

Phase 2: Recruitment and Retention

Please complete this template and submit through the link on our website at: <http://paycommission.gov.ie/submissions/>

Please include any additional relevant documentation relating to recruitment and retention as a separate attachment.

Submissions may alternatively be sent to the postal address below to arrive by due date:

Public Service Pay Commission,
St. Stephen's Green House,
Earlsfort Terrace,
Dublin 2.

Name of organisation making this submission	SIPTU, Local Authority Sector
Contact details	Liberty Hall, Dublin 1
Date of submission	28th November 2017

Submissions should be made **by 5.30 pm on Wednesday the 29th of November.**

Queries in relation to completing this template can be sent to info@paycommission.gov.ie

Please note that all submissions and comments received will be subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2014 and that all submissions will be published on the Public Service Pay Commission's website following publication of the report.

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Part I - 1 - Are there currently recruitment issues for this sector? Please indicate which grades are experiencing the most significant difficulties.

Grade Title
Yes, Retained Firefighters

Please expand where necessary

Part 1 - 2 - Please provide evidence to support the recruitment difficulties identified?

(E.g. number of competitions, number of applications to each competition, number of offers for each competition, number of acceptances/refusals to each competition, etc.)

There has been minimum of 50 competitions across the Local Authority Sector to date since the start of 2017, to fill multiple vacant Retained Firefighter positions in fire stations throughout the country.

Several Local Authorities have had to run multiple competitions during 2017 due to ongoing difficulties in recruiting and retention of Retained Firefighters.

Several Local Authorities have ongoing recruitment difficulties as detailed under Part 1 Recruitment - Q3.

However, the major reason giving rise to the ongoing difficulties in recruiting and retaining Retained Firefighters is the requirement to both live and work within a 5 minute radius of the fire station, while being paid a modest Retainer and any fire fees, in return for 24/7 cover on a 365 day basis.

This in turn means, that Retained Firefighters are required to seek additional employment/income, which is largely not available within the required 5 minute radius in rural areas throughout the country. This in turn means that Retained Firefighters are frequently forced to leave the fire service in order to seek employment outside of the 5 minute radius.

Part I - 3 - Please provide evidence of any relevant initiatives to address these difficulties (if applicable)?

Retained Firefighter recruitment competitions have been advertised across most if not all Local Authorities. The below information details examples of competitions ran in 2017 seeking to fill numerous retained firefighter posts, including multiple firefighter vacancies in individual fire stations.

County Kerry Job Vacancies ADDED - 25/11/2017 – Kerry County Council Fire Service is currently looking to recruit Retained Firefighters in the following Station Caherciveen, Castleisland, Killorglin

County Galway Job Vacancies ADDED - 24/11/2017 – Galway County Council Fire Service is currently looking to recruit Retained Firefighters in the following Station Mountbellew

County Offaly Job Vacancies ADDED - 22/11/2017 – Offaly County Council Fire Service is currently looking to recruit Retained Firefighters in the following Stations Birr, Clara, Edenderry, Ferbane, Tullamore

County Galway Job Vacancies ADDED - 2/11/2017 – Galway County Council Fire Service sought to recruit Retained Firefighters in the following Station, Galway City

County Waterford Job Vacancies ADDED - 3/10/2017 – Waterford County Council Fire Service sought to recruit Retained Firefighters in the following Stations, Kilmacthomas, Dunmore East, Lismore

County Donegal Job Vacancies ADDED - 21/9/2017 – Donegal County Council Fire Service sought to recruit Retained Firefighters in the following Stations, Buncrana, Carndonagh, Stranorlar, Dungloe, Falcarragh

County Monaghan Job Vacancies ADDED - 14/9/2017 – Monaghan County Council Fire Service sought to recruit Retained Firefighters in the following Station, Monaghan Town

County Clare Job Vacancies ADDED - 14/9/2017 – Clare County Council Fire Service sought to Recruit Retained Firefighters in the following Stations, Kilkee, Kilrush, Shannon

County Westmeath Job Vacancies ADDED - 1/9/2017 – Westmeath County Council Fire Service sought to Recruit Retained Firefighters in the following Station, Castlepollard

County Cork Job Vacancies ADDED - 18/8/2017 – Cork County Council Fire Service sought to recruit Retained Firefighters for the following station, Ballincollig, Kinsale, Crosshaven

County Waterford Job Vacancies ADDED - 15/8/2017 – Waterford Fire Service sought to recruit Retained Firefighters in the following Station, Dunmore East

County Louth ACFO Job Vacancy ADDED - 8/8/2017 – Louth County Council Fire Service sought to recruit an Assistant Chief Fire Officer

