

FPS Bulletin 18 – March 2019

Welcome to issue 18 of the Firefighters' Pensions Schemes bulletin.

If you are looking for information on a certain topic, don't forget to visit the issue and content indexes which are available on the main bulletin page of the website and are updated following each new issue.

If you have any comments on the contents of this bulletin or suggested items for future issues, please contact [Claire Hey](#).

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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 contact [Claire Hey](#).

Data: Pensions in a digital era	3 April 2019
North West regional FPOG	4 April 2019
Eversheds annual Public Sector Pensions Conference – London	5 April 2019
Eversheds annual Public Sector Pensions Conference – Leeds	12 April 2019
LPB effectiveness committee	18 April 2019
Fire Communications Working Group	29 April 2019
Joint Fire and Police governance event	15 May 2019
Eastern regional FPOG	30 May 2019
Administration & benchmarking committee	6 June 2019
North East regional FPOG	12 June 2019
SAB	13 June 2019
Local Pension Board annual wrap-up session	18 June 2019
Ill health and medical appeals seminar	19 June 2019
Firefighter Pensions Technical Community	26 June 2019
CLASS annual conference: Manchester Holiday Inn	3-4 July 2019
Pensionable pay workshop	18 July 2019
Firefighters' Pensions AGM	24-25 September 2019
SAB	3 October 2019
Pensions tax seminar	12 November 2019
SAB	12 December 2019

FPS

2019 amendment order – SI 2019/378

The Police and Firefighters' (Pensions etc.) (Amendment) (England and Wales) Regulations 2019 [SI 2019/378](#) was laid on 28 February 2019 and comes into force on 1 April 2019. The government response to the consultation can be found [here](#).

A [technical note](#) has been published to confirm the details of the amendment order as it relates to the Firefighters' Pension Schemes. FRAs and local pension boards should take the following action:

1. Ensure they are satisfied that the two pension rule is properly applied.
2. Identify and recalculate any survivor's pension in payment under these rules.
3. Identify and make additional payment to the estate of deceased survivor members who would have had a survivor pension in payment under these rules.
4. Identify and recalculate any CETV calculations (whether for a transfer or divorce) where the value of the survivor's pension was calculated under these rules.

We recognise that scheme records may not be held in such a way that allows the administrator to identify such cases, and therefore a communications exercise will need to take place to all persons or relatives of such persons who may be affected. The communications group will be consulted on the most effective way to communicate this and further advice will be available as soon as possible.

Consolidated versions of rule B5A as amended by this order can be found [here](#).

Revised Fire (England) factors

Further to the letter issued by the Home Office on 31 October regarding the [review of scheme factors](#) due to the change to the SCAPE discount rate, GAD has provided the following replacement factor tables.

[Appendix 1: Pension Debit Adjustment and Pension Credit factors](#)

These factors replace those currently in use with immediate effect from 8 March 2019.

The pension credit factors used in each particular case should be those which correspond to those used for the calculation of the Divorce CETV. In particular, if there are any outstanding pension credits to be calculated where a determination has been made using a Divorce CETV calculated on the old factors then they should be processed using the old pension credit factors.

The pension debit adjustment factors contained in this email should be used for all calculations going forward.

We would be grateful if administrators could undertake some sample calculations using the new factors, which we can forward to GAD to ensure that they have been implemented in line with current guidance. Please send any examples to bluelight.pensions@local.gov.uk.

GAD has informed us that they will update the guidance and example calculations to reflect these revised factors at a later date. The updated tables and subsequent guidance will be made available at <http://fpsregs.org/index.php/gad-guidance> in due course.

ACTION: Pension Board Chairs and Scheme Managers, please ensure you liaise with your pension manager to ensure that the factors are applied with immediate effect.

Contribution rates 2019-20

Banded contribution rates were introduced to the Firefighters' Pension Scheme 1992 and the Firefighters' Pension Scheme (England) 2006 by Statutory Instruments [2012/953](#) and [2012/954](#) respectively.

These rates have subsequently been amended each year by an amendment order to the schemes. The most recent amendments¹, which came into force on 1 April 2015, listed the rates applicable from 2015-16 to 2018-19, including contribution rates for Special Members of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme (England) 2006.

The Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2015 was introduced on 1 April 2015 by SI 2014/2848. [Regulation 110](#) set out details rates applicable from 2015-16 to 2018-19.

For 2019-20, FRAs have been instructed that the current rates shall continue to apply, due to the pause of the cost-cap mechanism. The factsheet at [Appendix 2](#) reminds FRAs of the contribution rates set out in the above Regulations and Orders which will apply from 1 April 2019.

Year End update 2019

A factsheet containing relevant thresholds and rate changes is available at [Appendix 3](#).

New factsheet – Additional Pension Benefits (APBs)

A new factsheet on [Additional Pension Benefits \(APBs\)](#) has been published on the [factsheets](#) tab of the FPS Regulations and Guidance website. This factsheet has been prepared to give guidance to FRAs on APBs, and the requirement to make a discretionary determination on whether eligible payments should be treated as pensionable or not.

