



FIRE BRIGADES UNION SCOTLAND PARLIAMENTARY BRIEF

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Fire Brigades Union Condemns Pensions Hijack

Recent events effecting three retired firefighters from London is sending a wave of shock and anger through the fire and rescue service.

The individuals, medically retired from London Fire Brigade had appealed the level of award they had received — as was their right under the scheme — only to be told that new guidance means that if they can perform any of the duties of a firefighter they are not entitled to receive an ‘ill health’ pension.

The three firefighters have had their pensions terminated, and as they are no longer employed find

themselves sacked for being ill.

This issue seems to have come about with a change of guidance to medical examiners released in September 2006, at which point a key phrase has been removed. This allowed an Authority who did not have alternative employment for a sick or injured firefighter to retire the individual with a pension.

The Fire Brigades Union have already written to the UK fire service Minister to raise their concerns.

The FBU in Scotland has also made its feeling clear, that this imposition is unacceptable in a modern society.



Fire & Rescue Service Pensions Crisis

Campaign building in fight to protect pensions for sick and injured firefighters

Fire Brigades Union officials have been astonished and outraged at recent developments that have seen a change in the Firefighters Pension Scheme make it effectively impossible to retire from the service with an ‘Ill-Health’ pension.

The newly imposed guidance states, “3.16 A firefighter is permanently disabled if he/she is medically unfit to carry out all the duties expected of him/her as listed in the role map for his/her role (rank). Provided the member can carry out one of the duties of the role he/she cannot be permanently unfit.

It is difficult to imagine circumstances in which an individual could not perform one of the duties of the role.

The situation now exists where a serving firefighter who gets injured in the course of their duty and cannot continue to perform those tasks that involve firefighting will no longer be able to receive a pension if they have the ability to perform any one element of the firefighters role map.

The effect of this guidance will therefore be to end ill health and injury retirement under the pension scheme.

Whilst FBU officials across the UK are raising their concerns with the UK Government, here in Scotland local officials are looking to the Scottish Parliament for assistance.

A campaign is building in fire stations across the country under the “Justice for Firefighter Pensions” banner, Scottish FBU officials are looking for ways to prevent this detrimental change from affecting members here.



Whilst it is hoped that a solution can be quickly found either across the UK or here in Scotland, one thing is certain. Scottish firefighters who will today be putting themselves in danger will not tolerate this attack on their pension scheme.

UK Parliament Mislead by Government Department Scottish Parliament Urged to Help

The Fire Brigades Union is calling for urgent action on a change in guidance for recent amendments to the Firefighters Pension Scheme (FPS) that has already seen three firefighters in London denied a job and pension.

The Union accuses the then ODPM of misleading parliament - and stakeholders, including the FBU - on changes to the FPS regarding ill-health retirements and redeployment, and if the situation is not resolved the Union will be looking to ballot on industrial action.

The aim of the original change to the scheme (made in July 2004), as explained to stakeholders during the consultation, to parliament when legislation was laid before parliament and again in subsequent fire service circulars, was to allow

greater flexibility into the scheme by allowing re-deployment to non-operational duties if this was appropriate.



However, new guidance issued in September 2006 by the department of Communities and Local Government means a pension will not be paid even if no such job exists.

The effect of these changes will be to place firefighters in limbo. They will not be able to continue in their profession due to ill-health or injury. They will not be entitled to a

pension. They will also not be guaranteed any employment since there are few, if any, such (non-operational) jobs in existence within the Fire and Rescue Service.

Members pay a very high level of contribution (11%) to allow for the possibility of early retirement due to ill-health and are now facing a future of poverty as a result of guidance issued by CLG.

This matter could be resolved relatively easily by a revision of the CLG guidance and a return to the position which existed immediately following the change in 2004.

FBU Scotland Officials are calling on MSP's of all parties to raise this unfair issue with Scottish Ministers as a matter of urgency.

KEEP Fire Controls "All 8"

There is now a real possibility that a decision on the future of the 8 Scottish Fire Control Centre's is about to be taken, bringing to a head several years of anxiety and campaigning by FBU members.

The previous Scottish Executive whilst in administration looked to be basing their argument on the discredited Mott McDonald report that had recommended closures.

Fire & Rescue Control Centres Decision?

This followed a similar report done for England and Wales, which has led to the development of regional control centres, an idea slated by a Select Committee Report and which is seeing costs spiralling (112% in one year) and potential saving plummet (575%).

The major stakeholders have been active in pressing for the retention of all 8 controls and the FBU in Scotland has recently submitted a further paper to the Community Safety Minister. **The paper is available on the FBU Scotland website.**

We remain unconvinced by any argument favouring a reduction in Emergency Fire Control Rooms and are resolutely convinced that the Service Delivery, Public Safety, Firefighter Safety and Financial arguments all support the retention of all eight local, dedicated Emergency Fire Control Rooms in Scotland.,

We hope that the current Scottish Government see the logic of the argument rather than simply following questionable London based dogma.

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For further information on the matters raised in this issue please contact us
See also pensions information at www.fbu.org.uk