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Circular: 2020HOC0654AD

9 December 2020

TO: All Members

Dear Brother/Sister

NJC Circulars in relation to FRS Covid-related activities issued 9 December 2020 (NJC circulars 7/20, 8/20 9/20).

The NJC circulars and a copy of this all members circular are available on the website using this link <https://www.fbu.org.uk/circular/2020hoc0654ad/njc-circulars-relation-frs-covid-related-activities-issued-9-december-2020>

This circular provides members with copies of three NJC circulars issued today. Members are asked to note the following important points in respect of each circular:

NJC circular 7/20 [COVID 19 – additional work activities]

This circular brings attention to the NJC agreement. The Tripartite agreement and related Tripartite statements periodically notified to members and FRSs are no longer in operation. The NJC has adopted all of the provisions contained within the previous Tripartite agreement. Particular attention is drawn to these factors:

- Covid-related activities are not within the role of firefighters. Accordingly, participation in such activities is entirely voluntary.
- So long as all provisions contained in the agreement and in the associated risk assessments have been implemented by your FRS, the FBU encourages members to volunteer to undertake those activities where your FRS wish to do so.
- As made clear in the NJC agreement, when undertaking such activities the NJC has agreed they will be considered, for the duration of the member's participation, 'within role'. In circumstances where there is a collective agreement, an activity is identified as being within role this means that employees are protected by the respective FRS compensation and pension schemes.
- Before registering to volunteer, members should check with local FBU officials to ensure that the FRS has implemented the NJC agreement in full.
- In instances where local FBU officials inform members that the arrangements in the FRS are not compliant with the NJC agreement, members, in their own interest are asked to refrain from volunteering. Your safety; your employment rights; and your eligibility for pension and compensation scheme benefits are paramount.

Though a long circular, members are asked to read the document thoroughly.

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NJC circular 8/20 [Covid-19 Support Agreement – new additional activities]

The NJC circular is self-explanatory in that it brings attention to two further activities which have been agreed and which are subject to the same provisions and safeguards as detailed in NJC circular 7/20.

NJC circular 9/20 [Covid-19 Support Agreement – mass vaccination]

This circular does not contain an agreement for members' participation in a new activity. It reflects a very strong and important commitment by both sides of the NJC to play a significant role in the mass vaccination of people across the UK, in what promises to be the beginning of the end of the health crisis brought about by the Covid-19 virus.

You will note that the NJC has further committed to move quickly to ensure that firefighters and FRSs are able to provide this valuable contribution. Alongside the national employers, the FBU is anxious that the relevant authorities, prompted and urged on by the respective government departments, provide the detailed information; clinical governance; equipment and training to allow us to do this. However, members are asked to note the following:

It has come to the attention of the Executive Council that a number of FRSs are acting prematurely and over-promising to local health agencies that they will provide such facilities and services and, in that vein, have been contacting members seeking volunteers.

This is an incredibly unhelpful step by those FRSs for the following reasons:

By making this commitment those FRSs are potentially adversely affecting the NJC's ability to ensure that all FRSs are able to be supplied with the information, equipment and other resources from those agencies in order to provide the facility in a way which is in the best interest of the fire sector, the firefighter-volunteers and the public.

As explained above in this all members circular, because the above measures aren't in place, there is no NJC agreement which makes such activity 'within role', leaving volunteers (whether members of the FBU or not) vulnerable in the event of sustaining any injury or illness – as the requirements of the pension and compensation schemes have eligibility clauses in respect of such events being the result of work which is 'within role'.

Accordingly, whilst the FBU remains entirely committed to the principle of firefighters playing a significant role in the mass vaccination programme – at this time members are asked not to volunteer and to suspend any expression of interest that they have registered until such time as satisfactory arrangements can be secured that allow a national agreement to be reached.

Best wishes.

Yours fraternally



**Andy Dark
Assistant General Secretary**

Att.

AD/sll