More detailed information, including the regulatory background and calculation guidance, is available from the [APB](#) GAD guidance page.

ACTION: FRAs should ensure that a policy is in place on the exercise of their discretion, and that any APBs are reported to their administrator in a timely manner.

SAB cost-effectiveness committee vacancy

We have a vacancy on the [SAB cost effectiveness committee](#) for an HR FRA representative. If you are interested in sitting on this committee, please email clair.alcock@local.gov.uk for further information.

¹ [SI 2015/579](#), [SI 2015/590](#)

March 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 will be updated on a monthly basis in line with the bulletin release dates.

Queries from earlier months have been grey-shaded to differentiate from new items added in February.

Other News and Updates

SFGB renamed

In [FPS Bulletin 16 – January 2019](#), we reported that the government’s [Single Financial Guidance Body](#) (SFGB) had officially adopted its delivery functions and would be seeking a new name for the organisation as 2019 progressed.

The new name has now been confirmed by [The Financial Guidance and Claims Act 2018 \(Naming and Consequential Amendments\) Regulations 2019](#) as the Money and Pensions Service.

PASA data guidance

The Pension Administration Standards Association (PASA), in partnership with ITM, has produced the following [data guidance](#) to help those responsible for running schemes to review the quality of their existing data, and provides guidance on taking any necessary action to ensure that their data meets all stakeholders’ needs.

Once again data quality and record keeping are high on the TPR agenda, with poor administration a key regulatory concern. Over one quarter of all schemes have not measured their data within the last three years, and a further one quarter only measure common data².

DWP launches midlife MOT website

On 21 February 2019, the DWP launched a new website aimed at encouraging people aged 40 or over to take a ‘mid-life MOT’ to assess their finances, wellbeing and career.

In addition to the [mid-life MOT website](#) for individuals, DWP, in association with Business in the Community, has also produced [a guide](#) for smaller companies on how they can provide mid-life MOTs for their staff.

HMRC

HMRC newsletters/bulletins

At the time of writing, there have been no new publications since our February bulletin.

² Pensions Age seminar 15 March 2019: Louise Sivyler, Policy Manager, TPR,

Contracting-out reconciliation update

The following bulletins, containing important guidance and information about the end of contracting out and the scheme reconciliation process, have been published by HMRC in March.

[Countdown bulletin 43](#)

Updates include:

- Pension Scheme Administrator queries
- Pension Scheme Administrator guidance about the end of contracting-out
- Scheme Reconciliation Service process improvements
- reminder of deadlines
- contracted-out statements

[Countdown bulletin 44](#)

This bulletin gives important information and dates regarding scheme financial reconciliation.

HMRC workshops on the Manage and Register Pension Schemes service

On 27 and 28 February 2019, HMRC held workshops on the Manage and Register Pension Schemes service.

The slides from the workshop are attached to this bulletin as [Appendix 4](#).

Training and Events

Data: Pensions in a digital era

We are pleased to invite readers to a data seminar being held at the LGA offices at 18 Smith Square, London on **Wednesday 3 April 2019**, from 10:30 to 15:15.

We know that data is a major focus this year for TPR and pension schemes, but why is data so important in a digital era and what can we do to improve our approach?

We have put together an agenda of industry speakers to reflect on why data is so important for the Firefighters' and Police Pension Schemes and how technology can help us to get it right.

The event is aimed at Fire and Rescue Authorities and Police Authorities including scheme managers and Local Pension Board representatives, pension practitioners and administrators, along with software providers and industry professionals.

There will be sessions on the Pensions Dashboard project, valuation data, data improvement plans, scheme reconciliation, and member communications, as well as an LGA-led workshop on data scoring for TPR. The full programme can be viewed [here](#).

[Book your place now!](#)

Brighton rocks: LGA annual fire conference

The Bluelight team recently had opportunity to attend the LGA annual fire conference and exhibition in Brighton. The event is well attended by those responsible for managing Fire and Rescue Services and their budgets, along with elected members of Fire Authorities, and so provides an excellent opportunity for networking and improving our knowledge of the wider issues affecting Services across the country. We were also able to catch up with the majority of our Scheme Advisory Board employer representative members, many of whom sit on the Fire Services Management Committee (FSMC).



There were thought-provoking keynote sessions on culture, diversity and inclusion; finance, risk, and capacity; the HMICFRS inspectorate programme; and building safety, among others, in addition to a varied selection of workshops. For those interested, the complete slide decks from the two day event can be viewed [here](#).

Legislation

SI	Reference Title
2019/373	The Guaranteed Minimum Pensions Increase Order 2019
2019/374	The Automatic Enrolment (Earnings Trigger and Qualifying Earnings Band) Order 2019
2019/376	The Social Security Revaluation of Earnings Factors Order 2019
2019/378	The Police and Firefighters' (Pensions etc.) (Amendment) (England and Wales) Regulations 2019
2019/455	The Public Service Pensions Revaluation Order 2019
2019/546	The Pensions Increase (Review) Order 2019

Useful links

- [The Firefighters' Pensions \(England\) Scheme Advisory Board](#)
- [FPS Regulations and Guidance](#)
- [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](#)

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