

Subsistence and public transport expenses policy

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy sets out the Brigade's arrangements for all employees to claim and be reimbursed reasonable business expenses incurred whilst on duty so the cost to the Brigade is minimised applying the value of service, whilst complying and minimising exposure to current inland revenue and customs and excise requirements.
- 1.2 Expenses for volunteers (cadets and independent members of LFC boards) must have their expenses approved by an authorising manager, who must be an employee, and should be emailed to Finance to AccountsPayable@london-fire.gov.uk.
- 1.3 This policy is to be read in conjunction with the guidance on Hotwire which also provides examples for you.
- 1.4 Submitting and/or authorising invalid claims is a breach of the Brigade's disciplinary rules. Fraud, or other acts of dishonesty, is potentially gross misconduct, and therefore may result in summary dismissal (see Policy number 392 – Discipline (conduct) procedure). In addition fraud cases may be referred to the Brigade's internal audit service which is managed by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC), in accordance with Policy number 568 – Counter fraud and corruption policy and response plan.
- 1.5 This policy should be applied in line with the Brigade's values:
 - Service – We put the public first.
 - Courage – We step up to the challenge.
 - Learning – We listen so that we can improve.
 - Teamwork – We work together and include everyone.
 - Equity – We treat everyone fairly according to their needs.
 - Integrity – We act with honesty.

2 Receipts

- 2.1 Till receipts are required for reimbursements under £25 and VAT receipts are required for reimbursements over £25. Please note that reimbursements must not be authorised without relevant receipts, other than reimbursements for travel at the Oyster card/contactless rate.

3 Definitions

- 3.1 **'Business expenses'** – costs reasonably and properly incurred by employees in furtherance of Brigade business objectives.
- 3.2 **'Normal place of work'** – the place where an employee usually and regularly carries out the significant proportion of their duties and responsibilities. (This has specific taxation significance).
- 3.3 **'Normal working hours/day'** – the range/number of hours of duty during which an employee usually and regularly carries out the significant proportion of their duties and responsibilities.
- 3.4 **'Authorising manager'** – A senior employee with written delegation to authorise and validate claims for expenses reimbursement, and is registered with payroll, this will usually someone in the line management chain of the individual claiming.
- 3.5 **'Travelling on official business'** – this refers to journeys undertaken in pursuance of the business objectives of the Brigade. Further details are outlined in paragraph 8 below.

Note: Variation to the standard terms of this policy may be made for individuals on special requirements for medical/disability related reasons and beliefs/religious reasons. In these cases, authorisation of the head of service will be required.

4 Subsistence

- 4.1 Subsistence in the context of this policy includes hotel costs, food and refreshments and incidental expenses when working away from the normal place of work and outside normal working hours, which are properly and reasonably incurred on Brigade business.

5 Overnight subsistence

- 5.1 **Hotel accommodation** – all hotel accommodation should be booked through the Brigade's framework contract, unless, exceptionally, the contractor cannot provide accommodation. In such cases, reimbursement of bed and breakfast charges shall normally be reimbursed to the actual receipted cost or £54.91, whichever is the lower amount, and 24-hour absence shall normally be reimbursed to the actual receipted cost or £109.80, whichever is the lower amount. This is subject to prior approval of head of service.
- 5.2 **Hotel accommodation in respect of conferences** – Where a conference is held in a specific hotel or group of hotels and it is of specific benefit for delegates to stay in the conference hotel, staying in the conference hotel will be allowed, even if the cost exceeds maxima stated in the policy, or the hotels cannot be booked through our booking agents. This is subject to prior approval of head of service.
- 5.3 **Meals when in overnight accommodation** – Where you are staying in overnight accommodation, you may order the hotel set meal or two courses from the normal fixed price hotel menu, even when this exceeds the limits set out below for evening meals subject to head of service approval of the expenditure over the published maxima.
- 5.4 **Out of pocket expenses (personal incidental expenses)** – Personal out of pocket expenses incurred when away from home overnight on business or training, such as telephone calls, refreshments or other reasonable receipted expenditure shall normally be reimbursed up to a maximum of £4.99 per day or £19.91 per week.
- 5.5 **Alcoholic drinks** - The payment for any alcoholic drinks consumed, including those with a meal your responsibility and will not be reimbursed by the Brigade. This includes situations when entertaining non-Brigade staff.

