix](#) have now been published and can be found on the [Age Discrimination Remedy \(Sargeant\) page](#).

Please note that each FRA's nominated contact for the Sargeant litigation will have further information in order to inform your authority's approach to immediate detriment cases. This is for reasons of legal privilege. Please ensure that you liaise with the nominated contact for your FRA before taking any action.

Special Members of FPS 2006 - Second options exercise

We understand stakeholders are keen to receive updates on the expected second special members options exercise, sometimes referred to as Matthews or O'Brien. While at this stage we cannot provide more definitive information, we have published a new [special members factsheet](#) which provides a brief background on the introduction of special members and comments on the expectations of a second exercise.

Special members were introduced to the Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2006 (FPS 2006) in 2014, following [Matthews v Kent and Medway Towns Fire Authority \[2006\] UKHL 8](#) which allowed retained firefighters employed between 1 July 2000 and 5 April 2006 to join the FPS 2006 with retrospective effect to 1 July 2000.

Following the [European Court of Justice's decision in O'Brien v Ministry of Justice](#) which is a case concerning [fee paid judges in the Judicial Pension Scheme](#), the UK Government have recognised the right for retained firefighters employed before 1 July 2000 to elect to become a special member from the start date of their employment.

This will necessitate a second options exercise, for which legal discussions have commenced between central government, the LGA on behalf of FRAs and trade union legal representatives to consider who is in scope and the details of the settlement exercise.

Regulations for England will be drafted and consulted on following the conclusion of the legal discussions. It is expected further regulations and consultations for the devolved governments will follow later. Unfortunately, no timescales are known at this stage.

There is no further action needed at this time by FRAs or their administrators.

Scheme sanction charge

From time to time we have been asked to clarify who pays the [scheme sanction charge](#) on an unauthorised payment. We can confirm that this is the responsibility of the Fire and Rescue Authority as [sub scheme administrator](#). Further we can confirm that:

- There is no provision to deduct the scheme sanction charge from the member, unless the scheme rules provide for it which the FPS does not, and
- The scheme sanction charge is payable from the operating account and is **not** chargeable to the notional pension fund.

More information on frequently asked questions for scheme sanction charge can be found under *Unauthorised payments* in the technical queries log published monthly on the [technical queries page](#).

Medical retirement IQMP certificates

We have been receiving an increased level of enquiries related to medical retirement certificates for use by IQMPs.

Medical retirement is leaving employment from the FRA under either ill-health retirement or injury. Ill-health retirement can and often does occur on its own. Injury retirement occurs due to a direct result of the firefighter's work and will always also trigger ill-health retirement.

An injury pension is paid under the regulations of the [Firefighters' Compensation Scheme 2006](#) (FCS 2006). The amount of benefit payable does not depend on what pension scheme the member may be in, however, it will be calculated in reference to the service attributable to the employment in which the injury is received.

Ill-health retirement occurs under the pension scheme rules, and benefits may be different depending on the pension scheme the member is in:

- Firefighters' Pension Scheme 1992 (FPS 1992)
- Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2006 - Standard and Special members (FPS 2006)
- Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2015 (FPS 2015)

Which ill-health form to use is not laid down in legislation, subsequently it is for FRAs to satisfy themselves that the forms meet the requirements of the legislation and that the IQMP has answered the relevant questions.

In 2009, following meetings of an [ill-health review group](#), a form was developed that brought together the requirement to consider redeployment as a result of the [Marrion case](#), and the different rules and eligibility for FPS 1992, FPS 2006 and FCS 2006.

In 2015, following feedback that the forms were unwieldy to use and had led to errors of interpretation the forms were simplified and separated across the schemes. The new forms considered the questions for IQMPs only and did not try to give guidance on employment considerations.

Those forms are held on the password-protected [ill-health and injury webpage](#) and **must** be downloaded each time to ensure the most recent version of the form is being used.

Each approach to the forms has pros and cons and the SAB are considering a programme of work to ensure that more resources and information about medical retirement are readily available to FRAs and members. More detail can be found in the [minutes of the SAB meeting of 13 June 2019](#).

This work may take some time and may be impacted by the Court findings in the age discrimination case known as Sargeant and the resulting [HMT consultation on age discrimination](#) in public service schemes.

In the short term we are drafting a short summary factsheet on medical retirement issues and will be making some changes to the forms. We will advise a timescale for this work in the next bulletin.

Fire and Rescue workforce and pensions statistics published

The Home Office published [workforce and pensions statistics](#) for Fire and Rescue Services (England) on 22 October 2020. The pension scheme statistics, covering April 2019 to March 2020, reflect data returns on income, expenditure and membership submitted by all 45 FRAs in England.

Some key results:

- Firefighters' Pension Scheme expenditure in 2019-20 was around £908 million.
- In 2019-20, 80 per cent of expenditure was "recurring outgoing payments" and 19 per cent was "commutation payments". "Transfers" and "miscellaneous expenditure" totaled less than 1 per cent
- Firefighters' Pension Scheme income in 2019-20 was around £387.5 million.
- Employer contributions nearly doubled from £135 million in 2018-19 to £260 million in 2019-20 as a result of changes to the discount rate set by HM Treasury from April 2019.
- In 2019-20, 67 per cent of income was "employer contributions", 30 per cent was "employee contributions" and the remaining 3 per cent comprised transfers, miscellaneous income and ill-health charges.
- The Firefighters' Pension Scheme deficit in 2019-20 was around £520 million.
- As at 31 March 2020, the total number of pensioner members was 46,228. Of these, 94 per cent were members of FPS 1992.

