On-Call (RDS) Firefighter Selection Information
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A Career with the Fire and Rescue Service

Introduction

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service can offer you a satisfying, exciting and varied career. The aim of this information booklet is to give you a better insight into what our work involves.

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service is 1 of 46 separate Fire Services in England and Wales and is run under the command of the Chief Fire Officer.

Bedfordshire is served by a total of 14 Fire Stations of which five are crewed by Wholetime (full-time) firefighters and one station is day crewed. The service also operates an On-call (RDS) Duty System which covers eleven stations (two of these are on Wholetime stations and one on the day crewed station).

Our Firefighters (Wholetime and On-call (RDS)) are both men and women representing the communities they live and/or work within. There are benefits in having personnel who reflect all aspects of our local communities. The benefits are removing barriers; truly representative; cultural improvements; employer of choice to name a few. These are drawn from all the different cultures within Bedfordshire and we would welcome applicants from these under-represented groups such as, BAME and females.

Like many organisations, the Fire and Rescue Service draws those considered suitable for promotion to the most senior management positions from its existing employees and ensures that it has people with a wide range of skills from which to select. There are, therefore, many opportunities for career progression.

Fighting fires can, in fact, be just a small part of the everyday work. Firefighters are called upon to provide community education and advice on fire safety to reduce the risks associated with fire, flood, etc. When they are called to an emergency, they could be dealing with any type of major or minor incident: road, rail or air crashes; floods; chemical spills; or rescuing people trapped; building fires and collapses; affecting entry to render medical assistance, etc.

This type of work requires a range of personal skills such as understanding, reliability, flexibility and the ability to work within a team. If you think you have what it takes to deal with these situations, please read on.
Dealing with Emergencies

Technology obviously plays a major role in helping firefighters to tackle emergencies as efficiently and effectively as possible. For example, at Service Headquarters, Fire Control computers store street plans, details of high risk buildings and the latest information on hazardous materials. This ensures that, as soon as an emergency call is received - whether a fire, chemical spillage or road traffic collision - our Fire Control Operators can immediately assess what appliances are required to attend.

On arriving at a fire, the firefighters have to make a very quick assessment of the situation; as materials used in homes and factories change, so does the way a fire is tackled. A house fire may require two appliances as well as requiring thousands of litres of water, plus the use of specialist equipment.

There is also the hazard of toxic fumes and heavy smoke, which can be generated from modern material - for example foam filled furniture. This makes tackling a fire that much more difficult and firefighters are always fully protected with equipment such as breathing apparatus, as well as personal radio sets to keep them in contact with their colleagues at the scene, or back in Fire Control.

Firefighters will also have a range of other equipment at their disposal depending on the incident to which they have been called, such as cutting and lifting equipment to deal with road traffic collisions.

The Fire and Rescue Service today is called to a broad range of incidents not just limited to fires and road traffic collisions. Firefighters attend incidents such as water rescue, rescues from height, animal rescues, and chemical incidents, all of which require specialist skills and training.

Community Safety

An increasing part of the Firefighters role is to encourage a safe community by preventing fires and emergencies before they happen, and to make sure people understand the risks of fire and what they can do to protect themselves.
Firefighters take part in activities such as:

- Giving talks to schools;
- Visiting community groups;
- Fitting smoke detectors in houses;
- Advising homeowners on protecting their properties from fire risks;
- Working with youth and vulnerable people.

Firefighters therefore use a range of communication skills and have regular contact with all sections of the community. Therefore the ability to speak a different language, be able to sign and/or have skills with young people can be an advantage.

**Firefighters on the On-call (RDS) Duty System**

Bedfordshire Fire & Rescue Service operates an On-call (RDS) Duty System, for Firefighters who undertake their normal employment duties whilst being ‘On-call’ for the Fire and Rescue Service.

To be considered for the On-call (RDS) Duty System you need to live and/or work within 6 minutes travelling time of an On-call Fire Station by car.

