

News for Firefighter Pensioners

(Old Scheme)

2023

The increase this year

This year the consumer price index (CPI) in the twelve months to September 2022 increased by 10.1%. We will increase your pension from 10 April 2023 by the full 10.1% if:

- we have been paying you a pension for at least one year, and you are at least 55 years old, or
- you have recently started to draw your pension which had been deferred for at least a year, or
- you are aged at least 55, your pension was calculated on pay details for a period not ending on your last day of service, or
- we have been paying an ill health pension for at least a year regardless of your age.

Does this affect everyone?

If your pension began on or after 26 April 2022 you will receive a proportion of the increase as follows:

Date Pension began		Percentage increase
From	To	
26 April 2022	25 May 2022	9.26%
26 May 2022	25 June 2022	8.42%
26 June 2022	25 July 2022	7.58%
26 July 2022	25 August 2022	6.73%
26 August 2022	25 September 2022	5.89%
26 September 2022	25 October 2022	5.05%
26 October 2022	25 November 2022	4.21%
26 November 2022	25 December 2022	3.37%
26 December 2022	25 January 2023	2.53%
26 January 2023	25 February 2023	1.68%
26 February 2023	25 March 2023	0.84%

How do we work out the increase?

The starting point for calculating the increase is the value of your annual pension at March 2023.

If you reached State Pension Age (SPA) before 6 April 2016, payment of the increases to your pension may be shared between Oxfordshire Pension Fund and the government's Department of Work and Pensions (DWP).

Your pension may comprise two elements: Guaranteed Minimum Pension (GMP) and pension in excess of GMP. A GMP applies if you were a Scheme member between 6 April 1978 and 5 April 1997 and have reached SPA.

The DWP pays the increases on the GMP part of your pension with your state pension. However, Oxfordshire Pension Fund must pay up to the first 3% increase on the GMP generated by any membership after April 1988.

If you reach SPA after 5 April 2016, Oxfordshire Pension Fund pays the whole increase on the GMP as part of your pension. The government is investigating possible alternative methods of paying increases to your GMP for those reaching SPA after 6 April 2021. However the current interim arrangement – of paying the increase here with your pension - will continue for the time being.

For pensioners with no GMP, the whole of your pension in payment will be increased.

Don't know your State Pension Age? Find it here: <https://www.gov.uk/state-pension-age>

Contact us:

Pension Services, 4640 Kingsgate, Cascade Way, Oxford Business Park South, Oxford, OX4 2SU
T: 03300 241 369 E: pension.payroll@oxfordshire.gov.uk W: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/pensions
My Oxfordshire Pension: <https://oxfordshire.pensiondetails.co.uk/>



**OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL**

Payslips and P60s

Payslips

- Your pension is paid one month in advance, which means the payment you receive in March reflects the pension payable for April.
- We will send out a payslip in March 2023, if the value of your pension differs by at least £1 (when compared to the previous month) because of either an annual review or a change to your tax code. We will send out this payslip even if you have registered online for *My Oxfordshire Pension*.
- We pay your pension into your bank or building society account on the last working day of each month.
- If you have registered for *My Oxfordshire Pension* you will be able to see your payslip every month, and previous P60s.

P60s

- Your P60 will be available on *My Oxfordshire Pension* before 31 May 2023. This document, which looks like a payslip, shows the amount of pension we have paid and the tax deducted.
- If you have already told us that you do not want to use *My Oxfordshire Pension*, we will post your P60 to your home address. There is no need to contact us again.

Pay dates for your monthly pension 2023/2024

Friday 28 April 2023

Wednesday 31 May 2023

Friday 30 June 2023

Monday 31 July 2023

Thursday 31 August 2023

Friday 29 September 2023

Tuesday 31 October 2023

Thursday 30 November 2023

Friday 29 December 2023

Wednesday 31 January 2024

Thursday 29 February 2024

Thursday 28 March 2024

How do we keep in touch with you?

Get online!!

Please sign up to our secure website *My Oxfordshire Pension* at <https://oxfordshire.pensiondetails.co.uk/> to see payslips every month and to keep your personal details and bank account details up to date. You can register at any time even if you have previously decided against. If you also have an active or deferred record, you can see these too when you log in.

Online access? No thank you!!

Maybe online access is not for you, and if that is the case, you can keep things exactly as they are.

- If you have already told us that you wish to keep the paper correspondence, you do not have to contact us again.
- If you have not registered to keep paper, we will assume that you intend to log in at some point and your paper correspondence will eventually cease.
- If you wish to register to keep paper, please write us a letter telling us you do not want to use *My Oxfordshire Pension*.
- Please note using *My Oxfordshire Pension* does not change how or when we pay your pension.