Website and resources update

We have added the following page to the Firefighters' Pension Schemes Regulations and Guidance website this month:

[Consultations](#). This page has been created to hold consultations on the FPS and wider public service pension schemes.

The following factsheets for members have been updated for the current financial year by the LGA Bluelight team in collaboration with the Fire Communications Working Group (FCWG) and are available from the website:

[Annual Allowance](#)

[Topping up your State Pension](#)

October query log

The current [log of queries and responses](#) is available on the FPS Regulations and Guidance website. The queries have been anonymised and divided into topics. The log will be updated on a monthly basis in line with the bulletin release dates.

Queries from earlier months have been grey shaded to differentiate from new items. New queries have been added under the following categories: compensation scheme, ill-health retirement, Protected Pension Age, and salary sacrifice (updated).

FPS England SAB updates

Immediate detriment request for information - reminder

In [FPS Bulletin 37 – September 2020](#), the SAB asked for information on the number of members who are likely to become eligible for payment of benefits under the terms of the [Home Office immediate detriment note](#). This includes:

- Any member refused ill-health retirement under the FPS 2015 as the lower ill-health criteria was not met.
- 1992 transition members of FPS 2015 who reach age 55 before 31 March 2022.
- 1992 transition members of FPS 2015 who reach 30 years' service before 31 March 2022.
- 1992 transition members of FPS 2015 who will have 25 years+ service and be over 50 by 31 March 2022.

The SAB also want to understand what percentage of the FPS 2015 membership within the immediate detriment (ID) category are likely to be affected by complicating factors, such as divorce or transfers.

To date we have only received responses from eight FRAs.

The SAB kindly request that FRAs complete the [ID information sheet](#) by 30 November 2020. Please note that clicking the link downloads an Excel spreadsheet. Completed returns should be submitted to bluelight.pensions@local.gov.uk.

SAB levy 2020-21 update

We informed readers in [FPS Bulletin 35 – July 2020](#) that collection of the SAB levy would begin in August/ September.

[Click here to return to Contents](#)

The budget remains with the minister's office, so we have not yet been able to request purchase order numbers from FRAs. We are continuing to chase this up with the Home Office.

Other News and Updates

Restriction of exit payments in the public sector

[The Restriction of Public Sector Exit Payments Regulations 2020](#) come into force on 4 November 2020.

As expected, the regulations have limited application for the FPS, as exemptions apply to two of the exit payments which would otherwise fall within the scope of the £95,000 cap: [enhanced commutation](#) (FPS 1992) and [Authority Initiated Early Retirement \(AIER\)](#) (FPS 2006 and FPS 2015) on fitness grounds.

In some limited circumstances of AIER the cap would still apply and we understand that the Home Office is working with the Government Actuary's Department (GAD) to establish how the assessment against the cap can be undertaken for the fire scheme. This will be achieved either through regulatory change or statutory GAD guidance.

Public Service Pensions GMP indexation consultation

On 6 April 2016, the government introduced the new State Pension which removed the mechanism that enabled public servants in "contracted-out" employment between 1978 and 1997 to have their Guaranteed Minimum Pension (GMP) fully price protected. The interim solution of full indexation was brought in, which was later consulted on and extended until 5 April 2021. This ensured that public service pensioners had the GMPs they had earned in public service fully indexed by their public service pension scheme.

On 7 October the government published a consultation on [Public Service Pensions: GMP indexation](#). The consultation sets out how the government proposes to ensure it continues to meet its past commitments to public service employees regarding the full indexation of public service pensions, including for any GMP element.

The consultation will last for 12 weeks and closes on 30 December 2020.

The consultation and supporting [written ministerial statement](#) can be found on the new [consultations page](#) of the Regulations and Guidance website.

The LGA will be responding in due course.

Update on TPR scheme return 2019-20

We reported in [FPS Bulletin 36 – August 2020](#) that the Pension Regulator's (TPR's) statutory scheme return was scheduled to be released in Autumn in line with the usual timescales.

TPR has advised us that the scheme return campaign for public service schemes has been slightly delayed and notices are now due to be sent out during week commencing 2 November 2020.

TPO factsheet: Complaining to TPO on behalf of a deceased's estate

On 19 October the Pensions Ombudsman (TPO) published a factsheet for survivors who may want to bring or continue a complaint on behalf of the deceased's estate.

Factsheet: [Complaining to TPO on behalf of a deceased's estate](#).

Pensions Dashboard Programme update

On 28 October 2020 the Pensions Dashboard Programme (PDP) published its [second progress update report](#). The report summarises the work the PDP has undertaken since April 2020 and sets out a timeline for the development of the project.

