

Q. I am interested in applying for a job as a wholetime firefighter, how do I apply?

A. A shortlisting process will be in place throughout the recruitment campaign, if you are successful at each stage, you will be invited to apply via our website in due course.

Q. What's the difference between wholetime and on-call firefighters?

A. Firefighters can be either wholetime (full-time) or employed on an on-call (part-time) basis.

Wholetime firefighters are permanently based at, and mobilised from a fire station. On-call firefighters often have other jobs and/or responsibilities, and when they are on duty, respond to calls from their home or place of work.

Q. Do I have to work shifts?

A. Yes, if you successfully complete your training you will be placed on a watch working a 4 day on, 4 day off, shift rota, this will consist of 2 day shifts 09:00 – 18:00 and 2 night shifts 18:00 – 09:00. Firefighters are required to work unsociable hours and weekends. Other shift patterns may be required to be worked to accommodate the service needs; this will only be discussed with successful candidates who are offered places on the training course.

Q. How many hours a week are firefighters contracted to work?

A. 42 hours a week

Q. Why do applicants for wholetime firefighter posts need to hold GCSE's (Grade 9-4) or a recognised equivalent qualification in English Language and Mathematics?

A. The role of a wholetime firefighter has over the years become increasingly technical and there is an expectation that all operational personnel will be able to undertake educational self-study in the areas of: firecraft, the science of fire behaviour, the mechanics of a wide range of operational equipment and the use of IT equipment and associated software systems.

As an organisation that doesn't currently operate multi-level entry criteria, we intend to ensure that we employ a broad range of staff; from those who will be content to remain as wholetime firefighters, to those who will reach senior levels of management/command within the Fire and Rescue Service.

It is important therefore, that our recruitment criteria is set in such a way that it attracts people with a broad range of skills/abilities and as a result we have set our recruitment criteria to ensure we attract the right calibre of applicant, who possess the level of educational qualifications considered necessary to undertake the role of a wholetime firefighter.

We do not insist on this for on-call firefighters as we appreciate that their 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 they can spend on training and the limited opportunities to undertake specialist work/roles.

If you do not have C grades in English Language and Maths GCSE we advise you contact SPS Training Solutions Ltd: 01438 537001 / <http://www.sps-training.com> / stevenage@sps-training.com

SPS will advise you on the Level 2 Functional Skills English and Maths training available. If you are eligible the course will be funded. If you can achieve your level 2 qualification by the end of September 2018 we will accept these as equivalent qualifications to the GCSEs. You will need to provide evidence of this if you reach the interview stage in early October.

Q. Can I show my results sheet as evidence of passing my GCSEs?

A. No, we require your original GCSE (or equivalent) certificates. Please ensure you have these ready for the interview stage of the selection process. If you do not have your originals you can request replacements from your Awarding Organisation, if you do not know who this was you will need to contact the school/college where you took your exams, who should be able to help.

Please note that it may take around 4 weeks for you to obtain a replacement certificate and generally a cost of around £45.

Q. If the original exam board no longer exists and I can only get a certified statement will you accept that as evidence?

A. Yes, we would accept a certified statement where there original exam board no longer exists or they do not provide original certificates which we can validate, please click on this link for info: <https://www.gov.uk/replacement-exam-certificate/if-your-old-exam-board-no-longer-exists>

Please note the certified statement cannot be a scanned copy and must be an original statement.

Q. If my qualifications were obtained outside of the UK will they be accepted as equivalents to GCSE?

A. You will need to provide a statement of comparability from [UK NARIC](http://www.uk-naric.org). The current cost to obtain this is £59.40 and it is important to note it can take up to 20 days once the request has been received.

Q. When will I need to provide my documents?

A. We will request you bring in your original documents; GCSE certificates (results sheets will not be accepted), Driving Licence and any other relevant documents if you are invited to attend an interview.

Q. Why can't I apply if I live outside of the Hertfordshire post code boundaries?

A. There are several reasons for this:

- Hertfordshire has a diverse population and by recruiting applicants from within the county we are attempting to ensure that the demography of our workforce matches up with the communities in which we serve.
- Due to a high number of enquiries received, we aim to make the recruitment process manageable and ensure that the organisation can cope with demand

and also process all eligible candidates fairly.

- A current valid driving licence – required by time of interview - must evidence your Hertfordshire postcode.
- If your postcode falls just outside of the boundary, you may still express an interest, you will need to click that you do meet the postcode criteria when you complete the online form then email Fire.Recruitment@hertfordshire.gov.uk with reasons why your application should be considered. All requests will be reviewed after 22nd July & you will be contacted to advise if you can proceed through the process.

