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Sarah Ward
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Our Ref: MW/sa

2 May 2023

Dear Sarah,

At the most recent NJC joint secretaries meeting, the Fire Brigades Union informed you that we would be lodging a claim to improve maternity arrangements for firefighters.

We note that in some FRSs across the UK some employers have already introduced maternity provision beyond that found in the scheme of conditions of service, sixth edition 2004 (updated 2009).

The national employers have an obligation to address the inadequate maternity provisions in the fire service, ensuring that our service is covered by maternity provision fit for purpose to address:

- Under-representation of women in the fire and rescue service; ensuring that the FRS is an attractive opportunity for all women, with the best possible maternity provisions and eliminating obstacles to the recruitment and retention of women.
- Increased risks to expectant mothers, foetuses, and new-born babies from firefighting related contaminants: noting the U.K. National Health Service (NHS) advice that exclusive breastfeeding (breastmilk only) is recommended for around the first 6 months of a baby's life, followed by breastfeeding alongside solid foods into the baby's second year.
- Better support those statistically more likely to be primary carers in a career already facing the challenges of regular shift based work.

The Fire Brigades Union has received reports from the union's National Women's Committee, that when pay is reduced, new mothers are returning to work, simply because they cannot afford to stay on maternity leave.

In view of the above, the Fire Brigades Union seeks to extend the current arrangement for maternity leave to 12 months on full pay following the date of birth. Pre-birth provisions must also be addressed, ensuring that expectant mothers are protected from the industry's related exposures.

In view of the above, the employers' side of the NJC need to urgently address the maternity provisions as laid out in the scheme of conditions. We hope that this can be conducted before the 6 June 2023. It is our intention to provide further detail to support our claim. We intend that representatives of our National Women's' Committee would attend future discussions on this matter. I hope that will be agreeable to you and that we can address matters of process at the next Joint Secretaries' meeting.

Yours sincerely

Matt Wrack
General Secretary

Cc: Gill Gittins