Events

Local Pension Board virtual training

We are attending an increasing number of virtual pension board meetings to provide an update on current issues affecting the FPS and how to use the [six key areas of governance](#) as measured by TPR to support the scheme manager through various complexities, such as Sargeant / Matthews, pensionable pay, and ill-health decisions.

If you would like to arrange a session for your board, please email bluelight.pensions@local.gov.uk.

FPS coffee mornings

We are continuing to run our MS Teams coffee mornings every second Tuesday while social distancing measures remain in place. These informal sessions lasting up to an hour allow practitioners to catch up with colleagues and hear a brief update on FPS issues from the LGA Bluelight team.

The next event is scheduled to take place on 3 November 2020.

If you would like to join us, please email bluelight.pensions@local.gov.uk and we will add you to the invite list for the sessions.

HMRC

HMRC newsletters/bulletins

On 6 October HMRC updated [pension schemes newsletter 124](#) to confirm that the protected pension age easement in relation to COVID-19 will not be extended and will expire on 1 November 2020.

HMT has previously confirmed that anyone re-employed between 1 March and the deadline would be deemed as having satisfied the re-employment conditions, regardless of how long the employment lasted. Therefore, we understand that the PPA easement ceases to apply for any new appointments from 1 November 2020.

Legislation

SI number Reference title

2020/122 [The Restriction of Public Sector Exit Payments Regulations 2020](#)

Useful links

- [The Firefighters' Pensions \(England\) Scheme Advisory Board](#)
- [FPS Regulations and Guidance](#)
- [Khub Firefighters Pensions Discussion Forum](#)
- [FPS1992 guidance and commentary](#)
- [The Pensions Regulator Public Service Schemes](#)
- [The Pensions Ombudsman](#)
- [HMRC Pensions Tax Manual](#)
- [LGA pensions website](#)
- [LGPS Regulations and Guidance](#)
- [LGPS member site](#)

Contact details

Clair Alcock (Senior Pension Adviser)

Telephone: 020 7664 3189

Email: clair.alcock@local.gov.uk

Kevin Courtney (NPCC Pensions Adviser)

Telephone: 020 7664 3202

Email: kevin.courtney@local.gov.uk

Claire Hey (Firefighters' Pension Adviser)

Telephone: 020 7664 3205

Email: claire.hey@local.gov.uk

Copyright

Copyright remains with Local Government Association (LGA). This bulletin may be reproduced without the prior permission of LGA provided it is not used for commercial gain, the source is acknowledged and, if regulations are reproduced, the Crown Copyright Policy Guidance issued by HMSO is adhered to.

[Click here to return to Contents](#)

Disclaimer

The information contained in this bulletin has been prepared by the Bluelight Pensions team, part of the Local Government Association (LGA). It represents the views of the team and should not be treated as a complete and authoritative statement of the law. Readers may wish, or will need, to take their own legal advice on the interpretation of legislation. No responsibility whatsoever will be assumed by the LGA for any direct or consequential loss, financial or otherwise, damage or inconvenience, or any other obligation or liability incurred by readers relying on information contained in this bulletin.

While every attempt is made to ensure the accuracy of the bulletin, it would be helpful if readers could bring any perceived errors or omissions to the attention of the Bluelight team by emailing bluelight.pensions@local.gov.uk.



FPS Bulletin 39 – November 2020

Welcome to issue 39 of the Firefighters' Pensions Schemes bulletin.

We hope that readers remain safe and well.

Face-to-face meetings and training remain suspended for the time being due to restrictions on travel and social distancing. However, the Bluelight team are available at home by mobile, email or video (MS Teams, Skype, or Zoom).

If you are looking for information on a certain topic, issue and content indexes are held on the [main bulletin page](#) of the website and are updated following each new issue.

If you have any comments on this bulletin or suggested items for future issues, please email claire.hey@local.gov.uk.

Contents

Contents	2
Calendar of events	3
Actions arising	3
FPS	3
Medical Appeal Boards service update	3
Protected Pension Age – HMT easement ended	4
Compensation Scheme – Qualifying Injury COVID-19	5
FPS England actuarial factors and guidance notes	6
FPS 2006 special member tax relief requests	6
November query log	7
FPS England SAB updates	7
SAB levy 2020-21 – Request for Purchase Order numbers	7
TPR 2019 Governance and Administration Survey	7
Other News and Updates	8
Restriction of exit payments in the public sector	8
TPR pledge to combat pension scams campaign	8
ICO issue new statutory code of practice on DSARs	8
DB schemes must equalise past GMP transfers	9
Events	9
Joint Fire and Police CIPFA webinar – Sargeant/ McCloud stakeholder management	9
FPS coffee mornings	9
HMRC	9
HMRC newsletters/bulletins	9
Useful links	10
Contact details	10
Copyright	10
Disclaimer	11

Calendar of events

Please see below a calendar of upcoming events relevant to the Firefighters' Pension Schemes. Only those events which are hyperlinked are currently available to book. If you have any events you would like to be included in a future bulletin, please email claire.hey@local.gov.uk

Table 1: Calendar of events

Event	Date
FPS coffee and catch up	Every second Tuesday from 1 December 2020
Fire Communications Working Group	7 December 2020
SAB	10 December 2020
CIPFA remedy engagement webinar	15 December 2020
North East regional group	17 February 2021
SAB	11 March 2021
SAB	24 June 2021
SAB	9 September 2021
SAB	9 December 2021

Actions arising

Readers are asked to note the following actions arising from the bulletin:

[2020-2021 statutory levy](#): FRAs to provide a valid purchase order number for invoicing of the annual levy, based on the number of employees eligible to join one of the Firefighters' Pension Schemes at 1 April 2020.

