

Station mess and stand-by food related allowances policy

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Owner: **Assistant Director, People Services**

Responsible work team: **Policy, Pay and Reward**

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy sets out the arrangements for allowances relating to the station mess and stand-bys which applies to operational staff.
- 1.2 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 Station messes

Payment of allowances to mess managers

- 2.1 A firefighter who is elected as the mess manager for an approved mess at a fire station or establishment will be required to carry out those duties without a paid deputy and will be entitled to a weekly non-pensionable allowance at the rate of £7.35 per week.
- 2.2 The allowance is payable only to the person who is the accredited manager for the approved mess at a station and they will continue to receive the allowance while holding the position regardless of any absence e.g. on annual leave, sickness, etc., except when the absence is without pay. The sub/station officer will, take steps to make sure that if the person who is the mess manager is absent for so long a period as to be non-effective, then a new mess manager will be appointed.
- 2.3 Payment will be made monthly through salaries. Details of any changes in mess managers including the date of effect are to be submitted promptly via the station commander to Payroll Services.
- 2.4 Mess managers at fire stations, who also provide meals on a regular basis for operational staff not attached to their station, are eligible to receive an additional non-pensionable mess manager's allowance for those weeks when the meals are actually provided.
- 2.5 Details of mess managers, who qualify under sub-paragraph 2.4 above for this additional allowance, including the date of commencement, are to be forwarded via station commanders to Payroll Services. Station commanders are to notify Payroll Services of alterations to these arrangements so that the payment can be adjusted.. This should include details of any weeks when, for whatever reason, no meals are provided by a mess manager for operational staff not attached to the station.

Payment of allowance to individuals when mess is not in operation

- 2.6 You are eligible to claim an allowance for each day when normal messing facilities are not available due to circumstances beyond your control. These circumstances would be rare when, for example, there was a need to clean, decorate or repair the mess concerned. The allowance is payable for the duty shift as a whole and not individual meal times. The rate of allowance is set out in Appendix 1 paragraph 3(d).

2.7 You should submit a claim via the online expenses claim form, which will be approved by the station commander if satisfied that the claim meets the relevant criteria. For staff who are on standby at that station (claiming mess off the run), the sub/station officer is to submit an email stating the individuals name, role, pay number, date and reason the mess was taken off the run to the station commander who will recommend payment if satisfied that the claim meets the relevant criteria. The email is then to be forwarded to the HR Services, Expenses Claim Team via the HR Helpdesk for authorisation and processing. Payment will be made through individual salaries and will be taxable.

3 Stand-by duties

Payments to station mess funds

3.1 On each occasion when members of a station mess are absent without prior notice from their parent station for all of the meals provided by the mess of that station during their duty shift because of performing stand-by duties at another station (normally for the purpose of attending an operational incident), then payment of the amount specified in Appendix 1 paragraph 3(a) may be made to the mess of the parent station in respect of the absence for the whole of a day or night shift.

3.2 Payments are not to be made in respect of a person performing standby duties who is not a full member of the station mess.

3.3 Payments are to be claimed by the mess manager through the online expenses system as a non-taxable expense; the mess manager will pay approved amounts back into the mess fund. Online claims should include full details of the absences which attract the amounts referred to in paragraph 3.1 above, and will be authorised by the station commander.

4 Subsistence entitlements for standbys

Standby is a mess member - catering facilities available at standby station

4.1 No claim for subsistence is payable if you are a member of a station mess and posted for standby duties to a station where there are messing facilities.

Standby is a mess member – no mess at standby station or food required for cultural or religious needs

4.2 If the watch at the standby station do not run a mess, or a kitchen is not in operation, or a person requires food for a cultural or religious need and therefore the standby station mess are unable to cater, a member of a station mess may claim subsistence not exceeding the maximum as prescribed in appendix 1(1). Claims are to be made through the online expenses system and receipts will be required.

Note: For day shift (lunch), for night shift (evening meal), (breakfast). See Appendix 1 attached to this policy for current rates.