Details of the location of On-call (RDS) Fire Stations in Bedfordshire can be found on page 26 of this information booklet.
The First Phase of Your Career

If you are selected to join Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, whatever your educational achievements, you and other new trainees will receive the same basic training, consisting of technical, practical and theoretical work. The initial training will be held at the Training & Development Centre at Service HQ and will be 2 weeks (10 days) in duration.

Having completed the foundation training required to start operational duties in the role of Firefighter, you will be a responsible member of a close knit and well organised team. Whilst there is a reliance on teamwork, there is plenty of scope for individual potential to be realised and a career path to be developed.

You will commence your development phase following successful completion of the foundation training. Everyone has their own personal development programme and regular progress reviews. Training is provided to meet development needs and evidence will need to be collected and assessed to maintain competence in the role.
Training Throughout Your Career

The Fire and Rescue Service offers continuous in-house training to ensure your potential is maximised and that you are kept up-to-date with the latest equipment and specialist techniques. There may also be a requirement to attend courses at various locations to progress your learning journey.

Promotion and Longer Term Career Prospects

There are opportunities for promotion within the Fire Service. You may have the opportunity to take on extra responsibilities involving more specialist duties at your station.

Within Bedfordshire, career progression for On-call (RDS) Duty System personnel occurs as follows:

FIREFIGHTER → Crew Manager → Watch Manager

On-call (RDS) Firefighter Selection Process

The recruitment and selection process consists of seven stages which are progressive therefore applicants must be successful at each stage to progress on to the next. You may be given the opportunity to retake certain stages of the recruitment process however; if you are continually unsuccessful at any stage your application will not be continued.
The seven stages are as follows:

Stage One

Online Application Form

Applicants are asked to complete a standardised online application form which contains applicant’s personal details and other key details. It requires applicants to fully complete all sections apart from the information evening as this is only optional. If Applicants wish to attend an information evening they should contact operational.vacancies@bedsfire.gov.uk to request this. Applicants may submit their application without having attended an information evening.

Stage Two

Suitability Interview at the Station

This will be with the Station Commander, Watch Commander or Crew Commander and will review key details of your application form such as, cover hours being offered. The meeting will also cover key requirements of an On-call (RDS) Firefighters role and Service expectations.

Stage Three

Online Psychometric and Ability Tests

These three tests are initially sent together for completion. If you are unsuccessful at any of these tests you may be given the opportunity to just retake the test(s) you were unsuccessful in. All tests are online and will require you to have internet access from a computer.

The three tests are as follows:

- Dependability and Safety Instrument (advised 10 minutes to complete but not time bound);

- Online Ability Test in Operational Verbal Reasoning (45 minutes to complete);

- Online Ability Test in Operational Calculation (25 minutes to complete).
For the Operational Verbal Reasoning test above extra time can be added if a candidate has special requirements. These should be identified on application in order to assist making the appropriate arrangements.

Practice tests are available online at the following location for Verbal Reasoning and Calculation:


You may be asked to complete a verification test at the interview stage as part of our quality assurance process. This test will look to verify that you were the original person to undertake the online tests earlier in the selection process.

Stage Four
Completion of Physical Entry Tests

The physical entry tests have been developed and specifically designed as single person tests. Applicants will complete all six tests irrespective of their result on each. At the start of the physical session you attend you will be required to undertake a short warm up session. You will be wearing full fire kit including helmet, tunic, leggings and boots while completing the warm up and throughout the practical tests. For some of the tests you will be required to wear gloves which will be provided.

The seven tests will be completed in any order during the session.

The tests are as follows:

- Manual Dexterity;
- Ladder Climb;
- Ladder Lift;
- Casualty Evacuation;
- Equipment Carry;
- Enclosed Space.
- Ladder Extension
You can find information on the 6 tests by doing an internet search on “National Firefighter Practical Tests”. To prepare for this stage it is recommended that you utilise the Preparatory Fitness Information Booklet available as a download from the Career - On-call Recruitment page on www.bedsfire.gov.uk

Physical Entry Tests will be undertaken at one of your local stations and will be arranged by the Recruitment Team.