FPS

Medical Appeal Boards service update

Readers may have been aware that Duradiamond, the current contracted provider of Medical Appeal Boards, suspended appeal hearings for three months from the end of March due to COVID-19.

In July, hearings recommenced on a limited basis in London.

Duradiamond provided the following service update by email on 13 November 2020:

"We are writing to advise that following a meeting with the Home Office this week, we are beginning to open up regional venues in response to appeal demand.

- We will initially open up Manchester and Leeds and pending cases which have these locations as their venue of choice will be booked accordingly.
- Edinburgh, Birmingham and Bristol are in the process of being confirmed and opened and we will be in touch as soon as the allocated venues have confirmed that they remain open to take bookings whilst Lockdown 2 is in effect.
- Regional venues are being reviewed monthly whilst any lockdown and/or COVID-19 tier structure is in place and an update will be provided to all stakeholders on a monthly basis.

We would also like to update you with regard to remote appeals. At present remote attendance is not able to be accommodated, whether that be remote attendance by any party or a full remote board. Following submission of a proposal regarding the provision of remote hearings (in any format) to the Home Office earlier in the year, the Home Office agreed at our meeting yesterday to support Duradiamond in exploring this undertaking. Duradiamond is setting up a project team to assess the feasibility and practicality of delivering any form of remote service in a secure and confidential manner. Duradiamond is aware that the HMCTS (HM Courts and Tribunals Service) is already trialling audio and video technology capability. We will keep you updated on a monthly basis as the project progresses."

Protected Pension Age – HMT easement ended

You may recall that earlier in the year the tax rules for [protected pension age](#) were relaxed. That meant that for any FRA re-employing a retired firefighter under age 55 and in receipt of a pension from the FPS 1992, they didn't need a month's gap in employment to keep their protected pension age or face tax charges of potentially up to 70 per cent of their lump sum and pension. This was only where re-employment was in relation to COVID-19.

On 6 October HMRC updated [pension schemes newsletter 124 - September 2020](#) to confirm that the protected pension age easement will not be extended and would expire on 1 November 2020.

HMT have confirmed that the expiration of the exemption remains unchanged and that there are currently no plans to change this approach. Those who have returned to support the government's response to COVID-19 before 1 November will however not lose their protected pension age if they continue working after that date. This pension age is protected irrespective of whether they move jobs or employers.

More information can be found on our [COVID-19 and the FPS webpage](#).

Compensation Scheme – Qualifying Injury COVID-19

Readers will recall that questions have been previously asked as to whether a firefighter being identified with a positive case of COVID-19 would be treated as a qualifying injury for the purposes of eligibility to benefits under the compensation scheme, and the Home Office were asked to provide clear assurances that any firefighter who dies from COVID-19 will be recognised as having died from a qualifying injury.

The Home Office have confirmed the following statement:

“The Home Office is unable to provide such assurances as this this would interfere with the established legal process for determining an entitlement to awards payable under the FCS and may set unhelpful future precedents. The responsibility for making such decisions rests with employing FRAs, who are best placed to consider the relevant facts in each case.

FRAs should note that the [IQMP guidance](#) for the firefighters’ pension schemes and compensation scheme clearly sets out the processes that employers should follow when making a decision on scheme members’ ill-health/injury/death entitlements. Paragraph 3.27 of the guidance sets out that when a case is being referred to an IQMP the employing FRA should state whether or not they accept that the injury/death being considered should be treated as a qualifying injury. This process allows employing FRAs to provide their views on whether any firefighter’s death should be treated as a qualifying injury. As explained above, employing FRAs are best placed to consider the detailed facts in each case in order to make these decisions”

In order to make a decision with regards to whether COVID-19, which is widely present in the general population, has been contracted specifically due to conditions in the workplace, the FRA will need to consider each case on a case by case basis in light of the full facts and a blanket approach would not be appropriate.

In considering whether COVID-19 was contracted ‘in the exercise of duties as a firefighter’ FRAs would need to take several matters into account including but not limited to:

- Whether the incident has been taken into account for sick pay purposes.
- The work (and/or leave) pattern for the individual, being mindful of incubation times.
- Known COVID situations in any incident/location attended.
- Colleagues within the same Crew/Watch known to have been infected in the same timeframe.
- Known results whether positive or negative tested at any point over the relevant timeframe for the case in hand
- Any instruction by the FRS not to attend work within the relevant timeframe because of contact with a colleague who had come into work at a point when they would have been infectious
- FRA risk control measures, such as PPE, Distancing, Hygiene, Work Bubbles etc

- Medical reports

The [HSE advice in RIDDOR](#) (the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013) includes information about making a judgement and reasonable evidence for their purposes.

