



Surrey Local Firefighters' Pension Board 10 November 2022

FIRE BULLETINS

The Pensions Board has adopted a procedure to ensure that any FPS Bulletins released by LGA are reviewed and any necessary actions are noted and tracked through to completion.

Bulletins 59, 60 and 61 (Annex 2) have been published since the last Board meeting.

- Bulletin 59 informed the reader that the Administrator self-assessment survey results had been published. Whilst we have not been able to review the exact responses provided by our administrator, from the information provided the Service believes XPS has responded to us in the right means on the Sargeant and McCloud projects.
- The Bulletin highlighted that as qualifying service in the FPS 1992 is added to the FPS 2015 pension scheme, any periods of leave will affect a member's pensionable service and ultimately their retirement age. Therefore FRA's need to have a process in place to ensure if a member has any breaks in service, this is reported to the pension administrators at the earliest opportunity. The Pensions Team are working with internal teams to align this transfer of information to XPS.
- In relation to the Sargeant case, Bulletin 59 informed FRA's that should a member who is affected by the age-discrimination remedy, have an inter-brigade transfer, then they are to share any information on the member with the current FRA administrator. Whilst this has been noted to potentially cause a GDPR breach, it was confirmed at the Fire Technical Working Group on 25 July 2022 that pension administrators have a legitimate reason for requiring the information so a breach would not be caused.
- Bulletin 59 confirmed representatives from Heywood Pension Technologies attended the Scheme Advisory Board (SAB) meeting on 23 June 2022 and provided an update on the progress of the software required for remedy. Heywood Pension Technologies (along with other software developers) also provided an update on the phases of development going forward which the SAB felt were useful.
- Information was provided on The [Pension Ombudsman \(TPO\) factsheet in relation to McCloud](#) and it's view on how FRA's should be responding to remedy. The Pensions Project Team have read through this factsheet and do not feel we have fallen short of TPO's expectations. Further legal advice will be obtained as and when it is deemed necessary.

- Bulletin 59 confirmed that due to the LGA's response to the Department for Work and Pensions consultation on the pension dashboard, the staging date for FRA's has been extended from 30 April 2024 to 30 September 2024. This now provides FRA's with a little extra time to ensure any members who are affected by McCloud, have the latest and most up to date information on the pension dashboard when it goes live for public service schemes.
- It was highlighted in the Bulletin that the LGA had received clarification from HMRC on the changes to annual allowance rules. Due to the change in rules, administrators will have to recalculate annual allowance amounts for previous years in certain situations. However it was unclear as to when any changes in Annual Allowances (AA) charges had to be reported by. Detailed information on the situations AA need to be reported along with the deadline administrators need to work to, can be found in the amended regulations and explanations in the [pension schemes newsletter 140](#).
- Bulletin 59 informed readers of the change to the Employer Cost Cap and Specified Restricted Scheme Regulations 2022 which came into force on 3 August 2022. The amended regulations set out the specified margins for the cost cap introduced by the Public Service Pensions Act 2013. The margins are the parameters which the scheme costs must remain within before corrective action is taken. The new regulations are now set to three percentage points above and below the employer cost cap rate.
- The Bulletin also highlighted the agenda for the Fire Pension Scheme Conference. The conference is due to take place on 25 and 26 October and both the Chair of the Board and a member of the Pensions Project Team are due to attend.
- Bulletin 60 commenced by informing FRA's of an [Age Discrimination Eligibility Factsheet](#) developed by the LGA. The factsheet confirms the four conditions which must all be met for remedial service and encourages scheme managers to review those who have been deemed to be in scope. The factsheet has been reviewed by the Project Team and yet no members who fall out of scope have been identified.
- The Bulletin informed FRA's that Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service has shared their *Retirement Re-Engagement And Abatement policy*. This policy can be adopted by other FRA's. The information in this policy has been included within the abatement policy currently in the process of being written by the Pensions Project Team. [The LGA's informal guidance on abatement](#) has also been updated as a further reference point for FRA's which the Pension Project Team has referred to extensively.
- Bulletin 60 [highlighted The Pensions Regulator \(TPR\) has published a new strategy to combat pension scams](#). The strategy hopes to:
 - educate savers about the threat that scams present
 - encourage higher standards and preventing practices that lead to saver harm
 - fighting fraud through the prevention, disruption and punishment of criminality.
- Bulletin 61 commenced with notifying readers of a template which the LGA has created for FRA's to send to members originally deemed as out of scope for the McCloud remedy project, yet following on from reading the eligibility factsheet are now eligible for consideration. The Pensions Project Team have liaised with XPS Administration and no further members are in scope.

- As part of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2014 regulations 4H(1), the Scheme Advisory Board (SAB) is required to set an annual budget for approval by the Secretary of State. The 2022-23 budget was submitted to the minister at the start of October and it is expected the collection for the SAB Levy will start in November/ December 2022. A letter will be sent to Chief Fire Officers to request a purchase order number. The levy includes the employers' voluntary subscription to fund support with FRAs understanding and management of the FPS.
- Bulletin 61 confirmed SAB, the LGA and the Home Office are working together on collaboration sessions on the Matthews (Modified) case. The sessions work through the Matthew's legislation and policy, and the proposed timeline particularly with how this is affected by McCloud. The LGA has published a [Matthews Project Implementation Document \(PID\)](#) which sets out the scope, deliverables, and high-level timeline for the project. The PID also includes a communications plan.
- The Bulletin notified FRA's of The Pensions Regulator scheme return notices which were issued in October. Scheme managers are reminded to double check their details in Exchange are correct and that the FRA could be fined if the return is not completed on time. XPS have confirmed they will be sending the draft scheme returns to the Service for our consideration before they are submitted on our behalf.
- Bulletin 61 confirmed the LGA had provided a response to the Pensions Dashboards Programme consultations. This was in respect to the consultation on *Dashboard Standards And Guidance* and *The Call For Input On Design Standards*. Bulletin 61 highlighted a number of responses the LGA provided in addition to a recommendation for FRAs':

In relation to the code of connection and connection guidance "...we (LGA) stated that we understand that pension providers have a responsibility to assure themselves that a third-party provider has met all required standards. We will recommend that FRAs' Local Pension Boards play a key role in applying an appropriate level of scrutiny."

The Pensions Project Team asks the Surrey Local Firefighter Pension Board to note this recommendation. The LGA provided a [full response to the consultations](#) on behalf of the Fire Pension Scheme.

- The Bulletin provided an overview of the content of the HMRC Pension Scheme Newsletter 142. Topics within this newsletter included:
 - Normal minimum pension age – updates to the Pensions Tax Manual
 - Migrating your pension schemes – take action now
 - Accounting for Tax (AFT) returns – can no longer be completed for any quarter from 1 April 2020 using the Pension Schemes Online service
 - New scams strategy from The Pensions Regulator

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Annexes

Annex 1: FPS Bulletin 59
Annex 2: FPS Bulletin 60
Annex 3: FPS Bulletin 61