If you are unsuccessful at the physical tests you may be offered the opportunity to retake the tests.

Stage Five

Interview

Applicants will undertake a Structured Interview based on the On-call (RDS) Firefighter Job Description. The interview will last for approximately 1 hour.

To prepare for this stage it is recommended that you utilise the Interview Preparation Booklet available as a download from the Career - On-call Recruitment page on www.bedsfire.gov.uk

Information from the Equality Monitoring Section will not be provided to the Interview Panel.

If you are unsuccessful at the interview you may be offered the opportunity to retake the interview.
**Stage Six**

**Holding List**

If the interview panel consider you suitable to become an On-call (RDS) Firefighter you will be added to a holding list and will be considered for vacancies occurring within 12 months of your addition to the list. Unfortunately, if you have not been appointed during that time you will be asked to re-apply.

If you are being considered for a place on the training course you will need to undertake and be successful at each element of stage seven (detailed on the following pages) before being formally offered a position.

**Stage Seven**

**Pre-Employment Clearances**

**Medical and Fitness Test**

You will be invited to attend a medical appointment with the Service Medical Adviser and Occupational Health Practitioner/Nurse and a fitness test with the Service Occupational Health & Fitness Manager.

The Service medical comprises of the following:

- Approximately 15 minute fitness test;
- Followed by a 45 minute appointment with the Occupational Health Practitioner/Nurse;
- Finishing with a 30 minute appointment with the Service Medical Adviser.

Overall you would need to be available for approximately 1½ hours.

The fitness test will comprise of undertaking the Chester Treadmill test achieving the cardio-respiratory fitness of 42 v max. More information can be found here:

[http://www.cfoa.org.uk/18322](http://www.cfoa.org.uk/18322)

Candidates will also have a hearing, eyesight and substance abuse test.
The purpose of the medical is to assess your general level of health, including weight, blood pressure and lung function. This is to allow the Service Medical Adviser to decide whether a candidate is fit to undertake firefighting duties, allowing for any reasonable adjustments that may be made in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

Prior to attending this appointment, candidates should visit the opticians for an eyesight test. The completed form should be sent in to the Occupational Health Department in advance of your medical date.

**Fitness Test and Medical will take place at the Service Occupational Health Department in Kempston.**

References, DVLA Check and Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) Check

References, DVLA and DBS checks will also be carried out as part of stage seven by the HR team. If these clearances are deemed satisfactory at all of these areas you will be offered a place on the training course subject to there being a place available.
Responsibilities of a Firefighter

Job Purpose

Attend emergency and other incidents, carrying out duties as required and promote safety in the community, in order to provide the community with the highest possible standards in fire defence, rescue services and fire safety.

Role

Act as part of an operational firefighting team in order to carry out the requirements of the job purpose and to work in accordance with the requirements of Fire and Rescue Service legislation, safely without risk to the public, other members of the team or the individual.

Duties and Responsibilities

Emergencies

• Respond immediately and safely to all emergency calls and requests for assistance;

• Deal with emergencies as directed and work effectively and efficiently as a member of a disciplined team;

• Minimise distress and suffering including giving first aid;

• Liaise and communicate with other emergency personnel at incidents.

Dealing with People

• Establish and maintain the confidence of members of the public;

• Maintain links with the community;

• Be sensitive to the needs of others, particularly with regard to fairness at work issues;

• Awareness of ‘safeguarding’ signs and the referral process.
Fire Safety

- Give general fire safety advice and guidance to people when requested;
- Carry out routine inspections of premises and complete associated documentation;
- Work to help educate members of the community in the risks and hazards of fire;
- Assist in Service initiatives, programmes and strategies to reduce fire calls.

