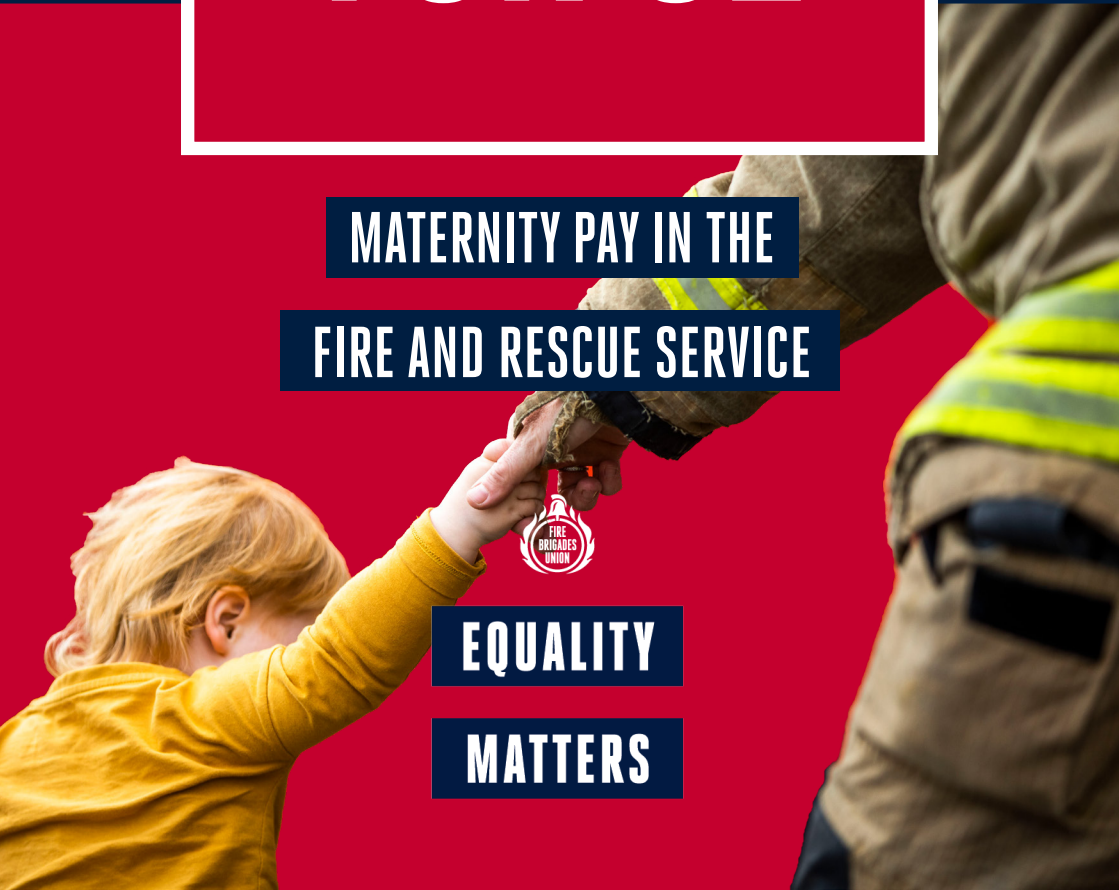


FIGHT FOR 52

MATERNITY PAY IN THE
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

EQUALITY

MATTERS



The Fire Brigades Union is calling for 52 weeks maternity leave on full pay for firefighters across the UK. Here's why.

A POSTCODE LOTTERY

There is stark inequality in maternity pay in the UK fire and rescue service.

