

## Frequently asked questions

### Entry Criteria

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| <b>What qualifications do I need to become a Wholetime Firefighter with Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service?</b>  |
| You must have 5 GCSEs grade A*-C/4-9 including Maths and English language or equivalent. Please note that if they are equivalent, the equivalent to Maths and English Language grade A*-C must be included. You will be required to provide your certificates as evidence of this during the recruitment process   |
| <b>How do I know if my qualifications meet the criteria?</b>   |
| If you are unsure if your qualifications are equivalent to having 5 GCSEs A*-C/4-9 including Maths and English Language, please contact an education provider or careers advisory service for clarification.   |
| <b>Why do Wholetime applicants need 5 GCSEs A* - C / 4 - 9 and we do not ask this of our On-call firefighters?</b>   |
| 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 |
| <b>Is there an age limit</b>   |
| Although you can apply at the age of 17 years and 6 months you must be at least 18 years of age or by the date of final assessments. (Please refer to our website to find out final assessment dates for the Wholetime recruitment process). There is no upper age limit for applications.   |
| <b>Why is there a requirement for a driving licence by point of employment?</b>  |
| 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.   |
| <b>I am learning to drive now, and have my test booked in a few months' time. Can I still apply?</b>   |
| Yes, you must have a full and current driving licence that entitles you to drive in the UK without restrictions by point of employment, we will provide you with a minimum of 3 months' notice of offer of employment.   |

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| <b>Are there any height limits?</b>   |
| 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.  |
| <b>What if I have a criminal conviction(s)?</b>   |
| 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.  |
| <b>Do I have to be a British citizen?</b>   |
| You can be of any nationality to apply if you have the right to remain without restrictions in the UK. If you are living in the UK before 01 January 2021 and employed after 30 June 2021, EU citizens will need to demonstrate that they have leave to remain in and work in the UK under the EU Settlement Scheme. If arriving to live in the UK from 01 January 2021 EU citizens will need to apply in advance for a visa to be able to work. You will be required to supply evidence during the recruitment process.  |
| <b>Is it ok to have a tattoo or body piercing?</b>  |
| 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   |
| <b>Why is there a requirement to swim in the criteria?</b>  |
| All our Wholetime Firefighters are in-water trained and those on Wholetime 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.   |
| <b>Why have you limited applicants to those who permanently reside within 20 miles of the boundary of the county of Cambridgeshire as determined by Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service's mapping system?</b>  |
| There are several 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 Wholetime Firefighters now, 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 crucial 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 20 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. |

## Recruitment Process

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| <b>If I am unsuccessful at any stage, can I re-sit?</b>  |
| You must 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.  |
| <b>What if I cannot make an assessment date?</b>   |
| The dates of the assessments 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.  |
| <b>What will happen if I forget to attend an assessment or arrive late to any of the assessments?</b>  |
| You will be withdrawn from the recruitment process.  |
| <b>What will happen if I forget to bring photographic ID and any requested documentation to assessments or interviews?</b>   |
| We need to ensure that the person we are assessing is the person that is applying for the role of Wholetime Firefighter; therefore, if you do not bring photographic ID to each stage of the process you will be withdrawn.  |
| <b>Where can I get an application form?</b>  |
| You will be able to access an online application form from 05 June 2023 the application window will close on the 18 June 2023. There will be more details to follow, please check the website.   |
| <b>I have 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?</b>   |
| 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.  |
| <b>Can I apply if I was unsuccessful in the previous recruitment process?</b>  |
| Yes, if you meet the initial entry criteria you can apply. If you passed the online aptitude test stage in the 2021 Wholetime recruitment process you will not be required to undertake these assessments again, you will however be required to undertake the remaining assessments   |
| <b>I have a long term physical or mental impairment, medical condition or neurodiversity that may give me rights under the Equality Act 2010 - is there any support I can gain throughout the recruitment process? e.g., Dyslexia, ADHD, Dyscalculia, Autism.</b>  |
| If you have a long term physical, mental impairment, medical condition, or neurodiversity - please contact recruitment via <a href="mailto:recruitment@cambsfire.gov.uk">recruitment@cambsfire.gov.uk</a> to discuss what support you require, and the recruitment team will provide advice on how reasonable adjustments can be applied to the process. |
| <b>I attended a new recruit's course but was unable to complete this, can I apply again?</b>   |
| Please note that applicants who have been unsuccessful in completing a new recruit's course within the last 2-year period are not eligible to apply for the role of Wholetime Firefighter.   |
| <b>If I am successful at final assessment, how long will I be on the holding list?</b>   |
| There is no set time as to how long you may remain on the holding list. The Service meets on a regular basis to discuss the establishment of our Wholetime Firefighters, Recruitment will  |

be in touch to provide updates about your place on the holding list. Recruitment will give you a minimum of 3 months' notice when offering you a place on a new recruit's course. Please note you may be required to be retested on sections of the recruitment process i.e. fitness and swim assessment to ensure you have kept a level of fitness.

## 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 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 emergencies; 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 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 several 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 £25,884 per annum for a trainee. The salary then rises to £26,962 whilst a further development stage is carried out. Finally, a competent firefighter will achieve a salary of £34,501 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 medical condition can I still apply to be a Wholetime Firefighter?**

Decisions relating to whether your medical condition 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 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 a 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?**

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.

### **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 am an On-call firefighter in another fire and rescue service?**

You will be expected to complete the entire application process including all assessments. If we can obtain confirmation of your written tests from your current Fire and Rescue Service and they are accepted by CFRS, you will be exempt from sitting the online aptitude tests.

**What if I am a Wholetime Firefighter for another Fire and Rescue Service?**

If you are a substantive competent Wholetime Firefighter working for a local authority fire and rescue service and are interested in joining CFRS as a Wholetime Firefighter please contact [recruitment@cambsfire.gov.uk](mailto:recruitment@cambsfire.gov.uk) to find out more about our Wholetime transferee process.