



# Wholetime Firefighter Information Pack



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## Introduction

County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS) Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) and Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service (TWFRS) are pleased to invite applications to join us as wholetime firefighters.

Our communities value the services we offer and need to feel confident in our highly skilled teams, who reduce risk as well as respond to emergency situations. Our teams continually evolve and improve how we operate whilst maintaining the highest standards for our communities.

If you feel that you have what it takes, we'd like you to join our 2019/2020 recruitment process. To pre-register, go to [www.twfire.gov.uk/firefighter](http://www.twfire.gov.uk/firefighter)

Over the next 12 to 18 months, our three Services are looking to recruit a number of wholetime firefighters. Please refer to page 8 which outlines the timescales for the selection processes.

This document has been written to provide you with details of each stage of the recruitment and selection processes for the role of wholetime firefighter. It is important that you are aware of how you will be assessed and what to expect at each stage.

If you have any queries prior to entering into the recruitment process, please refer to the frequently asked questions (FAQs) at the back of this document in the first instance. If you still have an outstanding query, email [Recruitment@twfire.gov.uk](mailto:Recruitment@twfire.gov.uk)

## GDPR Statement

How we use your data.

- We will hold and process your data for the purpose of administrating the selection process for wholetime firefighters.
- We are committed to protecting your data and it will only be used for the purpose of recruitment.
- We will only share your data with other members of the North East Fire and Rescue Services for the purpose of recruitment.
- We will hold your data in line with our current retention schedules after which time it will be permanently deleted.
- You have the right to withdraw your consent for us to hold your data at any time. This can be done by emailing [DPO@twfire.gov.uk](mailto:DPO@twfire.gov.uk)

## The role of a firefighter

### **Location:**

Any fire station within the fire and rescue service that you have been appointed to, as directed by the Chief Fire Officer.

### **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.

#### **Dealing with people**

- Establish and maintain the confidence of members of the public.
- Maintain links within the community.
- Be sensitive to the needs of others with regard to fairness and dignity issues.

#### **Fire safety**

- Give general fire safety advice and guidance to people when requested.
- Work to help educate members of the community on the risks and hazards of fire and other emergencies.
- Assist in Service initiatives, programmes and strategies to reduce fire calls.

#### **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**

- Maintain level of physical and medical 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 to approved standards and procedures.
- Check firefighting resources provided for Fire and Rescue Service use, including hydrants and fixed installations.

#### **Local geography**

- Know the local streets, roads and buildings situated within the fire station response 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 recording of information.
- Use information technology as required and in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).
- Keep personal records up to date.

### **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.

### **Fire authority**

- Undertake any other duties commensurate with the level of responsibility and expertise as may be required by the Chief Fire Officer.
- Adhere to the policies and procedures of the Service.

**Rates of pay** for operational wholetime firefighters (correct as of September 2019):

<b>Firefighter</b>	<b>Annual salary</b>
Trainee (Phase 1)	£23,366
Development (Phase 2)	£24,339
Competent (Phase 3)	£31,144

N.B. from trainee to competent may be a minimum of three years.

### **Pension benefits**

New entrants will be contractually enrolled on to the Firefighter Pension scheme 2015.

Highlights of the pension include:

- A pension of 1/59.7th of your pay every year, added to your pension account and protected against inflation.
- The option to convert part of your pension into a tax-free lump sum when you retire.
- Immediate payment of pension benefits to you.
- Retire at pension age – 60, or retire early from age 55 (but with an early payment reduction).
- A lump sum of three years' final pay if you die in service.
- A substantial employer contribution towards the cost of your benefits.
- The choice of deferring payment of your pension benefits until State Pension Age if you leave the scheme early, or transferring them to another pension arrangement (unless you were a member for less than three months when you would get a refund of contributions instead).
- Employee contributions vary from 10% to 14.5% of your pay depending on your rate of pay.

## Pre-application information

### **Age**

You must be 18 years of age or over at the start of your training. You may apply to be a wholetime firefighter if you are aged between 17 years 6 months and 18 years old, as long as you are 18 years old once you commence training. Your date of birth is verified as part of the process.