6 Daily subsistence

- 6.1 Reimbursement for breakfast and/or lunch will not be made where there are subsidised canteen or restaurant facilities available to Brigade employees, or where there is subsistence provided as part of the cost of a conference or course.
- 6.2 Items claimed for must be appropriate to the meal that is being claimed, and the receipt should contain detail to support this in terms of time/date and items purchased.
- 6.3 **Breakfast** – Where you leave home before 6:00 hrs and are working at least five miles¹ from your normal place of work for at least five hours, the cost of breakfast shall be reimbursed at the actual receipted cost up to a maximum normally of £7.87.

¹ This is measured by the most direct route available, and therefore can be the most direct distance by public transport if that is the actual mode of travel used.

- 6.4 **Lunch** – Where you are working at least five miles¹ from your normal place of work for at least five hours including the lunch period 12:00-14:00, the cost of lunch shall be reimbursed at the actual receipted cost up to a maximum normally of £10.50.
- 6.5 **Evening meals** - Where you are working at least five miles¹ from your normal place of work and will not reach home before 21:00 hrs, the cost of an evening meal shall be reimbursed at the actual receipted cost up to a maximum normally of £19.65.

7 Subsistence and travel related to training

Subsistence

- 7.1 Subsistence cannot be claimed if the accommodation price for a residential training course specifies the inclusion of meals.
- 7.2 Where meals are not included in the accommodation price, the normal receipted maxima will apply.
- 7.3 Where you are provided with board and/or lodging as part of the course arrangements, subsistence expenses cannot be claimed, provided that food is included.
- 7.4 Where meal or buffet facilities are available at non-residential course venues, subsistence cannot be claimed.
- 7.5 For operational staff on courses of longer than 5 days the training venue shall be considered the normal place of work, from the first day of the course, and the end of each day of instruction shall be considered the end of the normal working hours/day.
- 7.6 For operational staff subsistence is only claimable for the first 5 days of a course. Therefore, from the sixth day onwards no subsistence can be claimed.

Travel to residential training courses

- 7.7 You will be entitled to make a claim for journeys to and from a residential training course at the start and end of the course plus return journeys to and from home for each weekend during the course as set out below:
- Travelling to and from a residential training course by rail will be reimbursed the receipted cost or the cost of the most economical fare reasonably available in the absence of a receipt. Saver and supersaver fares are available for most journeys. There is no entitlement to first class travel.
 - Travelling by private vehicle will be reimbursed the cost of the most economical fare reasonably available, or the appropriate car mileage rate as set out in appendix 1, whichever is the cheaper. If you use your leased car, the mileage will be calculated at the appropriate leased car mileage rate.
 - Where more than one person is travelling by car to the same training venue, you are encouraged to share cars for which the driver will be entitled to claim an additional rate per passenger per mile.
- 7.8 **Out of pocket expenses (personal incidental expenses)** – Personal out of pocket expenses incurred when away from home overnight on business or training, such as telephone calls, refreshments or other reasonable receipted expenditure shall normally be reimbursed up to a maximum rate of £4.99 per day or £19.91 per week.

Travel to non-residential training courses

- 7.9 Where you travel to non-residential training venues by public transport (or by car but are not authorised car users) then you will be reimbursed the additional cost from home to the training venue by public transport compared to the normal home to duty journey. You are reminded that your motor insurance must include 'for business use' and that this be certified on the claim form.

Note: Where courses for operational staff take place over a ten day fortnight then for each tenth day only, you have the option of claiming reimbursement of any fares incurred.

- 7.10 Where you are authorised to use your private vehicles for official business (e.g. leased, ECUS or casual car scheme (Policy number 770 - Brigade car schemes and mileage rates) and travel to training venues in Greater London in your private vehicle then you will be eligible to claim mileage in accordance with the normal provisions of the individual schemes providing that the cost is cheaper than the public transport costs. Where you travel outside of the Brigade area, mileage allowances will only be payable if the journey has been authorised in advance. This will be reimbursed at the regular mileage rate or 45p per mile, whichever is lower.
- 7.11 When deciding which rate is appropriate members of the essential and casual car schemes should take into account the rate variations that apply in each scheme relating to the amount of mileage already claimed.
- 7.12 Car parking costs will be refunded, subject to prior approval if receipts are provided and a full justification for parking costs is submitted with the claim form.
- 7.13 Taxi fares will not be reimbursed without prior approval and a full justification for using a taxi submitted via the online system. Receipts must be supplied with all claims for reimbursement of taxi fares.