FPS England actuarial factors and guidance notes

HM Treasury reduced the SCAPE discount rate from 2.8% to 2.4%pa above CPI from 29 October 2018. As a result of the change, the Government Actuary's Department (GAD) undertook a [factor review](#) for the Firefighters' Pension Schemes.

Over the following 12 to 18 months, new factors and guidance notes were issued to FRAs. It has recently come to our attention that the guidance notes for transfers-in and pension sharing on divorce in respect of FPS 2015 were not distributed at that time. We are pleased to now include them below.

- [FPS 2015 Individual Cash Equivalent Transfers – factors and guidance](#)
- [FPS 2015 Pension Sharing on Divorce – factor and guidance](#)

In addition, the following updated factors and guidance have been provided in November:

- [FPS 1992 and FPS 2006 CPD Additional Pension Benefit – factors and guidance](#)
- [FPS 1992 and FPS 2006 CPD Pension Factors](#) (Excel spreadsheet download)

CPD factors (Table X-801) have been extended to begin at age 20 in advance of remedy implementation.

- [FPS 2015 Early payment reductions – factors and guidance](#)
- [FPS 2015 Early Retirement Factors – Deferred members](#) (Excel spreadsheet download)

Early retirement factors for deferred members of FPS 2015 (Table x-403) have been extended to 13 years to allow for members with a State Pension age of 68.

The [consolidated factor workbook](#) has been updated to take account of the changes. All factor tables and guidance notes can be found on our dedicated [GAD guidance webpage](#).

FPS 2006 special member tax relief requests

In [FPS Bulletins 10 - July 2018](#) and [11 - August 2018](#) we advised FRAs of a request from HMRC for information to be provided directly to them with regards to tax relief claims for special members of the FPS 2006. HMRC have now completed their investigations directly with the Home Office and there is no further action for FRAs to take.

[Click here to return to Contents](#)

Members should not be directly contacted by HMRC with regards to any tax relief claims made due to becoming a special member. If you are aware of any member receiving a request for payment please refer this to us via bluelight.pensions@local.gov.uk.

November query log

The current [log of queries and responses](#) is available on the FPS Regulations and Guidance website. The queries have been anonymised and divided into topics. The log will be updated on a monthly basis in line with the bulletin release dates.

Queries from earlier months have been grey shaded to differentiate from new items. New queries have been added under the following categories: contribution banding.

FPS England SAB updates

SAB levy 2020-21 – Request for Purchase Order numbers

Following our update in [FPS Bulletin 38 – October 2020](#), we are pleased to confirm that the SAB budget for 2020-21 has received ministerial approval and we can now start the invoicing process.

In 2014, FRAs entered a shared arrangement to fund a technical adviser post to support FRAs with their understanding and management of the Firefighters' Pension Schemes. The employers' voluntary subscription is included in the final levy.

The total levy for the 2020-21 year will be £8.29 per firefighter, which is calculated at £6.20 for the SAB and £2.09 for employers. A letter has been sent out to Chief Fire Officers advising them of this.

Devolved FRAs have also been sent levy requests with regards to the employer advice service provided to them by the LGA.

The first stage of the process is for FRAs to provide a valid purchase order number, stating the number of employees eligible to join one of the Firefighters' Pension Schemes at 1 April 2020. The form at [Appendix 1](#) should be used to provide this information.

TPR 2019 Governance and Administration Survey

As you may be aware, the results of the [2019 Governance and Administration survey](#) have now been published by The Pensions Regulator (TPR).

The performance of the Firefighters' Schemes is commented on throughout and the Scheme Advisory Board will consider any further actions they may take.

The TPR [six key processes factsheet](#) will be updated to reflect the latest performance and give further guidance to FRAs in order to achieve a higher rate of understanding and compliance ahead of the 2020 survey.

At their meeting on 17 September 2020 the Board considered a report summarising the [results of the COVID-19 governance survey](#) designed to measure the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on pension scheme governance.

Other News and Updates

Restriction of exit payments in the public sector

We confirmed last month that [The Restriction of Public Sector Exit Payments Regulations 2020](#) came into force on 4 November 2020.

Following the enactment of the Exit Payment Regulations, HM Treasury (HMT) published the following documents:

- [Guidance on the 2020 Regulations](#)
- [Directions](#)
- [Equalities Impact Assessment](#)

Although the regulations have limited application for the FPS, FRAs will also have employees who are members of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).

The Local Government Pensions Committee (LGPC) has provided detailed information about the changes for LGPS and any actions for scheme employers in [LGPC Bulletin 203 – November 2020](#).

TPR pledge to combat pension scams campaign

On 10 November 2020, TPR launched the [pledge to combat pension scams](#) campaign. The initiative asks administrators and employers to commit to the six pledge principles to show their intent to protect scheme members from losing their benefits in transfer scams.

The pledge is supported by the Pension Scams Industry Group (PSIG) and follows the principles of the [PSIG Code of Good Practice](#).

ICO issue new statutory code of practice on DSARs

At the end of October 2020, the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) issued its new statutory code of practice on data subject access requests (DSARs). It is aimed at data protection officers (DPOs) and those with specific data protection responsibilities in larger organisations. Along with providing additional guidance and clarity, the new code of practice is particularly relevant for administrators dealing with increased data requests from members, IFAs and claims management companies in respect of past transfers.