### **Work permit**

As an employer, the Fire Authority is subject to the provisions of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996. It could be guilty of committing a criminal offence if it employed someone who does not have permission to be in or to work in the United Kingdom. The Fire Authority reserves the right to request relevant documentation from all those offered employment, in order to satisfy its obligations. For more information you may find the following immigration advice websites useful: [www.workpermit.com](http://www.workpermit.com) or [www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk).

### **Identification**

As an employer we need to ensure all prospective employees have the right to work in the United Kingdom. You will be asked to bring some form of photographic identification with you e.g. passport, driving licence, any other relevant documentation and a work permit if applicable, at the interview stage of the recruitment process. Please visit [www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk) for more information on prevention of illegal working.

### **Driving**

If you hold a driving licence you must inform us if your licence is endorsed, giving details about the nature of the offence, offence code (e.g. CD10 driving without due care and attention) and also give details of the penalty (e.g. £ fine and number of penalty points). If you had to attend court you will need to give details of the outcome.

### **Diversity monitoring**

This helps us ensure we are accessible to all groups in the community. The data is held in accordance with the GDPR and is not used to assist or make selection decisions. It will be used for statistical analysis only.

### **Medical standards**

Fire and Rescue Authorities are required to assess each applicant on an individual basis, regarding their suitability to perform the role of a firefighter, in accordance with Equality Act legislation. This means that Fire and Rescue Authorities will consider what reasonable adjustments could be made to enable you to proceed with your application provided any such adjustments do not contravene Health and Safety legislation. Health and Safety legislation places the obligation on Fire and Rescue Authorities to ensure that individuals are safe at work for their own protection and that of others (in the context of the Fire and Rescue Service "others" includes colleagues and members of the public).

To ensure that support is readily available, you are required to bring your specific needs to the attention of the human resources team in advance. Please email

[Recruitment@twfire.gov.uk](mailto:Recruitment@twfire.gov.uk)

Specific information about the national standards relating to eyesight can be found on page 23.

### **Secondary employment**

If successful and you intend to continue with any other employment whilst employed by any of the Services, you must declare it. You will be unable to undertake secondary employment whilst in phase 1 and 2 of your training.

### **Declaration of offences**

You are required to declare any offence for which the conviction is not yet spent. Within the meaning of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 – incorporating the Rehabilitations of Offenders Act (exemptions) 1975 and the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (exemptions) (Amendment) Order 1996 – you are advised to declare any charge that is pending as a subsequent conviction could lead to your dismissal from the Service.

Broadly, the Act provides for anyone who has ever been convicted of a criminal offence and not sentenced to more than 2.5 years in prison to become a 'rehabilitated person' at the end of the rehabilitation period, provided there have been no further convictions. At the end of this period, the conviction is considered spent and should be treated as it had never happened. Generally speaking, there are fixed rehabilitation periods for specific offences. If you are unsure whether you have to declare a previous conviction you should contact your local Probation Office, Citizens Advice or your Solicitor. Alternatively, you can consult the Home Office publication 'A Guide to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974'.

A Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check will be carried out at 'enhanced level' for those who are offered employment by Northumberland and Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Services. Please note that all convictions, including those that are spent will be declared on the DBS certificate and this will require further consideration by the 'employer' Service.

## Do you really want to be a firefighter?

The following list of questions has been designed to help you decide whether being a firefighter is really for you. Simply tick Yes or No to each of the following questions.

	Yes	No
Are you interested in people?		
Can you get on with people from different backgrounds and cultures?		
Do you want to work as part of a close-knit team?		
Can you work under pressure?		
Can you think on your feet and solve problems when you know a lot depends on your suggestion?		
Do you have the sensitivity to deal with members of the public when they are distressed, confused or being obstructive?		
Can you take responsibility for representing the Service when you are at work and when you are not?		
Are you committed to always maintaining and developing your skills?		
Are you committed to maintaining your health and physical fitness?		
Are you prepared to work in situations where you may see blood, seriously injured or dead people?		
Are you prepared to talk to people in the local community about fire safety?		
Are you a practical person who likes to work with your hands/equipment?		
Do you enjoy making things or finding out how things work?		
Are you someone who can always be relied on to be somewhere on time?		
Are you prepared to work at height?		
Are you prepared to work outside in all types of weather, when it is wet and cold?		
Are you prepared to work unsociable hours?		
Are you prepared to work in enclosed spaces?		
Are you prepared to carry heavy equipment?		