Q. Do I have to be a British citizen to apply?

A. You can be of any nationality to apply, provided that you have the permanent right to remain without restriction in the UK. All candidates will be required to provide evidence of your legal right to work in the UK during the recruitment process.

Q. Is there an age restriction?

A. You must be 18 years of age or above at the commencement date of the wholetime firefighter recruit course; there is no upper age limit for candidates.

Q. Is there a height limit for applicants?

A. There is no minimum or maximum height limit for applicants.

Q. Will the process be quicker and easier because I've served in the military?

A. Hertfordshire County Council have signed up to the Armed Forces Covenant to acknowledge and understand that those who serve or who have served in the armed forces, and their families, should be treated with fairness and respect in the communities, economy and society they serve with their lives.

However, everyone has an equal chance of applying for the role of a Firefighter, no special provisions are made for personnel currently serving in or leaving the military. If you have served in the armed forces it may help you with discipline and the physical side of the job, however, there is much more to the role of a modern firefighter than just these aspects of the job. There is no process for ex-forces to transfer straight across into the Fire and Rescue service, just as there is no process in place for firefighters to transfer directly into the military.

Q. I have a criminal record; can I still apply to be a firefighter?

A. Having a criminal record will not necessarily bar you from becoming a firefighter. If you have a criminal record, you will have to declare this in the application stages. You will be subject to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 which you will need to read as each offence will be different. Before an offer of employment is made a disclosure document from the Criminal Records Bureau may be obtained. If at this stage a conviction is highlighted that has not been declared, your application will be withdrawn from the recruitment process.

Q. I have a disability; can I still become a firefighter?

A. Hertfordshire County Council is a disability confident employer. Under the Equality Act 2010 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. We will ask candidates if they need adjustments to be made as part of the recruitment process to allow them to be considered for the job and to give details of the type of adjustments they may require in order to take part in the selection process and to fulfill the role of a firefighter. Each case will be considered on an individual basis and if reasonable adjustments can be made to enable individuals to take part in the selection process, these will subsequently be replicated on the incident ground.

Q. Can I apply if I wear glasses?

A. As part of the medical, candidates will undergo an optical examination. If you require glasses and dependent on your level of eyesight, the service may provide you with prescription safety glasses.

Q. Can I apply if I am colour blind?

A. There are a number of variations in colour deficiency, some of which are acceptable for the role of fire fighter. We will require any one with a colour defect to undergo further testing and possible work related assessments to determine if they would be suitable for the role.

Q. What if I have dyslexia?

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

Q. What if I have asthma?

A. 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 (OHU), after which a decision will be made as to your suitability for the role of a firefighter.

Q. What can I expect if I get invited to attend a medical?

A. You will be expected to provide a urine sample under controlled conditions which will be used for a drugs test and you will need to bring along photographic I.D. You will also be required to undertake the following investigations with a nurse:

- Height and weight
- Blood pressure/pulse
- Urinalysis
- Spirometry (lung function test)
- Audiology (hearing test)
- Eyesight test (if required)
- Palpation of the abdomen
- Testing of the reflexes

Q. If I'm unsuccessful at any stage of the process, can I re-sit?

A. You have to be successful at each stage of the recruitment process to progress to the next stage. We do not have the facility to allow candidates to re-sit the process. You would be welcome to apply again during future recruitment campaigns.

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

A. The dates of the assessments and training course dates have been set and agreed 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. Only in exceptional circumstances will cases will be considered on an individual basis, however, this is dependent on resources within the service being able to accommodate any requests.

Q. What will happen if I forget to attend a recruitment event or arrive late at any of the assessments?

A. Your application will be immediately withdrawn from the recruitment process.

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

A. Yes. Our processes and requirements 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.

Q. If I am an on-call firefighter can I apply to be a wholetime firefighter?

A. Yes, if you are successful in the selection process your on-call firefighter contract will be suspended during your training.

Q. On completion of my training course, which station will I be based at?

A. On completion of an initial recruit training course, personnel may be posted to any fire station within Hertfordshire. This will be dependent on the operational needs of the service at that time.

Q. Are there any career prospects?

A. Yes. As your career progresses there will be opportunities for development and promotion. This could include moving into a specialist area such as Fire Protection (enforcing legislation in non-domestic premises) or promotion into one of our management roles.

