

The Chief Executives, Fife Council and Dumfries & Galloway Council
Clerks to the Joint Boards
Chief Fire Officers

7 Tweedside Park
Tweedbank
Galashiels TD1 3TE
<http://www.sppa.gov.uk>

Telephone: 01896 893224
Fax: 01896 893230
Dorothy.hamilton@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Our ref: FIR/06/01/01

10 September 2007

Dear Colleague

SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE CIRCULAR No 15/2007

FIREFIGHTERS' PENSION SCHEME (FPS)

NEW FIREFIGHTERS PENSION SCHEME (NFPS)

This circular covers:

Guidance for Independent Qualified Medical Practitioners (IQMPs)

This circular should be brought to the attention of your fire authority, pension managers, pension administrators brigade medical officers/occupational health managers, Human Resources and active members of the FPS and NFPS

1. GUIDANCE FOR INDEPENDENT QUALIFIED MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS (IQMPs)

- 1.1 The Firefighters' Pension Scheme 1992 (FPS) and the New Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2006 (NFPS) provide for early payment of benefits to scheme members who are found to be permanently disabled to undertake the duties of their role. The Firefighters' Compensation Scheme (FCS) allows the award of further benefits where the incapacity has been occasioned by a qualifying injury. The level of benefits payable to a member is determined not only by his or her earnings capacity but also his or her capability to undertake regular work.
- 1.2 The medical prognosis is the key input to the final decision as to whether to grant ill health retirement and other benefits. Whilst any decision on the issues can only be taken by a fire and rescue authority as the employer, the authority will be bound by the opinion of an independent medical practitioner on medical issues.

- 1.3 The attached guidance has been prepared to help IQMPs to understand what their role is in determining a medical opinion on the questions of permanent disablement for the member's role, capability for regular work, whether an injury is qualifying and calculation of degree of disablement; and to enable IQMPs to provide FRAs with an opinion that is fair, consistent and supported by clear evidence and reasoning.
- 1.4 The Guidance has been prepared in discussion with the Firefighters' Pension Committee and the Association of Local Authority Medical Advisers (ALAMA).
- 1.5 The Guidance should be provided to all IQMPs whose opinion is sought for the purposes of determining questions under Rule H1 of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme 1992, Part 8, rule 2 of the New Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2006 and Part 6, rule 1 of the Firefighters' Compensation Scheme 2006.

2. SELECTION OF IQMPS: GOOD PRACTICE

- 2.1 At a recent hearing, the Board of Medical Referees noted that the IQMP, whose opinion was being appealed, was less highly qualified in terms of occupational medicine than a practitioner who had been involved at an earlier stage in the consideration of the case. In the view of the Board, it would be better practice to invite a practitioner with a higher qualification to act as IQMP.
- 2.2 Whilst we appreciate that it is sometimes difficult to find an occupational health practitioner with the necessary independence, we would be grateful if authorities would note and use their best endeavours to ensure that the opinion of a more highly qualified IQMP is obtained.

Yours sincerely

Dorothy Hamilton

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Policy Officer