



# Government Actuary's Department

## **Firefighters' Pension Scheme (1992) (England and Wales) Firefighters' Pension Scheme (Northern Ireland) 2007**

Commutation on retirement

Factors and guidance

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## 1 Introduction

### Scope of this guidance note

- 1.1 Rule B7 of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme Order 1992 (SI 1992/129) and article 18 of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme Order (Northern Ireland) 2007 (SR 2007/144) (collectively "the Regulations") state that a member entitled to an ordinary, short service, ill health or deferred pension may commute a portion of their pension for a lump sum. The lump sum is the actuarial equivalent of the commuted portion at the date of retirement, calculated from tables prepared by the Government Actuary.
- 1.2 Rule IA2 (in England and Wales) of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme Order 1992 (SI 1992/129) and article 75 of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme Order (Northern Ireland) 2007 (SR 2007/144) state that certain pension credit members may commute a portion of their pension for a lump sum. The lump sum is the actuarial equivalent of the commuted portion at a specified age.
- 1.3 The purpose of this note is to provide to administrators the tables for commutation of pension to lump sum in the Firefighters' Pension Scheme (1992) in England and Wales and the Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2007 Northern Ireland ("1992 Scheme (FPS 2007 in Northern Ireland)").
- 1.4 This guidance supersedes the commutation guidance issued by GAD dated 11 October 2012 (and the tables issued in GAD's letter of 20 May 2014 which superseded the tables in that guidance) and any previous guidance or advice issued by GAD in connection with firefighters' pension commutation and has immediate effect.
- 1.5 This note should not be used for any purpose other than to determine the commutation factor that should be applied to the amount of pension commuted to provide a lump sum in the 1992 Scheme (FPS 2007 in Northern Ireland). For example:
  - > This guidance does not apply to the commutation for lump sum in the 2006 Scheme (2007 Scheme in Wales, NFPS 2007 in Northern Ireland) or the 2015 Scheme (FPS 2015 in Northern Ireland).
  - > This guidance does not apply to the trivial commutation of pension under rules B8, E5 and E6 of The Firefighters' Pension Scheme Order 1992 or articles 19, 40 and 41 of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme Order (Northern Ireland) 2007.
  - > This guidance also does not cover the calculation of the capitalised value of benefits for the purpose of determining death gratuities under rule E4 of The Firefighters' Pension Scheme Order 1992 or article 39 of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme Order (Northern Ireland) 2007.
  - > This guidance does not cover firefighters in Scotland. These firefighters are covered under separate guidance.



- 1.6 This note should be considered in its entirety, not as individual sections which if considered in isolation, may be misleading. Conclusions reached by a review of some sections on their own may be incorrect.
- 1.7 This note only covers the actuarial principles around the calculation and application of commutation factors. Any legal advice in this area should be sought from an appropriately qualified person or source.
- 1.8 This note does not provide advice on whether a member should commute any part of their pension. Third parties should not rely on this guidance, but should separately seek their own actuarial advice where appropriate.

#### **Changes to previous guidance**

- 1.9 We have revised all of the commutation factors from those set out in the commutation guidance dated 11 October 2012 (and later superseded by the tables of factors in our letter of 20 May 2014). We have also extended the factors in Table 1 up to age 75. This guidance note includes updated tables and illustrative examples to show these revised factors. We have **not** altered the guidance and formulae that should be used to calculate commutation lump sums in the 1992 Scheme (2007 in Northern Ireland).

#### **Questions about this guidance**

- 1.10 Any questions concerning the application of the guidance should, in the first instance, be referred to the Firefighters' Pensions team at DCLG (or at the Home Office from 1 April 2016).
- 1.11 Administrators for other authorities should contact the Welsh Government or the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety Northern Ireland, as applicable. The Firefighters' Pensions teams will seek input from the scheme actuary if necessary.



