

## FPS Bulletin 58 – June 2022

Welcome to issue 58 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](mailto: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](mailto:bluelightpensions@local.gov.uk).

Table 1: Calendar of events

Event	Date
<a href="#">FPS coffee morning</a>	12 and 26 July
FPS Technical Group	18 July 2022
North-East regional group	17 August 2022
SAB	8 September 2022
North-West regional group	14 September 2022
FPS Communications Working Group	16 September 2022
FPS Technical Group	25 October 2022
FPS AGM (Save the date)	25 and 26 October 2022
SAB	8 December 2022

## **Actions arising**

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

[Home Office collection of FPS forecasts](#): FRAs to submit pension income/expenditure forecasts by 19 August 2022.

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

FRAs and administrators to complete query form when submitting a technical query.

[Annual Benefit Statement 2022 – Information factsheet](#): Administrators to include ABS factsheet with 2021/22 benefit statement distribution.

[TPR dashboard guidance](#): FRAs to read dashboard guidance and book onto webinar.

## **FPS**

### **Home Office collection of FPS forecasts for 2022-23 to 2027-28**

On 21 June 2022, the Home Office emailed all FRAs in England to request submission of their pension income/expenditure forecasts for the period 2022-23 to 2027-28.

The formal commissioning letter at [Appendix 1](#) sets out the centrally prescribed assumptions that must be applied when calculating pension income and expenditure forecasts. The forms can be accessed on DELTA from 1 July 2022. The deadline for submissions is Friday 19 August 2022.

FRAs are also required to complete the Excel table at [Appendix 2](#) in order to declare the local assumptions that they have applied to calculate their pension estimates. The prescribed assumptions that FRAs should use for CPI percentage increases, pay increases and employer contribution rates for the forecasting period have already been pre-populated on the table.

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Please note that payment of the 2022 Top Up grant will be conditional on its completion and incomplete tables will be returned to FRAs.

For the avoidance of any confusion, there are **two returns required by 19 August 2022**:

1. The online DELTA returns setting out the 6-year forecast of pension income and expenditure.
2. Assumptions returns (email direct to [anthony.mooney@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:anthony.mooney@homeoffice.gov.uk) attaching the completed table above).

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.

### **Matthews – Lessons learned**

The Home Office has recently shared with us a [draft document which outlines the lessons learned](#) from the first special members' options exercise.

This high-level paper has been produced for stakeholders involved in Matthews Remedy work. The purpose of this paper is to identify the areas of improvement from the previous remedy project and how to implement the lessons identified. The lessons referenced are drawn from the experience and reflections of the Home Office, Government Actuary Department and Local Government Association on Matthews Remedy options exercise which took place between April 2014 and September 2015.

Stakeholders had opportunity to discuss the key points from the paper at our latest [coffee afternoon session on 28 June 2022](#).

Feedback is welcomed from the sector as to whether anything is missing from the document which should have been captured. Please send any thoughts and suggestions through to the Bluelight inbox ([bluelightpensions@local.gov.uk](mailto:bluelightpensions@local.gov.uk)).

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## **Immediate Detriment Framework costing and assumption guidance**

On 26 May 2022, the LGA in collaboration with Ian Hayton, Cleveland FRS CFO and NFCC pensions lead, hosted a session via MS Teams relating to the Financial Assessment for Immediate Detriment. The session was open to all FRAs, and the invite was shared with CFOs.

The LGA has been working closely with Cleveland FRS to establish a calculator which should enable FRAs to estimate their financial liabilities when considering adoption of the Framework.

The session was designed to provide participants with an overview of the financial assumption spreadsheets. The LGA provided attendees with an explanation of the spreadsheets which included how each column interacts with the final data as well as a demonstration on how to complete the spreadsheet.

It was agreed at this meeting that the LGA would prepare some guidance for FRAs on how they can effectively use the spreadsheet. We are pleased to confirm that the guidance, along with template spreadsheets, has now been published and is available to access via the [age discrimination page in the member protected area](#) of the FPS Regulations and Guidance website.

Before using the spreadsheet, it is worth noting that it has been designed to provide FRAs with a basic estimate of their financial exposure; it does not cover every eventuality and it is based on the LGA's current understanding of what the main financial liabilities are.

## **Bluelight inbox and query form**

Now that the Bluelight team is up to full strength please can we ask that all queries are sent to the generic Bluelight inbox ([bluelightpensions@local.gov.uk](mailto:bluelightpensions@local.gov.uk)). This will enable the most appropriate team member to respond as well as ensuring that queries can be dealt with when someone is on leave.

