

FPS Bulletin 24 – September 2019

Welcome to issue 24 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 the contents of this bulletin or suggested items for future issues, please contact [Claire Hey](#).

Contents

[Calendar of events](#)

[FPS](#)

- [Firefighters' Pensions: Board of Medical Referees - appointment of new contractor](#)
- [Claims for refunds of NICs - FPS 2006 special members](#)
- [GAD data improvement reports for FRAs now issued](#)
- [TPR data measuring review](#)
- [FPS contacts for HMRC – a gentle reminder](#)
- [SAB Administration & Benchmarking committee vacancy](#)
- [New factsheet – FPS Management and Governance](#)
- [September query log](#)

[Other News and Updates](#)

- [ICO changes to GDPR](#)
- [TPR publish LGPS engagement report](#)
- [Uprating of UK State Pension recipients living in the EU after Brexit](#)

[HMRC](#)

- [Contracting-out reconciliation update](#)

[Training and Events](#)

- [FPS AGM – event summary](#)
- [Training survey research report](#)

[Useful links](#)

[Contact details](#)

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](#).

SAB	3 October 2019
North East regional group	4 October 2019
Fire Finance Network conference : Arden - Warwick Conferences	9-10 October 2019
Fire Communications Working Group	16 October 2019
SAB Administration & Benchmarking/ Cost-effectiveness committee	24 October 2019
South East regional group	28 October 2019
Pensions tax seminar	12 November 2019
SAB LPB effectiveness committee	14 November 2019
SAB	12 December 2019
Firefighters' Pensions AGM – save the date!	22-23 September 2020

FPS

[Firefighters' Pensions: Board of Medical Referees - appointment of new contractor](#)

The contract for providing the Board of Medical Referees (BMR) to consider medical appeals under the Firefighters' Pension Schemes (in England) is currently held by Health Management Limited and will expire on 30 September 2019.

Following the completion of a formal tendering process, the Home Office can now confirm that it has appointed the successful applicant, Duradiamond Health Ltd, to provide the BMR from 1 October 2019 onwards.

Further information on the company can be accessed at: <https://www.duradiamondhealth.com/>.

It has been agreed that any new medical appeal cases referred to the BMR on or after 14 September 2019 will be considered by Duradiamond Health Ltd. In order to facilitate a seamless transition to the new contractor, FRAs are asked to hold off referring any new appeal cases to the BMR during the period 14 to 30 September 2019 - these cases can then be referred to Duradiamond Healthcare from the 1 October onwards. Any cases referred to the BMR before 14 September will be seen through to conclusion by Health Management Ltd.

While it is not expected that the appointment of Duradiamond Healthcare Ltd as the new contractor will change the current medical appeals arrangements, the Home Office will provide further detail in due course on hearing fees, hearing venues and the address that new appeal claims should be sent to, etc.

Contact details for Duradiamond Healthcare Ltd are as follows:

Email: pfmab@duradiamondhealth.com

Phone: 01273 963729

Postal Address: Duradiamond Healthcare
Tribune House
Bell Lane
Bellbrook Industrial Estate
Uckfield
East Sussex TN22 1QL

Please contact philip.perry@homeoffice.gov.uk if you would like to discuss any of the above.

Claims for refunds of NICs - FPS 2006 special members

HMRC has received claims for refunds of National Insurance Contributions (NICs) in relation to retained firefighters who have taken up backdated membership of their employer's pension scheme as special members of FPS 2006. A refund will be due for the difference between the amount already paid and the amount due at the lower contracted-out rate for the period of contracted-out employment.

However, for the employment to be treated as contracted-out employment a valid contracting-out certificate will need to be in place. Each of the affected FRAs will need to make a formal election to vary their pre 2016 contracting-out certificate, to backdate the start date of the certificate to 6 April 2000.

HMRC will contact you shortly to let you know what action you need to take. Once your backdated contracted-out certificate is issued, HMRC will be able to process your refund claims.

GAD data improvement reports for FRAs now issued

As detailed in [FPS Bulletin 23 – August 2019](#), the individual data improvement reports from GAD have now been sent to the Chief Officer and Local Pension Board chair at each FRA.

