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To: All Members

Dear Members,

Pay Reform Update: National Joint Council 8 October 2026

Pay reform remains the FBU's number one industrial priority. At our 2026 Conference, members reaffirmed their commitment to the work the Executive Council were undertaking and underlined the importance of securing a new UK-wide pay structure. Our ambition is to negotiate a new structure that properly recognises the skills, responsibilities and contribution of firefighters and emergency control staff.

The NJC met in Manchester on 8 October, marking an important point in this work. The meeting provided an opportunity to review progress and agree next steps. Having built our position from FBU campaigns on CPD, pay progression and new roles, we are now moving into the next phase of more detailed discussions on pay reform and the future role of firefighters, alongside which we are continuing to make the case for investment into the Fire and Rescue Service.

At the meeting, both sides agreed a shared position to take this work forward. This provides a basis for the next phase of detailed discussions and reflects the commitment of the FBU, National Employers, governments across the UK and the wider fire and rescue sector to progress reform.

The current pay structure is more than twenty years old. It is a flat structure, with very little progression with firefighters expected to do more work without sufficient reward. The fire and rescue service has changed significantly in that time. The skills, responsibilities and demands placed on our members have increased, but the pay structure has not kept pace.

Following the 2026 pay settlement, we have an opportunity to address these long-standing issues and develop a system that recognises the work our members do, supports professional development and provides fair opportunities for progression.

What are we seeking to achieve?

The FBU wants a fair, transparent, enduring and nationally agreed pay structure across the UK Fire and Rescue Service that reflects the skills, competence, professional development and responsibilities of our members.

Pay reform must provide genuine career opportunities for progression within roles, rather than promotion being the only route for members to increase their earnings. It should support recruitment

and retention, recognise specialist expertise and establish clearer career pathways across the service.

This is about more than changing the Grey Book pay spine. Any new structure must deliver meaningful improvements for members, recognise the full range of work carried out across the service and address inequalities between different roles and duty systems and within different fire and rescue services. This is a complex piece of work which will require a UK-wide framework of policies and procedures to ensure any changes are designed not just around pay and consistency but are underpinned by safety and speaks to our ambition of national standards.

It is essential that emergency fire control staff are recognised in this work, alongside firefighters and all Grey Book roles. The FBU will continue to press for a system that values all members and the work they do in prevention, protection and emergency response – all of which is highly valued by local communities.

What has happened so far?

While the roots of this work are present in FBU campaigns across many years, this work has the shared commitment and focus of the National Employer and the FBU as it formed part of our pay agreement in 2025 to hold these talks. Following Conference 2025, the FBU has engaged in sustained discussions with the National Employers and other key organisations to build the case for reform, to map out the scale of the opportunity, the project itself and to build the case for support across the sector.

This has included work through the NJC, engagement with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), and discussions with the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and the Local Government Association (LGA).

At the LGA Fire Conference in March 2026, the FBU and National Employers took part in a joint session on pay and role reform. Regular meetings between the joint secretaries have also helped develop the work, with engagement involving MHCLG and a four-nation approach covering England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Both sides of the NJC have also contributed to MHCLG's ongoing Civil Protection review. This work is relevant to understanding the future role of the fire and rescue service, including its contribution to prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. It is important that the service's responsibilities and the demands placed on members are properly understood as decisions are made about future investment.

A workshop involving the FBU, MHCLG, and the NFCC has also considered the duties firefighters carry out now and may undertake in the future, including prevention, protection, recovery and leadership. The FBU is committed to developing the role, and in accurately reflecting the work firefighters undertake with the public and in wanting to see that genuinely reflected in how we talk about the role and how that work is rewarded.

In July in agreement with the FBU, Incomes Data Research (IDR) was appointed to provide specialist expertise and assurance to the process. IDR has previous experience of work on NJC job evaluation and are providing independent support to both sides of the NJC.

These discussions have helped establish the groundwork for the next phase, but there is still significant work to do.

Developing the proposals

Members who attended our regional briefings earlier this year will have seen the overarching principles and outline agreements we've already reached with the National Employers. But the essential task now is to get the detail right and in place. A co-design subgroup has been established, with representatives from each side of the NJC, including FBU officials and National Employers' advisers. Our work here is directly accountable to the Executive Council. The subgroup is considering the issues that need to be addressed as reform develops. This includes possible pay models, career pathways, job evaluation and the relationship between skills, competence and pay.

These discussions will focus on taking forward the shared vision, working through the detail of proposals and addressing the issues that need to be resolved. There is still significant work to do, and it is important that the process is thorough and that we get it right.

The FBU will continue to press for fair pay, meaningful progression and recognition of the work carried out across all roles and duty systems. Nationally agreed terms and conditions, professional standards and the interests of members must remain central to the process.

What happens next?

Following the agreement reached at the 8 October NJC meeting, further meetings will now take place to discuss the shared position and develop the work needed to progress pay reform.

Further updates will be communicated to members in due course as discussions progress through the NJC and the union's established structures. There will also be meetings and briefings established to ensure members are updated and we will continue to update the campaign page on the [FBU website](#).

Members must have their say: When the work is completed, any proposals must be judged against whether they deliver real improvements for members.

No changes to national pay structures or role maps can be taken forward without the appropriate consideration through the union's democratic structures and member agreement.

The FBU will keep members informed as the work develops and will ensure that the union's established structures remain central to engagement and decision-making. The opportunity to address the long-standing shortcomings of the current pay structure cannot be missed. The FBU remains committed to securing a fair, progressive and nationally agreed system that recognises the skills, responsibilities and contribution of all members across the fire and rescue service.

In unity,



Steve Wright
General Secretary