

FPS Bulletin 68 – April 2023

Welcome to issue 68 of the Firefighters’ Pensions Schemes bulletin.

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, suggested items for future issues, or a job you would like to advertise, please email bluelightpensions@local.gov.uk.

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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 bluelightpensions@local.gov.uk.

Table 1: Calendar of events

Event	Date
Police and Fire Data Conference	17 May 2023
FPS coffee morning	6 June 2023
SAB	8 June 2023

FPS Technical Working Group	20 June 2023
FPS Communications Working Group	19 July 2023
SAB	14 September 2023
Fire Pensions Annual Conference	19 and 20 September 2023
SAB	14 December 2023

Actions arising

[Consultation on the Firefighters' Pension Scheme \(Remediable Service\) Regulations](#)

[2023](#): All interested parties are encouraged to respond to the consultation by the deadline of 23 May 2023.

[Consultation on Retained Firefighters' Pensions: Proposed changes to the](#)

[Firefighters' Pension Scheme \(England\) 2006](#): All interested parties are encouraged to respond to the consultation by the deadline of 9 June 2023.

[SCAPE Discount Rate Methodology Consultation Response](#): The CETV technical note was suspended on 30 March 2023. All CETV's, Pensioner cash equivalents and non-club transfers-in should be suspended until the revised technical note is published.

[Fire England – Commutation on retirement factors and guidance updated](#): The new factors are effective from 3 April 2023. Please ensure that you are using the revised factors for any retirements after this date.

[Secondary Contracts](#) – FRAs may wish to review their contracts to ensure that a secondary contract has been awarded correctly.

[A Matthews poster](#) has been published under the [Second options exercise – Resources](#) on the Special members of FPS 2006 page: FRA's will need to personalise the poster and publicise the second options exercise at their fire authority and fire stations.

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[Bluelight Inbox Technical Queries](#) - As covered in [Bulletin 58 – June 2022](#), please can we remind you to complete the [query form](#) for all technical queries that are sent to the Bluelight inbox.

[Generic text for estimate/retirement letters](#): FRAs to consider including within their estimates and/or retirement letters to members.

[Request for contact details](#): FRAs and administrators are reminded to include a request to members to keep them updated of any change of contact details in correspondence which is issued to them.

[Annual Allowance – Impact of the backdated pay award](#): FRA's and administrators to consider the factsheet when determining their calculations for Annual Allowance where a backdated pay award has occurred.

FPS

[Consultation on the Firefighters' Pension Schemes \(Remediable Service\) Regulations 2023](#)

As a reminder in [FPS Bulletin 67 – March 2023](#) we informed you that the above consultation had been launched.

The LGA will respond to the consultation and share our response before the consultation closes on 23 May 2023.

ACTION: All interested parties are encouraged to respond to the consultation by 23 May 2023.

[Consultation on the retained Firefighters' Pensions: Proposed changes to the Firefighters' Pension Scheme \(England\) 2006](#)

On 31 March 2023, the Home Office published [a consultation on the proposed changes to the Firefighters' Pension Scheme \(England\) 2006 in relation to retained Firefighters'](#). These regulations concentrate on providing further remedy to those individuals who were employed as retained firefighters between 7 April 2000 and 5 April 2006 inclusive providing access to the modified section of the Firefighters'

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Pension Scheme 2006 (referred to as ‘the modified scheme’).

The LGA will respond to the consultation and share our response before the consultation closes on 9 June 2023.

ACTION: All interested parties are encouraged to respond to the consultation by 9 June 2023.

Fire England – Commutation on retirement factors and guidance update

On 3 April 2023, following the announcement of the revised SCAPE rate, the Government Actuary’s Department (GAD) published [revised commutation on retirement from FPS 1992 factors and guidance](#).

The factors are effective from 3 April 2023.

ACTION: Please ensure that you are using the correct factors for any retirements following 3 April 2023 (inclusive).

Secondary Contracts – Injury and death benefits

We have received several enquiries with regards to secondary contracts and eligibility under the Firefighters’ Compensation Scheme.

The position has not changed since the introduction of the compensation scheme in 2006 and was communicated to FRAs when we were considering implications of [COVID-19 resilience cover](#).

In order to determine the pensionable consequences of the secondary contracts, with particular reference to the compensation scheme, FRAs should consider the [Secondary Contract – Injury and Death benefits factsheet](#).

ACTION: FRAs may wish to review their contracts to ensure that a secondary contract has been awarded correctly.