In addition, please can we remind readers of the process to follow when submitting a technical query. [FPS Bulletin 9](#) confirmed that a query form had been developed which asks for information in the following areas:

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- Details of your query
- Area of uncertainty / challenge
- Proposed solution
- Research undertaken: Relevant legislation, HMRC guidance, relevant websites, historical background (circulars or technical meeting minutes), legal advice [Include links]
- Indication of amounts (£) involved
- Timescales involved
- Other supporting evidence

Receiving queries in this way allows us to build up a picture of frequently asked questions and ensure greater consistency in our responses. We can build up a knowledge bank of resources and be able to more easily identify common areas of uncertainty, where dedicated training or workshops could be offered.

The form and notes for completion are available on the [technical queries page](#) of the FPS Regulations and Guidance website. Once completed, the form should be submitted to [bluelight.pensions@local.gov.uk](mailto:bluelight.pensions@local.gov.uk). Your query will be acknowledged upon receipt, and we will aim to reply to your query within 28 days. If we cannot reply with a full response within 28 days, we will let you know and tell you when you can expect to receive a full reply from us.

Please note that we have taken the opportunity to move the technical queries page to the password-protected area of the website, as it intended as a dedicated resource for practitioners. Therefore, you will now need to log in to access the form and the log of previous queries.

**ACTION: FRAs and administrators to use the Bluelight inbox for email correspondence with the Bluelight team.**

**FRAs and administrators to complete query form when submitting a technical query.**

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## Annual Benefit Statements 2022 – Information factsheet

At the Fire Communications Working Group (FCWG) meeting on 13 June 2022 we discussed whether it would be beneficial to provide members who are affected by age discrimination remedy with any additional information alongside their annual benefit statement.

Although the notes clearly indicate that benefit statements cannot at this stage reflect remedy, the group thought that it would be prudent to provide members with an additional information note which outlines the timeframes associated with remedy.

The factsheet is available to access via the [guides and sample documents page](#) of the FPS Regulations and Guidance website, under the heading Annual Benefit Statements (ABS). All administrators are encouraged to send the document to members impacted by remedy, with the 2021/22 benefit statements.

**Action: Administrators to include ABS factsheet with 2021/22 annual benefit statement distribution.**

## 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.

Queries have been answered this month in the following categories: Commutation (page 19).

## FPS England SAB updates

### SAB respond to HM Treasury's letter

We reported in [FPS Bulletin 52](#) that the chair of the SAB had written an [open letter to HM Treasury \(HMT\) on the withdrawal of the Home Office informal guidance](#) on immediate detriment. The letter, dated 17 December 2021, asked for more information on the risks and uncertainties which HMT said arose as a result of processing cases ahead of legislation.

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On 23 March 2022, [HMT provided a response outlining the factors behind the withdrawal](#) in more detail. The response highlighted that Section 61 of the Equality Act 2010 did not, in HMT's opinion, allow for amendment of a member's tax position. The response detailed several tax complexities which had been identified and will be dealt with through legislation.

On 20 June 2022, the chair of the SAB wrote an [open letter in response to HMT's reply](#) which seeks further clarity on the extent of Sections 61/ 62 and the tax implications detailed.

## **Other News and Updates**

### **DWP call for evidence – helping savers understand their pension choices**

On 14 June 2022, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) launched a [Call for Evidence entitled: 'Helping savers understand their pension choices'](#).

The call for evidence explores what support pension scheme members need to help them make informed decisions about how to use their savings.

DWP welcomes views from pension scheme members, consumer organisations, trustees, and scheme managers.

The consultation closes on 25 July 2022.

### **Further consultation on Pensions Dashboards launched**

On 28 June 2022, DWP launched a further consultation on Pensions Dashboards: [Pensions dashboards: further consultation - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

This further consultation supplements the consultation on the draft dashboard regulations which ran from 31 January 2022 to 13 March 2022. More information, including the LGA FPS response to that consultation, can be found on the [consultations page](#) of [www.fpsregs.org](#).

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The further consultation sets out two proposals. The first proposal provides clarity on the 'Dashboard Available Point' (DAP). The second proposal allows the Money and Pensions Service and the Pensions Regulator to share information about dashboards with each other.

The DAP is the point at which dashboards will be available to all members of the public. The consultation proposes that the DWP will decide on the DAP and then give pension schemes 90 days' notice. It is hoped that this will give schemes sufficient time to make final preparations.

The consultation is scheduled to run for 3 weeks and closes on 19 July 2022.

### **PDP update**

Speaking at the Pensions Age Northern Conference and the PLSA Local Authority Conference Chris Curry, Principle of the Pensions Dashboards Programme (PDP), confirmed that:

- DWP is expected to respond to the consultation on the draft regulations for pensions dashboards before summer recess, with the regulations likely to be laid in parliament later this year.
- Dashboards are still on track for 2023, with less than 12 months until some schemes begin onboarding.
- Later in the year PDP will be running a further consultation on the specific standards for dashboards, which they will look to work with the industry through webinars and events.
- PDP has successfully tested an end-to-end version of the dashboards ecosystem and that the alpha phase of the project was complete.