If you are not aware that your authority has received this information and would like to have sight of the document, please contact bluelight.pensions@local.gov.uk.

TPR data measuring review

We have recently been informed that some authorities may have received an email entitled 'Our records show you don't measure your data' from the Pension Regulator (TPR). We have sought reassurance that this is not a scam email, and can confirm this is a genuine request from TPR as the first stage of one of their regulatory initiatives, based on information supplied in the scheme return last year.

This year's scheme return invitations are imminent, so FRAs have an opportunity to rectify the information TPR hold. The Exchange system is open all year for updates to scheme information and

TPR encourage schemes to maintain the information held throughout the year, not just in response to a scheme return request.

[FPS contacts for HMRC – a gentle reminder](#)

Also in the [August bulletin](#), we requested contact details of the Pensions Manager or senior person responsible for pensions administration within each FRA to provide to HMRC to help get their records as up to date as possible.

So far, we have received 19 of an expected 44 responses for England. Please consider this a gentle reminder of the following action.

ACTION: FRAs to provide the name, address, telephone number, and email address for the pensions manager or senior responsible person.

Please email bluelight.pensions@local.gov.uk by 15 October 2019 using the subject line “FPS contacts for HMRC”.

[SAB Administration & Benchmarking committee vacancy](#)

A vacancy has arisen on the [Administration & Benchmarking committee](#) for an FRA Local Pension Board representative. The main objectives of the committee are to provide guidance to the SAB to understand the value and cost of administration, and consider how administrators can best be supported by identifying best practice. The committee are currently involved in considering the recommendations made by Aon in the [administration and benchmarking review](#) and how these can be progressed.

The required commitment is attendance at three to four meetings per year, generally held in London. Attendance can be made by conference call if necessary. If you are interested in sitting on the committee, please email clair.alcock@local.gov.uk for further information.

[New factsheet – FPS Management and Governance](#)

We have recently produced a factsheet on the management and governance of the England Firefighters’ Pension Schemes (FPS) in order to highlight the roles of stakeholders and the guidance that is available to ensure good governance and management of the scheme.

While the factsheet will be interesting to all stakeholders, it will be particularly beneficial to those new to the FPS family, to give an overview of the relationship between stakeholder groups and the support networks available.

The factsheet has been published on the [factsheets](#) tab of the FPS Regulations and Guidance website and is also attached as [Appendix 1](#).

[September 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 August.

Other News and Updates

ICO changes to GDPR

While GDPR has now been in force for some time, it is important for data controllers and processors to keep up to date with changes made by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

Recent updates include a change in position on calculating the time limit for responding to requests in relation to individual rights, and additional guidance around "manifestly unfounded and excessive" requests.

All the latest news is available from the following link <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/whats-new/>

TPR publish LGPS engagement report

On 19 September, TPR published a [report](#) on the findings from its engagement with 10 Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) funds. The engagement took place between October 2018 and July 2019.

The report summarises the key findings against the Regulator's Code of Practice 14 both in terms of exceeding and falling short of required standards.

TPR have confirmed that they are planning future supervisory and engagement work with a number of FRAs.

Up-rating of UK State Pension recipients living in the EU after Brexit

The government has committed to up-rating the UK State Pension paid to those living in the EU each year until March 2023, in the event that the UK leaves the EU without a deal on 31 October 2019.

During this three year period the Government plans to negotiate a new arrangement with the EU to ensure that up-rating continues.

HMRC

Contracting-out reconciliation update

The following bulletin, containing important guidance and information about the end of contracting out and the scheme reconciliation process, was published by HMRC on 30 August 2019.