Matthews Poster

At the Matthews Technical Working Group and [Firefighters Communications Working Group](#) we discussed the request for a poster to assist FRAs with engaging

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with retained/on call firefighters ahead of the Matthews second options exercise.

The poster has been published under the [Second options exercise – Resources](#) on the special members of FPS 2006 page.

ACTION: FRAs will need to personalise the poster and publicise the Matthews second options exercise at their fire authority and fire stations.

Annual Benefit Statements 2023

As annual benefit statements (ABS) in 2023 will be based on current scheme regulations up to 31 March 2023, it is recommended that the same approach is adopted as in 2022. [FPS Bulletin 57 – May 2022](#) provides more information.

The standard ABS template, annexes, notes and factsheet have been updated with the new scheme year and published on the [FPS Regulations and Guidance website](#).

FPS 1992 Commentary

Eunice Heaney has very kindly provided updated FPS 1992 Commentary content and a new page [FPS 1992 Commentary](#) has been added to the restricted Member Area on the Firefighters Regulations and Guidance website.

Ill Health process guide

An [ill health process guide](#) has been published to help FRAs navigate the ill health process, and understand their role, as employer and the content of the ill health certificates.

The process guide has been published under resources on the [ill health and injury](#) pages on the restricted Member Area of the Firefighters Regulations and Guidance website.

LTA Factsheet

The [LTA factsheet for members](#) has been updated to reflect the spring budget announcements, as covered in [FPS Bulletin 67 – March 2023](#). The factsheet can be found in the [Guides and sample documents section](#) of the Firefighters Regulations and Guidance website.

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Annual Allowance – impact of backdated pay award

A [factsheet](#) has been produced to assist FRAs and administrators regarding the impact of the back dated pay award on the Annual Allowance calculations.

ACTION: FRAs and administrators to consider the factsheet when determining their calculations for Annual Allowance where a backdated pay award has occurred.

Generic text for estimate/retirement letters

The Fire Communications Working Group has agreed template wording below for FRAs to include within their estimate/retirement letters to cover re-employment:

If you have membership in the 1992 Firefighters' Pension Scheme and you are retiring under the age of 55 and not on Ill Health, you will have a Protected Pension Age (PPA) which enables you to draw your benefits before age 55.

For employees who have a PPA and are re-employed with a Fire and Rescue Service or a Sponsoring Employer¹ in any role in any capacity, between the ages of 50 and 54 inclusive, they may be subject to additional tax charges, unless certain conditions are applied.

This will also apply if an employee remains in employment as a retained/on call firefighter beyond retirement from a wholetime role.

To satisfy the conditions to retain your PPA and to avoid the additional tax charges, you must leave all employments with the Fire and Rescue Service or Sponsoring Employer on the same date and have at least one calendar month break before you are re-employed; your pension must also be subject to abatement.

[Further information relating to XXX's retirement policy is available from your employer.]

Failure to notify the Pensions Team of any re-employment may result in your pension being overpaid and you will be required to repay any overpaid pension.

¹ Local Authority when an FRA is part of the Local Authority

ACTION: FRAs to consider including within their estimate and/or retirement letters.

Industrial Action template letter

A template letter has been produced to cover pension contribution repayment requests from members should there be any instances of industrial action in future years. The template letter has been published in the [Guides and sample documents section](#) of the Firefighters regulations and guidance website.

Request for contact details

FRAs are requested to remind members, in correspondence, which is sent out, to keep their administrators updated of any change in address or contact details.

ACTION: FRAs to include a request in correspondence to all members.

HMRC retained firefighter bulletin

We are aware that HMRC have recently sent out emails to Fire Authorities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland asking for further information in relation to National Insurance refunds for retrospective entry into the pension scheme. Each Fire Authority scheme has received information bespoke to them. HMRC have provided further clarity around the information they have requested which can be located in the [first options exercise resource area](#) of the Regulations and Guidance website.

Technical query log

The [current log of queries and responses](#) can be accessed by practitioners in the member-restricted area of the FPS Regulations and Guidance website. The queries have been anonymised and divided into topics. The log is updated monthly in line with the bulletin release dates.

There have been no queries added this month.

As covered in [Bulletin 58 – June 2022](#), please can we remind you to complete the [query form](#) for all technical queries that are sent to the Bluelight inbox.

ACTION: FRAs and administrators are requested to use the [Bluelight inbox](#) for email correspondence with the Bluelight team. FRAs and administrators to complete query

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form when submitting a technical query.