Helping you get on line

You can find guidance for registering for *My Oxfordshire Pension* at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/pensions

Dedicated helpline: 03300 536760

Email: pension.msenquiry@oxfordshire.gov.uk

How you can contact us

The Pension Services team works from home, with scheduled days in the office when required. Make sure you tell us about any changes to your personal details, by email, phone, letter, or by logging on:

Our website: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/pensions

Phone: 03300 241369

My Oxfordshire Pension: <https://oxfordshire.pensiondetails.co.uk/>

Email: pension.payroll@oxfordshire.gov.uk for queries regarding pensions already in payment.

pension.fireservice@oxfordshire.gov.uk if you are a member of the Firefighter pension schemes.

Post: Pension Services, 4640 Kingsgate, Cascade Way, Oxford Business Park South, Oxford, OX4 2SU

Going to live abroad?

We can continue to pay your pension if you move overseas, and you can receive your pension in local currency.

It does take a little while to set up the arrangements, so don't leave this to the last minute. Contact Pension Services for details.

Tax

Your tax is a personal matter between you and HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC). Our pension payroll team can only operate a tax code change when instructed by HMRC.

Sorry, but we cannot advise on tax matters or act as your representative with the tax office.

Tax and pension savings

Make sure any personal pension is in payment before age 75.

There may be a high tax charge against a benefit paid after that birthday.

Tax Enquiries to HMRC

Telephone Tax Helpline **0300 200 3300**. From abroad **+44 135 535 9022**.

You can use Relay UK if you cannot hear or speak on the phone: dial **18001** then **0300 200 3300**.

Please have your National Insurance number ready when you phone.

Tax reference number for Oxfordshire's pension payroll is **075 EZ 29045**.

Online Help

<https://www.gov.uk/claim-tax-refund>

How to claim a refund if you think you've paid too much tax

<https://www.gov.uk/tax-codes>

Understanding tax codes and your PAYE Coding Notice, emergency tax, underpayments, what to do if your tax code is wrong.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/check-when-you-can-expect-a-reply-from-hmrc>

When you can expect a reply after contacting HMRC.

<http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/individuals/change-of-circs.htm>

Information sent by email over the internet is not secure and is at risk of being intercepted and read by other people other than those it was intended for.

Post

Use the address on their most recent letter to you. If you don't have a recent letter from HMRC then write to: **HM Revenue & Customs, Pay As You Earn and Self-Assessment, BX9 1AS**

Residents in Scotland and Wales

If you are resident in Scotland your tax code will start with an S to show that you are paying tax at the Scottish rate.

You will find more information on this website <https://www.gov.uk/scottish-income-tax>

If you are resident in Wales you started to pay the new Welsh income tax from 6 April 2019. Your tax code will start with an C to show that you are paying tax at the Welsh rate.

You will find more information on this website <https://www.gov.uk/welsh-income-tax>

Security

... for your pension payments

Remember – if post is returned to as Addressee Unknown or Gone Away, or if a pension payment is returned to our bank account, **we will suspend** your pension payments until you contact us.

Bank account changes can be made on *My Oxfordshire Pension* at <https://oxfordshire.pensiondetails.co.uk/>

If you don't use **My Oxfordshire Pension**, changes to your bank account must be made in writing to the Pension Services address on this newsletter. Please state your previous account details and make sure you sign the letter. Changes cannot be accepted by e-mail unless a copy of a scanned letter is attached.

... of your personal details

As the Administering Authority of the Fund we hold securely, certain information about you (“personal data”), which we need to administer the Fund. The information is provided by yourself and your former employer.

If you believe the information we hold is incorrect contact Pension Services. You will find more details and the full privacy notice on www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/administration-and-performance

You are welcome to contact Pension Services with any questions about how we use and or share your information, find out more about your rights or to see what information we hold.

... of email correspondence

Oxfordshire Pension Services use an encryption service called Egress Switch to make sure that any personal information we send is delivered securely.

When we send personal or financial information by email you will receive a message to advise you a secure message is waiting.

The instructions from that email to set up your own account are straightforward, but must be followed before you can receive our message. There is no cost to you in using this service to reply to us. You will need to click on the link within the e-mail and not the attachment.

... against pension fraud

We share information with bodies responsible for auditing and administering public funds, in order to prevent and detect fraud.

1. We participate in the National Fraud Initiative, which matches electronic data within and between public and private sector bodies. It helps promote the best use of public funds.
2. We share information about you with other public bodies. This helps to make sure that no pensions are being paid to deceased pensioners or to people no longer entitled to receive it.

Where fraud is committed and pensions are wrongly paid, this must be recovered. However occasionally wrong payments are made because of a genuine error, and this could result in payments to pensioners being increased.

National Insurance and your State Pension

The government introduced the new state pension from April 2016. The State scheme is now a flat rate scheme, so there are no longer contracted out reduced rates of national insurance for members or employers.

