

FPS Bulletin 70 – June 2023

Welcome to issue 70 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
FPS coffee morning	11 July 2023
FPS Communications Working Group	27 July 2023
SAB	14 September 2023

Event	Date
FPS Technical Working Group	19 September 2023
Fire AGM-save the date	19-20 September 2023
SAB	14 December 2023

Actions arising

[Consultation on the retained Firefighters' Pensions: Proposed changes to the Firefighters' Pension Scheme \(England\) 2006](#): FRAs and administrators to familiarise themselves with the LGA's response, for information ahead of the Home Office's response to the consultation.

[Consultation on The Public Service Pension Schemes \(Rectification of Unlawful Discrimination\) \(Tax\) \(No.2\) Regulations 2023](#): FRAs and administrators to familiarise themselves with the LGA's response, for information ahead of the HMRC's response to the consultation.

[Data Collection for 2015 remedy](#): FRAs to ensure that the data collection template is completed and sent to administrators by their set deadlines, so that they are prepared for the implementation of remedy from 1 October 2023.

[Firefighters Pay Scales](#): FRAs to make themselves familiar with the pay scales available ahead of the Special members FPS 2006 (Matthews) remedy exercise to commence in October 2023.

[Home Office collection of FPS forecasts for 2023-24 to 2028-29](#): FRAs should start preparing to collate the necessary information (which is similar to that provided last year) from your records so that FRAs are well prepared, bearing in mind that some staff will be on summer leave.

[Consultation on the retained Firefighters' Pensions: Proposed changes to the Firefighters' Pension Scheme \(England\) 2006](#): FRAs and administrators to familiarise themselves with the SAB's response, for information ahead of the Home Office's response to the consultation.

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[Consultation on The Public Service Pension Schemes \(Rectification of Unlawful Discrimination\) \(Tax\) \(No.2\) Regulations 2023](#): FRAs and administrators to familiarise themselves with the SAB's response, for information ahead of the HMRC's response to the consultation.

[Added Years Factsheet](#): FRAs and Administrators to ensure they are using the updated version on their websites.

[Government Actuary's Department \(GAD\): Data Projects and Long-Term Strategy](#): FRAs are advised to read GAD's write up of the event and their broader focus on data

[Remedy readiness self-assessment tool](#): Scheme managers to complete the self-assessment tool and report back to their senior teams and local pensions boards.

[Data Conference Q and As](#): Pension Dashboards: FRAs and administrators may wish to review the Q and As for information.

[Remedy member examples by GAD](#): FRAs and administrators should read these with reference to slide 15 from the coffee morning of 26 January 2023.

FPS

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

In [FPS Bulletin 68 – April 2023](#) we informed you that the above consultation had been launched. The LGA has responded to the consultation and our response is available on the [Consultations section](#) of the Firefighters' Pension Schemes Regulations and Guidance website.

ACTION: FRAs and administrators to familiarise themselves with the response, for information ahead of the Home Office's response to the consultation.

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[Consultation on The Public Service Pension Schemes \(Rectification of Unlawful Discrimination\) \(Tax\) \(No.2\) Regulations 2023](#)

In [FPS Bulletin 69 – May 2023](#) we informed you that the above consultation had been launched. The LGA has responded to the consultation and our response is available on the [Consultations section](#) of the Firefighters' Pension Schemes Regulations and Guidance website.

ACTION: FRAs and administrators to familiarise themselves with the response, for information ahead of HMRC's response to the consultation.

[Data Collection for 2015 remedy](#)

In [FPS Bulletin 44 – April 2021](#) and [FPS Bulletin 66 – February 2023](#) we advised that remedy data collection tools had been developed with the assistance of software suppliers and the Fire Communications Working Group to help FRAs to collect the relevant data needed to prepare for the 2015 remedy exercise.

In [FPS Bulletin 69 – May 2023](#) we covered the Fire and Police data conference event and the workshop feedback coffee morning, which both raised concerns by administrators and software suppliers that not all FRAs had been in a position to provide the relevant data.

There are no assumptions made for missing data within the Police and Firefighters' Pension Schemes (Amendment) Regulations 2023 and FRAs should be near completion of the collection of this data. It is imperative that for administrators to be able to commence the remedy options exercise in October 2023, that they receive this data in good time.

The data collection template and notes are as follows:

[FPS remedy data collection template](#)

[FPS remedy data collection notes for completion](#)

[Age discrimination remedy data collection - Guidance for administrators and FRAs – version 2 clean](#)

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ACTION: FRAs to ensure that the data collection template is completed and sent to administrators by their set deadlines, so that they are prepared for the implementation of remedy from 1 October 2023.