4.3 If the kitchen at the standby station is not in operation and a meal cannot be obtained under paragraph 4.2 above, the provisions of paragraph 2.6 of this policy will apply to the standby.

Standby is not a mess member

4.4 No claim for subsistence can be made for standbys who are not members of a station mess.

5 Spoiled meals – payments to station mess fund

- 5.1 Where breakfast, lunch or dinner is spoiled as a result of attendance at an operational incident, a non-taxable expense is payable to fire station messes as set out in Appendix 1 paragraph 3(c).
- 5.2 As agreed with the trade union, the station working routine is flexible to allow station commanders to organise work activities (full details of this are available through hotwire in the agreed Station Working Routine area: http://hotwire/people/humanresources/Start_finish.asp)
- 5.3 As individual watches may vary mealtime preferences, each watch must agree a regular mealtime routine with their station commander; this will align with the routine in the collective agreement on shift start and finish times. A failure to do this may result in a refusal of reimbursement. Arrangements need to be outlined in writing by the sub/station officer, and agreed in writing by the station commander.
- 5.4 To qualify for payment the origin of a mobilising call (as shown in the teleprinter message) must be between 10 minutes before and 20 minutes after the start of the agreed mealtime, and the absence will be at least 30 minutes duration.
 - Breakfast – the break for breakfast is expected to be completed by 08.15 hours.
 - Lunch – the break for lunch is expected to be completed by 15.30 hours, a 15 minute refreshment break is expected to be taken either side of the break on days.
 - Dinner – the break for dinner/supper is expected to be completed by 22.30 hours.
- 5.5 When meals have been spoiled as a result of attendance at an operational incident and the criteria set out in paragraphs 5.3 and 5.4 above has been met, the mess manager should make a claim through the online expenses system, quoting the time of call, the period of absence, and the number of meals spoiled. The mess manager will pay approved amounts back into the mess fund.
- 5.6 The sub/station officer is to confirm the details given, including the booked time for the meal in the case of lunch, and pass to the station commander. If the station commander is satisfied with the claim and it falls within the criteria outlined in this policy, the claim can be authorised by the station commander.
- 5.7 Where a claim falls outside the rules detailed in this policy but the officer in charge of the watch feels that the spoiled meals allowance is still payable, the online claim must be submitted to the station commander with supporting evidence for consideration.
- 5.8 If the station commander is also satisfied with the claim's validity and considers that the justification attached is sufficient to explain the circumstances, the station commander will authorise the claim on the online expenses system. Spoiled meals claims outside the provisions of this policy will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.

6 Spoiled meals – payment to officers on the flexible duty system

- 6.1 An allowance as set out in Appendix 1 paragraph 3(c) is payable to any officer on the flexible duty system who has a meal spoiled, by virtue of an attendance at an operational incident, providing both the following conditions have been satisfied:
 - (a) The time of ordering shall have taken place within the following time bands:

– Breakfast	0700 to 0800 hours inclusive
– Lunch	1230 to 1330 hours inclusive
– Supper	1830 to 1930 hours inclusive
 - (b) Officers shall have spent at least one half of an hour away from normal place of duty or standby/callout base at the incident.

Method of claiming

- 6.2 When your meals have been spoiled in the circumstances described in paragraph 1, you should submit a Form FN/PC7 to your group commander or head of service stating:
 - Incident(s) attended.
 - Time of ordering.
 - Period of attendance.
 - Time of return to normal place of duty or standby/callout base.
 - Details of the meal spoiled.
- 6.3 Where the spoiled meal was purchased at a commercial establishment a receipt must also be provided.
- 6.4 Form FN/PC7 is then to be forwarded to the HR Services, Expense Claims Team, 3rd Floor Union Street for authorisation. Payment in approved cases will be made via salary.

