

FPS Bulletin 53 – January 2022

Welcome to issue 53 of the Firefighters' Pensions Schemes bulletin.

We wish all readers a belated Happy New Year.

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 bluelight.pensions@local.gov.uk.

Contents

Calendar of events	2
FPS	2
Immediate Detriment Framework – Update on position from FRAs	2
LGA response to Home Office consultation	3
Age discrimination remedy help and support	3
Administrator remedy self-assessment survey	3
Technical query log	4
FPS England SAB updates	4
LGA vacancy - Firefighters' Pensions Adviser - Governance	4
SAB response to Home Office consultation	4
SAB levy 2021-22 – Request for Purchase Order numbers	5
SAB SMA committee vacancy	5
Other News and Updates	5
DWP consultation on pensions dashboards	5
Public Service Pension Indexation and Revaluation 2022	6
TPO webinars	7
Judicial review challenging McCloud consultation dismissed	7
DWP responds to 'stronger nudge' consultation	7
Vacancy at Avon Fire and Rescue Service	8
HMRC	8
HMRC newsletters/bulletins	8
Managing Pension Schemes service – message to FRAs	8

Events	9
FPS coffee mornings	9
Legislation	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 bluelight.pensions@local.gov.uk.

Table 1: Calendar of events

Event	Date
FPS coffee morning	8 and 22 February 2022
North East regional group	16 February 2022
Fire Communications Working Group	1 March 2022
FPS Technical Group	7 March 2022
LGA Annual Fire Conference and Exhibition	15 – 16 March 2022
SAB	24 March 2022
SAB	23 June 2022
SAB	8 September 2022
SAB	8 December 2022

FPS

Immediate Detriment Framework – Update on position from FRAs

We understand that FRAs are continuing to consider adoption of the Immediate Detriment Framework.

It would be useful for the LGA to know what the current position is in each FRA. We will therefore shortly be contacting scheme managers to ask what arrangements are currently in place for their FRA.

This information will be important for us to better understand the current landscape, which means we will be best placed in our discussions with other parties to identify any necessary solutions, and able to provide further support to FRAs where needed.

The latest guidance on the Framework, which was updated at the end of last year following the statements from the Home Office and HM Treasury on immediate detriment, can be found on the [age discrimination page](#) of the FPS Regulations and Guidance. Log-in details are required to access the page and can be provided to practitioners and administrators only.

LGA response to Home Office consultation

We reported in [FPS Bulletin 51](#) that the Home Office had launched a consultation on amendments to the pension scheme regulations to deliver the first set of changes to remove the transitional protections from the FPS 2015.

On 2 January 2022, the [LGA submitted its response to the consultation on the prospective changes](#).

The changes are intended to come into force on 1 April 2022.

Age discrimination remedy help and support

With April 2022 on the horizon, we are conscious that FRAs and administrators will be very much focused on remedy and the prospective changes which are due to come into force on 1 April 2022.

We are also aware that the retrospective remedy will be at the forefront of people's minds. By now we expect that you are working through the guidance issued in [FPS Bulletin 44](#) and are gathering the data that you require to populate the FPS remedy data collection template.

We want to support you in these efforts and ask for suggestions on ways in which you feel that our resource and expertise may benefit you and your organisations. We are planning on setting up some working groups and are happy to deliver training and/or knowledge refreshers.

Please let us know what support you think would be useful by emailing the Bluelight Pensions inbox bluelight.pensions@local.gov.uk.

Administrator remedy self-assessment survey

In addition to the above, readers may recall that last summer the Scheme Advisory Board (SAB) launched an FRA remedy self-assessment survey. As part of their statutory role to provide advice to scheme managers and Local Pension Boards in relation to the efficient and effective administration and management of the FPS, the Board wanted to understand more about arrangements for managing the pension scheme and specifically for implementing the age discrimination remedy.

[Click here to return to Contents](#)

To do this, the Board prepared a self-assessment survey to take a temperature check of current arrangements. The survey was specifically aimed at FRAs and, as a result, a [research report](#) was published in December's edition of the bulletin. All FRAs were also provided with individual feedback.

The data received was extremely useful and, with both Sargeant and Matthews remedies on the horizon, we thought that it would be prudent to understand the administrators' position. With this in mind, we plan to launch an administrator survey. The survey can be expected in the coming weeks and will be shared with our key contacts within the relevant administrators.

Once the survey has closed, we will analyse the data and provide a report to the SAB for a forthcoming meeting. Welsh administrators are also invited to complete the survey and the data will be shared with the Welsh Scheme Advisory Board.

We ask that administrators are as open as possible when completing the survey, this will help us consider what additional support and advice will be needed.