## 2 Administration

- 2.1 The amount of the 1992 Scheme (FPS 2007 in Northern Ireland) pension that can be commuted is subject to the limits set out in the Regulations. In most cases a quarter of the pension can be commuted. However, an ordinary pension in respect of at least 25 but less than 30 years of service (unless the member retires at, or after, age 55) or an eligible pension credit can be commuted to give a maximum lump sum of no more than 2¼ times the full amount of the annual pension (rules B7 or IA(2) of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme Order 1992 / article 18 of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme Order (Northern Ireland) 2007). Please refer to the Regulations for full details of the commutation limits applicable to members.
- 2.2 Rule B10 of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme Order 1992 (or article 21 of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme Order (Northern Ireland) 2007) describes additional restrictions on the amount of pension that can be commuted in certain circumstances.
- 2.3 Restrictions on pension commutation are also imposed by the pension taxation regime under Finance Act 2004. Administrators must ensure that the payment of a lump sum in lieu of pension is compliant with the tax rules as well as with the Regulations. The main taxation restriction is that for a lump sum to be authorised under the tax rules it must not exceed 25% of the total value of benefits crystallised. Additionally, where a firefighter's pension savings exceed HMRC's Lifetime Allowance (LTA), an additional tax charge may fall due.

Please refer to HMRC guidance for further information.

- 2.4 There are some scenarios where the 25% HMRC limit could potentially be breached.
- > A member with a commutation factor above 20 commutes 25% of their pension. This can be avoided by commuting a lower proportion of pension.
  - > Allocation in accordance with Firefighters' Pension Scheme Order 1992 rule B9 / article 20 of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme Order (Northern Ireland) 2007.

Please refer to HMRC guidance if such cases arise.

### **1992 Scheme (FPS 2007 in Northern Ireland) commutation – retiring from active service or on pension credit**

- 2.5 For a firefighter retiring on pension directly from firefighter service or a pension credit member, the lump sum payable can be determined as follows:

pension given up × factor from Table 1

Equivalently, the pension given up can be determined as follows:

lump sum payable ÷ factor from Table 1

- 2.6 Note that the factor for retirements below age 50 should only be used for retirements in ill health since retirements under other rules are not possible until age 50.



2.7 Rule IA2(4) in England and Wales and article 75(4) in Northern Ireland state that the lump sum for a pension credit member is “the actuarial equivalent of the commuted portion at the normal benefit age”. Normal benefit age is defined in Schedule 1 of the legislation as age 60. GAD’s understanding is, therefore, that the factor for 60 years 0 months (i.e. 18.6) should be used for all pension credit members of English, Welsh and Northern Irish fire authority pension schemes. Authorities may wish to take legal advice on this point.

2.8 The examples in section 3 illustrate the commutation calculation.

**1992 Scheme (FPS 2007 in Northern Ireland) commutation – break between leaving service and pension commencing**

2.9 For a firefighter retiring with a break between leaving service as an active member of the firefighters’ pension schemes and pension commencing, the commutation lump sum should be calculated as in paragraph 2.5 above in the following cases:

- > If the pension commences at or above age 55; or
- > If the pension commences on grounds of ill health before age 55 and attracts full pension increases.

2.10 In other cases where the pension commences before age 55 a special calculation is needed. If any cases arise, please refer to the Firefighters’ Pension Team at DCLG, the Welsh Government or the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety Northern Ireland (as applicable) for onward transmission to GAD.

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18 March 2016



### 3 Example calculations

3.1 This section provides examples of the calculations described in this note.

**Example 1 – – 1992 Scheme (FPS 2007 in Northern Ireland): retiring from active service**

Date of birth: 1 April 1966

Date pension commences: 1 April 2016

Pensionable Service: 25 years (excluding doubling)

Total pension payable: £20,000 per year

Age on day pension commences: 50 years 0 months

Commutation Factor = 22.5 (from table 1)

3.2 The member retires with an ordinary pension at age 50 with 25 years' service, so the maximum lump sum he can commute according to the 1992 Scheme (FPS 2007 in Northern Ireland) rules is two and a quarter times the full amount of the pension.