7 Payment of allowance during special conditions

- 7.1 In the event of special conditions (public transport dispute, severe weather, fuel shortage etc.) and subject to any special alternative arrangements regarding attendance, which may be made by the Commissioner, every member of the Brigade is expected to do their best by whatever other means of transport are open to them to attend their place of work at the normal time in order to carry out their official duties (see Policy number 689 – Travel disruption – work arrangements policy).
- 7.2 When you are required to remain on duty, because of the delayed arrival of an appliance rider, you will be eligible to receive overtime.
- 7.3 Allowances as detailed in paragraphs 8.2 - 8.7 will be payable to those staff that, during special conditions, arrive early at their place of work or remain at their place of work between shifts whilst off duty to ensure their availability for their next rostered duty. The allowances are applicable only to those staff whose attendance at their place of duty is essential to the maintenance of the Brigade's operational functions.

Staff arriving early at their place of work

- 7.4 Staff that arrive early at their place of work to guarantee their availability for their next duty shift and are present at a time when a meal would normally be served will be paid an allowance as set out in Appendix 1 paragraph 4(a).

Note: Staff who remain on overtime to keep appliances on the run will be expected to pay in the normal way for meals received whilst overtime is being worked.

Staff remaining at their place of work between shifts whilst off duty

- 7.5 Staff remaining at their place of work without working overtime – staff remaining at their place of work for a complete shift to guarantee their availability for their next rostered duty may claim an allowance as set out in Appendix 1 paragraph 4(b) if no overtime is worked during that shift. No other subsistence or meal payment will be made in addition to this allowance.
- 7.6 Staff remaining for a complete shift but working some overtime – staff opting to remain at their place of work may be required to work overtime to keep appliances on the run or for other essential operational reasons pending the arrival of a standby or member of the oncoming watch delayed by special conditions. Such overtime must be restricted to a maximum of 6 hours during

a night shift and 3 hours during a day shift to allow staff to get sufficient rest to be fit for their next rostered duty.

- 7.7 Staff who perform overtime for part of an intervening shift and remain at their place of work for the remainder to guarantee their availability for their next rostered duty may claim the allowance set out in Appendix 1 paragraph 4(c). No other subsistence or meal payment will be made in addition.
- 7.8 Staff who have completed a tour of duty, and are due for rota leave but remain on overtime to keep appliances on the run or for other essential operational reasons pending the arrival of a standby or member of the oncoming watch delayed by the weather conditions, will be paid overtime whilst remaining on duty but will receive no other allowances in addition.

Authorisation

- 7.9 If you are seeking to remain at your place of work then you must receive prior permission to do so from a senior manager in consultation with the Central Operations section. Authorising officers must be satisfied that it is necessary for you to remain at the work place and that you cannot make arrangements to stay locally with colleagues, friends or relatives.

Method of claiming

- 7.10 When you are eligible to claim these allowances then you should submit a Form FN/PC2 as necessary to your sub/station officer giving the relevant details.
- 7.11 The sub/station officer is to confirm the details stated and pass to the station commander who will recommend payment if satisfied that the claim meets the relevant criteria. In cases of staff who remained at their place of work between shifts whilst off duty, the station commander will include the name of the senior manager who granted the required prior permission.
- 7.12 The Form FN/PC2 is then forwarded to HR Services, Expense Claims Team, 3rd Floor, Union Street for payment via salary.
- 7.13 Members of the staff in headquarters departments should submit a Form FN/PC2 via their supervisory manager to the HR Services, Expense Claims Team, 3rd Floor, Union Street, for authorisation before payment is made via salary.

8 Spoiled food, due to equipment or electrical failure

- 8.1 Compensation can be claimed for spoiled food (including raw ingredients); the most common causes being:
 - Breakdown of ovens whilst the meal is being cooked.
 - Prolonged loss of electrical power to, or mechanical faults in freezers/refrigerators, resulting in disposal of foods on hygiene grounds.
- 8.2 In such circumstances a claim against the Brigade may arise. It will be treated as an ex-gratia claim for loss of or damage to food purchased by the station mess, as covered by the provisions of Section Nd. 1 of the Brigade's Staff Code.

Procedure for claiming

- 8.3 The mess manager shall notify the manager in charge immediately the loss is identified. The manager in charge should investigate the causes of the loss and, where appropriate, arrange for repairs to be undertaken. The damaged food is to be inspected by the station commander or duty group commander and agreed to be unfit for consumption, and then disposed of. A list of

the condemned food should be produced during inspection and certified by the group commander.