8 Travelling on official business

- 8.1 When you travel on official business then you are entitled to reimbursement of additional reasonable and necessarily incurred additional expenditure on transport.

Reimbursement is based on the most expeditious route and fare by public transport. The Brigade encourages the use of Oyster/contactless cards for official business travel, where appropriate.

- 8.2 Additional qualifying journeys include travel in connection with:

- Officially arranged medical or Counselling and Trauma Service appointments.
- Obtaining medical treatment arising from a 'due to service injury', with prior approval.
- Examinations/selection procedures required for promotion.
- Required/requested attendance at disciplinary proceedings.
- Obtaining treatment from the Firefighters Charity whilst sick or light/restricted duties.
- Brigade arranged training venues.

- 8.3 Staff absent sick on half or nil pay shall receive full reimbursement of fares when attending occupational health medical appointments.

- 8.4 Recognised trades union officials are entitled to be reimbursed for reasonable and necessarily incurred additional travel expenditure in respect of industrial relations duties. Additional qualifying journeys includes travel in connection with meetings within the Policy number 959 - Industrial Relations procedures of the Brigade such as:

- Scheduled joint committee meetings and side meetings.
- Other joint meetings called at the request of management.

- 8.5 Where possible a receipt should be provided to evidence public transport expenditure. In the absence of a receipt the reimbursement shall be made based on the cost as shown on the Transport for London website journey planner, or at the most economical rate appropriate. Please note that receipts are available from ticket machines when paid for by debit/credit card and from the ticket office. In situations where a travel card is purchased, the travel card will suffice as evidence of expenditure.
- 8.6 For travel within the greater London area, you are expected to use the most economical mode of travel. For multiple daily journeys, the appropriate travel card or bus pass should be used. Where you have not obtained or retained a receipt, reimbursement shall be at the Oyster card/contactless rate.
- 8.7 For travel outside of the Greater London area - you are expected, where sufficient notice of the necessity to travel occurs, to book /purchase mainline rail tickets in advance to take advantage of the cheapest fares available at time of booking/purchase.
- 8.8 Rail tickets - can be obtained through Network Business Travel as outlined in the procedure in general guidance and procedural note.

9 TFL's Santander cycle hire

- 9.1 You can use the Santander cycle hire scheme for short journeys. For journeys of up to 30 minutes the Brigade will reimburse evidenced usage at a rate of £3 per day (the 24-hour access fee).
- 9.2 You can find details of the scheme on the TFL website.
- 9.3 Usage of the scheme can be evidenced by one of the following methods:
- (a) Journey log can be printed from the TFL website or TFL terminals by members or key users. Please note that journey logs are available for the previous 8 days.
 - (b) 1 day "access period ID" receipt printed by TFL terminals.
- 9.4 Claims submitted without evidence will not be reimbursed.

10 Additional travelling expenses on relocation

- 10.1 Fire and Rescue Staff (FRS) and Control Staff, following relocation to a new primary place of duty will be eligible to claim an amount towards additional expenditure that is incurred in respect of travelling from their home to their new place of duty, they will be entitled to receive the additional fares for one year from the date of relocation.

Travel by public transport

- 10.2 If you travel by public transport, reimbursement will be calculated on the difference in annual season ticket/Travelcard rates between home and former workplace and home and new workplace. For instance, if you previously needed a Travelcard for zones 4 and 5 from home to work but now need a Travelcard covering zones 1 to 5, claims can be submitted based on the difference between a two zone and five zone ticket. Payment for any month will not exceed the amount determined by this formula whether the employee holds an annual ticket or purchases a ticket(s) for any other period.
- 10.3 Claims must be submitted on the on-line expenses system on a monthly basis for one-twelfth of the difference in annual season/Travelcard costs. Taking the example given in the preceding paragraph, the calculation, using 2024 rates would be as follows:

