



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

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Thank you for contacting me about firefighters' fitness.

As you may be aware, the move to give firefighters protection on the issue of fitness and capability has been taken recently, and the improvement of the early retirement terms at age 55 was made as a result of the recent consultation. The Government has also finalised the settlement for retained firefighters, giving historic equal treatment to access a pension scheme, one of the key elements of the dispute.

The Fire Brigade Union's alternative early retirement terms were considered but the Government concluded that they were to the disadvantage of existing 2006 scheme members and to any firefighter who loses their fitness due to a permanent medical condition and is ill-health retired. I know this last point has been of particular concern to firefighters and the Government's final scheme design delivers a bigger pension than under the Union's terms.

I agree that there should be greater certainty for firefighters in how they will be supported throughout their careers to maintain their fitness, and how they will be treated should they lose this. I believe that, with the right levels of support and intervention, firefighters will be able to maintain their fitness to their scheme's Normal Pension Age. Rest assured, the Government has published a consultation to put these key fitness principles onto a statutory footing through the Fire National Framework.

The consultation on the National Framework also requires the authority to consider providing an unreduced pension, where a firefighter loses their fitness through no fault of their own. Alongside this, the Government has also agreed to review the implementation of the fitness policies after three years, to ensure that firefighters are fully supported in maintaining their fitness through to age 60.