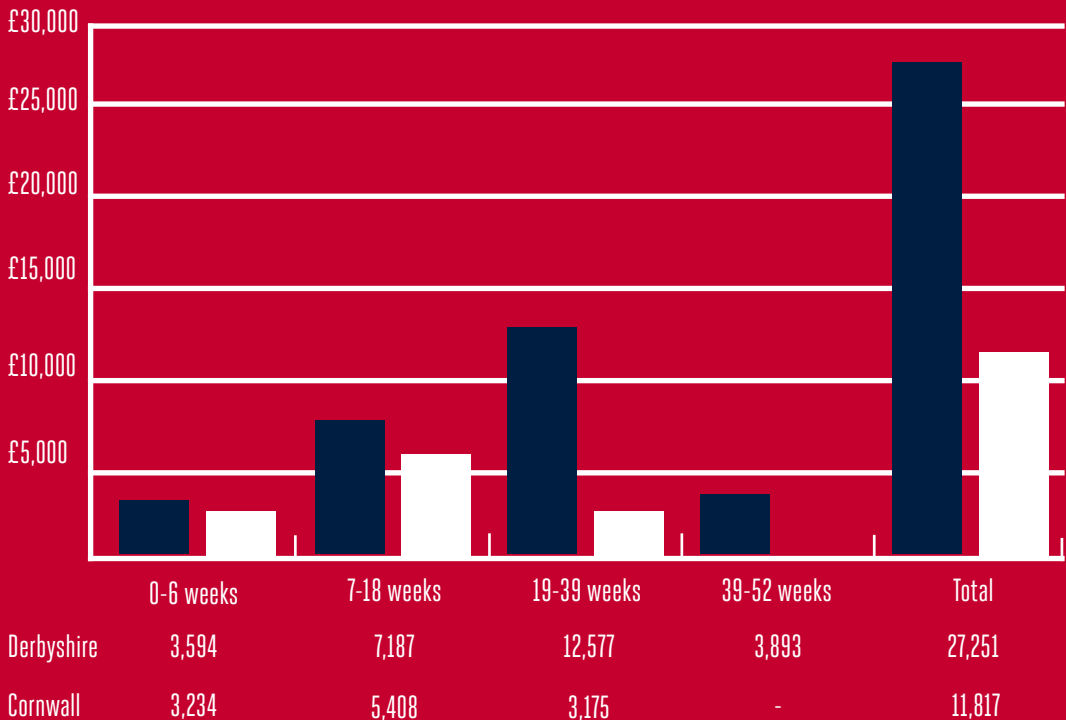
The national minimum standard for maternity pay for firefighters provides only 90% pay for an initial 6 weeks, decreasing to 50% pay for 12 weeks, followed by statutory maternity pay.

The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) has secured better maternity provision beyond this in some services. However, the low national minimum standard has created a postcode lottery.

Our research has found that there is a **£15,000 gap in maternity pay** between the best and worst fire services.

Women working for Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service get approximately £27,251 maternity pay. Meanwhile, women firefighters in Cornwall only receive approximately £11,817.

FIREFIGHTER MATERNITY PAY COMPARISON - 52 WEEKS (2020)



UK LAGGING BEHIND

Women firefighters are being short-changed on two fronts: within the UK fire and rescue service and by international standards.

When looking at the duration of paid maternity, parental and home care leave, the UK's 39 weeks is significantly below the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) average of 51 weeks.



THE CASE FOR 52 WEEKS ON FULL PAY

Current maternity provisions in the fire and rescue service are fragmented and show an underappreciation of women in the sector.

Women firefighters are being forced to return to work too early because they can't afford to live on maternity pay. This is putting their health and safety, and their children, at risk.

There are also pre-birth provisions that must be addressed to properly protect expectant mothers.

OCCUPATIONAL HAZARDS

Firefighting is a stressful, physical job that presents many potential hazards. There are physical hazards such as drastic temperature variations, extreme and unpredictable physical demands, psychological stress and more.

Firefighters may also be exposed to biological or radiation hazards as well as toxic contaminants released from fires. Research commissioned by the FBU and carried out by University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) into the links between firefighting, contaminants and cancer and diseases has found exposure to contaminants during pregnancy can be harmful to expectant mothers and the developing foetus. Even after pregnancy, babies can continue to be at exposure to contaminants through breastfeeding.

It is recommended that other than in specific health circumstances, infants should be breastfed until six months of age, while the World Health Organisation recommends that breastfeeding - along with appropriate solid foods and fluids - should continue until at least two years of age. These recommendations are endorsed by UK health departments.



This reinforces the importance of minimising exposure to contaminants and improving maternity pay and leave.

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION AND INCLUSION

There is still a problem in recruiting and retaining women to the fire service.

Although women have been working as operational firefighters since the early 1980s, they still only make up a small minority of operational positions. In England (2022), only one in ten firefighters are women.

Maternity provision is having an impact on firefighters' careers. Case studies collected by the FBU's National Women's Committee (NWC) have found that women in the fire service have had contracts terminated, not been informed of promotion opportunities, and been forced to choose between breastfeeding and struggling to survive on low pay or ending their maternity leave prematurely.

Women firefighters put themselves on the line to protect the public. They deserve better.

Fire service employers must act to address this inequality and improve maternity provisions, including 52 weeks maternity leave on full pay everywhere in the UK.



£15,000 GAP
IN MATERNITY PAY BETWEEN THE
BEST AND WORST FIRE SERVICES

ONLY 1 IN 10
UK FIREFIGHTERS ARE WOMEN

EQUALITY MATTERS.