Technical 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 is updated monthly in line with the bulletin release dates.

No new queries have been added this month.

FPS England SAB updates

LGA vacancy - Firefighters' Pensions Adviser - Governance

We are looking for someone to join us at the LGA to provide high-quality support to the Scheme Advisory Board (SAB) and FRAs' Local Pension Boards as a [Firefighters' Pensions Adviser – Governance](#) on a home or office-based contract.

The ideal candidate will have knowledge and experience of the FPS and excellent communication skills to support scheme stakeholders through a number of upcoming legislative developments that will require clear and comprehensive information and will bring with them significant administrative and communication challenges.

The closing date for applications has been extended to 18 February 2022 and interviews will take place in the week commencing 7 March 2022.

Please contact claire.hey@local.gov.uk with any questions about the role.

SAB response to Home Office consultation

We reported in [FPS Bulletin 51](#) that the Home Office had launched a consultation on amendments to the pension scheme regulations to deliver the first set of changes to remove the transitional protections from the FPS 2015.

On 2 January 2022, the [SAB submitted its response to the consultation on the prospective changes](#).

The changes are intended to come into force on 1 April 2022.

SAB levy 2021-22 – Request for Purchase Order numbers

We are pleased to confirm that the SAB budget for 2021-22 has been approved by the minister and the invoicing process has started.

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 2021-22 year will be £9.16 per firefighter, which is calculated at £6.88 for the SAB and £2.28 for employers. A letter was sent by email to Chief Fire Officers and HR Directors on 11 January 2022 advising them of this.

Devolved FRAs have also been sent levy requests with regard 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 as of 1 April 2021, using the form provided with the letter.

SAB SMA committee vacancy

The Board continues to carry a vacancy on the [Scheme Management and Administration \(SMA\) committee](#) for an FRA LPB representative. The main objectives of the committee are to provide guidance to the SAB to understand the value and cost of administration and to consider how scheme managers and administrators can best be supported by identifying best practice.

This is a great opportunity for an LPB member to get more involved with governance at a national level and represent the views of the sector.

The required commitment is usually three to four meetings per year, and these are currently being held virtually. If you are interested in sitting on the committee or would like more information, please email bluelight.pensions@local.gov.uk.

Other News and Updates

DWP consultation on pensions dashboards

On 31 January 2022, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) published a [consultation on draft Pensions Dashboards Regulations](#). The consultation closes on 13 March 2022.

The purpose of this consultation is to seek views on a range of policy questions relating to the creation of pensions dashboards. An indicative draft of the Regulations is included to show how DWP envisage the policy would be turned into law.

The Board has previously responded to requests for information on dashboard implementation expressing concern around the potential value of dashboards for firefighters and the suggested timescales for Public Service Pension Schemes to make data available:

[SAB response to DWP consultation – Pensions dashboards: Working together for the consumer](#) (January 2019)

[SAB response to PDP call for input on dashboard staging](#) (July 2021)

These responses may be useful when considering your replies.

In addition, the [Pensions Dashboards Programme \(PDP\) published a report from Ipsos Mori](#) on 25 January 2022. The PDP had commissioned Ipsos Mori to undertake qualitative research on the attitudes of potential dashboard users, their circumstances, behaviours, and views of the dashboard concept.

On the same day, Rita Patel, Lead Analyst for the PDP, published a [blog summarising the report's main findings](#), which are:

- respondents reacted almost uniformly positively to the concept of dashboards
- respondents expect to see value information, both accrued and projected
- a find-only dashboard, which located pensions without displaying values, was of limited appeal
- a phased or partial service could negatively affect dashboards' reception
- dashboard users need to know what the service can and cannot do for them, as well as having clear signposting of government backing, in order to increase trust in its security.

DWP is hosting a series of webinars connected to the consultation to help stakeholders form their responses. You can register for the webinars on the [PDP webpage publicising the consultation](#). There is also a range of documents to support the consultation, outlining the scope of PDP's standards.

Public Service Pension Indexation and Revaluation 2022

On 20 January 2022, HM Treasury issued [written statement HCWS548](#) confirming the Public Service Pension Indexation and Revaluation for 2022.

Public service pensions will be increased in line with the annual increase in the Consumer Prices Index up to September 2021. The increase from 11 April 2022 is 3.1%.

HMT has published the [2022 pensions increase multiplier tables](#) and [covering note](#) to the GOV.UK website in advance of the Pensions Increase (Review) Order being laid.

FPS 2015 will use the figure of 4.1% as set out in the statement for the earnings element of revaluation for active members to be applied at one second after midnight on 31 March 2022.