[Countdown bulletin 48](#)

Updates include:

- Final Data Cuts for Ceased Schemes
- Approach for producing Final Data Cuts
- Guaranteed Minimum Pension (GMP) Conversion

Training and Events

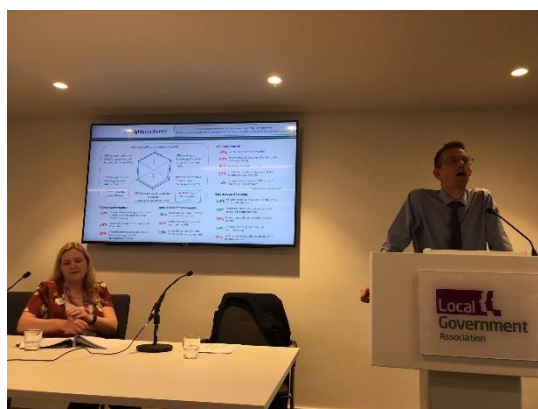
FPS AGM – event summary

In keeping with tradition, our annual fire pensions conference two day event opened with a meeting of the regional chairs of each fire pensions officer group, followed by the technical community. You can find out more about the work of each of these forums, along with the various other stakeholder groups involved with FPS administration, governance, and management in our new [factsheet](#).

We were delighted to welcome over 60 delegates to the first full conference session, aimed at scheme managers and Local Pension Boards, along with other parties with an interest in FPS governance. Following the Chair's welcome, the audience heard from Gavin Chambers, ACO and chair of Bedfordshire FRS LBP, on his experiences before participating in a lively debate on the efficiency of boards and challenges of assisting the scheme manager.



TPR then took to the stage to present the headline results from the [2018 Governance and Administration survey](#), including everyone's favourite slide – “the spider diagram of doom”.



We ended the day with a networking drinks reception and although the weather was not quite as accommodating as last year, this didn't seem to dampen the animated conversation between colleagues and friends.

The day 1 presentations are available [here](#).

The full technical/ administration AGM took place on day 2 with a record attendance of around 120 delegates in our Bevin Hall conference room at 18 Smith Square.

Malcolm Eastwood, chair of the FPS (England) SAB, once again opened proceedings, outlining some of the complexities in managing the Firefighters' Pension Schemes. We were then delighted to welcome Amar Pannu, Head of Police and Firefighters' Pensions at the Home Office, to provide a view from central government including updates on the transitional protections case and the 2020 scheme valuation.

Twelve months after launching the FPS [administration and benchmarking review](#), Craig Payne from Aon, was back on stage at the AGM to present a summary of the review outcomes and recommendations. Read the full and final report [here](#).



Following a short break, attendees were given the option to join one of three technical workshops: [National performance monitoring](#); [Abatement](#); and [Transitional pension calculations refresher](#). All workshops were well attended and received positive feedback. Thank you to our facilitators and those who participated.

Lunch followed the short workshop feedback session, and delegates had chance to network with colleagues and visit exhibition stands hosted by the following organisations: Barnett Waddingham, Eversheds Sutherland, ITM, and Income for the Third Age.

We make a special apology here to Laura of Pen-gage <https://www.pengage.co.uk/> and Mark from Income for the Third Age <https://i3aguidance.co.uk/>, as we somehow managed to lose a box of promotional leaflets which had been delivered in advance to the office.

In the tough first afternoon slot, Alec Bennett from Eversheds Sutherland provided the ever-popular case law update, taking the audience on a whistle stop tour of recent court and Pensions Ombudsman decisions. And the final session of the day was delivered by the Bluelight lead Clair Alcock, who gave an update on the work of the team and future plans.



Malcolm Eastwood closed the conference for 2019 with a fond farewell, as he retires as chair of the SAB in March 2020.

We would like to thank all for their participation and support, particularly our speakers and exhibitors for contributing to the success of the event, and to all delegates who took time out of their busy schedules to attend. We look forward to seeing you again next year – save the date 22-23 September 2020!

The day 2 presentations are available [here](#). To view the full conference in pictures, visit our [@LGAWorkforce](#) twitter feed, #LGAfirepensions

Training survey research report

Between 31 May and 31 July 2019, FPS stakeholders were invited to take part in a web-based survey on the current and future training provision offered by the LGA Bluelight team, to ensure that the LGA training offer remains relevant and that the statutory levy provides value for money.

During that time a total of 51 responses were received from across a wide range of FPS stakeholders in England, Wales, and Scotland.

Having collated and analysed the responses, we are pleased to present the final [research report](#), which will be used to inform our training plan for 2020.

The LGA would like to thank all those that were able to submit a response for their participation in the survey, and for continuing to support the work of the Bluelight team.

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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