To find out more visit the [Right of access page](#) on the ICO website.

DB schemes must equalise past GMP transfers

On 20 November 2020, the High Court ruled that trustees who do not equalise a member's guaranteed minimum pension (GMP) benefits at the time of calculating a cash equivalent transfer value (CETV) have committed a breach of duty. Defined benefit (DB) schemes providing GMPs should revisit historic CETVs made in the past 30 years and top them up where necessary. The judgment does not force organisations to actively correct all pensions transfers, however, employers may look to do so to avoid legal proceedings from members affected.

This [latest judgment on GMP equalisation](#) follows the initial judgment made in October 2018 involving Lloyds banking group.

We are discussing implications for the FPS with the Home Office.

Events

Joint Fire and Police CIPFA webinar – Sargeant/ McCloud stakeholder management

CIPFA is running a joint Fire and Police webinar on Tuesday 15 December at 10am:

“Stakeholder management will be a key component of your plan to deliver the McCloud remedy. In this seminar, we will cover the changes faced by a variety of stakeholders in the Police and Fire Network. The focus will be on member engagement, the member journey and the opportunity that presents, whilst managing the risks.”

As registration is not yet open for this event, we will circulate details by email to the bulletin distribution list as they become available.

FPS coffee mornings

We are continuing to run our MS Teams coffee mornings every second Tuesday while social distancing measures remain in place. These informal sessions lasting up to an hour allow practitioners to catch up with colleagues and hear a brief update on FPS issues from the LGA Bluelight team.

The next event is scheduled to take place on 1 December 2020.

If you would like to join us, please email bluelight.pensions@local.gov.uk and we will add you to the invite list for the sessions.

HMRC

HMRC newsletters/bulletins

HMRC has published the following newsletter containing important updates and guidance on pension schemes:

[Pension schemes newsletter 125 – 30 October 2020](#)

[Click here to return to Contents](#)

- Temporary changes to pension processes as a result of coronavirus
- Managing Pension Schemes service – financial information
- Relief at source declaration – APSS590
- Pension flexibility statistics
- Signing in to online services
- Registration statistics

Useful links

- [The Firefighters' Pensions \(England\) Scheme Advisory Board](#)
- [FPS Regulations and Guidance](#)
- [Khub Firefighters Pensions Discussion Forum](#)
- [FPS1992 guidance and commentary](#)
- [The Pensions Regulator Public Service Schemes](#)
- [The Pensions Ombudsman](#)
- [HMRC Pensions Tax Manual](#)
- [LGA pensions website](#)
- [LGPS Regulations and Guidance](#)
- [LGPS member site](#)

Contact details

Clair Alcock (Senior Pension Adviser)

Telephone: 020 7664 3189

Email: clair.alcock@local.gov.uk

Kevin Courtney (NPCC Pensions Adviser)

Telephone: 020 7664 3202

Email: kevin.courtney@local.gov.uk

Claire Hey (Firefighters' Pension Adviser)

Telephone: 020 7664 3205

Email: claire.hey@local.gov.uk

Copyright

Copyright remains with Local Government Association (LGA). This bulletin may be reproduced without the prior permission of LGA provided it is not used for commercial gain, the source is acknowledged and, if regulations are reproduced, the Crown Copyright Policy Guidance issued by HMSO is adhered to.

Disclaimer

The information contained in this bulletin has been prepared by the Bluelight Pensions team, part of the Local Government Association (LGA). It represents the views of the team and should not be treated as a complete and authoritative statement of the law. Readers may wish, or will need, to take their own legal advice on the interpretation of legislation. No responsibility whatsoever will be assumed by the LGA for any direct or consequential loss, financial or otherwise, damage or inconvenience, or any other obligation or liability incurred by readers relying on information contained in this bulletin.

While every attempt is made to ensure the accuracy of the bulletin, it would be helpful if readers could bring any perceived errors or omissions to the attention of the Bluelight team by emailing bluelight.pensions@local.gov.uk.



FPS Bulletin 40 – December 2020

Welcome to issue 40 of the Firefighters' Pensions Schemes bulletin.

We hope that readers remain safe and well. May we take this opportunity to wish you all a happy festive period. Many thanks for your help and support during a challenging year – perfectly captured in this illustration by Eunice Heaney.



Face-to-face meetings and training remain suspended into 2021 due to restrictions on travel and social distancing. However, the Bluelight team are available at home by mobile, email or video.

If you are looking for information on a certain topic, issue and content indexes are held on the [main bulletin page](#) of the website and are updated following each new issue.

If you have any comments on this bulletin or suggested items for future issues, please email claire.hey@local.gov.uk.

