

# FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE MATTERS

A PARLIAMENTARY BULLETIN FOR MPS FROM THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION | SEPTEMBER 2023



## MATERNITY IN THE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE - THE FIGHT FOR 52

A woman firefighter in Cornwall receives £15,000 less than her equal in Derbyshire. Surely this cannot be right and is a stark case of inequality. The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) is campaigning to level up maternity provision across the UK fire and rescue service.

Sadly, this postcode lottery is the reality facing women firefighters. Current maternity provisions are totally inadequate: in terms of occupational hazards, in serving as a barrier to the recruitment and retention of women firefighters, and leave some women firefighters with no choice but to return to work too early after giving birth.

The FBU is firm in its longstanding commitment to equality and addressing the disparity in maternity arrangements is fundamental to achieving this. Women firefighters deserve better.

Ministers, fire employers, and chief fire officers must act now and extend the current maternity arrangements to 52 weeks full pay. Women firefighters need action now.

### FIREFIGHTERS' STORIES

The FBU National Women's Committee (NWC) has collated some case studies that illustrate the issues around maternity provisions and the impact this has on firefighters' careers.

*"Her provision is six weeks at 90% then SMP only. To return to work after just six weeks would be massively detrimental to her mental and physical health."*

*"When I was pregnant, I had one contract terminated when I told them, and my temporary promotion ended."*

*"I went off for a year and wasn't told about a promotion opportunity, had no contact from management to check on my welfare, and felt very let down. This contributed massively to crippling post-natal depression."*

### FIGHT FOR 52

The FBU is seeking to extend the current arrangement for maternity leave to 12 months on full pay following the date of birth. Moreover, pre-birth provisions must also be addressed to protect expectant mothers from industry related exposures. The case for 52 weeks is overwhelming.

If women are truly valued in the fire and rescue service, pregnancy and maternity needs to be revisited.

Women firefighters deserve better. Equality matters to the FBU. We will fight for 52 weeks of maternity leave for firefighters everywhere in the UK.

**On 2 May 2023 the FBU wrote to national fire employers calling on them to address the inadequate maternity provisions in the fire and rescue service. The FBU is determined that employers address:**

- The postcode lottery for maternity pay across the UK
- removing obstacles to the recruitment and retention of women by ensuring the best possible maternity provisions
- Only one in ten firefighters in England are women, clearly there's a problem with recruiting women
- Increased risks from toxic contaminants that pose a risk to the health of both mothers and babies
- Babies can be exposed to contaminants ingested, inhaled, or dermally absorbed by the mother, and are more sensitive to lower doses of contaminants
- Women firefighters being forced to return to work too early due as a result of inadequate maternity provisions.

| Rank | Fire and rescue service | Approximate maternity pay |
|------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1    | Staffordshire           | £27,251                   |
| 1    | Derbyshire              | £27,251                   |
| 2    | Cheshire                | £26,952                   |
| 3    | Avon                    | £23,358                   |
| 4    | Durham                  | £20,245                   |
| 5    | Kent                    | £18,747                   |
| 6    | Shropshire              | £18,427                   |
| 7    | Humberside              | £18,106                   |
| 7    | West Yorkshire          | £18,106                   |
| 7    | Merseyside              | £18,106                   |
| 8    | Buckinghamshire         | £17,538                   |
| 8    | Surrey                  | £17,538                   |
| 9    | London                  | £16,171                   |
| 10   | Berkshire               | £16,026                   |
| 10   | Hampshire               | £16,026                   |
| 11   | West Midlands           | £15,290                   |
| 12   | Scotland                | £13,956                   |
| 12   | South Wales             | £13,956                   |
| 13   | South Yorkshire         | £13,123                   |
| 14   | East Sussex             | £13,049                   |
| 15   | Mid and West Wales      | £13,003                   |
| 15   | Dorset and Wiltshire    | £13,003                   |
| 16   | Cambridgeshire*         | £12,689                   |
| 17   | North Wales             | £12,177                   |
| 18   | Northern Ireland        | £11,817                   |
| 18   | Cleveland               | £11,817                   |
| 18   | Northumberland          | £11,817                   |
| 18   | North Yorkshire         | £11,817                   |
| 18   | Cumbria                 | £11,817                   |
| 18   | Greater Manchester      | £11,817                   |
| 18   | Lancashire              | £11,817                   |
| 18   | Leicestershire          | £11,817                   |
| 18   | Northamptonshire        | £11,817                   |
| 18   | Nottinghamshire         | £11,817                   |
| 18   | Hereford and Worcester  | £11,817                   |
| 18   | Warwickshire            | £11,817                   |
| 18   | Bedfordshire            | £11,817                   |
| 18   | Essex                   | £11,817                   |
| 18   | Hertfordshire           | £11,817                   |
| 18   | Norfolk                 | £11,817                   |
| 18   | Suffolk                 | £11,817                   |
| 18   | Isle of Wight           | £11,817                   |
| 18   | Oxfordshire             | £11,817                   |
| 18   | West Sussex             | £11,817                   |
| 18   | Devon and Somerset      | £11,817                   |
| 18   | Gloucestershire         | £11,817                   |
| 18   | Cornwall                | £11,817                   |
|      | <b>Differential</b>     | <b>£15,434</b>            |

## Maternity Pay Leaderboard

The table is based on a 2020 competent firefighter salary of £31,144.08 per annum; The Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) 2020 figure £151.20 per week has been utilised. Detailed are approximate figures of remuneration; note that some policies do offer an alternative way in which occupational pay can be distributed. Individuals assumed to have 12 months' service, and are intending to return to work (for at least 3 months). Lincolnshire FRS refused the request and Tyne and Wear FRS provided incomplete data. Moreover, since 2020: mergers of FRSs have occurred and arrangements may have been updated accordingly.

\*Cambridgeshire FRS: > 2 years cont. service