Firefighter Pay Scales

With the help of LGA Workforce colleagues and the Fire Brigade Union, we have been able to locate pay scales going back to 1962. These have been added to [Firefighter Pay Scales](#) page on the member restricted area on the Firefighters' Regulations and Guidance website.

ACTION: FRAs to make themselves familiar with the pay scales available ahead of the Special members FPS 2006 (Matthews) remedy exercise to commence in October 2023.

Home Office collection of FPS forecasts for 2023-24 to 2028-29

On 21 June 2023, the Home Office emailed all FRAs in England to give notice that they will shortly be writing to formally request submission of pension income/expenditure forecasts for the period 2023-24 to 2028-29 via the online DELTA system.

The deadline for submissions is **Friday 25 August 2023**.

The Home Office will set out the centrally prescribed assumptions that FRAs should apply when calculating their forecasts; and what other considerations they will need to factor in.

FRAs are reminded that forecast pension accounting data is being subjected to an ever-increasing scrutiny and, as such, they should ensure that processes are in place to ensure that they have a robust methodology to calculate these. [Best practice forecasting guidance](#) was published by the Pension Forecasting Working Group in July 2019.

ACTION: FRAs should start preparing for collating the necessary information (which is similar to that provided last year) from their records so that they are well prepared, bearing in mind that some staff will be on summer leave.

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Added Years Factsheet

In [FPS Bulletin 67 – March 2023](#) we confirmed that all relevant thresholds and rate changes for 2023 were available in the [FPS annual update 2023](#).

We have updated the Added Years Factsheet to include the rate for 2023. You can find this on the [factsheet page](#) of the Firefighters Pensions Regulations and Guidance website.

ACTION: FRAs and Administrators to ensure they are using the updated version on their websites.

Government Actuary's Department (GAD): Data Projects and Long-Term Strategy

In [FPS Bulletin 69 – May 2023](#) we provided an overview of the Fire and Police Data Conference which took place on 17 May 2023.

We reflected on the importance of data for setting long term strategy about the management of pensions and ultimately supporting FRAs. GAD have now published [a news feature](#) reflecting on the event as well as covering a broader focus on data generally.

In the article GAD refers to a blog they have written about Pensions Dashboards, where they compared the matching process to a game of Guess Who. They then referenced pensions administration projects to another board game that I am sure we are all aware of where they urge the bankers (scheme managers) to invest time in the game to prioritise the experience of the players (the members) and provide an exceptional service.

ACTION: FRAs are advised to read GAD's write up of the event and their broader focus on data.

Remedy readiness self-assessment tool

To help scheme managers and pension boards reflect on their own readiness for remedy we have made available (with the help from our NPCC colleagues) a [remedy self-assessment tool](#) which can be found on the Retrospective Remedy page of the

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FPS Regulations and Guidance website. This tool is designed to assist you in assessing whether you have the necessary preparation in place for remedy and whether there are any potential gaps which need addressing.

This is purely for your own use to inform you and your senior team of your readiness for remedy. There is no requirement to return the results of this self-assessment tool to the LGA.

If, after completing the survey, you wish to seek advice or further reassurance, please contact bluelightpensions@local.gov.uk in the first instance.

ACTION: Scheme managers to complete the self-assessment tool and report back to their senior teams and local pensions boards on the results.

Data Conference Q&As – Pensions Dashboards

As mentioned above we provided an overview of the Police and Fire Data Conference event which took place on 17 May 2023 in last month's bulletin.

We have since sought answers to the outstanding questions that were asked on Pensions Dashboards and have put together a Q&A document and you can view this on the [Data conference page](#) on the Firefighters' Regulations and Guidance website.

ACTION: FRAs and administrators may wish to review the Q and As for information.

Remedy member examples by GAD

In [FPS Bulletin 65 – January 2023](#) we covered our Coffee Morning of [26 January 2023 – HMT Remedy Directions](#). Additional resource on interest and member contributions has been created by GAD and has been added to the [Retrospective Remedy page](#) of the Firefighters Pension Regulations and guidance website.

ACTION: FRAs and administrators should read these with reference to slide 15 from the coffee morning of 26 January 2023:

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

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have been anonymised and divided into topics. The log is updated monthly in line with the bulletin release dates.

Queries have been answered this month in the following categories:

- Injury Pension – whether Personal Independence Payment (PIP), which has replaced Disability Living Allowance should be deducted from an Injury Allowance. Page 56.
- Ill Health retirement review – when to cease paying a higher tier benefit. Page 106.