**If you answered 'Yes' to ALL of the above, and you think that you have what it takes to protect the community you live and work in, read the information provided and join our recruitment campaign.**



## Recruitment process

This selection process is robust and time limited. We are not able to offer time extensions. The information below indicates when each stage of the process is likely to take place and how long you will be given to complete each one.

The following notes are designed to give you an understanding of the recruitment process, what you can expect and what will be expected of you.

**Stage 1. Registration and eligibility screening (online)**

November 2019 – open for 2 weeks

**Stage 2. Behavioural Styles Questionnaire (online) and Situational Judgement Tests (online)**

25 November 2019 – open for 1 week

**Stage 3. Ability Tests (online)**

09 December 2019 – open for 1 week

**Stage 4. Role Related Tests**

13 January 2020 – 1 week

**Stage 5. Competency Based Interview**

03 February 2020 – 2 weeks

**Stage 6. Occupational Health Medical and Fitness Test**

24 February 2020 – 1 week

**Stage 7. Pre-employment Checks**

March 2020

**Trainee course begins**

From April 2020

## Stage 1. Eligibility and Registration

To apply for the role, you must 'pre-register'. This will give you access to CORE Recruitment, the online recruitment system which must be used to apply. CVs or any other form of application will not be accepted.

You will only be able to register once. It is important that you have completed all relevant sections of the forms and have checked that all details are correct before submitting your registration.

We will communicate with you throughout the process via email, so please make sure that you provide the correct email address. Due to the volume of applications, we are unable to reopen the registration to correct any errors. There are systems in place to sift out those who have registered more than once and who have submitted incomplete forms. In such cases, we will not progress your registration.

You will be asked basic questions to ensure that you are eligible to apply. As part of your eligibility assessment, we will identify, for example:

- Whether you are over the age of 17 years and 6 months
- Whether you have the right to work in the UK
- Whether you have any unspent convictions that may temporarily preclude you from working as a firefighter (all unspent and pending convictions must be declared – failure to do so will result in your application being automatically withdrawn)

If you meet the eligibility requirements you will be invited to complete Stage 2 of the selection process.

Online pre-registration for CORE Recruitment is available at [www.twfire.gov.uk/firefighter](http://www.twfire.gov.uk/firefighter)

**We will contact everyone who has pre-registered once registration opens.** You will have two weeks to complete your registration and eligibility screening.

### **Dyslexia**

If you have dyslexia and require reasonable adjustments you must contact the human resources team by emailing [Recruitment@twfire.gov.uk](mailto:Recruitment@twfire.gov.uk) as soon as possible. Evidence of your dyslexia will be required. The team will advise you of how to continue with your application.

### **Disability or medical conditions**

Due to the nature of the role, you will need to undergo a full medical examination which will consider your current and historic medical conditions. You are encouraged to speak to your doctor or optician as soon as possible if you have or have had any conditions that you feel may affect your eligibility for the role. We have provided guidance on the National Standards for eyesight (see page 23) to help you with your discussion with your medical practitioner.

## Stage 2. Behavioural Styles Questionnaire (BSQ) and Situational Judgement Test (SJT)

**You will receive an email from Apollo to access the test, please check your junk/spam folder.**

Both of these tests are to be completed online, however they cannot be completed using tablets or mobile phones. Tests must be completed using one of the following internet browsers:

- Internet Explorer 9 and above
- Firefox 4.0 and above
- Google Chrome 10.0 and above
- Safari 5 and above (Mac and PC)

Your browser should also have JavaScript and Cookies enabled. Refer to the Help function of your browser for guidance about these settings. The tests are designed to be viewed with a screen resolution of at least 1024 x 768 pixels.

The BSQs are designed to explore your preferred behaviours and values in a working environment. The questionnaire assesses whether you have the right behaviours and attitudes to be effective in the role. The test is not timed. You must however ensure that you complete it within the timescales.

Although no revision or additional study is required, you may find it helpful to look at some examples before you complete the BSQ. Examples are available on our websites.

The SJT measures your judgement and decision-making skills in situations that are typical in the Fire and Rescue Service. The test is not timed. You must however ensure that you complete it within the timescales.