Contents

Calendar of events	3
Actions arising	3
FPS	3
Joint statement on age discrimination remedy	3
Standard wording for inclusion with CETVs in divorce cases (and others)	4
December query log	4
FPS England SAB updates	5
Year-end message from the Chair	5
SAB levy 2020-21 – Request for Purchase Order numbers reminder	5
Other News and Updates	5
Cost-cap review stakeholder meeting	5
Pension Dashboards Programme – key data standards published	6
Events	6
FPS coffee mornings	6
Training and events – 2020 facts and figures	6
HMRC	7
HMRC newsletters/bulletins	7
Legislation	7
Useful links	7
Contact details	8
Copyright	8
Disclaimer	8

Calendar of events

Please see below a calendar of upcoming events relevant to the Firefighters' Pension Schemes. Only those events which are hyperlinked are currently available to book. If you have any events you would like to be included in a future bulletin, please email claire.hey@local.gov.uk

Table 1: Calendar of events

Event	Date
FPS coffee and catch up	Every second Tuesday from 12 January 2021
North East regional group	17 February 2021
SAB	11 March 2021
SAB	24 June 2021
SAB	9 September 2021
SAB	9 December 2021

Actions arising

Readers are asked to note the following actions arising from the bulletin:

[2020-21 statutory levy](#): FRAs to provide a valid purchase order number for invoicing of the annual levy, based on the number of employees eligible to join one of the Firefighters' Pension Schemes at 1 April 2020.

FPS

Joint statement on age discrimination remedy

Please see below a joint statement issued on 4 December 2020 by the Home Office and LGA Bluelight team regarding public service pensions age discrimination remedy:

“As you are aware the Treasury’s public consultation on the Public Sector Pension remedy closed on the 11 October. This note is intended to outline next steps for delivery of the remedy.

The Treasury are currently considering consultation responses and expect to publish their response to the consultation in the new year. This will outline the policy intent of the remedy, including whether immediate or deferred choice will be adopted.

Changes to both primary and secondary legislation will be required to remove the discrimination. The Home Office will need to work with the Treasury to understand the policy and proposed legislation and to draft regulations to make the changes required for the Fire schemes.

In order to deliver the remedy to the timeline set out by the Treasury, the Home Office and the LGA Bluelight pensions team are committed to ensuring that you are fully up to speed with all policy and regulation developments so that work can progress at pace. It will be essential that Fire and Rescue Authorities start the process of considering what technology/administration processes will be required to implement the remedy, including what data should be retained, at the earliest opportunity and we will be engaging with you further to understand your dependencies and any challenges you will face.”

Standard wording for inclusion with CETVs in divorce cases (and others)

On 14 December 2020, we emailed pension managers and administrators with the following standard wording provided by HM Treasury (HMT). The text should be included with Cash Equivalent Transfer Values (CETVs) issued prior to remedy to alert the member – and others “using” the CETV – to the fact that it may well not be a final figure:

“The Government is currently in the process of consulting on, and finalising, proposals to address discrimination identified by the Courts in respect of certain members that may affect the cash-equivalent transfer value (CETV) set out in this communication. For more information please [see the consultation documents available here](#). It is expected that, in due course, eligible members with relevant service between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2022 may be entitled to different pension benefits in relation to that period.

It is important for the recipient of this CETV to note that the value given may change in future.”

HMT has confirmed that the wording should be used for CETVs in divorce and transfer cases, but not for Club transfers.

When using the wording, please make sure the hyperlink to the consultation is not lost if you copy and paste the text to another electronic document. If you send a hard copy of the communication rather than sending electronically, the full link text must be included.

December query log

The current [log of queries and responses](#) is available on the FPS Regulations and Guidance website. The queries have been anonymised and divided into topics. The log will be updated on a monthly basis in line with the bulletin release dates.

No new queries have been added this month.

FPS England SAB updates

Year-end message from the Chair

Following a whirlwind four months and in keeping with tradition, we are pleased to bring you this year-end message from Joanne Livingstone, chair of the FPS England Scheme Advisory Board:

“Dear Friends & colleagues,

Although it has become a cliché to say so, it has certainly been a year that none of us will forget. For me, the process of being appointed as the Chair of the Scheme Advisory Board (SAB) for England and then getting up to speed on the Fire Pensions front was a welcome distraction from the international emergencies. And there has certainly been a lot going on for Fire Pensions.

The year was dominated by the HMT consultation on remedy for the age discrimination detriment created by the transitional arrangements for the introduction of the 2015 Scheme...”

Read [Joanne's year-end festive message](#) in full on the [Board updates page](#).

SAB levy 2020-21 – Request for Purchase Order numbers reminder

As detailed in [FPS Bulletin 39 – November 2020](#), we have now started the collection process of the SAB and technical support levy for 2020-21.

FRAs were asked to provide a valid purchase order number by 31 December 2020, stating the number of employees eligible to join one of the Firefighters’ Pension Schemes at 1 April 2020.

Thank you to the organisations who have completed the [statutory levy form](#). We will send a direct reminder in January to those who do not respond by the deadline.

Other News and Updates

Cost-cap review stakeholder meeting

On 23 October 2020, the Government Actuary’s Department (GAD) held a stakeholder meeting to discuss the operation of the cost-control mechanism across public service pension schemes.

A paper setting out a [summary of the key discussion points](#) was released following the meeting.

You can find this and other documents relating to the valuation and cost-cap on our [scheme valuations](#) webpage.

Pension Dashboards Programme – key data standards published

The Pension Dashboards Programme (PDP) published several updates relating to [dashboard data standards](#) on 15 December 2020. These include an introduction to data standards video and a guide containing detailed information on the data that will be needed for initial dashboards.

