

## Covering absences of uniformed officers policy

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 Owner: **Head of HR Operations and Systems, People Services**  
 Responsible work team: **Policy, Pay and Reward**

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# 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy sets out the Brigade's arrangements of cover during periods of absence of uniformed officers.
- 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 Definitions

- **Competent:** - Is where you have successfully completed all elements of the development programme for a particular rank and been confirmed competent in that rank.
- **Development:** - Is where you are placed on a development programme, following success at the appropriate assessment centre, that may result you being confirmed as competent upon successful completion of the programme.
- **Acting Up and Temporary promotion** – Is where you undertake the duties of a higher rank. Acting up covers periods of 1-21 days, temporary promotion covers periods of 22 days or more. In all cases the temporary promotion/acting up will be a maximum of one rank. For StARS admin purposes when an individual is performing acting up or temporary promotion, they will be shown in both roles separated by '/', and as on development in the higher role. Temporary promotion/acting up will be paid at the competent rate of pay in the higher rank for individuals acting up/temporarily promoted to leading firefighter/sub officer/station officer.
- **Suitably assessed** – Is where you are competent and have been assessed through an approved process as suitable to undertake temporary promotion to the next rank.

# 3 Covering absence of officers at operational stations

## Covering at operational stations – firefighter/leading firefighter

- 3.1 Competent firefighters who have been suitably assessed will have the opportunity to act up either (a) at their own station only, or (b) also at other stations, to cover the absence of a leading firefighter.
- 3.2 Under normal circumstances it will not be necessary for a firefighter to act up to leading firefighter in place of a leading firefighter who is acting up to sub officer. At one appliance stations the Brigade will seek to maintain the position of two officers on a watch. This will be achieved by the acting up of a firefighter from within the watch, or by sending in a standby leading firefighter or temporary leading firefighter. Where this is not possible the appliance will remain on the run with one officer.

### **Covering at operational stations – leading firefighter/sub officer/station officer**

- 3.3 At single appliance stations a suitably assessed competent leading firefighter will act up in the absence of their sub officer, for a minimum of 21 duty shifts in a rolling 12 month period.
- 3.4 At multi appliance stations a suitably assessed competent leading firefighter will act up, only when **both** the station officer and the sub officer are absent, for a minimum of 21 duty shifts in a rolling 12 month period. Where there is more than one suitably assessed competent leading firefighter available the station commander should ensure a fair system is established to identify which leading firefighter will act up.
- 3.5 A competent sub officer will be required to act up to station officer to cover any shortfall either at their own station or any other station.

### **Temporary promotion at operational stations**

- 3.6 Temporary promotion will be used, where possible, to cover absences which result from:
- Unfilled posts.
  - Sickness certified by a doctor for a period in excess of 21 consecutive days.
  - Attendance at training courses or detached duty for periods in excess of 21 consecutive days.
- 3.7 A sub officer can be required to undertake temporary promotion and may volunteer to undertake temporary promotion providing they are suitably assessed as competent.
- 3.8 EPT will maintain a register of staff who have expressed an interest in undertaking temporary promotion.

### **Appliance availability**

- 3.9 Where the absence of an officer would result in an appliance or station being taken off the run or where brigade wide operational officer cover is compromised, the use of acting up, temporary promotion, pre-arranged overtime<sup>1</sup>, standbys or redeployments will be considered to cover this need. See the joint Agreement in relation to redeployment of appliances (2018). Decisions regarding appliance availability and officer cover are made by the officer of the day/Control Operational Resourcing and Event (CORE) team.
- 3.10 Whilst the leading firefighter on development or temporary leading firefighter is awaiting the arrival of a standby officer they will have managerial responsibility for the station, the custody of the keys and ride in charge of the pump ladder until the arrival of the standby officer.

## **4 Covering absence of station commander to deputy assistant commissioner**

- 4.1 Short-term absences of station commanders, group commanders and deputy assistant commissioners, may be covered by additional duties. Short/long-term absences of group commanders and deputy assistant commissioners may be covered by the role below undertaking operational cover only in the higher role. Long-term absences of station commanders, group commanders and deputy assistant commissioners may be covered by temporary promotion.
- 4.2 Temporary promotion to cover posts of station commander to deputy assistant commissioner will take place for the reasons specified in paragraph 3.6 above when the absence continues or

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<sup>1</sup> In accordance with the Pre-arranged (determined) overtime policy, policy number 375.

vacancy remains unfilled for a period of over 21 days, notwithstanding paragraph 5.3 below. Temporary promotion to station and group commander are subject to assistant commissioner/head of service approval. For temporary promotion to deputy assistant commissioner the authorisation will be given by the Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operations.