No knowledge or experience as a firefighter is required to complete this test and no prior revision is needed. Examples of the test is available at [www.twfire.gov.uk/firefighter](http://www.twfire.gov.uk/firefighter)

If you are successful you will be invited to complete the ability tests (Stage 3). Please note all test results are final and there is no right of appeal. Outcomes and feedback reports will be emailed to you.

**BSQ and SJT tests will be available for completion from 09:00 on 25 November and will close at 08:59 on 02 December.**

### Stage 3. Ability Tests

**You will receive an email from Test Partnership to access the tests, please check your junk/spam folder.**

The ability tests comprises of 3 different tests:

- Numerical reasoning – You will be required to calculate basic numerical equations that are equivalent to GCSE level maths.
- Verbal reasoning – You will be required to answer questions on short passages of information. No prior knowledge is required.
- Mechanical reasoning – You will be required to apply cognitive reasoning to mechanical, physical and practical concepts in order to solve problems.

The tests are timed, with a set amount of time per question. Practice tests are available at

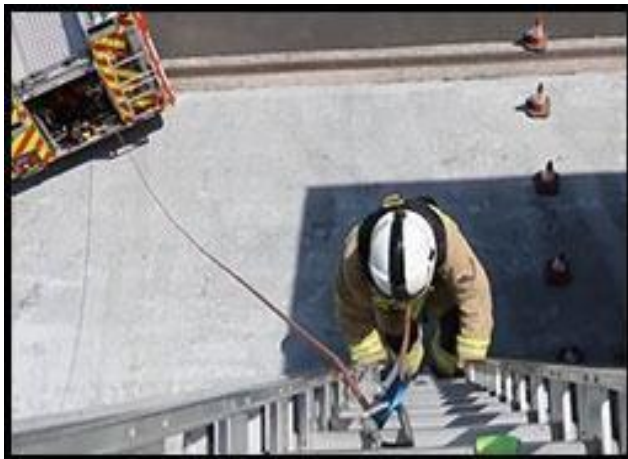
- <https://frs.tptests.com/candidate/practice?accesskey=31524637>
- <https://frs.tptests.com/candidate/practice?accesskey=1445204>
- <https://frs.tptests.com/candidate/practice?accesskey=321455714>

All test results are final and there is no right of appeal. Outcomes and feedback reports will be emailed to you.

**Ability tests will be available for completion from 09:00 on 09 December 2019 and will close at 08:59 on 16 December**

## Stage 4. Role Related Tests

The role related (practical) tests will be held at CDDFRS and TWFRS locations. The role of a firefighter is physically demanding and it is important to assess your ability to handle the situations and challenges you will face. The tests are designed to assess your level of physical fitness in line with the requirements of the role. You must perform all the tests whilst wearing firefighter personal protective equipment (PPE), provided on the day. For each test, full instructions will be provided. You will work in groups but will be tested individually. Your behaviours will be observed throughout the time you are on our premises. The session will last about 3 hours.



### **Ladder Climb**

Designed to assess confidence at heights. Wearing a safety harness, you are required ascend two thirds of the way up a 13.5 metre ladder and secure yourself by hooking one leg through the ladder.

You will be asked to lean backwards and outstretch your arms to the sides, then confirm a symbol being shown by the assessor at ground level.



### **Casualty Evacuation**

Designed to assess upper and lower body strength and coordination.

You will drag a 55kg dummy backwards around a 30M course, by a carrying handle fixed to the dummy.



### **Ladder Lift**

Designed to assess upper and lower body strength and coordination.

You will raise the bar of a ladder lift simulator to the required height with 15kg of weight placed on the simulator cradle, which gives a total lift load of 24kg.



### **Enclosed Space**

Designed to assess confidence, agility and stamina. You will put on a facemask and with un-obscured vision make your way through a crawl and walkway.

Once inside the crawl/walkway you will have your vision obscured and return to the start.



### **Equipment Assembly**

Designed to assess manual dexterity. You are given a demonstration of the test before having to assemble and disassemble a number of components to make an item of equipment.



### **Equipment Carry**

Designed to assess upper and lower body strength and coordination. You will carry items of equipment up and down a course between two cones placed 25m apart.

You will be given a brief, a demonstration of correct lifting techniques and you can practice picking up the correct items.