TPO webinars

Following feedback from stakeholders, The Pensions Ombudsman (TPO) is running a series of short webinars at the end of March. Topics will include:

- A general introduction to TPO
- The work of the Early Resolution Service
- Volunteers
- How to Avoid The Ombudsman

To register your interest in attending any of these events, email stakeholder@pensions-ombudsman.org.uk.

Judicial review challenging McCloud consultation dismissed

On 15 December 2021, the [High Court handed down its judgment](#) dismissing the judicial review brought by the Police Superintendents' Association (PSA). The PSA challenged the legality of the consultation remedying the discrimination identified in the McCloud judgment in the unfunded public service schemes and the decision to close the legacy schemes on 1 April 2022.

The Court upheld some aspects of the PSA's claims. The Court found that the Government had not given clear conscientious consideration to the consultation responses before deciding to close the legacy schemes on 1 April 2022 and that parts of the public sector equality duty were breached. The Court decided against granting relief as it found it highly likely that the Government would have made the same decisions if the breaches had not occurred.

The [PSA has announced that it will seek leave to appeal](#) to the Court of Appeal.

DWP responds to 'stronger nudge' consultation

The [Department for Work and Pensions \(DWP\) responded to the consultation 'Stronger Nudge to pensions guidance'](#) on 17 January 2022.

On the same day, the DWP laid before Parliament [the Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes \(Disclosure of Information\) \(Requirements to Refer Members to Guidance etc\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2022](#).

The regulations come into force on 1 June 2022 and apply to England, Scotland, and Wales. The regulations will require administrators of occupational pension schemes to give to their members, in certain cases, a stronger nudge to Pension Wise guidance.

There is no action required by FPS administrators or practitioners, as the FPS does not offer “[flexible benefits](#)” as defined by the Pension Schemes Act 2015.

Vacancy at Avon Fire and Rescue Service

Please see below details of a job opportunity at Avon Fire & Rescue Service. The closing date is Mon 7 February.

[Workplace Pensions Advisor | Yes You Can! The Avon Fire & Rescue Service Job Site](#)

This links through to the advert and then onto the JD. This is a very flexible role and could be filled full or part time, and it can be a hybrid of home and office working. There are good benefits in AF&RS and access to funded development as well as the opportunity to branch out into other specialist areas

HMRC

HMRC newsletters/bulletins

On 17 January 2022, HMRC published [Pension schemes newsletter 136](#) containing important updates and guidance for schemes. The newsletter includes articles on:

- Relief at source — notification of residency status report for 2022 to 2023
- Normal minimum pension age (NMPA)
- Extension to some of the temporary changes to relief at source processes
- Maintaining qualifying recognised overseas pension schemes (QROPS) status
- Pension flexibility statistics
- Managing Pension Schemes service
- Scheme Pays reporting

Managing Pension Schemes service – message to FRAs

On 18 January 2022, we emailed FRA FPS contacts and FPS pension administrators with the following update from HMRC on the migration of pension schemes from the Pension Schemes Online service to the Managing Pension Schemes service:

“We’re currently planning to release the feature for migrating pension schemes in early April 2022.

As currently planned, from mid-March 2022, you’ll no longer be able to compile and submit an AFT return for any quarter from 1 April 2020 on the Pension Schemes Online service.

This means that if you need to submit an AFT return for the quarter 1 January 2022 to 31 March 2022, you must migrate your pension scheme in time to compile and submit the AFT return by the filing deadline of 15 May 2022.

[Click here to return to Contents](#)

If you've compiled but not yet submitted a new AFT return on the Pension Schemes Online service for any quarter from 1 April 2020, you also won't be able to successfully submit this on that service from mid-March.

To be able to migrate pension schemes, scheme administrators must be [enrolled](#) on the Managing Pension Schemes service using their existing 'A0' administrator ID. Scheme administrators with [multiple administrator IDs](#) will need to have completed the process of setting up their 'Master' and 'Ancillary' IDs, and have enrolled using their 'Master' ID.

Further information on this can be found in our [Pension Schemes newsletter](#), which was published on GOV.UK today and our guidance [Migrating your pension scheme to the Managing Pension Schemes service](#).

Please email migration.mps@hmrc.gov.uk if you have any questions or feedback on the Managing Pension Schemes service, including the migration of pension schemes."

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 8 February 2022.

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

[11 January 2022 – Forward look 2022](#)

[25 January 2022 - Abatement](#)

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

Legislation

SI	Reference title
2022/30	The Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (Disclosure of Information) (Requirements to Refer Members to Guidance etc.) (Amendment) Regulations 2022

[Click here to return to Contents](#)

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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