

FBU Southern Region New Members Welcome Pack



Handbook for New Members

Welcome To The Fire Brigades Union

The FBU is the sole representative of Firefighters and Control Staff on the National Joint Council which agrees your pay and conditions of service. Our union was started in 1918 and has been representing Firefighters and Control Staff since that time.

We represent your interests both at a national level and locally within your brigade.

Members are the most important element of the FBU structure and each FBU member is a member of a branch. This is usually at your place of work such as a fire station or within a control room.

All Branches in a Brigade meet at the Brigade Committee to put forward the views of the members of a Branch.

Each Brigade within our region then in turn meets several times a year to form the Regional Committee.

Each Regional Committee has Regional Officials and an Executive Council Member who puts forward the views of the region to the National Executive, the Executive Council.

In addition to the regional structure there are the equivalent of these structures to represent Control Staff, Officers, Retained Firefighters, Women, Gay and Lesbian members and members from Black and Ethnic Minorities.

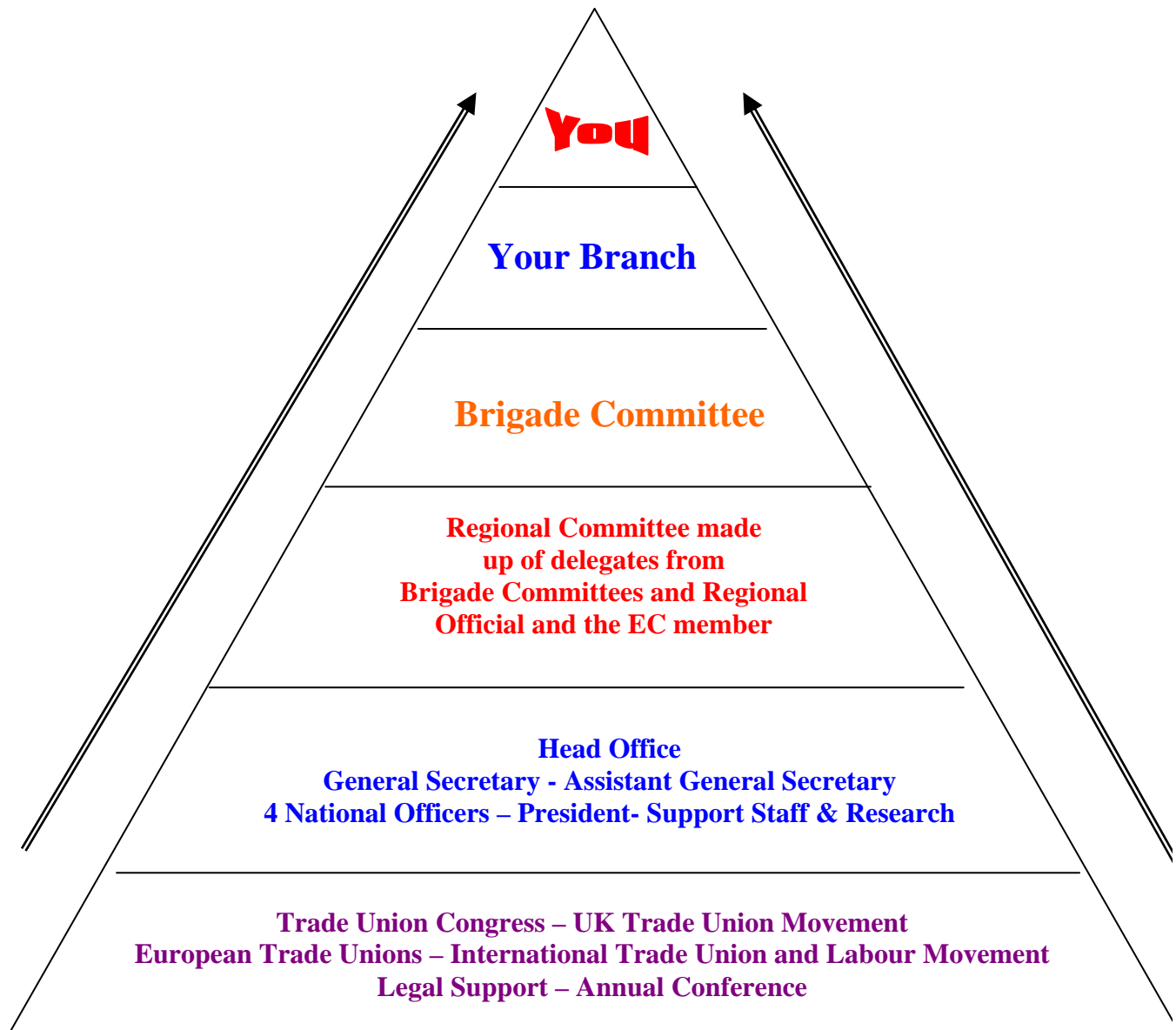
Each year there is a conference where representatives from the whole of the UK meet to debates and discuss issues concerning members and to agree the best way forward improving your conditions of service, pay, and the service we give the public.