**The role related tests will take place between 13 January and 17 January 2020.**

### **Stage 5. Competency-based interview**

Upon successfully passing the practical tests you will be invited to attend an interview which will last about an hour. This will be our chance to get to know more about you and for you to tell us how you meet the requirements for the role. The panel will be made up of 2 panel members.

The questions you are asked during interview will be competency-based, i.e. based on the skills and attributes required for the job. The aim of competency-based interviews are to explore in detail how you have used specific skills in your previous roles (paid or voluntary) and your approach to problems, tasks and challenges.

If you are not familiar with competency-based interviews, you will find it helpful to refer to the additional guidance and use YouTube videos to help you develop your interview technique.

**The interviews will be held between 03 February and 14 February 2020.**

If you are successful at this stage, you may be invited to undertake medical and fitness testing, with the potential to be offered a role with ANY Service. Alternatively, we will retain your details for a period of time or until a vacancy becomes available.

## Stage 6. Occupational Health Medical and Fitness Test

We will need you to take a full medical assessment prior to joining us, which will be conducted by our occupational health provider. Prior to attending your medical, you should obtain a list of your vaccinations from your GP. If you have any concerns about meeting the eyesight standards, you are advised to obtain a report from a qualified optician. Information about the National Standards for Eyesight can be found on page 23. You may be provided with a form to take to the optometrist when we confirm that you have passed the interview.

As part of the medical, you will need to complete a questionnaire about your medical history and the following tests:

- Hearing test
- Lung function
- Eye test
- Grip strength
- Blood pressure
- General tests based on your completed medical questionnaire
- Drug and alcohol test

It is important that you do not complete any exercise or consume alcohol or caffeine immediately prior to the medical.

### **Fitness test**

If you are successful at interview stage, you will be invited to attend a fitness assessment. The assessment is Service specific. Further information will be provided nearer the time.

Firefighting can be a physically demanding and hazardous activity with potential for exposure to high physiological and environmental loads. To ensure effective and safe operational performance an appropriate level of physical fitness is essential.

As a guide, you are likely to have the minimum level of cardiorespiratory fitness for UK firefighting if you can:

- ✓ Run 1.5 miles (2.4 kilometres) continuously in 12 minutes or less (this is equal to running 6 laps of a 400m outdoor athletics track in 12 minutes).
- ✓ Run on a treadmill at 7.5mph (12 km/h) for 12 minutes.
- ✓ Perform the multi-stage shuttle run test (bleep test) to at least level 8 shuttle 8.

You are likely to have the minimum physical strength and muscular endurance if you can:

- ✓ Shoulder press 25 kg once in an overhead, upright seated position.



We have published a copy of a 12 week fitness programme to help build up your strength and stamina: [www.twfire.gov.uk/firefighter](http://www.twfire.gov.uk/firefighter)

**Medical and fitness assessments will take place between 24 and 28 February 2020.**

#### Stage 7. Pre-employment checks

Offers of employment will be made as vacancies arise and your details may be placed on a holding list.

If you are successful at all stages of the recruitment process, there are a number of checks that we will undertake to confirm: your identity, your right to work in the United Kingdom and any criminal convictions.

You will need to provide at least 3 continuous years of references. There must be employer, professional or academic references.

If any part of your pre-employment checks do not meet the required standards, we will be unable to confirm your appointment and any offer will be withdrawn without notice.

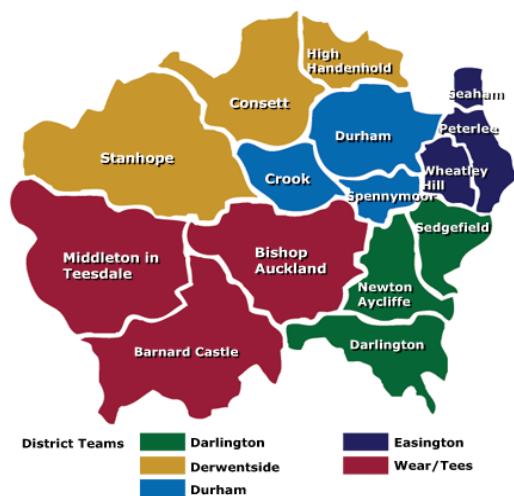
**The course start dates will be from April 2020.**

**We would like to take the opportunity to wish you every success throughout the recruitment process.**

## About us – County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue

CDDFRS provides a fire and rescue service from 15 strategically placed fire stations managed via five areas; Darlington, Derwentside, Durham, Easington and Wear & Tees. The fire stations are staffed by either wholetime firefighters, part-time ('on call' previously termed retained) firefighters or a combination of both.