- 8.4 A claim should be drawn up by the mess manager detailing the spoiled food, its costs and the circumstances in which it became unfit. The claim should attach receipts from the mess club accounts for the food disposed of, or the receipts for the replacement food and be passed to the station commander.
- 8.5 The station commander should check the details of the claim and, if satisfied, forward it to the HR Services section for consideration, together with a Memo Form supporting the claim and detailing what steps have been taken to correct the causes of the food becoming unfit (repair order numbers, new procedures, etc), plus a certified list of food declared unfit by the inspecting group commander.
- 8.6 HR Services will consider the claim under the Brigade's ex-gratia rules. The claim will be examined and if the circumstances justify an ex-gratia payment the relevant HR Services manager will approve an appropriate amount and notify the claimant.
- 8.7 If a payment is approved it will be coded to ex-gratia payments, and the Area Admin team will be requested by HR Services to pay the relevant amount to the station mess fund from the Area petty cash float.

9 Relocation expenses

Allowance entitlement

- 9.1 Relocation expenses may be payable where an officer is ordered by an assistant commioner or above in writing to move home by the Brigade (regardless of whether place of duty is changed) and therefore has to:
 - Sell their existing residence and purchase another.
 - Purchase a residence having moved from provided accommodation.
 - Move from rented accommodation to different rented accommodation.
- 9.2 There is no requirement for officers on the flexible duty system to have their home at a set location. They will be informed by the Brigade of the area in which they are required to perform their standby call-out duty and whether their home is acceptable to the Commissioner as a standby/call-out base. If their home is not acceptable as a standby/call-out base, officers are expected to provide an acceptable standby/call-out base at their own expense, but can apply to the Establishment & Performance Team (EPT) to use Brigade camp-out facilities.
- 9.3 If officers are ordered in writing to move home they may be entitled to benefit from the provisions detailed in paragraph 9.6 – 9.14 in respect of one move, subject to the Brigade being satisfied that the expenditure referred to has been necessarily and actually incurred.
- 9.4 Relocation expenses are not normally payable when an officer moves home after accepting an invitation to join the Brigade and thereby having resigned from another Brigade. Payment of relocation expenses in these circumstances must be approved in advance at Director level in consultation with the Assistant Director People Services.
- 9.5 Relocation expenses are not payable in cases of voluntary transfer from one brigade to another.

Scale of allowance

- 9.6 Officers who move home in the circumstances set out in paragraph 9.1 – 9.5 shall receive the following, subject to the Brigade being satisfied that the expenditure referred to has been necessarily incurred.
- 9.7 The cost of removal of furniture and effects from the old home to the new, including insurance of goods in transit. Reimbursement will be based on the lowest of three competitive tenders (officers can engage contractors of their choice if they pay the difference in cost between this and the lowest tender).
- 9.8 Travelling expenses and subsistence allowances for officers and their immediate dependants from their old home to the new at public transport rates (standard fare if rail) or the mileage rate specified in Appendix 1 paragraph 2(a) if the whole family travels by car, whichever is actually incurred.
- 9.9 Any necessary cost of storage of furniture and effects for a period not exceeding 12 months, where a move cannot be made immediately, reimbursement to be equal to the amount of the lowest of three competitive tenders (officers can engage contractors of their choice if they pay the difference in cost between this and the lowest tender).
- 9.10 The legal, mortgage, house agents, and survey fees involved by the sale and/or purchase and for one unsuccessful bona fide attempt to sell and/or purchase. Stamp duty is not payable. These fees may be reimbursed for any subsequent unsuccessful bona fide attempt to sell and/or purchase, at the discretion of the Brigade.
- 9.11 Where house agents or auctioneers are not engaged, reimbursement of the actual advertising costs incurred up to the maximum figure set out in Appendix 1 paragraph 2(b).
- 9.12 Where a tenancy is involved, reimbursement of the actual cost involved up to the maximum figure set out in Appendix 1 paragraph 2(c).
- 9.13 A disturbance/settling in allowance related to the particular circumstances of the case and the expenditure necessarily and actually incurred of an amount not exceeding the figure set out in Appendix 1 paragraph 2(d). (Such expenditure may include, for example: alteration or replacement of curtains, fixtures and fittings; relaying of floor covering; conversion and installation of electrical appliances; losses incurred on school fees or uniforms; travel season tickets etc).
- 9.14 Where officers are unable to move into the new accommodation by the date on which the order of the Brigade takes effect and therefore have to find temporary accommodation, they shall be reimbursed the actual cost incurred on board and lodging to a maximum of the figure set out in Appendix 1 paragraph 2(e). The period of payment shall be for 13 weeks or until the officer moves into the permanent accommodation, whichever is the sooner. The period of 13 weeks may be extended in exceptional circumstances.
- 9.15 Receipts and/or evidence of relevant expenditure, and proof of relocation, will be required for claims made under the terms of this policy.