3.3 Maximum lump sum =  $2.25 \times 20,000$   
= **£45,000**

3.4 Pension after commutation for maximum lump sum  
=  $20,000 - (45,000 \div 22.5)$   
= **£18,000.00 per year**



### Example 2 – Avoiding breaching the 25% HMRC limit

- 3.5 To illustrate how members may be able to avoid breaching the 25% HMRC limit by commuting less pension than the maximum available under the 1987 scheme, this example makes use of the current tax regime in force at the time of writing, in its most common form. Administrators should check whether there have been any changes to the tax regime, or whether any additional complexities apply, before undertaking individual calculations. Individuals may wish to seek financial advice regarding pensions and taxation.
- 3.6 Date of birth: 15 August 1964  
Date pension commences: 15 August 2016  
Pensionable Service: 30 years (excluding doubling)  
Total pension payable: £30,000 per year  
Age on day pension commences: 52 years 0 months  
Commutation Factor = 21.9 (from Table 1)
- 3.7 The member retires from active service at age 52 with 30 years' service, so the maximum amount of pension available to commute according to the Regulations is a quarter of the full amount of the pension.
- 3.8 Maximum lump sum under scheme regulations  
$$= 30,000 \times \frac{1}{4} \times 21.9$$
$$= \mathbf{\pounds 164,250}$$
- 3.9 Pension after commutation for the maximum lump sum permitted under scheme regulations  
$$= 30,000 - (164,250 \div 21.9)$$
$$= \mathbf{\pounds 22,500 \text{ per year}}$$
 (which is £30,000 × ¾)
- 3.10 Under the current tax regime, the maximum lump sum that can be taken without being liable for a tax charge is 25% of the combined assessed value of the post-commutation pension and lump sum. To assess the value of the post-commutation pension HMRC currently use a factor of 20.
- 3.11 Under HMRC's assessment the value of these benefits is therefore:  
$$= (22,500 \times 20) + 164,250$$
$$= \pounds 614,250$$
- 3.12 25% of this:  
$$= 25\% \times 614,250$$
$$= \pounds 153,562.50$$





3.13 Therefore, if the member commuted the maximum under the scheme regulations (to give a lump sum of £164,250), they would be liable for a tax charge, as this exceeds the maximum tax-free lump sum permitted (£153,562.50).

3.14 To calculate the maximum amount of pension that can be commuted in this case without incurring a tax charge, it is necessary first to calculate the maximum 1987 scheme lump sum allowable within the HMRC limit.

3.15 HMRC's maximum tax-free lump sum is calculated using the following equation:

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Maximum lump sum} &= \frac{20 \times \text{pension before commutation}}{[3 + (20 \div \text{factor from Table 1})]} \\ &= \frac{20 \times 30,000}{3 + (20 \div 21.9)} \\ &= \textbf{£153,325} \text{ (rounded down to nearest £1)}\end{aligned}$$

3.16 Setting the lump sum from the 1992 Scheme (FPS 2007 in Northern Ireland) at this level ensures that the HMRC limit is not exceeded.

3.17 The amount of pension required to be commuted from the 1992 Scheme (FPS 2007 in Northern Ireland) to provide this maximum *tax-free* lump sum:

$$\begin{aligned}&= 153,650 \div 21.9 \\ &= \text{£7,001.14 per year}\end{aligned}$$

3.18 The pension remaining after commutation:

$$\begin{aligned}&= 30,000 - 7,001.14 \\ &= \textbf{£22,998.86 per year}\end{aligned}$$

3.19 To check that this is within HMRC limits, HMRC's assessment of the value of these benefits is:

$$\begin{aligned}&= (22,998.86 \times 20) + 153,320 \\ &= \text{£613,302.20}\end{aligned}$$

3.20 25% of this:

$$\begin{aligned}&= 25\% \times 613,302.20 \\ &= \text{£153,325.55}\end{aligned}$$

3.21 So payment of the lump sum of £153,325.00 calculated above will not breach the tax-free limit (provided that there has been no breach in the member's Lifetime Allowance).