Placing our operational, community and fire safety staff in local areas enables us to provide a more integrated, cohesive and focused approach to addressing local risks, as well as improving access to services and advice for local residents and members of our business community. The map below shows where the stations are located throughout the service area.



Some of our stations are on call and occupied only on a need basis.

CDDFRS are here to make the communities within our area a safer place to live, work and visit. We are governed by a separate statutory body known as the Combined Fire Authority. Our Service is accountable to the Combined Fire Authority which is comprised of locally elected councillors, who are members of the authority.

County Durham and Darlington Fire Authority is responsible for the fire and rescue service across the two unitary authority areas of County Durham and the borough of Darlington, serving a population of over 620,000 people spread over almost 2,460 square kilometers. Fire cover is provided 24-hours a day, every day of the year.

All 999 calls are received by our control room at Service Headquarters at Belmont. Fire appliances are then mobilised from 15 fire stations across the Service area. All front-line fire appliances are equipped with state-of-the-art rescue equipment and there is also a fleet of specialist appliances, which are used during road traffic collisions, water rescues and other specialist rescues. Firefighters are trained and ready to respond to a range of emergencies, not just fire. These include: road, rail or air crashes, flood, animal rescues, chemical spills and even terrorist attack.

### Shift systems

CDDFRS operates a variety of rota systems, which may involve working anti-social hours, weekends and public holidays. The majority of our stations follow a four-day shift pattern working two day shifts, two nightshifts, and four days off. We also have a day crewing station which is Monday to Friday day shifts and two-day crew stations which work self-rostering day shifts. You may be expected to work any of these working patterns whilst employed by us.



## About us – Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service

The primary purpose of Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) is to make Northumberland a safer place to live and work through Prevention, Protection and Response. The services provided are a risk critical provision of Northumberland County Council that are delivered to the highest standard with fully qualified professional teams.

NFRS currently has 15 community fire stations in Northumberland, delivering services 365 days a year. The Service received over 7,000 emergency calls, attended over 3,300 incidents in 2017/18 and utilises a number of duty systems based on risk:

**Whole-time Duty System:** The Service has two whole-time community fire stations in the south east of the county which is largely urban. Operational firefighters work 10 hour day shifts, and 14 hour night shifts.

**Day Staffing:** The Service has two Community Fire Stations with firefighters working during the day for a 12 hour shift period, and responding following pager alert during the 12 hour night shift.

**Retained Duty System:** In rural areas, firefighters who live or work within five minutes of the station will respond to a pager alert if there is an incident in their area.



Holy Island has a garaged fire engine. Firefighters from Berwick, Belford and Seahouses Community Fire Stations will respond to an incident using the fire engine and equipment stored on the island where appropriate.

### Fire Control

Fire Control provides an emergency call handling and mobilising service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Fire Control Operators ensure that the right vehicles, equipment and staff are sent to a variety of incidents. In addition, Fire Control provides the out of hours service on behalf of NCC.

### Community Safety

The Community Safety department undertakes Safe and Well-Being visits, fitting smoke alarms and providing general safety advice where appropriate. CSD is also responsible for the delivery of the Prince's Trust Team programme, the firesetters intervention programme, Young Firefighters Association and manages the service's volunteer and apprentice programmes.

### **Fire Safety**

The Fire Safety department has established strong relationships with businesses in Northumberland, in order to support them in their responsibilities under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. The Order places a duty on all fire and rescue authorities to enforce fire safety in non-domestic properties. Fire Safety officers process applications for petroleum storage certificates, comment on licensing applications under the Licensing Act 2003, invoke enforcement policy where appropriate, undertake fire safety inspections and provide technical fire safety advice.

### **Fire Support Services**

Fire Support Services department has responsibility for the following NFRS areas; Health and Safety, fleet management, specialist equipment, Fire Control, policy and document management, stores, communications, management and risk information systems, catering and management of contracts for services such as vehicle workshops, stores and Private Finance Initiative (PFI).

