



## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **THE ENTRY CRITERIA**

#### **What qualifications do I need to become a wholetime firefighter with Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service?**

You must have 5 GCSEs grade A\*-C / 9-4 including Maths and English language or equivalent. Please note that if they are equivalent, the equivalent to Maths and English language grade A\*-C / 9-4 must be included.

You will be required to provide your certificates as evidence of this during the recruitment process.

#### **How do I know if my qualifications meet the criteria?**

If you are unsure if your qualifications are equivalent to having 5 GCSEs A\*-C / 9-4 including Maths and English language, please contact an education provider or careers advisory service for clarification.

#### **Why will applicants need 5 GCSEs A\*-C / 9-4 when this has not been the case previously and we do not ask this of our on-call firefighters?**

The role of a wholetime firefighter is increasingly technical – IT equipment, understanding the science of fire behaviour, the mechanics of the wide ranging operational equipment we use etc – and we wanted to reflect this in our recruitment criteria to ensure we attract the right calibre of applicants.

As an organisation without multi-level entry we need to ensure we employ a broad range of staff; from those who will be content to remain as wholetime firefighters to those who will one day reach senior levels of command within the fire service. It is important therefore that we set our recruitment criteria in such a way that attracts people with the range of abilities required for the modern day fire and rescue service.

We do not insist on this for on-call firefighters as we appreciate that the role is different to that of the wholetime firefighter. The wholetime firefighter requires a broader range of skill sets than on-call firefighters due to the limitations of the time that can be spent on training and the limited opportunity to undertake specialist work/role.

#### **Is there an age limit?**

Although you can apply at the age of 17 years and 6 months you have to be at least 18 years of age before the swimming assessment stage of the process. There is no upper age limit for applications.

#### **Why is there a requirement for a driving licence?**

The four-watch shift system requires wholetime firefighters to provide cover on roster anywhere in the county at short notice. Therefore we have asked for a driving licence as part of the essential criteria.

#### **I am learning to drive at the moment, and have my test booked in a few months time. Can I still apply?**

In order to apply you must have a full and current driving licence that entitles you to drive in the UK without restrictions.

#### **Are there any height limits?**

There are no maximum or minimum height restrictions. Within the physical assessments undertaken as part of the selection process, candidates will be assessed on their ability to carry out key physical requirements of the role.

#### **What if I have a criminal conviction(s)?**

You are required to declare any convictions for offences that are not spent under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. This includes any offences dealt with by a court of law, HM Services disciplinary procedures and any driving offences.

**Do I have to be a British citizen?**

You can be of any nationality to apply, provided that you have the permanent right to remain without restriction in the UK. EU citizens are automatically eligible to apply.  
You will be required to supply evidence of your right to work in the UK during the recruitment process.

**Is it ok to have a tattoo or body piercing?**

In the interests of health and safety, all piercings must be removed before starting operational duty. Tattoos are acceptable providing they could not be deemed as offensive. Tattoos are automatically unacceptable if they are rude, crude, racist, sexist, sectarian, homophobic or violent.

**Why is there a requirement to swim in the criteria?**

All of our wholtime firefighters are in-water trained and those on wholtime stations are trained to level 3 and are expected to perform in-water rescues. We therefore need new recruits to be able to swim and be confident in water to the levels we have set in the essential criteria.

## THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

**Why have you limited applicants to those who permanently reside within 10 miles of the boundary of the county of Cambridgeshire as determined by Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service's mapping system?**

There are a number of reasons for this. We know we will be inundated with applications from people wanting to be a firefighter and as few fire and rescue services are recruiting wholtime firefighters at the moment, applications could come from anywhere in the country. We need to be able to try and limit the applications to make the recruitment process manageable to ensure we can process them fairly. Another important factor for us is that we want to retain the firefighters we recruit. It is a common occurrence for firefighters to train in one service and then transfer to their local fire service. This is frustrating when you have invested the time, money and effort into training and developing that individual. Therefore, by setting the criteria to those who reside within 10 miles of the boundary of the county of Cambridgeshire as determined by Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service's mapping system only, we will hopefully retain those individuals we have selected and trained.

**If I'm unsuccessful at any stage, can I re-sit?**

You have to be successful at each stage of the recruitment process to progress to the next stage. We do not have the facility to allow candidates to re-sit the process.

**What if I can't make an assessment date or the training course date?**

The dates of the assessments and training course dates are made known at the beginning of the recruitment process. If you are unable to make any of the dates you will not be able to continue with the recruitment process.