Equality and Fairness

- Ensure compliance with equal opportunities legislation and the Service’s existing equality policies and procedures to ensure fairness in employment and service delivery.

We are committed to embracing diversity within the workplace, where everyone is valued for the contribution they make. Our personnel are expected to promote and support the principle of fairness at all times, while opposing and challenging all forms of harassment, bullying and discrimination.

All employees, and potential employees, will receive equal, fair and just treatment within all aspects of recruitment, employment, training and promotion. No employee will receive less favourable treatment than any other on the grounds of age, disability, marital status, race, religion or belief, gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation or pregnancy and maternity.

Health and Safety

- Recognise health and safety issues at work and deal with them to minimise or eliminate the degree of hazard or risk;
- Ensure personal safety and that of others at all times.
Personal Fitness and Hygiene

- Keep a level of physical and mental fitness necessary to carry out the duties of a firefighter;
- Maintain personal appearance, hygiene and cleanliness of uniform in keeping with a disciplined service.

Equipment

- Maintain all firefighting and emergency equipment in a state of readiness including cleaning, repairing and testing as required and to approved standards and procedures.

Local Geography

- Know the local streets, roads and buildings situated around the fire station area;
- Be aware of the risks, possible hazards and water supplies to be found within the fire station area.

Administration

- Complete basic paperwork and routine administration including the recording of information;
- Use information technology as required and in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR);
- Keep records up to date as necessary.

Training

- Take part in a continuous training programme by attending lectures, exercises, practice drill sessions and other forms of training to maintain competence levels;
- Attend training courses as directed.

General Responsibilities

- Ability to converse at ease with members of the public and provide advice in accurate spoken English.
- Undertake such other duties commensurate with the level of responsibility and expertise as may be required from time to time;
Serve at any location under any recognised duty system as directed by the Chief Fire Officer;

Undertake light driving duties when required and be trained to drive Fire Appliances as necessary;

Demonstrate competence to both local service and National Occupational Standards.

Fire and Rescue Service Core Values

Our people are essential to ensuring that Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service continue to deliver not only its statutory obligations to the people of Bedfordshire but strive to ensure we contribute to ensuring health, safety and welfare whenever we can make a difference.

We value…

- Service to the community;
- People;
- Diversity;
- Improvement.

Service to the Community

We value service to the community by…

- Working with all groups to reduce risk;
- Treating everyone fairly and with respect;
- Being answerable to those we serve;
- Striving for excellence in all we do.
People
We value all our employees by practising and promoting...

- Fairness and respect;
- Recognition of merit;
- Honesty, integrity and mutual trust;
- Personal development;
- Co-operative and inclusive working.

Diversity
We value diversity in the service and the community by...

- Treating everyone fairly and with respect;
- Providing varying solutions for different needs and expectations;
- Promoting equal opportunities in employment and progression within the service;
- Challenging prejudice and discrimination.

Improvement
We value improvement at all levels of the service by...

- Accepting responsibility for our performance;
- Being open-minded;
- Considering criticism thoughtfully;
- Learning from our experience;
- Consulting others.
Main Conditions of Service

The information below is for guidance only, and may be subject to change at any time.

Place of Work

Throughout your career with the Service for the On-call (RDS) Duty System you are required to live/work within 6 minutes of the Fire Station you are providing cover for.

Hours of Duty

Firefighters on the On-call (RDS) Duty System carry out their duties under either full or part availability. A retainer fee is paid depending on which availability you have given and attendance fees are paid as per the salary section which can be found on page 21.

Holidays

The annual leave entitlement is four weeks (plus Public Holidays) which is taken in accordance with Service policies. After five years’ service, it increases to five weeks (the additional week is granted as long service leave).

Pension

From the start of your employment you will contribute to the New Firefighters Pension Scheme 2015 unless you choose to opt out.

Sickness

You are entitled to full pay when on sick leave, subject to national conditions.