- 4.3 Special circumstances - Temporary promotion for periods shorter than that indicated in 4.2 above may be approved in exceptional cases. This is where failure to temporarily fill a post immediately will result in a particular shortage of officer cover, leading to a decline in the effectiveness of the service. This could also be where specified work deadlines, inspections and targets, etc., will not be achieved and the consequences of this non achievement will be serious. Approval must be given by an assistant commissioner/head of service or above in such cases.

## **5 Selection procedure for temporary station commander, group commander and deputy assistant commissioner positions**

- 5.1 Personnel will be selected subject to their position in the current assessment process for the post in which the temporary position is available.
- 5.2 Where appropriate an assistant commissioner /head of service or above will take into account skills matching of individuals to positions.
- 5.3 Assistant commissioners/head of service or above may decide not to cover absences with temporary promotion, where they consider service delivery will not be impaired.

## **6 Temporary promotion to leading firefighter/sub officer/station officer specialist posts**

- 6.1 Temporary promotion to leading firefighter/sub officer/station officer specialist posts may take place in circumstances set out at paragraph 3.6 above.

## **7 Pay and conditions for temporary promotion**

- 7.1 Staff undertaking temporary promotion shall be entitled to the leave entitlement applicable to the rank performed pro-rata.
- 7.2 For all members of staff who have been temporarily promoted for a continuous period of less than 12 months, all payments and benefits associated with the performance of temporary promotion shall cease to be applicable during periods of sickness absence.
- 7.3 Staff who are temporarily promoted will continue to receive the applicable rate of pay for their rank during absence due to authorised leave (e.g. annual, special, maternity, maternity support and adoption) and leave for training courses.
- 7.4 Staff who have been temporarily promoted for a continuous period of 12 months or more will retain that temporary rank and will continue to receive the higher rate of pay for that rank if they are on short term sickness absence, i.e. 27 days or less.
- 7.5 Temporary promotion may be reviewed at any time.

## **8 Procedure for recording and authorisation of payments**

- 8.1 All acting up/temporary promotion of uniformed staff must be recorded on StARS and will be automatically collected by Payroll Services via StARS once authorised by the station commander

or Head of Section as appropriate. The monthly deadline for entry and authorisation is the 4<sup>th</sup> of each month, entries and authorisation after that will be paid in the following month.

- 8.2 Payments for acting up/temporary promotion for watch based staff will be calculated on a shift worked basis, i.e. for each shift worked on acting up/temporary promotion the additional payment will be the annual difference between the higher and substantive rates of pay divided by the number of normal working shifts in a year (182.5).

## **9 Records**

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

## **10 Help and support**

- 10.1 Please contact the Establishment and Performance Team by email to <mailto:EstablishmentandPerformanceTeam@london-fire.gov.uk>.
- 10.2 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](mailto:communications.team@london-fire.gov.uk) to discuss your needs and options.

## Document history

### Assessments

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

|     |          |      |              |       |          |    |     |
|-----|----------|------|--------------|-------|----------|----|-----|
| EIA | 29/04/24 | SDIA | L – 23/09/25 | HSWIA | 10/11/25 | RA | N/A |
|-----|----------|------|--------------|-------|----------|----|-----|

### 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 5, para 9.1<br>Page 5, para 10.2 | Data protection details added.<br>Access to alternative policy format details added. | 10/04/2024 |
| Page 6                                | Equality impact assessment date updated.                                             | 30/04/2024 |
| Page 5, para 9.1                      | Establishment and Performance Team details added.                                    | 28/05/2024 |
| Page 3, para 3.9                      | Reference to RMC changed to CORE team.                                               | 24/07/2025 |
| Page 6                                | Health, Safety and Welfare impact assessment date updated.                           | 11/11/2025 |
| Page 1<br>Page 2, para 2              | Owner details updated.<br>Reference to StARS display updated to include acting up.   | 21/08/2026 |

### Subject list

You can find this policy under the following subjects.

|            |           |
|------------|-----------|
| Absence    | Acting up |
| Deputising | Duties    |

### Freedom of Information Act exemptions

This policy/procedure has been securely marked due to:

| Considered by:<br>(responsible work team) | FOIA exemption | Security marking<br>classification |
|-------------------------------------------|----------------|------------------------------------|
|                                           |                |                                    |
|                                           |                |                                    |