Procedure for claiming

- 9.16 If you consider you may be eligible to make a claim under the terms of this policy and/or want to know what expenses you can claim, then you are advised first to check with the Head of HR Services. You are advised not to commit to any expense without first clarifying your entitlement to claim.

- 9.17 Any claim for reimbursement of relocation expenses is to be submitted, together with receipts or other evidence of such expenditure, to the Head of HR Services. Claims must be signed by the individual's line manager (no lower than DAC).
- 9.18 All claims will be checked by the Head of HR Services to ensure compliance with the policy and that the expenditure has been necessarily and actually incurred.
- 9.19 Claims that are deemed satisfactory by the Head of HR Services will be forwarded to the AC Fire Stations for final approval.
- 9.20 Once approved by AC Fire Stations, the claim will be paid to the individual in the next available pay run.
- 9.21 The tax-free limit for claims is currently £8,000, amounts claimed in excess of this figure, will be taxable.

10 Records

- 10.1 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 file. Personal data shall be processed in accordance with Policy number 351 – Data protection and privacy policy.

11 Help and support

- 11.1 Please contact the HR Helpdesk on extension 89100 option 3 and by email to IT.HR@london-fire.gov.uk or Payroll by email to payforms@london-fire.gov.uk.
- 11.2 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.
- 11.3 The Brigade invites your engagement so that it can learn 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 – Subsistence (and other food related allowances), relocation expenses and inclement weather allowance

1 Subsistence

(a) Breakfast	£7.87
(b) Lunch	£10.50
(c) Evening meal	£19.65

2 Relocation expenses

(a) Car mileage rate	45p per mile
(b) Advertising costs	£279.77
(c) Tenancy costs	£335.73
(d) Disturbance allowance	£1,655
(e) Lodging allowance	£111.83 per week

Food related allowances

3 General messing

(a) Standby payment to station mess	96p		
(b) Spoiled meals –payment to station mess funds	86p	Lunch/supper	
	42p	Breakfast	
(c) Mess not in operation	£4.14	per person per day	

4 Special conditions

(a) Members arriving early at their place of work.	£1.40	Breakfast
	£2.80	Lunch/supper
(b) Members remaining at their place of work between shifts while off duty without working overtime	£19.64	Night shift
	£11.91	Day shift
(c) Members remaining at their place of work between shifts while off duty and performing overtime for part of the intervening shift	£14.72	Night shift (1-3 hours overtime)
	£9.83	Day shift (4-6 hours overtime)
	£8.07	(1-3 hours overtime)

Document history

Assessments

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

EIA	22/04/24	SDIA	L – 09/02/26	HSWIA	09/02/26	RA	n/a
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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
Page 10	Subsistence rates increased with effect from 01/04/2024.	21/05/2024
Page 9, para 10.1	Records Services details added.	
Page 9, para 11.3	Staff Suggestion scheme access details added.	
Throughout	Reviewed against 2025 Grey Book 7 th edition.	15/05/2025
Page 10, para 3	Reference to catering staff removed.	20/06/2025
Page 11	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