Annual Travelcard zones 1 to 5	£2,920
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Less Annual Travelcard zones 4 and 5	£1,280
Difference	£1,640
Divided by 12	£136.66 per month

- 10.4 No reimbursement will be made after the first 4 weeks of any period of sick leave or extended annual leave.
- 10.5 Where you are redeployed other than at the beginning of the month, reimbursement for that month will be calculated on a pro rata basis.
- 10.6 Similarly, if you cease to be eligible for additional fares other than at the end of the month, then reimbursement will be calculated on a pro rata basis. This could arise from retirement/resignation, promotion, maternity leave or extended leave as detailed in paragraph 10.3.

Travel by private vehicle

- 10.7 Where you travel by private vehicle between home and the new workplace, payment will be made on the basis of the additional mileage compared to the journey from home to the former workplace at the following rates:

Travel by car	24p per mile	(LPG rate 14 p per mile)
Motorcycle above 500 cc	14p per mile	
Motorcycle 151 - 500 cc	11p per mile	
Motorcycle/moped/scooter up to 150 cc	8p per mile	
Electric vehicles	4p per mile	

- 10.8 Claims in respect of mileage must be submitted using the on-line expenses system on a monthly basis detailing the individual journeys for the month under the heading 'Site/Location/Reason for and details of expenditure' to take into account the following:

Return mileage home to new workplace	X miles
Less return mileage home to former workplace	Y miles
Difference (X minus Y)	Z miles
Therefore, amount claimed = Z miles per day x 24p per mile = £.....	

A separate entry must be made on the claim form for each day travelled for which a claim is being made.

- 10.9 No claim will be reimbursed where the mileage incurred is in excess of a direct journey between the old place of work and the new primary place of duty. This means that you are expected to claim on the basis of the most direct and cost-effective route to get to your new location and not journeys that are excessive in mileage.
- 10.10 Passengers sharing a vehicle are not eligible to claim additional fares or mileage allowance. However, the driver may claim 3p per passenger mile for the additional distance any other redeployed member of staff is transported to/from the place of work compared to their journey before redeployment. The names of the passenger(s) and details of their individual journeys must be stated on the claim form in such cases.

General

- 10.11 Eligibility to claim additional travelling expenses following a relocation exercise will be in accordance with that detailed at paragraph 10 above. In cases of promotion or where you make a subsequent transfer request to a different location, eligibility will cease from the date of effect of the promotion or transfer. Where you receive relocation assistance from the Brigade in moving

home following redeployment, the entitlement to additional travelling expenses will cease from the date of removal to the new home.

11 LGV Expenses

- 11.1 LGV medicals are to be performed by your GP. The GP should complete the necessary DVLA Medical Examination Report (form D4). The Brigade will grant you a partial 'Gone to Visit' (GTV) absence to attend the GP appointment in line with Policy number 1005 - Partial attendance policy. The GP will charge a fee for this medical which the Brigade will reimburse. Claims should only be made by employees who have completed the MD qualification and whose role requires them to drive. Where it is necessary to pass a medical prior to obtaining a provisional LGV licence, the cost may be reclaimed provided a receipt from the doctor or practice is attached. An advance payment for LGV medical examination fees can also be claimed by completing the online expenses form. In order to claim the payment, you should get an email or letter from the GP surgery confirming how much the medical will cost, the cost may vary dependent on the GP. This is important as the Brigade will not be able to process the claim without it. Once confirmation of the cost has been agreed you should give it to the officer in charge who will approve the payment using the online expenses form. Once the medical has been completed you should provide the officer in charge with the official receipt from the GP surgery confirming that the payment has been made.
- 11.2 You can also claim reimbursement for the LGV Theory and Hazard tests, and an advance payment is also available for these. The advance payment can be claimed by completing the online expenses form and providing confirmation to your officer in charge.

