

[Sent by email to pension managers and scheme managers of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme on 25 March 2020]

Pensions administration – service provision during Covid-19 restrictions for staff

On 23 March the Prime Minister asked that everyone stay at home expect for a few restricted activities one of which is 'travelling to and from work, but only where work absolutely cannot be done from home'. Previously (19 March 2020) the Government published [a list of key workers](#) in the advice to schools who are critical to the Covid-19 response. These include administrative occupations, 'delivering essential public services such as the payment of benefits', which in the case of the Firefighters Pension Scheme would include administrators and Fire and Rescue officers in the role of scheme manager.

Organisations will be making their own decisions on the combination of home working staff and those who will be asked to continue to attend their place of work based on the above advice and their own circumstances (e.g. remote access to systems). It may be the case that authorities will not be able to deliver a full range of services in support of the Firefighters Pension Scheme with such a combination of staff availability.

The [Pension Regulator's advice for administrators](#) (20 March 2020) asks that the focus of service delivery at this time should be on the following areas applicable to DB schemes.

- Payment of benefits
- Employer contributions
- Minimising the risk of scams
- Supporting good decision making

TPR also provide some comfort to administrators by recognising that some administrative breaches may occur at this time but that they will maintain a proportionate and fair approach' to any action they take.

In order to avoid any delays to the top up grant payments in July from Home Office then FRAs should allocate sufficient resources to ensure the annual pension accounting data is returned to the HO when requested. The data will be requested in early April with a mid-May deadline.

We are currently working on some guidance for scheme managers and administrators to cover COVID-19 pension implications. We are also talking to the relevant departments on matters such as delaying ABS requirements due to any issues with employers being able to provide timely and accurate data during the year end period and the possibility of suspending transfers

In order for us to make the best case on your behalf to Government and TPR and ensure that we provide the support and guidance you need, it would be of great benefit if you could provide us with the information requested in the [online survey](#).

The LGA pensions team is continuing to work as normal but located at home. We can all be contacted by email or by mobile phone. Video calls can be arranged via MS Teams or Skype for Business, and we are exploring the use of goto webinar and zoom so that we can continue to hold on-line meetings. We are also continuing to liaise closely with other LGA teams such as Workforce, Finance and Legal in order to deal with issues which require a multi team approach.

Kind Regards

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