Probation

From the date of your appointment you will serve a probationary period of 12 months. Within this time you will undertake a development programme which has assessments on a four monthly basis.
Development

The development programme commences the day you start on station; it is divided into a variety of subjects over three years. The first year consists of three assessments and is completed during your Probation Period. There will be further assessments at the end of years 2 and 3.

Training and Progression

Effective and regular training will be essential for the proper performance of your duties. Some training courses that you will undertake are compulsory and training venues may be outside Bedfordshire areas.

A wide range of other development opportunities exist, including assistance with study for promotion and sponsorship for qualifications that are relevant to your work.

External Employment

Fire and Rescue Service employees are not permitted to be volunteer members of the reserved armed forces, including the Territorial Army, Royal Naval Reserve, Royal Marines Reserve or Royal Auxiliary Air Force.

Driving Appliances

Suitably qualified firefighters must be prepared to drive fire appliances.
Uniform

Uniform is provided and must be worn whilst you are on duty in accordance with Service Policies and Procedures.

Personal Appearance

For Health and Safety reasons the following must be adhered to:

- Hair (including facial hair) must not impair the seal of the breathing apparatus face mask nor must it impair vision or hearing. Hair must therefore be worn off the collars and shoulders whilst at work. For males, they must be clean shaven i.e. no beard;

- Whilst on duty the wearing of make-up or hair products, such as gel or hair spray, is not allowed;

- Jewellery such as rings, earrings, bracelets should generally not be worn on duty. Tongue piercings must also not be worn whilst on duty.
Salary

Salary payments are made directly to your bank account on a monthly basis.

The Fire Service rates of pay for Firefighters on the On-call (RDS) Duty System as at 1st July 2018 are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RETAINING FEES (depending on cover hours provided)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FIREFIGHTER (Trainee)</strong></td>
<td>From £1145 up to £2291 per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FIREFIGHTER (In Development)</strong></td>
<td>From £1193 up to £2386 per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(On completion of basic training)</em></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>FIREFIGHTER (Competent)</strong></td>
<td>From £1527 up to £3053 per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(When assessed as competent)</em></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ATTENDANCE FEES</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ATTENDANCE</strong></td>
<td>(attending the station but not going out on the Fire Appliance following a call)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disturbance Payment</td>
<td>£4.02 (set rate for Firefighter role)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remaining on Station attracts a pro rata amount of the hourly rate in addition to the disturbance payment above.</td>
<td>Hourly rates: £10.90 Development £13.94 Competent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DRILL NIGHT FEE</strong> (for attending 2 hours drill every week)</td>
<td>£21.80Development £27.88 Competent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N.B. The pay awards are reviewed on 1st July every year.
Visual Entry Standards

Applicants to The Fire And Rescue Service Should:

1. Satisfy a duly qualified ophthalmologist, optometrist or ophthalmic medical practitioner that he/she meets the required visual standards to undertake firefighting duties.

2. Have uncorrected visual acuity of 6/18 in the better eye and 6/24 in the worse eye.

3. Have a corrected visual acuity of 6/9 binocularly with a minimum of 6/12 in the worse eye.

4. Have no more than +3.00 dioptres of hypermetropia in each eye.

5. Be able to read to read N6 at 30cm unaided with both eyes open (applicants under 25 years of age).

6. Be able to read N12 at 30cm unaided with both eyes open; (aged 26 years and over).

7. Have a normal visual field in each eye, as determined by confrontation techniques or formal testing methods.

8. Have no history of night blindness or any ocular disease that is likely to progress and result in future failure of the visual standards for firefighters.

9. Have an appropriate level of colour perception. Individuals with either normal colour vision of 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, the Farnsworth D15 and Nagel anomaloscope, to determine both the severity and type of colour vision deficiency. All applicants will be tested using Ishihara plates. Those who pass (having made no more than two errors in plate identification) have normal colour vision. Those who fail should be tested by Farnsworth D15, which will determine the severity of their colour vision defect. Applicants who fail Farnsworth D15 will be rejected as unsuitable. Those who pass should be offered the opportunity to take a third stage test, the Nagel anomaloscope, to distinguish whether the individual has slight red or slight green colour vision deficiency.
Refractive Surgery - Applicants

Individuals who have had Radial Keratotomy **cannot** be considered for operational firefighting duties due to the relatively high incidence of refractive instability.