12 Medical charges (operational staff)

Treatment covered

- 12.1 Section 4, Part B, paragraph 5, of the National Joint Council's (2004) Scheme of Conditions of Service (the 'grey book'), provides for the reimbursement of charges incurred under Sections 77, 78 and 79 of the National Health Service Act 1977; these relate to:
- Dental treatment (including the provision of dentures).
 - The provision of eye tests and spectacles.
 - The provision of other appliances for which a charge has been prescribed.
 - By regulations made under the National Health Service Act; and (d) the prescription for drugs or medicines dispensed under National Health Service arrangements.
- 12.2 The above provisions only apply to employees whose continuous service commenced prior to 1 November 1994.
- 12.3 Under local agreements reached in 2012, these provisions are withdrawn from Brigade station and group commanders with effect from 1 April 2012.
- 12.4 Notwithstanding paragraphs 12.2 and 12.3, the arrangements in paragraph 12.1 apply to all Brigade grey book staff when the charges referred to arise directly from an illness or injury arising out of the execution of duty.
- 12.5 A member to whom paragraph 12.1 applies and who incurs expenditure in obtaining spectacles, dental treatment, dentures, or appliances of the type referred to in paragraph 12.1, other than through the National Health Service, may be reimbursed to the extent that the expenditure could have been reimbursed under paragraph 12 if the treatment or appliances had been obtained through the National Health Service.

Effect of neglect

- 12.6 A member to whom paragraph 12.1 of this policy applies and who incurs expenditure on medical, dental, or optical treatment and who:
- Refuses or neglects to submit to any medical examination which the Brigade may require.
 - Has caused or substantially aggravated the infirmity which occasioned the treatment for which expenditure is incurred.
 - Refuses or neglects fully to co-operate in any medical treatment which the Brigade considers necessary.

Will not be entitled to reimbursement under the provisions of the preceding paragraphs of this policy.

Partial liability for charges

- 12.7 Where only a proportion of the total cost of treatment is borne by the member of the Brigade and the remainder by some outside body, only the expenditure incurred by the member can be considered for reimbursement. The Form 325 must show the total cost of the treatment and its allocation between the other source and the applicant.

13 Procedure for claiming expenses

Note: All claims must be made and authorised within 3 months of the date of the incurred expenditure. Claims that are more than three months old will be deemed out of date and will not be met unless the head of service (delegated to group commander for station-based staff) considers that there are circumstances to justify the delay. However, you are encouraged to submit claims on a monthly basis.

- 13.1 Claimants should submit claims via the e-expenses system which is available via the My Employment section on hotwire. Guidance for claimants and managers is available on the system.
- 13.2 Reimbursement of dental expenditure described in paragraph 12.1 is to be claimed after the amount has been paid by submitting Form 325 (Rev 95) accompanied by a NHS receipt, to the line manager who will, provided they are satisfied the application is genuine, countersign the Form 325 for dental claims or a prepaid prescription certificate. Email the completed F325 to MEDICALEXPENSECLAIMS@london-fire.gov.uk. Emails will only be accepted from the authorising manager. Both signatories must be included. All other medical expenses must be claimed via the e-expenses system. If reimbursement is approved by People Services, the amount will be subject to income tax deduction and paid through the salary scheme.
- 13.3 Reimbursement of expenditure under paragraph 12.1(d) (prescription charges) can only be made where you have obtained the completed NHS Receipt Form FP57 from the dispenser and attached it to Form 325. Any other form of receipt obtained from the dispenser must indicate clearly that the charge is for an NHS prescription and applies to you.
- 13.4 Where the treatment has been obtained outside of NHS arrangements and reimbursement is claimed under paragraph 12.3, receipts must show full details of the treatment received so that the comparable NHS expenditure can be easily identified. All such receipts must show your name proving you received the treatment.
- 13.5 Authorising managers are required to accurately interrogate the claim details against the supporting evidence to ensure that they are satisfied that the claim is legitimate in line with the requirements stated in this policy. Additionally, a check list is provided on Hotwire. If the Authorising manager is not satisfied, then the claim must be rejected.

