

Frequently Asked Wholetime Firefighter Recruitment Questions

What qualifications do I need to apply?

To become a Wholetime Firefighter you will need 3 'GCSE' Grades A - C or equivalent in English and Maths plus one other subject. Please provide **full** details of **all** your qualifications in your application form as we do review your application for equivalent qualifications. During the recruitment process you **will** be asked to provide proof of these qualifications and grades. Initially this will be on application to upload copies of your certificates.

How do I know if my qualifications meet the criteria?

If you are unsure if your qualifications are equivalent to having 3 GCSE's A – C including Maths and English, please contact an education provider or careers advisory service for clarification.

I'm having problems uploading my certificates

The easiest way to upload your certificates is to save them all to a file and then upload the file to your application.

I need to find or request copies of my certificates, can I do this?

If you are unable to provide evidence of your qualifications at the application stage you will need to send the evidence to: Operationalvacancies@bedsfire.gov.uk This evidence must be provided prior to the interview stage. Failure to do so will prevent your application from progressing further.

Will the recruitment process close when a certain number of applications are reached?

No, the recruitment process will close at noon on 8th February 2019 and all applications will be shortlisted after that date.

Do I have to start and submit my application in one go?

No, there is the facility to start your application and then save it so you can go back to it. It's better to take your time to make sure you don't miss anything.

Why are you restricting applications to people who live within a 10 mile radius of your County border?

We seek to represent the communities we serve in the makeup of our organisation, by employing people from our communities we enhance our organisations knowledge of our local communities. We also contribute to the economic growth of our communities by providing local jobs for local people. During the recruitment process you **will** be asked to provide proof of your home address.

Is my address within a 10 mile radius of your County border?

Unfortunately we are unable to check prior to shortlisting every individual address query. You could however carry out a postcode check on the internet to gain a rough idea of how close to the border you are. We would recommend if you think you are within a location close enough that you submit your application. All addresses will be checked during the shortlisting stage to confirm the distance from the county border.

I live outside the 10 mile county border, can I apply and move into Bedfordshire if I'm successful?

Unfortunately your address needs to meet the criteria at the time of application. This address will be checked at the pre-employment check stage.

Is there an age limit?

You have to be a minimum of 18 years old at the start of your employment. There is no upper age limit, as long as you are physically fit and can pass the fitness test you can become a Firefighter.

If you are 17 at the time of the practical tests we will require parental consent for you to take part in this stage of the process.

Would somebody's size affect their application?

No – this is a popular misconception, because there used to be restrictions on height, weight and chest expansion. Candidates are expected to pass strength and fitness tests as part of the recruitment process. The tests are at a level that's achievable by men and women of all different sizes and builds.

I wear glasses and have had corrective eye surgery. Can I apply?

Yes, but all applicants have to provide an optician's report at medical stage. Please refer to the Visual Entry Standards for further information.

I am colour blind. Can I apply?

When you go for your eye test, the optician will test you for colour vision. Individuals with either normal colour vision or slightly abnormal green colour vision are suitable for appointment to the Fire Service. Please refer to the Visual Entry Standards for further information.

Do you have to have good hearing?

Yes, there is a requirement to have good hearing in line with functional standards (with artificial aids, where applicable)

I have a medical condition will this stop me from applying?

If you are unsure whether a medical condition would exclude you from applying it is recommended that you contact 01234 845000 and ask to speak to our Occupational Health Team.

I have a disability. Can I still apply?

The disability provisions of the Equality Act 2010 apply to Firefighters. This means anyone who considers themselves to have a disability can apply to join the Fire and Rescue Service. A disability is defined by the Act as:

Anyone who has a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on his/her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

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 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 fulfil the role of a Firefighter, then your application will be progressed.

I am dyslexic. Will I be able to cope with the online psychometric and ability tests?

Dyslexia is considered to be a disability and you will be asked if you have a disability as part of the recruitment process. Should you answer 'yes' we can make reasonable adjustments for you at the relevant stages of the selection process. We normally ask for a report to confirm the type and extent of your dyslexia which is sent to our Occupational Health Practitioner for review. They then use this information to decide if a reasonable adjustment can be made – for example, you may be given extra time to complete an online test.

This report should be sent to OccupationalHealth@bedsfire.gov.uk prior to taking the online tests.

Do I need to be able to swim?

All of our Firefighters are trained in water rescue and therefore applicants need to be able to swim and, be able to rescue themselves from calm water.



Do I need to be able to drive?

Yes, you need to hold a full UK driving licence with no pending issues at the point of pre-employment checks.

Why is there a requirement for a driving licence?

Firefighters may be required to provide cover at another Fire Station at short notice. They will need to get there along with their fire kit and therefore will need to be able to drive. There may also be a requirement to progress to driving fire appliances in the future.

Would a driving offence prevent me from applying?

Not necessarily. Please review our Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 guidance document for further information. We **will** undertake a Driving Licence check from the Driving and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) as part of the pre-employment clearances stage. Therefore please be honest on your application and advise us of any driving convictions, fines, etc that you have or have had in the past as some still appear even though they are spent. Fees for this check will be incurred by the Fire and Rescue Service.

