



Department for
Communities and
Local Government

Matt Wrack
General Secretary
The Fire Brigades Union
Bradley House
68 Coombe Road
Kingston upon Thames
Surrey
KT2 7AE

Brandon Lewis MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State

**Department for Communities and Local
Government**
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU

Tel: 0303 444 3430
Fax: 0303 444 3986
E-Mail: brandon.lewis@communities.gsi.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/dclg

09/10/2013

Dear Matt,

Following our recent discussion, I have asked my officials to draw up a set of principles on which we can seek agreement as a means to resolve the concerns that you have raised around fitness and capability.

Like you, I am committed to ensuring that a firefighter in the Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2015 who is over the age of 55 and loses fitness, through no fault of their own, should not be dismissed without access to a pension. This has never been an aim of our pension proposals. The issues which concern you relate to the policies of individual fire and rescue authorities, rather than central Government.

I am content to move forward on the basis of the principles set out below to agree a process which protects firefighters in the Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2015. This would apply to firefighters over the age of 55, who face difficulties in maintaining operational fitness. I would want the detail underpinning these proposals to be agreed by the unions and the National Employers, and would be happy to involve ACAS to facilitate these discussions. My officials would be in attendance and provide me with regular updates. To ensure that the process is robust, I am prepared to refer to an agreed solution within the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework.

Key principles

- Firefighting is a physically demanding occupation and requires fitness to be maintained throughout the career of a firefighter.
- Each fire and rescue authority will be responsible for setting their own local fitness standard which meets local operational needs.
- Firefighters are ultimately responsible for maintaining their own fitness levels, but fire and rescue authorities will need to commit to providing all operational personnel with adequate support to enable them to maintain their fitness.
- There should be an agreed process for fire and rescue authorities to support firefighters maintain their fitness.

- Firefighters should be given every opportunity to regain their fitness within a minimum timescale and should not face the prospect of instant dismissal from the service just for failing a fitness test.
- The agreed process must ensure that a firefighter who is over the age of 55 and has taken all reasonable steps to maintain their fitness should not be left without the option of a job or access to a pension.

Given the very specific representations that you have made around "no job, no pension", I believe that this process will resolve the concerns of your members and would be welcomed. As always, I am happy to work with you to bring this dispute to an end.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brandon Lewis', with a stylized, cursive script.

BRANDON LEWIS MP