**What will happen if I forget to attend an assessment or arrive late to any of the assessments?**

You will be withdrawn from the recruitment process.

**What will happen if I forget to bring photographic ID and any requested documentation to assessments or interviews?**

We need to ensure that the person we are assessing is the person that is applying for the role of wholtime firefighter; therefore if you do not bring photographic ID to each stage of the process you will be withdrawn.

**Where can I get an application form?**

The application process will be detailed on our website once recruitment commences.

**Will there be a holding list for applicants who meet the criteria but are not successful?**

Yes, candidates who meet the criteria but aren't successful will be placed on a holding list. This will be held for a finite period of time.

**I've recently passed the National Firefighter Selection process with a different Fire and Rescue Service and I am on their holding list. Do I still need to apply and go through your recruitment process?**

Yes, our processes may differ from those used within other Fire and Rescue Services and in the interests of fairness, it is vital that all candidates have been assessed in the same way.

**Can I apply if I was unsuccessful in the previous recruitment process?**

Yes, as long as you meet the initial entry criteria you are able to apply. If you passed the written ability assessment stage in the previous wholetime recruitment processes you will not be required to undertake these assessments again, you will however be required to undertake the remaining assessments.

**I attended a new recruits course but was unable to complete this, can I apply again?**

Please note that applicants who have been unsuccessful in completing a new recruits course within the last 2 year period are not eligible to apply for the role of wholetime firefighter.

**THE JOB ROLE****Who do firefighters work for?**

Firefighters are employed by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority and serve in the Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority is a combined fire authority. The Fire Authority and the Service cover the areas of Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council and they are part of the local government structure in the country. Further information relating to the Fire Authority is available on our website.

**What do firefighters actually do, apart from putting fires out?**

The emphasis for us is on prevention, which means firefighters helping to educate the community about the importance of fire safety. Therefore working with local communities and local businesses is a large part of a firefighter's work now. Firefighters also deal with many other types of emergency; road, rail or air crashes, floods, chemical spills or rescuing people and animals trapped in other circumstances. They also spend a lot of time training and doing routine activities, such as checking equipment. In fact, most firefighters probably only spend about 5% of their time dealing with fires.

**Are there any career prospects?**

Yes there are opportunities for development and promotion. This could be moving into a specialist area such as fire protection (enforcing legislation in non-domestic premises) or becoming a manager.

**How many jobs are there?**

The number of vacancies available depends on a number of factors such as retirement rates and organisational needs. We are therefore unable to provide specific numbers at this stage.

**If I am successful, which fire station will I be posted to?**

As a wholetime firefighter you could be posted to the following 24-hour stations:

- Dogsthorpe (Peterborough)
- Stanground (Peterborough)
- Huntingdon
- Cambridge

Or day-crewed stations at:

- Wisbech
- St Neots
- Ely

**What salary will I receive?**

The salary for a firefighter starts at £22,908 per annum for a trainee. The salary then rises to £23,862 whilst a further development stage is carried out. Finally a competent firefighter will achieve a salary of £30,533 per annum but this will not be achieved for a period of at least two years.

**Will I have to pay for my uniform?**

Uniform is provided free of charge including any Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that will be issued to you.

**How much annual leave do wholetime firefighters get?**

Wholetime firefighters have 30 days annual leave, plus 8 bank holidays per year.

## **MEDICAL RELATED QUESTIONS**

### **I have a disability; can I still become a wholetime firefighter?**

You will be asked if you have a disability as part of the recruitment process and to give details of the type of adjustments you may require in order to take part in the selection process and to fulfil the role of a wholetime firefighter, should you be successful. Each case will be considered on an individual basis and if reasonable adjustments can be made to enable you to take part in the selection process and to fulfil the role of a firefighter then your application will proceed.

### **What if I have a medical issue?**

Decisions relating to whether or not your medical issue will prevent you from becoming a firefighter can only be made following a detailed and individual assessment with our Occupational Health Department.

### **What if I have dyslexia?**

If you have dyslexia, or suspect you may have dyslexia, we are able to put appropriate measures in place to support you through the selection process. You will need to identify this on the application form and should you be shortlisted to the next stage, you will be asked to submit an assessment report from an appropriately qualified health or education professional. This assessment report will help us identify how best we can support you, not only at selection stage but potentially throughout your fire service career. You may find it useful to contact the British Dyslexia Association.