Would a criminal record prevent me from applying?

Not necessarily. Please review our Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 guidance document for further information. We **will** undertake an Enhanced Disclosure check from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) as part of the pre-employment clearances stage. Therefore please be honest on your application and advise us of any convictions, fines, etc that you have or have had in the past as some still appear on your DBS check even though they are spent. DBS fees will be incurred by the Fire and Rescue Service.

What is the fitness test?

You will be required to complete the 12 minute Chester Treadmill Test and three strength tests. If you are considering applying it is advisable that you start working on your fitness and strength now. If you are successful at the early stages of the process you will then be ready for the fitness test. It is also important you maintain your fitness.

Would I have to work weekend and public holidays?

Firefighters whose shift/work pattern falls on a weekend or public holiday will be required to work. There is the option to take leave subject to a maximum number of people being on leave at any one time. This is to make sure our fire engines have enough people on duty to crew them. For firefighters who are required to work a public holiday, the relevant enhancement would apply.

What salary will I receive?

The salary for a Firefighter starts at £22,908 whilst completing the initial training course. This rises to £23,862 whilst in the development stage. Once assessed as competent in role (approximately three years) this rises to £30,533 per year. Pay awards are reviewed on 1st July each year.

How long does the recruitment process take?

As you can imagine, we get a lot of people who are interested in joining Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service. It can take approximately 9 months for applicants to complete the whole process through to formal offer of employment.

Is child care provision available for the residential element of the training course or within the workplace once I start?

Unfortunately not however, you could explore whether you are entitled to tax-free childcare.

Can I choose which fire station to work at?

Unfortunately not, as a Firefighter you agree to serve at any station within Bedfordshire. We must take into account where we need to fill vacancies however we will review skills of all new employees and try to place them at a station and watch that will help develop them further.

Do you have separate changing facilities for male and female firefighters?

On Wholetime stations every firefighter has access to a study room which is shared with someone from the other 3 watches. This room can be used for getting changed, studying and for resting after midnight. There will be a time in the morning where someone from the watch coming on duty would need to use the room, as they would be getting ready for the start of their shift.

What are different coloured 'watches'?

Operational personnel at each station are split into four rota groups known as 'watches' – White, Red, Blue and Green. This is so we can provide a continual service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Can I have a second job?

We have a Service policy on secondary employment. Employees can't have a second job without first obtaining written approval from us.

Are you allowed to drink or smoke?

We have a policy which prohibits the use of drugs, alcohol and smoking in all of our premises.

If my faith requires me to fast, can I still be a Firefighter?

Yes, you can still fast, but it is important that all members of the Service are able to perform their core role whilst on duty.

It is important to recognise that dehydration can affect a person very quickly. An individual may believe they are perfectly fine but very quickly succumb to the adverse effects of dehydration.

We encourage staff who choose to fast to discuss it with their line manager. Employees have a responsibility for being fit for duty and, where fasting has affected a member of staff adversely, they must tell their manager immediately.

As part of the recruitment process when it comes to the fitness test we will look to make reasonable adjustments for those fasting for Ramadam. If this applies to you, please make us aware at the interview stage.

I have a beard for religious reasons. Will I have to shave it off to be a Firefighter?

Yes, this will be necessary. We totally respect your religious needs, but for health and safety reasons facial hair below the top lip cannot be allowed. As a Firefighter you will need to wear



a facemask when you're wearing breathing apparatus. Facial hair can stop the mask from forming a seal around the face, which could let dangerous airborne chemicals in.

As a practising Sikh, can I still be a Firefighter and wear a turban?

A new clause of the Deregulation Bill 2015 extends the existing exemption for Sikhs to have to wear a safety helmet under the Employment Act in all workplaces. However there are exclusions for emergency response services and the military, which apply only in hazardous operational situations when the wearing of a safety helmet is considered necessary. These include for example, entering a burning building where protective clothing needs to be worn to enclose the whole body, situations such as bomb disposal, or when dealing with hazardous materials like chemical leaks, bio-hazards or radiation.

Do you have quotas for women and ethnic minority recruits?

No, we don't have such quotas, but we encourage and welcome applications from these groups because they're under-represented within our workforce. However, all applicants are assessed purely on merit.

Isn't being a Firefighter dangerous?

We adopt an assertive safe and effective approach to how we manage incidents. Whilst there have been some fatalities to firefighters around the country when attending incidents, and they can never be hazard-free, we've developed a very positive approach to health and safety. As an organisation, we set extremely high standards and expectations in this area. Our firefighters work within a 'competency framework,' as well as effective personal protective equipment such as helmets and other fire kit. At incidents, safe systems of work are established with a high level of command and control. We also constantly stress the importance of personal safety to our staff.

Away from incidents, our commitment to health safety and well-being is maintained across all areas of activity

Could this be you.....?



For more information visit:

<https://www.bedsfire.gov.uk/Careers/Wholetime-Recruitment.aspx>