Individuals who have undergone the following types of refractive surgery can be considered one year after surgery provided that the limit of surgical correction has not exceeded 8D:

- Photorefractive Keratectomy (PRK);
- Laser assisted in-situ keratomileusis (LASIK);
- Laser epithelial keratomileusis (LASEK).

Before acceptance individuals will be required to pass a LogMAR test which is required to rule out poor visual performance in low contrast conditions.

Visual Standards for Serving Firefighters

Serving Firefighters should:

- Have an unaided visual acuity of 6/60 and read N48 at least 30cm with both eyes open;
- Have a corrected visual acuity of at least 6/9 and read N12 at 30cm with both eyes open;
- Use spectacles of an appropriate specification on the fire ground should they be needed to obtain this standard of vision;
- Have normal binocular visual field determined by confrontation techniques or formal testing methods.

Refractive Surgery – Serving Operational Firefighters

Any Firefighter who is considering refractive surgery is required to notify the Occupational Health Practitioner.

Firefighters who have has refractive surgery are required to undergo a LogMAR test to rule out poor visual performance in low contrast conditions.
Equal Opportunities

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service is an Equal Opportunities employer. The Service's policy is to ensure that no applicant or employee receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of age, disability, marital status, race, religion or belief, gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation or pregnancy and maternity.

Positive Action

We're proud of serving Bedfordshire and of our commitment to doing all we can to ensure our workforce reflects the many different communities we serve.

We want Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) to be made up of the same or similar proportions of the diverse people and groups in our area.

This is why we encourage particular groups to apply for jobs with us and to guide and support potential employees to achieve the qualifications needed.

Our operational workforce has a significant under-representation of people from black and minority ethnic groups and of women. We welcome applications from all, but particularly encourage applications from members of these groups.

If an organisation can show it has under-representation of particular groups in its workforce for employment, promotion or training, for a minimum of at least 12 months, the Equality Act 2010 allows it to carry out positive action to encourage applications from people in those groups. They can be targeted, supported and encouraged to apply for jobs, promotion and training.

The law allows us to run training courses, provide support for skills development and to lay on events such as open days. These events are open to all, but we target and encourage under-represented groups to take part.
Positive action is very different from positive discrimination, which gives preferential treatment to people from particular groups to ensure that greater numbers or quotas of those people succeed. Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service does not advocate or participate in such activities, which are unlawful in the UK.

All applicants go through the same selection processes, and all employees are appointed solely on merit. Our recruitment interview panels are drawn from a diverse range of existing staff, and they’re all trained in interview techniques including awareness of unconscious bias.

If you would like to discuss becoming an On-call (RDS) Firefighter please contact the Recruitment Team on 01234 845065 or email operational.vacancies@bedsfire.gov.uk
Locations of Fire Stations in Bedfordshire

Please see the below key which will tell you which Duty System each station operates.

**Fire Stations Crewed 24/7**
- Bedford
- Dunstable
- Kempston
- Luton
- Stopsley

**Fire Station Crewed During Daytimes**
- Leighton Buzzard

**Fire Stations Crewed by On-call Firefighters**
- Ampthill
- Bedford
- Biggleswade
- Harrold
- Kempston
- Leighton Buzzard
- Potton
- Sandy
- Shefford
- Toddington
- Woburn
Could you fill these boots…?

To become an On-call (RDS) Firefighter, apply online at:

http://www.bedsfire.com/CareersandRecruitment/Operational%20Staff/Pages/Retained.aspx

The information in this is leaflet is being reviewed continuously and all information is subject to change.