Q. Will I have to pay for my uniform?

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

Q. How much will I get paid during the 16 week training course?

A. You will be paid £22,459 which is the current rate for trainee firefighters. On completion of your training course your pay will rise to £23,394 whilst you are in the development stage, when you have been signed off as being a fully competent firefighter your pay will rise to £29,934. Fringe allowance is paid in some areas of the county but will not be paid during the training course.

Q. What do I have to do to become competent?

A. You will need to pass and complete the 16 week basic training course and then achieve a relevant Level 3 Qualification such as; Operational Firefighter Apprenticeship or NVQ Diploma Emergency Fire Services Operations in the Community within two years. This will be co-ordinated and supported by the Fire & Rescue Service.

Q. Will I automatically be enrolled on an Apprenticeship?

A. Yes, unless you are a competent civilian, aviation, military or on-call Fire & Rescue Firefighter, in which case you will undertake an Emergency Fire Services Operations in the Community NVQ Diploma within two years.

Q. Do I have to pay for my qualification and training?

A. No the qualification and training will be funded by Hertfordshire Fire & Rescue Service

Q. How much annual leave do wholetime firefighters get?

A. Wholetime firefighters have 30 days annual leave plus eight public holidays per year.

Q. Do I have to be fit to apply?

A. You will need to be fit and maintain your level of fitness throughout your career as a firefighter. As part of the recruitment process you will be required to undertake a fitness test to determine your aerobic capacity as well as a number of physical tests. Please view the [fitness video](#) on our website for requirements. The aerobic capacity test is the standard bleep test and you will need to reach level 8.8. If successful in your application you will be required to maintain a healthy weight and lifestyle throughout your career as a firefighter.

Q. Why do I need a full UK driving licence to apply?

A. Firefighters are required to work at various locations across the county so require a full driving licence to enable them to drive service vehicles.

Q. Does it have to be a manual licence or could I produce an automatic licence?

A. We require you to have a manual licence as our service vehicles are manual. If your licence shows code 78 or 106 in column 12 on the reverse of your licence this will not meet our requirements.

Q. Will a motorcycle licence be acceptable?

A. No, you are required to produce a full driving licence that shows you can drive Category B cars.

Q. Why must my postal address be on my driving licence?

A. It is a legal requirement to have your driving licence details up to date and HFRS use your postal address to confirm you are living in the Hertfordshire catchment area before applying.

Q. Can I produce an EU licence?

A. By law, if you come to live in Great Britain and hold an EU/EEA vocational licence you must register your details with the DVLA within 12 months of moving here.

Please follow this link for further info <https://www.licencebureau.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/Driving-in-Britain-as-visitor-or-resident.pdf>

If you can evidence that you have registered your UK address with the DVLA we will accept your EU licence.

Q. If I am successful when would I start my training as a firefighter?

A. The selection process to become a firefighter takes several months; timelines will be published on the Fire & Rescue website and be emailed to candidates. Training courses are due to commence early in 2019, further details of start dates will be given to successful candidates.

Q. What happens if I receive an injury or become ill whilst on the 16 week training course?

A. Every effort will be made to treat any injuries whilst on the course, however, if a more serious injury is sustained or illness prevents attendance on the course then the individual may be withdrawn from the course. All successful candidates who are offered a place on the recruit course will be advised to temporarily refrain from playing any sport or taking part in any activity that may cause them injury and potential removal from the course.

Q. Are tattoos acceptable for employment as a firefighter?

A. Any person who has a tattoo which could be construed as offensive to any religion, belief or is in any way discriminatory, violent or intimidating **will not** be considered as a suitable candidate for employment within HFRS. This is irrespective of where the tattoo appears on your body.

Q. Are body piercings acceptable for employment as a firefighter?

A. All body piercings **must be removed** when on duty. Additionally, any cavity caused by body modifications such as flesh tunnels or ear stretchers are strictly prohibited for health and safety reasons unless they can be surgically corrected.

Q. Are beards or facial hair allowed?

A. Firefighters must keep most of their face and neck free of hair or stubble because it affects the seal of the face mask on the Breathing Apparatus (BA) set. BA is not just provided to firefighters to supply oxygen; it is also designed to prevent the inhalation of poisonous smoke and fumes.

Smoke can, in many cases be extremely toxic. Many fire victims actually die from smoke inhalation which causes cyanide or other poisoning.

Firefighters are permitted to have a moustache or a small goatee beard that doesn't interfere with the seal of the BA set facemask.

If you have any other questions that are not covered here please contact Fire.Recruitment@hertfordshire.gov.uk