## 4 Table of factors

**Table 1 – Factors for commutation of pension to lump sum**

### **Males and Females**

Years	Age in years and completed months on day pension commences											
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
<b>Below 50</b>	22.5											
<b>50</b>	22.5	22.5	22.4	22.4	22.4	22.4	22.3	22.3	22.3	22.3	22.2	22.2
<b>51</b>	22.2	22.2	22.1	22.1	22.1	22.1	22.0	22.0	22.0	21.9	21.9	21.9
<b>52</b>	21.9	21.8	21.8	21.8	21.7	21.7	21.7	21.7	21.6	21.6	21.6	21.5
<b>53</b>	21.5	21.5	21.5	21.4	21.4	21.4	21.3	21.3	21.3	21.2	21.2	21.2
<b>54</b>	21.1	21.1	21.1	21.0	21.0	21.0	21.0	20.9	20.9	20.9	20.8	20.8
<b>55</b>	20.8	20.7	20.7	20.7	20.6	20.6	20.6	20.5	20.5	20.5	20.4	20.4
<b>56</b>	20.3	20.3	20.3	20.2	20.2	20.2	20.1	20.1	20.1	20.0	20.0	20.0
<b>57</b>	19.9	19.9	19.8	19.8	19.8	19.7	19.7	19.7	19.6	19.6	19.6	19.5
<b>58</b>	19.5	19.4	19.4	19.4	19.3	19.3	19.3	19.2	19.2	19.1	19.1	19.1
<b>59</b>	19.0	19.0	19.0	18.9	18.9	18.8	18.8	18.8	18.7	18.7	18.7	18.6
<b>60</b>	18.6	18.5	18.5	18.5	18.4	18.4	18.3	18.3	18.3	18.2	18.2	18.2
<b>61</b>	18.1	18.1	18.0	18.0	18.0	17.9	17.9	17.8	17.8	17.8	17.7	17.7
<b>62</b>	17.6	17.6	17.6	17.5	17.5	17.4	17.4	17.4	17.3	17.3	17.2	17.2
<b>63</b>	17.2	17.1	17.1	17.0	17.0	17.0	16.9	16.9	16.8	16.8	16.8	16.7
<b>64</b>	16.7	16.6	16.6	16.5	16.5	16.5	16.4	16.4	16.3	16.3	16.3	16.2
<b>65</b>	16.2	16.1	16.1	16.0	16.0	16.0	15.9	15.9	15.8	15.8	15.8	15.7
<b>66</b>	15.7	15.6	15.6	15.5	15.5	15.5	15.4	15.4	15.3	15.3	15.2	15.2
<b>67</b>	15.2	15.1	15.1	15.0	15.0	14.9	14.9	14.9	14.8	14.8	14.7	14.7
<b>68</b>	14.6	14.6	14.5	14.5	14.5	14.4	14.4	14.3	14.3	14.2	14.2	14.1
<b>69</b>	14.1	14.1	14.0	14.0	13.9	13.9	13.8	13.8	13.7	13.7	13.7	13.6
<b>70</b>	13.6	13.5	13.5	13.4	13.4	13.3	13.3	13.3	13.2	13.2	13.1	13.1
<b>71</b>	13.0	13.0	12.9	12.9	12.9	12.8	12.8	12.7	12.7	12.6	12.6	12.5
<b>72</b>	12.5	12.4	12.4	12.4	12.3	12.3	12.2	12.2	12.1	12.1	12.0	12.0
<b>73</b>	11.9	11.9	11.9	11.8	11.8	11.7	11.7	11.6	11.6	11.5	11.5	11.5
<b>74</b>	11.4	11.4	11.3	11.3	11.2	11.2	11.1	11.1	11.0	11.0	11.0	10.9
<b>75</b>	10.9											

The relevant day is the day that the pension commences for contributing members of the scheme. Administrators should refer to the guidance above on the relevant day for pension credit members.