### **TPR Deadline Campaign for Pensions Dashboards**

The Pensions Regulator (TPR) has launched its new "Deadline" campaign urging trustees and scheme managers to start preparing for pensions dashboards.

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It is expected that occupational pension schemes with 100 or more relevant members will connect to the pensions dashboards through a phased approach according to size and type of pension scheme. The first schemes will connect to the dashboards system by June next year and TPR will begin writing to them at least twelve months ahead of their connection deadline to alert them to what they need to do.

To help trustees and scheme managers get ready, TPR has published [Pensions dashboards: initial guidance](#) which outlines their legal duties, based on draft regulations, including a checklist to help track progress. TPR are urging the following:

- All schemes need to prepare, so it is vital that all schemes start to prioritise their duties and not leave them until the last minute-your pensions dashboard deadline is coming.
- Include pension dashboards as an agenda item at trustee board meetings.
- Decide how you will connect-i.e., using your current pensions administrator, an integrated service provider, or building your own connection solution.
- Check that the data you will use to match people with their pensions and return to the dashboard is available, accurate and assessable.

[Check your connection deadline and download a checklist](#)

TPR is hosting a webinar and Q&A on 28 July 2022 to take you through the steps you need to take to prepare for connection. [Register to save your place.](#)

### **TPR corporate plan 2022 to 2024**

On 13 June 2022, [TPR published its corporate plan](#) for the next two years. Their [press release](#), confirms they will continue to:

- call on schemes to take its pledge to combat pension scams
- work closely with DWP and the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) on a future consultation for a Value for Money Framework

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- assess how smaller defined contribution schemes offer value for money
- help schemes become dashboard ready
- develop its organisational capability with the creation of a Digital, Data and Technology directorate
- launch its second consultation on a new defined benefit funding code this autumn, with the code operational from September 2023.

### **TPR blog on pensions scammers**

On 15 June 2022, [TPR published a blog on pension scammers](#). The blog highlighted that tough prison sentences alone are not enough to dissuade all scammers and secure savers' pension pots.

TPR needs the pensions industry to make use of the new powers to block transfers they suspect are scams and, to report any suspected scams to the appropriate authorities.

TPR know scammers' methods will continue to evolve and are working with the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau to jointly [review the threat of pension scams](#).

Most importantly, schemes should [report concerns about scams to the authorities](#). To help do this effectively TPR and their partners have published [a guide to reporting pension scams](#).

The guide looks at:

- Why concerns about a scam should be reported
- What should be reported
- When report should be made
- Who a report should be made to
- What happens once a report has been submitted

### **State pension triple lock reinstated**

Chancellor Rishi Sunak has confirmed that the [state pension triple lock will be reinstated next April](#) after it was put on hold last April. It is likely to be based on the September 2022 consumer price index, which is expected to be around 10 per cent.

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## **Job vacancies**

### **Vacancy at Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service**

Please find below details of a current vacancy for a Pensions Officer which is open to existing Nottinghamshire FRS employees and external applicants. The closing date for receipt of application forms is 17 July 2022.

“We are looking for a Pensions Officer, working part-time 3 days a week. This is an exciting opportunity for an experienced pension expert. You will provide advice and guidance to the Service on the Fire Pension Scheme (FPS) and Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). You will act as a technical expert and advise on pension regulations overseeing the implementation of legislative changes.

Further information and an online application form are available via our Recruitment Website at <https://jobs.notts-fire.gov.uk>”

### **Vacancy at West Midlands Fire Service**

Please find attached below details of a current vacancy for a Pensions Practitioner at West Midlands Fire Service. The closing date for receipt of application forms is 12.00 on 7 July 2022:

[West Midlands Fire Service Pensions Practitioner Vacancy](#)

### **Vacancy at London Fire Brigade**

As detailed in [FPS Bulletin 57](#), an opportunity has arisen to join the LFB as a Pensions Analyst. The role is to ensure they fulfil all statutory requirements and deal effectively with pension related issues as they impact on the London Fire Commissioner. The closing date for receipt of application forms is 7 July 2022:

[Finance Pensions Analyst \(london-fire.gov.uk\)](#)

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## **Vacancy at West Sussex County Council**

Please find attached below details of a current vacancy for a Pensions Adviser at West Sussex County Council. The closing date for receipt of application forms is 13 July 2022:

[Pensions Adviser West Sussex County Council](#)

## **Events**

### **FPS coffee mornings**

Our MS Teams coffee mornings are continuing every second Tuesday. 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 session is due to take place on 12 July 2022.

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

[14 June 2022 – TPR Governance and Administration survey results 2020-21](#)

[28 June 2022 – Matthews - lessons learned](#)

If you do not already receive the meeting invitations and would like to join us, please email [bluelightpensions@local.gov.uk](mailto: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](#)

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- [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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