County Louth Job Vacancies ADDED - 8/8/2017 – Louth County Council Fire Service sought to recruit Retained Firefighters for the following stations, Ardee, Carlingford, Dunleer, Dundalk, Drogheda

Cork County Job Vacancies ADDED - 11/7/2017 – Cork County Council Fire Service sought to recruit Retained Firefighters in the following Stations, Kinsale, Crosshaven, Bandon, Millstreet, Mallow, Cobh

County Longford Job Vacancies ADDED - 17/6/2017 – Longford County Fire Service sought to recruit Retained Firefighters for the following Stations, Longford, Lanesboro

County Tipperary Job Vacancy ADDED - 15/6/2017 – Tipperary County Council Fire Service sought to recruit Retained Firefighters for the following Station, Clonmel

County Galway Job Vacancy ADDED - 10/6/2017 – Galway County Council Fire Service sought to recruit a Retained Firefighter for the following Station An Cheathrú Rua

County Kildare Job Vacancy ADDED - 6/6/2017 – Kildare County Council Fire Service sought to recruit a Station Officer in the following Station Newbridge

County Monaghan Job Vacancies ADDED - 27/4/2017 – Monaghan County Council Fire Service sought to recruit Retained Firefighters in the following Stations Monaghan Town, Carrickmacross

Cork County Job Vacancies ADDED - 6/4/2017 – Cork County Council Fire Service sought to recruit Retained Firefighters in the following Station Ballincollig

County Tipperary Job Vacancies ADDED - 29/3/2017 – Tipperary County Council Fire Service sought to recruit Retained Firefighters in the following Station, Borrisokane, Cloughjordan, Newport, Roscrea

County Offaly Job Vacancies ADDED - 29/3/2017 – Offaly County Council Fire Service sought to recruit Retained Firefighters in the following Station, Ferbane

Cork County Job Vacancies ADDED - 23/3/2017 – Cork County Council Fire Service sought to recruit Retained Firefighters in the following Station, Dunmanway

County Kildare Job Vacancies ADDED - 21/3/2017 – Kildare County Council Fire Service sought to recruit Retained Firefighters in the following Station, Leixlip

County Galway Job Vacancies ADDED - 13/3/2017 – Galway County Council Fire Service sought to recruit Retained Firefighters in the following Station, Loughrea

County Wicklow Job Vacancies ADDED - 6/3/2017 – Wicklow County Council Fire Service sought to recruit Retained Firefighters in the following Stations, Bray, Greystones, Blessington, Baltinglass, Carnew, Tinahely

County Cork Job Vacancies ADDED - 27/2/2017 – Cork County Council Fire Service sought to recruit Retained Firefighters in the following Stations, Crosshaven, Millstreet, Clonakilty

County Galway Job Vacancy ADDED - 16/2/2017 – Galway County Council Fire Service sought to recruit an ACFO / Assistant Chief Fire Officer

County Kilkenny Job Vacancies ADDED - 16/2/2017 – Kilkenny County Council Fire Service sought to recruit Retained Firefighters in the following Station Thomastown

County Laois Job Vacancies ADDED - 7/2/2017 – Laois County Council Fire Service sought to recruit Retained Firefighters in the following Stations Portlaoise, Rathdowney, Durrow, Abbyleix

County Monaghan Job Vacancies ADDED - 7/2/2017 – Monaghan County Council Fire Service sought to recruit Retained Firefighters in the following Station Castleblayney

County Tipperary Job Vacancies ADDED - 25/1/2017 – Tipperary Council sought to recruit retained firefighters.

County Cork Job Vacancies ADDED - 23/1/2017 – Cork County Council Fire Service sought to recruit Retained Firefighters in the following Stations Bandon, Millstreet, Carrigaline, Ballincollig

County Louth Job Vacancies ADDED - 20/1/2017 – Louth County Council Fire Service sought to recruit Retained Firefighters in the following Stations Ardee, Carlingford, Drogheda, Dunleer

County Galway Job Vacancies ADDED - 20/1/2017 – Galway County Council Fire Service sought to recruit Retained Firefighters in the following Stations Clifden, Athenry

County Sligo Job Vacancies ADDED - 20/1/2017 – Sligo Fire Service sought to recruit Retained Firefighters in the following Stations, Ballymote, Enniscrone, Sligo City, Tubbercurry

County Galway Job Vacancies ADDED - 6/1/2017 – Galway County Council Fire Service sought to recruit Retained Firefighters in the following Station Gort

Waterford City Job Vacancies ADDED - 4/1/2017 – Waterford City sought to recruit retained firefighters.

Part 1 - 4 - Please provide evidence of the outcomes of the initiatives described in part 1-Q.3

(E.g. change in the numbers of applications, change in the number or percentage of acceptances, change in the number or percentage of refusals etc.)