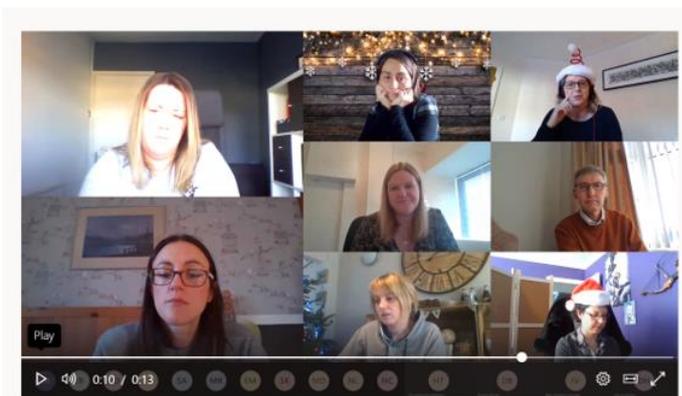
Events

FPS coffee mornings

We will restart our MS Teams coffee mornings every second Tuesday after the Christmas break. The informal sessions lasting up to an hour allow practitioners to catch up with colleagues and hear a brief update on FPS issues from the LGA Bluelight team.

The next event is scheduled to take place on 12 January 2021.

The sessions have been increasingly popular since we began hosting them in May. We had a record attendance of 34 at our final session on 15 December, where attendees were invited to get into the Christmas spirit early.



If you would like to join us, please email bluelight.pensions@local.gov.uk.

Training and events – 2020 facts and figures

Even though 2020 has looked very different, it has become tradition to provide a roundup of events attended and facilitated by the team. We have become very adept at using Teams and Zoom and will happily provide training sessions virtually upon request.

This year's meetings have numbered 12 regional Fire Pension Officer Group meetings, 12 local or regional training sessions for Local Pension Boards (LPBs) and scheme managers, 6 meetings of the SAB including two special meetings to discuss the HMT consultation, 12 technical discussions with stakeholders on remedy, 3 communications group, and 2 technical group meetings.

In addition to our business as usual engagements, we managed to continue to hold our two popular annual events: Local Pension Board 'wrap up' training and the two-day AGM. Information about our national events can be found on our [Events page](#).

Finally, we have been regular virtual visitors to the devolved SAB meetings to provide an overview of issues arising in England and continue to represent FPS interests at sector specific forums including HMT led meetings.

HMRC

HMRC newsletters/bulletins

On 3 December HMRC published [Pension schemes newsletter 126](#) containing important updates and guidance for schemes. Articles include:

- Managing Pension Schemes
- Relief at source
- Pension scheme returns for 2019 to 2020
- Signing in to online services
- In-specie contributions
- Annual allowance charge - members declaring their annual allowance charge on their Self-Assessment tax return

Legislation

SI number Reference title

2020/1332	The Occupational Pensions (Revaluation) Order 2020
2020/1391	The State Pension Debits and Credits (Revaluation) (No. 2) Order 2020
2020/1392	The State Pension Revaluation for Transitional Pensions (No. 2) Order 2020
2020/1511	The Firefighters' Pension Schemes and Compensation Scheme (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2020

Useful links

- [The Firefighters' Pensions \(England\) Scheme Advisory Board](#)
- [FPS Regulations and Guidance](#)
- [Khuf Firefighters Pensions Discussion Forum](#)
- [FPS1992 guidance and commentary](#)
- [The Pensions Regulator Public Service Schemes](#)
- [The Pensions Ombudsman](#)

[Click here to return to Contents](#)

- [HMRC Pensions Tax Manual](#)
- [LGA pensions website](#)
- [LGPS Regulations and Guidance](#)
- [LGPC Bulletins](#)
- [LGPS member site](#)

Contact details

Clair Alcock (Senior Pension Adviser)

Telephone: 020 7664 3189

Email: clair.alcock@local.gov.uk

Kevin Courtney (NPCC Pensions Adviser)

Telephone: 020 7664 3202

Email: kevin.courtney@local.gov.uk

Claire Hey (Firefighters' Pension Adviser)

Telephone: 020 7664 3205

Email: claire.hey@local.gov.uk

Copyright

Copyright remains with Local Government Association (LGA). This bulletin may be reproduced without the prior permission of LGA provided it is not used for commercial gain, the source is acknowledged and, if regulations are reproduced, the Crown Copyright Policy Guidance issued by HMSO is adhered to.

Disclaimer

The information contained in this bulletin has been prepared by the Bluelight Pensions team, part of the Local Government Association (LGA). It represents the views of the team and should not be treated as a complete and authoritative statement of the law. Readers may wish, or will need, to take their own legal advice on the interpretation of legislation. No responsibility whatsoever will be assumed by the LGA for any direct or consequential loss, financial or otherwise, damage or inconvenience, or any other obligation or liability incurred by readers relying on information contained in this bulletin.

While every attempt is made to ensure the accuracy of the bulletin, it would be helpful if readers could bring any perceived errors or omissions to the attention of the Bluelight team by emailing bluelight.pensions@local.gov.uk.