The FBU is NOT affiliated to any political party and makes no contribution to any national party. We lobby each and every party on behalf of all members and negotiate directly with Government departments and ministers on members behalf.

Welcome to the FBU – Protecting Your Conditions of Service



The FBU Structure



The individual member has a support network consisting of the Branch and Brigade Committees. The Regional Committee and the Executive Council and also our legal services provided by the largest and most successful firm of employment lawyers in Britain.

As part of the wider Trade Union movement the FBU also has the support and assistance of millions of other workers and their combined knowledge and skills both in the UK and across the world.



Individual Members

Ours is a democratic Union. As an FBU Member you have a duty to attend Branch meetings regularly and to participate at Branch level to ensure the Union's policies are adhered to and your voice is heard.

There is no pressure or requirement to become an official in the Union but many firefighters and control staff do at some point in their career and the experience helps give an insight into how the fire service functions as well as how industrial relations work.

Your Branch

Your Branch consists of individual members such as yourself and officials who run the branch to provide you with the services of experienced representatives. The Branch is the most important unit in the FBU. It is where individuals debate and agree the best way forwards for improving local conditions and settling problems which arise in the workplace.

Applications for membership are dealt with at Branch Level although new members are often signed into the FBU prior to attending training school.

The Branch is the place where nominations for elections take place and also where delegates to the Brigade Committee are agreed. The Branch also affiliates to the local Trades Council to meet with and support other workers.

Your Branch will elect officials to help members. These include electing a Chair, a Secretary and a Health and Safety Rep. Other posts may also be required depending on the size of the Branch.

Members just like you have submitted resolutions to their Branch which have been agreed by the Brigade Committee and taken to the Annual Conference. Some of these have led to changes in the law as well as how the FBU operates. Individual members should never forget how important they are and attendance at regular Branch Meetings ensures democracy is maintained and your views are acted upon. A Branch on a shift station may also have Watch Representatives on the Branch.

Your Brigade Committee

Your Brigade Committee consists of a delegate from each of the Branches as well as delegates from each of the sections in your Brigade. Additionally the Brigade Committee will include the Brigade Secretary and Chair, Brigade Membership Secretary and the Health and Safety Rep. There may also be a minute secretary of other officials the Branch decide they need to function efficiently.

- ✚ meet regularly (at least once a quarter) to discuss issues affecting the Members and the Union
- ✚ invite Regional and National Officials to address the meetings on Union matters and current issues



- + submit motions, reports and recommendations for consideration and necessary action by Regional Committee
- + report to the Regional Committee on all matters dealt with by local negotiating
- + ensure adequate representation for Officer Members, Retained Members, Control Members, Gay & Lesbian Members, Black & Ethnic Minority Members and Women Members
- + decide upon items for inclusion on the agenda for Annual Conference
- + consider amendments on motions on the preliminary agenda for Annual Conference
- + appoint delegates to Annual Conference

In addition to the Branch and Brigade Committees you are supported by a Regional Committee.

Your Regional Committee

This comprises of one delegate from each Brigade, the sectional officials such as the Officers Rep and the Regional Officials and Executive Council Member

Executive Council Member
Regional Chair
Regional Secretary
Regional Treasurer
Minute Secretary
Bucks Delegate
Oxfordshire Delegate
Hampshire Delegate
Berkshire Delegate
Isle of Wight Delegate
Education Officer
Fairness at Work Rep
Health & Safety Rep
Women's Rep
Black and Minority Members Rep
Gay and Lesbian Members Rep
Control Staff Rep
Officers Rep
Retained Rep

Observers may also attend the regional meeting but may not speak or vote. They may attend if the Chair agrees to a request.