FPS England SAB updates

SAB representation at Matthews Technical Working Group

In [FPS Bulletin 61-September 2022](#), we advised that a Matthews Technical Working Group had been set up to assist with the technical aspects of the implementation of the Matthews second options exercise. This group has met on a regular basis from that point with representation from the Home Office, the Government Actuary's Department, fire authorities and administrators. From April 2023, representation will include SAB members.

SAB website

You can use the links below to find out about the latest updates on the work of the SAB and its committees on the [SAB website](#):

- [SAB membership](#)
- [SAB meeting and agenda papers](#)
- [Committee meetings and agenda papers](#)

Other News and Updates

SCAPE Discount Rate Methodology Consultation Response

In [Bulletin 67- March 2023](#) we informed you that the SCAPE discount rate had changed.

Administrators will recognise that when the SCAPE rate changes, CETV calculations are suspended until the factors can be amended in line with the new SCAPE rate.

On 11 April 2023 we confirmed that the CETV technical note had been suspended.

ACTION: All CETV's, Pensioner cash equivalents and non-club transfers-in should be suspended until the revised technical note is published.

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The Pension Regulator (TPR) dashboard webinar

TPR held a webinar on dashboards on 30 March 2023. The webinar covered data preparation duties and the steps schemes need to take to ensure their data is accurate, complete, up-to-date and digitally accessible. You can watch a [recording of the webinar](#) on their website.

The Pensions Regulator Corporate plan 2023/24

On 21 April 2023, TPR published [its Corporate Plan for 2023/24](#).

The plan outlines TPR's key priorities for the year. These include:

- working with the Financial Conduct Authority and DWP to develop a value for money framework
- launching the new defined benefit funding code
- laying foundations for a significant increase in addressing quality outcomes in defined contribution schemes
- increasing its attention on tackling scammers
- supporting schemes to prepare for dashboards.

The document also includes TPR's plans beyond March 2024.

See the [press release for more information](#).

Voluntary NI contributions deadline extended

In [a written ministerial statement](#) published on 7 March 2023, the Government announced that it was extending the deadline to pay voluntary National Insurance (NI) contributions from 5 April 2023 to 31 July 2023. This applies for tax years 2006/07 to 2016/17. This came after HMRC and DWP had experienced a recent surge in customer contact.

Paying voluntary NI contributions enables individuals to fill gaps in their NI record to boost their State Pension.

For more information, see [the policy paper](#) the Government published on 24 March 2023.

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McCloud remedy consultation – Welsh firefighters’

The Welsh Government has published [a consultation setting out the proposed McCloud remedy](#) for the Welsh Firefighters Pension Scheme, The consultation closes on 23 June 2023.

HMRC

Lifetime allowance guidance newsletter – March 2023

On 27 March 2023, HMRC published [Lifetime allowance guidance newsletter – March 2023](#). It contained articles on:

- pension commencement lump sum and lifetime allowance protections
- taxable lump sums and employer PAYE payroll reporting
- the public service pensions remedy
- the lifetime allowance working group

HMRC issues newsletter 149

On 26 April 2023, HMRC published [newsletter 149](#). The newsletter contains articles on:

- the annual allowance calculator – currently members cannot use it for tax year 2023/24
- Pension Scheme Returns
- reminding schemes to use the Managing Pension Schemes service to submit any new Accounting for Tax returns for any quarter beginning on or after 1 April 2020
- an update on submitting Event Reports.

Events

FPS coffee mornings

Our MS Teams coffee mornings are continuing regularly with the next session being held in June 2023. 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

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Bluelight team.

We are pleased to include the presentations from recent sessions below:

[11 April 2023 – Home Office Matthews consultation](#)

If you do not already receive the meeting invitations and would like to join us, please email bluelightpensions@local.gov.uk. Please note that attendance at the coffee mornings is generally restricted to FPS practitioners and managers.

Fire and Police pensions data conference – 17 May 2023

As detailed in [FPS Bulletin 67 – March 2023](#) we are holding a data conference jointly with the National Police Chiefs Council (NFCC).

The event is now fully booked; however you can email events@local.gov.uk to put your name on the waiting list, or to request dial in details.

Useful links

- [The Firefighters' Pensions \(England\) Scheme Advisory Board](#)
- [FPS Regulations and Guidance](#)
- [FPS Member](#)
- [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](#)
- [LGPC Bulletins](#)
- [LGPS member site](#)
- [Scottish Public Pensions Agency - Firefighters](#)
- [Welsh Government Fire circulars](#)

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helpful if readers could bring any perceived errors or omissions to the attention of the Bluelight team by emailing bluelightpensions@local.gov.uk.

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