The details of any initiatives implemented by any Local Authority to overcome these issues, including the 5 minute radius issue are not available to SIPTU.

In a number of counties, recruitment issues persisted, requiring further competitions for retained firefighter posts during 2017. Details of those competitions are provided in the information provided under Part 1 Recruitment - Q3.

The details of numbers of applications received by the Local Authorities are not available to SIPTU at this time. Similarly, details on numbers of unsuccessful applications etc are not available to SIPTU at this time.

Part 1 - 5 - Please supply any relevant data, including trend data (from 2007 to 2017), that you may have; such as staff numbers, turnover rates*, staff vacancies, age profiles and details of recruitment campaigns, etc. from 2007 onwards.**

** Turnover is number of leavers in year x divided by average number employed in year x (For example the number of leavers in the acute/general Directors of Nursing grade in 2007 divided by the average number of acute/general Directors of Nursing grade in 2007)*

***Vacancy is where a position has been advertised and not successfully filled*

In this regard the specific details are not available on a Local Authority basis. However, as can be evidenced by the referred-to advertisements as exemplified in the details provided under Part 1 Recruitment - Q3, the issues of retention & recruitment are systemic across the Local Authority Sector.

Again, as stated previously, there are no details available of any Local Authority seeking to address the issue of the turnover/vacancy issues arising from the 5 minute radius issue.

Part II - 1 - Are there currently retention issues for this sector? Please indicate which grades are experiencing the most significant difficulties.

Grade Title
Retained Firefighters

Please expand where necessary

Part II - 2 - *Please supply evidence to support the retention difficulties identified?*

(E.g. Data on vacancy rates, data on turnover rates, data on leaver reason, data on joiner reason etc.)

Please see Part 1 Recruitment - Q. 3 which includes the relevant data regarding the need for Local Authorities to run repeat competitions because of the difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff into the grade and inability for staff to obtain a sustainable living in rural ireland within the 5 minute radius, indicated by the regularity attached to multiple vacancies within the Firefighter grade, requiring ongoing competitions on a multi-annual basis across the Sector.

Part II - 3 - Please provide evidence of any relevant initiatives to address these difficulties (if applicable)?

This information is not available to SIPTU but, notwithstanding that this a singular submission by SIPTU, the LGMA have acknowledged that a 'recruitment & retention' problem exists across the Retained Fire and Rescue Service as as late as Monday 27th November 2017.

SIPTU is not aware of any such initiatives being undertaken by the Local Authorities.

Part II - 4 - Please provide evidence of the outcomes of the initiatives described in part II-Q.3

(E.g. Change in vacancy rates, change in turnover rates, change in reasons for employees joining/leaving, etc.)

This information is not presently available to SIPTU, however the ongoing rate of advertisement for vacant Retained Firefighter posts, frequently in the same stations, is a clear indicator of ongoing retention issues across the Sector.

Part III - 1 - Evidence of any impact of recruitment and retention difficulties on service provision:

(i.e. Data/analysis that clearly identifies impacts on service provision)

There is clear evidence that the minimum manning-levels in some Retained Fire and Rescue Stations are not being maintained, including Station closures, standing down of appliances, or undermanned appliances, with obvious heightened risk factors for the public who depend on the 'Service and for the Fire-fighters providing same.

This issue has been raised by SIPTU consistently with the LGMA over the last number of years and remains on the agenda as an outstanding issue.

Part III - 2 - Please provide evidence of labour market pressures from the private sector domestically or international organisations (if applicable)?

(E.g. Data/analysis on numbers of employees joining international employers in similar sectors, data/analysis on numbers of employees joining similar sectors in the domestic private sector, etc.)

As stated previously, the requirement to both live and work within a 5 minute radius presents ongoing difficulties in both recruiting and retention of Retained Firefighters.

The situation is further exacerbated on occasion by the Department of Social Protection, who have previously cited that the requirement to stay within the 5 minute radius disqualifies them from welfare payments on the basis that they cannot consider employment beyond the 5 minute radius.

Part III - 3 Other information relevant to the submission

There are a number of contributory issues placing pressure on the ability of Local Authorities to maintain Retained Firefighter manning levels across the Sector, such as:

- * Retirement Age - Retained Firefighters are seeking to extend their working life on a voluntary basis to age 60.
- * The lack of an adequate sick pay scheme
- * inability to take annual leave due to chronic undermanning
- * lack of progression opportunities beyond within the fire service
- * non recognition of firefighter service for the purposes of incremental credit within the Local Authority Sector
- *Rate of pay of annual leave etc.
- * Retained Firefighters are paid a modest Retainer whose earnings are supplemented by fire fees.
- * There have been issues with DSP, who have taken issue with welfare payments to Retained Firefighters who are required to live and work within a 5 minute radius of the fire station.