The FBU's National Organisation

Your Union is divided into 13 regions:

Region 1	Scotland: Strathclyde, Lothian & Borders, Grampian, Fife, Highlands & Islands, Dumfries & Galloway, Central and Tayside
Region 2	Northern Ireland
Region 3	Tyne & Wear, Cleveland, Durham, Northumberland
Region 4	West Yorkshire, North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, Humberside
Region 5	Greater Manchester (GMC), Lancashire, Cumbria, Isle of Man, Merseyside, Cheshire
Region 6	Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire
Region 7	Hereford & Worcester, West Midlands, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Shropshire
Region 8	Wales: North Wales, Mid & West Wales and South Wales
Region 9	Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire, Essex, Norfolk, Suffolk
Region 10	London
Region 11	Kent, Surrey, East Sussex, West Sussex
Region 12	Buckinghamshire, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Oxfordshire, Berkshire
Region 13	Avon, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Somerset, Devon, Cornwall, Dorset

The Executive Council

It is the responsibility of the Executive Council to run the Union and implement the policies made by Conference. The Executive Council comprises of one elected Official from each Region and Section. Executive Council Meetings are Chaired by the President who is elected by the membership of the Union. The Vice-President and Treasurer are elected from the Executive Council by the membership and remain EC members. All EC members, the President and the National Treasurer are lay officials. This means that they remain employed by the Fire Service that they work for and they carry out FBU work in addition to their normal work.

Full-time Officials are employed by the FBU are the

- ✚ General Secretary
- ✚ Assistant General Secretary
- ✚ National Officer (Legal, Health & Safety, Pensions and AIF)
- ✚ National Officer (Equality, Elections and Retained)
- ✚ National Officer (Political & Education)
- ✚ National Officer (IT, Staff, Conference and Sections)

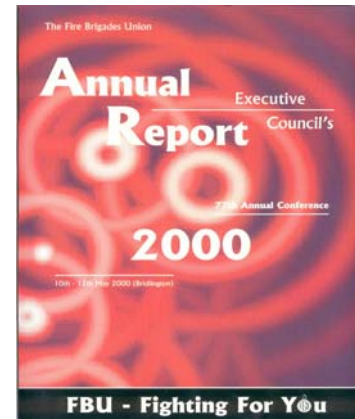
All the above full-time Officials are former uniformed members of the Fire Service who once elected have to resign from their Brigades to devote all their time to serving members like you.



FBU Annual Conference

Annual Conference is the policy making body of the Fire Brigades Union.

- ✚ Conference is attended by delegates from all Brigades the actual number depending on how large the Brigade is. So London for example have more delegates than the Isle of Wight but all Brigades may submit exactly the same number of resolutions on behalf of their members.
- ✚ The Executive Council submit an annual report to the conference. The annual report summarises the activity of the Union since the last Annual Conference and it must be agreed by delegates.
- ✚ Every three years the Rules of the Union are revised at Annual Conference this being a Rules Revision Conference and an extra day is set to ensure all the additional business can be dealt with.
- ✚ From the decisions made at Annual Conference, the Executive Council are given direction on how to proceed with the aims and objectives of the FBU.



Sections within the FBU

Officers' National Committee, (ONC).

The ONC comprises of an elected officer member from each region plus the elected Executive Council Member for officers

- ✚ through the Executive Council member, the ONC advises the Executive Council on matters affecting Officer members, (Station Manager and above)
- ✚ the ONC negotiates at a national level on conditions of service specifically relating to Officers

Control Staff National Committee, (CSNC).

The CSNC comprises of an elected control member from each Region plus the elected Executive Council Member for control staff in addition to a Secretary and Chair.

- ✚ through the Executive Council Member, the CSNC advises the Executive Council on matters affecting Control Staff Members
- ✚ the CSNC negotiates at a national level on Control Staff conditions of service

Retained National Committee

The Retained National Committee comprises of an elected officer member from each region plus the elected Executive Council Member for Retained members



- ✚ through the Executive Council Member, the Retained National Committee will advise the Executive Council of matters that affect the Retained membership.
- ✚ the Retained National Committee has its own newsletter entitled '*Alerter*' which is distributed to all Retained Branches.

Black, Ethnic & Minority Members

BEAMM was organised initially to help members who were subjected to wholly unacceptable racism and discrimination in the workplace. Today BEAMM is an integral part of the FBU's structure.