- 13.6 The original claim and receipts together with a printout of the claim form must be retained at a suitable location, e.g., for station personnel on the fire station, for borough based personnel at the borough team. HR Services maintain a schedule of locations where these records are kept so that audit can access them easily for periodic audit. Claims to be kept for a minimum period of 12 months and then archived for a further period of 5 years.
- 13.7 In exceptional circumstances, where it has not been possible to claim online, the claimant should contact HR Services (via the HR Helpdesk) for the appropriate paper claim form. Receipts must be attached for all subsistence, accommodation and out of pocket expenses. If no receipt is obtained or the receipt is missing or lost, then no payment can be made. Exceptions to this rule must be authorised by the head of service or delegated authority.
- 13.8 The claim is to be authorised by an authorising manager (see paragraph 3.4 above). Checks to be made using the provided check list before authorising the claim. A note from the authorising manager should accompany the claim stating why it was not possible to claim on-line. As a general rule, short-term system failures will not be deemed an exception.
- 13.9 The application of this expenses policy will be subject to periodic internal audit, to ensure that the policy is being adhered to in respect of provision of receipts, authorisation and validation of claims and the subsequent storage of resulting paperwork. These audits will be twofold under the programme of audit station visits and the audit of the expenses policy.

14 Increase in maximum rate for reimbursement

- 14.1 The maximum rates for subsistence reimbursement shall be considered by the Assistant Director, People Services, or delegated officer, on an annual basis, determined by changes in the retail price index for catering and other retail price indices as appropriate, as published by the office of national statistics. Any resulting changes will be implemented from the 1 April each year. (The RPI for catering takes into account costings/prices of restaurant meals, canteen meals, take-away meals and snacks).

15 Records

- 15.1 Please send records by email to RecordsServices@london-fire.gov.uk. Records will be kept on your electronic personal record file (e-PRF) and retained in accordance with Policy number 788 - Electronic personal record files (e-PRF) policy. Personal data shall be processed in accordance with Policy number 351 – Data protection and privacy policy.

16 Help and support

- 16.1 Please contact the HR Helpdesk on extension 89100 option 3 and by email to IT.HR@london-fire.gov.uk.
- 16.2 This policy may also be available on request in other alternative accessible formats as set out in Policy number 290 – Guidance note on translation and interpretation. Please contact Communications on extension 30753 and by email to communications.team@london-fire.gov.uk to discuss your needs and options.
- 16.3 The Brigade invites your engagement so that it can learn to improve so if you have a suggestion that can improve this policy then please submit your idea via the Staff Suggestion Scheme on Hotwire as set out in [Policy number 887 – Staff suggestion scheme](#). Any changes do need to go through the agreed engagement, consultation, negotiation or governance requirements.

Appendix 1 - Schedule of rates

Subsistence

Breakfast	£7.87
Lunch	£10.50
Evening Meal	£19.65
Bed and Breakfast	£54.91
24 hours absence	£109.80

Rates for hotel meals – receipted

Breakfast	£10.50
Lunch	£13.10
Dinner	£19.65

Out of pocket of expenses

Per night	£4.99
Per week	£19.91

Residential course car mileage rates

Car mileage rate	£0.45
Passenger mile	£0.04

Document history

Assessments

An equality, sustainability or health, safety and welfare impact assessment and/or a risk assessment was last completed on:

EIA	19/04/2024	SDIA	H – 09/02/26	HSWIA	09/02/26	RA	NA
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Audit trail

Listed below is a brief audit trail, detailing amendments made to this policy/procedure.

Page/para nos.	Brief description of change	Date
Throughout Page 10, para 15.1 Page 10, para 16.2 and 16.3 Page 13	Subsistence rates increased with effect from 01/04/2024. Records Services and Data protection details added. Access to alternative policy format details and Staff Suggestion access details added. Equality impact assessment date updated.	14/05/2024
Page 6, para 9.1	Evidence usage rate increased from £2 to £3.	12/11/2024
Throughout	Reviewed against revised 2025 NJC Grey Book.	13/05/2025
Page 7, para 11.1	Reference to cancelled PN0888 – Partial attendance policy updated.	04/11/2025
Page 2, para 1.2 Page 5, para 8.2 Page 5, para 8.3	Details for volunteers to claim expenses added. CTS and Firefighters Charity added (from Hotwire). Reimbursement of full travel expenses to OHS medical appointments when staff are on half or nil pay added (from JCF collective agreement 11/03/2019).	23/12/2025
Page 12	SDIA and HSWIA updated.	11/02/2026

Subject list

You can find this policy under the following subjects.

Allowances	Expenses
Travel	

Freedom of Information Act exemptions

This policy/procedure has been securely marked due to:

Considered by: (responsible work team)	FOIA exemption	Security marking classification