### **What if I have Asthma?**

Asthma does not necessarily prevent you from becoming a firefighter. Firefighters are exposed to smoke and other toxicants as part of their job. These are irritating to the lungs and upper respiratory tract and can exacerbate the symptoms of wheezing in firefighters with Asthma. Your condition will be assessed at the medical stage by our Occupational Health Department, after which a decision will be made as to your suitability for the role of firefighter.

### **Do I have to be fit to apply?**

You will need to be fit and maintain your levels of fitness throughout your career as a firefighter. You will be required to undertake a fitness test to determine your aerobic capacity which needs to be 42 vo2 Max. You are also required to maintain a healthy weight and lifestyle.

### **Can I become a wholetime firefighter if I wear contact lenses or have had corrective eye surgery?**

The vision standards for eyesight are:

#### **Visual Acuity**

- Use of aids to vision should be possible at the recruit stage.
- Corrected visual acuity should be 6/9 binocularly, and a minimum of 6/12 in the worse eye.
- The minimum uncorrected vision for recruits should be 6/18 in the better eye and 6/24 in the worse eye for both full time and retained Firefighters.
- The current 6/60 unaided limit should be retained for serving Firefighters.
- An upper hypermetropic limit of +3.00.
- Testing for myopic corrections is no longer required.
- VA testing protocols must be better defined (e.g. for Snellen, distances, ambient lighting and use).
- Vision must be binocular.
- Be able to read N12 at 30cm unaided with both eyes open (applicants aged 25 and over).
- Be able to read N6 at 30cm unaided with both eyes open (applicants under 25 years of age).

**Visual Fields** - Normal binocular field of vision is required.

#### **Contact Lenses**

The use of modern, Soft Contact Lenses (SCLs) is now considered safe. Silicon hydrogen contact lenses for extended wear are suitable for the fire ground. Rigid (gas permeable) contact lenses are NOT suitable for use on the fire ground due to risk of visual disability and discomfort associated with foreign bodies becoming trapped beneath the lens. CFRS do not give any financial contribution

towards the costs of contact lenses.

### **Refractive Eye Surgery**

If you have had laser surgery You will also need to provide the following:

- The date of surgery: (Applicants will not be considered until they are 12 months post surgery).
- Evidence that all medication relating to the surgery has stopped.
- Details of the pre-operative refractive error.
- A report following slit lamp examination confirming that the eye has returned to normal and that there is no loss of transparency over the pupil area.
- A report following refraction, topographic examination and pachymetry to confirm that there is no keratectasia.
- Details of post operative corneal thickness and any post operative complications.
- Evidence of satisfactory visual performance using a technique sensitive to the presence of scattered light and aberrations, e.g. using a low contrast log MAR chart.

The costs for provision of this information will rest with the applicant.

### **I wear glasses, can I still apply?**

You must meet the vision standards listed above.

### **I think I am colour blind – is this an issue?**

Not necessarily, but you should have an appropriate level of colour perception. Individuals with either normal colour vision or slightly abnormal green colour vision are suitable for appointment to the fire service. The recommended test procedure uses the Ishihara test as the initial screen, with two additional tests if the applicant fails the screening, to determine the severity and type of colour vision deficiency. If necessary, we may ask you to complete some additional tasks as part of a role-based risk assessment, in order to fully determine the extent to which your colour vision deficiency would impact on your ability to undertake the duties of a firefighter. With this additional information, we will then make a decision on a case by case basis.

### **I struggle sometimes to hear things, will this be an issue?**

Firefighting staff need to have a minimum hearing level to be considered fit for role which would normally be H2. Individuals who are below H2 may require a capability assessment before any decisions can be made on fitness for the role.

It is unlikely that individuals with hearing below the H3 level (with aids if appropriate) would be safe on the fireground.

The worse ear is used to grade the individual in their placement within the Service.

## **CURRENT FIREFIGHTERS WITH OTHER SERVICES/BRIGADES**

### **What if I'm already a wholetime firefighter in another fire and rescue service?**

You will be expected to complete the entire application process including all assessments.

### **What if I'm an on-call firefighter in another fire and rescue service?**

You will be expected to complete the entire application process including all assessments.

### **Will Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service be accepting any external competent firefighter transfers?**

No. We are not accepting any external transfers as part of this recruitment campaign. If you are a firefighter at another service/brigade you can apply through the external recruitment process. You will be expected to complete the entire application process including all assessments.

If you would like to transfer you can add your details to our transferee enquiry list by contacting Recruitment. You will then be contacted should we start accepting transferee requests.