### **Learning and Development**

Learning and Development department provides a risk-based programme of training to ensure the health, safety and welfare of firefighters attending a wide range of incident types. Learning and Development staff are responsible for all aspects of internal and external training to operational and corporate staff as well as members of the public. Working closely with Human Resources colleagues the team also facilitates Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service Recruitment.

### **Civil Contingencies**

The Civil Contingencies team works within the Northumbria Local Resilience Forum to prepare and plan for emergencies within Northumberland and protect and support communities when emergencies occur. A joint Community Risk Register is used to identify local Hazards and Threats and prioritise multi-agency planning, training and exercises. The Civil Contingencies Team drives Business Continuity and Emergency Planning across the County Council.



## About us – Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service

We are committed to the safety of our communities throughout Tyne and Wear.

Our aim is to keep everyone who lives and works in our area protected – whether we're responding to an emergency or working to promote safety in our waters, on our roads and in our homes and businesses.

Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service covers 334 square miles, bordering County Durham in the south and Northumberland to the north.

Over 1.104 million people live here, spread across five districts:



- Gateshead
- Newcastle
- North Tyneside
- South Tyneside
- Sunderland

We serve 43% of the North East's population in just six percent of the total land area. This density populated region is comparable to other Metropolitan areas, Greater Manchester, Merseyside, South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire and West Midlands. Our area covers 334 square miles and borders with County Durham in the south and Northumberland to the north.

Of the 1.104 million people in the area, 4.14% of those over the age of 3 years (44,000) would classify themselves as having an ethnic origin with primary languages including Bengali, Cantonese, French, Farsi, Hindi, Kurdish, Punjabi and Urdu.

We want our service to look like the community we represent. Recent figures show that just 3.29% of the service's employees are from a minority ethnic background and only 22.35% are women. We need people from all different backgrounds to bring a different set of skills to those what we have currently have and to bring these skills to benefit the next generation of firefighters.

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### Taster sessions

#### 1. How do I book onto a session?

In early October, we published the venues, dates, times and of the taster sessions as well as the link to the booking system on our websites. The sessions are taking place across Country Durham and Darlington, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear. You can only book a place at one session.

#### 2. How long does each session last?

Each session is about 90 minutes in total. The session will be split into 2 sections: first, a talk through the selection process, then you will have an opportunity to try some of the equipment that will be used as part of the role related tests (Stage 4).

#### 3. If I am unable to attend a session, will I still be able to apply?

Attendance is not mandatory. You will not be disadvantaged if you are unable to attend a session as we will publish a copy of the presentation used about the process and videos of the tests online.

#### 4. What do I wear for a taster session?

Please wear clothing and footwear suitable for physical training.

### Application and eligibility

#### 5. What is 'pre-registration'?

Pre-registration is a way of expressing an interest in applying. By pre-registering you will activate your access to the online system that we use for this recruitment, known as CORE (Recruitment).

#### 6. When can I apply?

Follow any of the three services on social media to find out when registration opens. We are expecting high volumes of applicants, during peak hours (i.e. within a few hours of registration opening and closing), so the website may be slow. You will have a better experience of the system if you do not access it during peak times.

#### 7. Is there a limit to the number of applications you are taking?

No, there is no limit to how many registrations we will accept. We will consider all of those who have completed the Registration within the published deadlines.

#### 8. There is a problem with the system, who do I contact?

You should email: [Recruitment@twfrs.gov.uk](mailto:Recruitment@twfrs.gov.uk) or telephone: 0191 444 1551. Please note that we will respond to you as quickly as we can, however, help and advice are only available during our normal office hours: 08:30 – 17:00 Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays).

#### 9. How do I choose which Service I want to work for?

This is a joint campaign between the 3 Services. When you apply, you are applying for a role, not for a particular Service. Therefore, you may be offered a role by any of the 3 Services.

As this is a joint campaign, we have a shared recruitment and selection process, which is why you need to apply through CORE (Recruitment) to work for any of the 3 Services.

**10. I have missed the deadline to pre-register and apply, can I have an extension?**  
Unfortunately no. This campaign is strictly timetabled, which is why we pre-publish the dates of each stage.