FPS England SAB updates

SAB meeting 8 June 2023

The Scheme Advisory Board (SAB) last met on 8 June 2023 and the meeting covered the following areas:

- First Actuarial SCAPE discount rate update
- Home Office retrospective remedy consultation
- Home Office Matthews second options exercise consultation

You can use the links below to find out about the latest updates on the work of the SAB and its committees:

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

SAB response to the Consultation on retained Firefighters' Pensions:

Proposed changes to the Firefighters' Pension Scheme (England) 2006

In [FPS Bulletin 68 – April 2023](#) we informed you that the above consultation had been launched. The Scheme Advisory Board has responded to the consultation and the response is available on the [Consultations section](#) of the Firefighters' Pensions SAB (England) website.

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ACTION: FRAs and administrators to familiarise themselves with the response, for information ahead of the Home Office’s response to the consultation.

[SAB response to HMRC Consultation on The Public Service Pension Schemes \(Rectification of Unlawful Discrimination\) \(Tax\) \(No.2\) Regulations 2023.](#)

In [FPS Bulletin 69 – May 2023](#) we informed you that the above consultation had been launched. The Scheme Advisory Board has responded to the consultation and the response is available on the [Consultations section](#) of the Firefighters’ Pensions SAB (England) website.

ACTION: FRAs and administrators to familiarise themselves with the response, for information ahead of HMRC’s response to the consultation.

Other News and Updates

[McCloud – unions granted right to appeal cost cap mechanism](#)

The Court of Appeal has granted unions permission to appeal against the recent High Court judgement over the government’s proposed method of paying for costs incurred by the McCloud ruling in public sector schemes. See [FPS Bulletin 67 – March 2023](#) for more information.

[Pensions Dashboard Programme](#)

On 8 June 2023, a [Ministerial Statement](#) was made to announce that as part of the reset of the Pensions Dashboard Programme, amending legislation will be laid to amend the Pensions Dashboard Regulations 2022.

On 9 June 2023 the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) laid draft [Pensions Dashboards \(Amendment\) Regulations 2023](#).

The amending regulations remove the phased staging timeline, replacing it with a single connection deadline of 31 October 2026. The regulations will allow the DWP and the Money and Pensions Service (MaPS) to issue guidance setting out a staged connection timeline for individual schemes, to which FRAs must have regard. MaPS aim to collaborate with industry on the guidance later this year.

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The Pension Regulator's (TPR) dashboard blog

On 14 June 2023, TPR published [a blog 'Make time to get your data dashboard-ready'](#).

The blog encourages pension schemes to continue working on their data to ensure that it is ready for dashboards. It also sets out what schemes should be considering when doing so.

TPR's response to the delay in the dashboard deadline

Further to the [written ministerial statement](#) on 8 June 2023, giving an update on the dashboard deadline, TPR has amended [its dashboard guidance](#).

TPR expects pension schemes to continue to prepare for dashboards. FRAs should continue engaging with the parties who will support them with their dashboard duties, such as their third-party administrator (if appropriate), software provider, and any other party deemed appropriate, to:

- assess the potential impact of these changes on their scheme and to agree a practical delivery plan
- continue activity on getting to grips with members' data, and
- avoid competing demands on capacity and other resources.

These expectations are reinforced in [TPR's new dashboards content toolkit](#) published on 14 June 2023. The toolkit contains key messages for pension schemes.

Dashboards Values Guidance

The Pensions Administration Association (PASA) has published [guidance](#) designed to provide trustees, managers, sponsors, administrators and providers with “good practice” approaches to providing value data to pensions dashboards.

The guidance is intended for use by both DC and DB schemes and covers 20 topics including possible approaches for dealing with issues such as late retirements, underpins, partial retirements and split normal retirement ages.

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TPO expands network of volunteers

The Pensions Ombudsman ([TPO](#)) [is expanding its network of volunteer advisers](#). It currently has a network of around 200 pension professionals, who in 2022 helped to close 1,390 cases.

If you are interested you can [apply to be a volunteer](#), or email TPO's Network Manager Paul Day at paul.day@pensions-ombudsman.org.uk

Voluntary NI contributions deadline extended

In [a written ministerial statement](#) published on 12 June 2023, the Government announced it was extending the deadline to pay voluntary National Insurance (NI) contributions from 31 July 2023 to 5 April 2025. This applies for tax years 2006/07 to 2017/18.

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

HMRC

Pension Schemes Newsletter 150

On 31 May 2023, [HMRC published pension schemes newsletter 150](#). The newsletter contains articles on relief at source and the Managing Pension Schemes service.

Events

FPS coffee mornings

Our MS Teams coffee mornings are continuing regularly. 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.

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

[Matthews FRA Calculator](#)

If you do not already receive the meeting invitations and would like to join us, please

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email bluelightpensions@local.gov.uk. Please note that attendance at the coffee mornings is generally restricted to FPS practitioners and managers.

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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