- ✚ BEAMM comprises of an elected Official from each Region plus the elected Executive Council Member for black and ethnic minority members
- ✚ through the Executive Council Member, BEAMM will advise the Executive Council of matters that affect the ethnic minority membership.
- ✚ BEAMM has its own newsletter entitled '*Advisor*' which can be obtained by contacting BEAMM Reps.
- ✚ Contact numbers for BEAMM reps can be obtained via Regional Office and on the regional web site.

National Women's Committee

The NWC represents the interests of women members of the FBU both on fire stations and in Control Rooms.

- ✚ The National Women's Committee comprises of a representative from each Region, a Secretary and Chair to the Committee and an Executive Council member
- ✚ The Secretary, Chair and Executive Council Member are elected by women members
- ✚ The NWC has its own newsletter entitled "*Siren*"
- ✚ Contact numbers for the NWC can be obtained via Regional Office or from the regional web site

Gay & Lesbian Committee

Gay, Lesbian and bi-sexual members are represented by the G&L committee if they wish to join. As with the other sections there is no additional cost to you as a member.

- ✚ The Gay & Lesbian Committee comprises of a representative from each Region, a Secretary and Chair to the Committee and an Executive Council member
- ✚ The Secretary, Chair and Executive Council Member are elected by G&L members
- ✚ The G&L has representation with full voting rights at Brigade, Region and EC level
- ✚ The G&L has its own newsletter entitled "*Flagship*"
- ✚ Contact numbers for the G&L reps can be obtained via Regional Office



Internal Union Discipline

The FBU has an internal disciplinary procedure for dealing with offences under our Rule Book.

Some of the offences covered by the rule book include:

- ✚ Acts in any way prejudicial to the interests of the Union.
- ✚ Discriminates, harasses or bullies another person.
- ✚ Wrongly or fraudulently receives or misapplies funds of the Union
- ✚ Acts contrary to or fails to carry out instructions of the Executive Council
- ✚ Acts contrary to or fails to carry out or comply with the policies and rules of the Union

If you believe that another Member has breached Union rules then you should write to the Regional Secretary setting out the details of why you believe an offence has been committed.

An investigation and a hearing may follow and, if proven, the Member may be reprimanded, fined or expelled from the Union

Fairness At Work

The FBU commitment to Fairness at Work is firm and unequivocal. The FBU exists to try and make sure that all Members are protected and treated fairly in the Fire Service. This includes not only Members wages and conditions of service but also recruitment, training, promotion and the way that we are all treated on a daily basis –by both managers and colleagues at work. Everyone is entitled to fair access to employment and fair treatment once in employment. The FBU will work with the Brigade to ensure that Fairness at Work becomes a reality.

Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment

Discrimination, bullying and harassment is not tolerated by the FBU or indeed your Fire Service. It is not difficult to identify discrimination, bullying and harassment. It is behaviour which is unwanted and which offends and undermines the dignity of men and women at work.

The FBU policy document “All Different All Equal” contained in this pack clearly sets out the FBUs commitment and strategy when dealing with this behaviour and you should ensure that you are familiar with its contents. A copy is also available on your Branch.

Legal Representation

The FBU provides a free legal service to Members through Thompsons Solicitors who deal with Employment Tribunals, Personal Injury Claims, pension and medical issues, discrimination, and any other issue which requires legal assistance. Assistance is also given in non-fire service issues such as divorce, making a will etc. Your officials will provide details of how advice in such circumstances can be obtained.



Accident, Injury and Death Benefit Fund

The Accident, Injury and Death Benefit Fund provides financial help for Members who are off work having suffered an injury through accident. Full details of the Fund can be obtained from your officials along with a claim form should you need it.

Political Fund

The political fund is used for a range of activities from printing posters to stop the closure of fire stations to organising demonstrations against job losses. The political fund helps protect your job and your conditions of service. Despite its name it is not money directed to any political party.

Your details:	
Union Membership Number	
Brigade Officials	
Regional Office contacts	01494 513034 web site: www.fbusouthern.com
National Web Site containing contact details	www.fbu.org.uk

Useful Numbers

Stress Helpline: Confidential stress and support hotline: 0800 783 4778

Lines are open 24 hours a day, Have your membership number above ready

Legal advice on a personal matter: Free legal helpline 0808 100 6061

8am-8pm Monday-Friday Have your membership number above ready

YOUR FIRE BRIGADES UNION

PROTECTING MEMBERS

PROTECTING THE PUBLIC