**11. I have unspent convictions, do I need to declare these?**  
Yes, all unspent convictions must be declared. You do not need to declare unspent convictions, but please note that if you are offered a job, you will need a DBS check.

## **Online tests**

**12. What happens if I lose internet connection whilst completing the tests?**  
An interrupted internet session will not affect your scores, as your responses are recorded during your session as you enter them. This information is auto saved so that when you log back in you can continue from where you left off.

**13. Is the scoring system reliable?**  
Yes, the scoring system is very reliable. When you submit your responses, these are scored automatically by computer against a pre-determined scoring key which is applied to all applicants in exactly the same way.

**14. Can I see my test results?**  
We do appreciate that you may want to know more details about your results, but we are unable to give out any additional information because we need to maintain the security of the scoring process. This is to ensure that all applicants are treated fairly in future recruitment campaigns. While we understand this may be frustrating for you, we hope you can understand the importance of ensuring a fair process for all.

**15. Why is my score so low?**  
It's helpful for you to understand how scoring is applied to your responses to generate the final result you get. The score you are given is a 'percentile' score not a 'percentage' score and is different to what you might be used to when completing tests. Knowing the difference between the two types will help you appreciate how you scored.

A percentile score is a score generated by comparing the results of your responses to a group of individuals who have also completed the test. This group is called a comparison group or norm group. Percentile scores show your results in relation to how you performed in comparison to this norm group. For example, if you have a percentile score of 60, then this means that your score is better than 60% of people in that norm group. It does not mean that you have answered 60% of the questions correctly.

**16. I have missed the test window, can you reopen the test for me?**  
Due to the large volume of applications, we are unable to re-open the tests after their closing date. Dates of tests are advertised prior to the start of the recruitment process so it is the candidate's responsibility to ensure they are available for all dates.

**17. I completed the test on my mobile phone or tablet and the system crashed, can I retake the tests?**  
No. You are advised not to use a mobile phone or tablet to complete the tests, so it is your own responsibility to ensure the correct browser is used.

## National Standards for Eyesight

As we get older our eyesight deteriorates. Firefighters require a certain level of eyesight to enable them to carry out their role. With this natural deterioration, it stands to reason that firefighters must meet a required standard of vision when applying to join the fire service as firefighters.

If you have any doubts regarding your eyesight we suggest that you book an appointment with your optician and take the information below to ask his/her opinion.

### **Colour blindness**

Candidates who believe they have colour blindness may wish to be formally assessed prior to submitting an application form. The minimum standard accepted is the Farnsworth D-15 standard test. We also conduct functional tests as part of the medical process if candidates display difficulties with colour perception. Candidates must also pass the Ishihara test.

### **The vision standards for eyesight are:**

Visual acuity

Use of aids to vision should be possible at the recruitment 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.

### **Eye disease**

You should 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

Individuals with keratoconus are unlikely to be fit for firefighting duties

Compound astigmatism assess for capability, history of headaches and eyestrain

### **Refractive surgery**

Successful Photorefractive Keratectomy (PRK), laser assisted in-situ keratomileusis (LASIK), Laser Epithelial Keratomileusis (LASEK) and EpiLASIK treatments should be allowable if post-operative visual tests are satisfied

RK (radial Keratotomy) and astigmatic keratotomy are NOT suitable due increased risk of rupture and fluctuation in vision

Intraocular Refractive Surgery – used for high myopes. Therefore there are still risk of complications



Wavefront Guided Laser Refractive Surgery – since a Wavefront treatment aims to reduce aberrations, in theory it should produce better outcomes for night vision and vision in difficult low lighting levels or reduced contrast as might be encountered in a smoke-filled room; this technology could therefore have great relevance for firefighters – research is still underway to aid our understanding of this relatively new technology

Assessment after Refractive Surgery – an examination to consider the suitability of a refractive surgery patient for operational firefighting should include:

A slit lamp examination to confirm that the eye has returned to normal and that there is no significant loss of corneal transparency over the pupil area

Refraction, topographic examination and pachymetry to screen for keratectasia

Candidates should have their visual performance assessed using a technique sensitive to the presence of scattered light and aberrations.

Candidates should not be considered until at least 12 months post-surgery and when all medication has ceased.