Whilst your Firefighters' pension forms a very important part of your retirement planning it is important not to forget about your State Pension. If you are not on track to get the full amount of State Pension (or you are not receiving the full amount if you have already drawn your State Pension), then you may wish to consider whether 'topping up' is an option for you. The rules for buying back 'missing' years are changing in April 2023 meaning that fewer years can be bought in the future.

Please refer to <https://www.gov.uk/voluntary-national-insurance-contributions/who-can-pay-voluntary-contributions> or speak to a financial adviser for more information.

Help with the cost of living

Have you claimed your pension credit?

There is a separate welfare benefit for pensioners called Pension Credit. Pension credit provides extra income for people over State Pension age on lower incomes.

In April 2022, it was estimated that about 850,000 households were missing out on Pension Credit because they thought it wasn't meant for them. Pension Credit can be worth up to £3,300 a year and you may be eligible even if you have your own home or have savings.

Even if you find out you are only entitled to a small amount of pension credit, it is worth claiming. This is because it may help you qualify for other benefits, such as help with heating bills, housing costs, NHS dental care, council tax, and if you are over 75, a free TV licence.

Use the [online calculator](#) to check if you are missing out on Pension Credit – it only takes a few minutes. Or call **0800 99 1234**.

Other resources

- There is more help on the cost of living on Oxfordshire County Council's website <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/council/help-rising-living-costs>
- Find out what other support is available <https://www.gov.uk/cost-of-living>
- Help with rising energy prices <https://helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk/>
- Get support with money and mental health at <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/money-and-mental-health/>
- Find a warm space <https://www.warmwelcome.uk/>

Change to how we send you your payslips

We would like to give you prior notice of a change to how we distribute your payslips, that's going to happen late in 2023 or early in 2024.

We will no longer be sending you your payslips in the post, unless you have written to us to tell us you do NOT want to use our online member portal, *My Oxfordshire Pension*.

In the future, your payslip will be stored securely on *My Oxfordshire Pension*. You will be able to see details of each monthly pension payment, and your online payslip will be HMRC compliant and fully printable.

If you do not want to use *My Oxfordshire Pension*, you must write to us at the address on this newsletter, to tell us. We do not accept online opt-outs by email. If you do not write to us, we will stop sending you payslips in late 2023 or early 2024. We will contact you again soon to confirm the dates.

Important - please note - if you have already opted to receive paper payslips, **there is no need to tell us again**. Repeat notifications simply slow down the service for everyone.

Considering the future

People often consider making a Will when they retire, which is of course an excellent idea if you have not already done so!

We would also encourage you to think about setting up a Power of Attorney (POA) which allows someone you trust to manage your affairs for you, should you become unable to do so.

If you are married or in a civil partnership, your partner does **not** automatically have authority to do this, nor do your children, even if they are adults. It is therefore worth taking the time to consider setting up a POA while you can still make decisions and exercise choice.

There is useful information about the roles and responsibilities of an appointed attorney on the

following websites:

- <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/money-legal/legal-issues/power-of-attorney>
- <https://www.gov.uk/power-of-attorney>

In Pension Services, we are able to make arrangements for paying your pension if you are unable to deal with matters yourself. But it is much better for you and your family if you have already set up your own plans.

Your dependants may also receive a lump sum when you die.

Make sure you check who you have nominated by logging on to *My Oxfordshire Pension*.

Scams and cold calling

You may think that it could never happen to you, but **scams are on the increase** as criminals look to cash in on the cost-of-living crisis. Scams can be very hard to spot because fraudsters often have credible websites and make false claims, such as being government-approved, to gain your trust. Please be on your guard.

To find out more, visit: <https://www.fca.org.uk/scamsmart/how-avoid-pension-scams>

How to avoid a scammer:

- Reject unexpected offers or cold calls
- Check who you're dealing with by checking the Financial Services Register <https://register.fca.org.uk/s/>
- Don't be rushed or pressured
- Get impartial information and advice from <https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en>

Other useful numbers and contacts

<https://www.gov.uk>

A single website to start enquiries on matters relating to state benefits, tax, allowances, retirement, through to taking your pet abroad. This will be your first step to question areas where the government is involved.

<http://taxvol.org.uk> / 01308 488066

A UK charity helping those on low incomes and aged 60 or over to resolve tax problems.

www.pensions-ombudsman.org.uk / 0800 917 4487

If you have a complaint or dispute with your pension provider concerning your workplace pension arrangements you should contact The Pensions Ombudsman.

<https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en> / 0800 011 3797

An independent service, set up by government to help people make the most of their money, giving free, unbiased money advice to everyone across the UK – online, over the phone and face-to-face.

And finally ... please always check the information for your own personal situation before making financial decisions.

Please note that information in this booklet cannot override the regulations. In the event of a dispute we will use the appropriate regulations.