

**Tyne and Wear Fire
and Rescue Service**



WHOLETIME FIREFIGHTER RECRUITMENT

CANDIDATE GUIDANCE 2026

www.twfire.gov.uk



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How to use this guide

This guidance document is designed to help guide candidates throughout the Wholetime Firefighter selection process. Please ensure you read the document carefully before submitting an application.

A frequently asked question (FAQ) section is included in the Applicant Guidance Document Appendices. If you need to contact us regarding a query that is not listed, you can do so by emailing the Recruitment Team via HR.HelpDesk@twfire.gov.uk

Reasonable adjustments

We are committed to ensuring that our recruitment and selection process is fair, inclusive, and accessible to all candidates. If you have a disability, long-term health condition, learning difference, or any specific need that may require support, please inform the recruitment team (HR.HelpDesk@twfire.gov.uk) of any reasonable adjustments required to enable you to participate fully in every stage of the process.

Any information you provide regarding adjustments will be treated confidentially and used only to ensure the correct support is put in place. It will not be shared with the selection panel and will not influence the outcome of your application.

Privacy Policy

Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service (TWFRS) is committed to protecting your personal information, the processing of personal data is covered by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018.

Our privacy notice explains how we use your information and how we protect your privacy, to view the full notice please click here: [Privacy and Cookies Policy – Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service](#)

We are a Data Controller for personal data. Our details are registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) and our register number is Z7007131. The ICO's register can be viewed online at www.ico.org.uk

Equality Monitoring

The information requested in this form is collected solely for equal opportunities monitoring under the Equality Act 2010. It will not be used as part of any decision-making process and will be kept confidential in line with GDPR. The information will be detached from your application and will not be seen by anyone on the shortlisting or interview panel. Completing this form is voluntary.

The role of a Firefighter

Transform your skills. Transform lives.

If you're looking for a career that challenges you, develops you, and allows you to make a real difference every single day, becoming a wholetime firefighter with Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service could be the opportunity you've been waiting for. Firefighting today is about far more than responding to emergencies. It's a dynamic, people-focused role built on three core activities: Prevention, Protection and Response, each one essential to keeping our communities safe.

Prevention: Helping Communities Thrive

As a firefighter, you'll play a vital role in preventing emergencies before they happen. You'll work directly with residents, schools, businesses and community groups to reduce risk and promote safer living. From carrying out home safety visits to delivering education programmes and supporting vulnerable people, you'll be a trusted presence who helps others feel confident, informed and protected. Our ability to communicate, empathise and build relationships will be just as important as your operational skills.

Protection: Keeping People and Places Safe

Firefighters also support the protection of our built environment. You'll help ensure local buildings meet fire safety standards, support inspections alongside specialist teams, and contribute to creating safer homes, workplaces and public spaces across Tyne and Wear. This work strengthens the resilience of our communities and helps prevent incidents that could cause harm, disruption or loss.

Response: Ready for Anything

When emergencies do happen, you'll be part of a highly trained, highly skilled team that responds quickly and professionally. From fires and road traffic collisions to water rescues, flooding, hazardous materials and complex technical incidents, you'll face a wide variety of situations where teamwork, courage and clear thinking are essential. Every shift brings something new, and every incident is an opportunity to make a meaningful difference.

Why join Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service?

Joining TWFRS means becoming part of a service that values its people, invests in their development and takes pride in serving one of the most vibrant and welcoming regions in the country. You'll benefit from outstanding training, continuous support and countless opportunities to grow your skills and build a truly rewarding career.

We're looking for people who are motivated, community-minded, and ready to embrace a role that is as rewarding as it is varied. If you want a career with purpose, one where you can help prevent harm, protect those who need it most, and respond when it matters then apply today!

Firefighter Pay and Benefits

Pay rates are shown below for both development and competent rates of pay, new trainees will commence on the development rate of pay before progressing to the competent rate of pay upon successful completion of the apprenticeship:

	Annual	Monthly	Hourly
Firefighter Development	£30,384	£2,532	£13.87
Firefighter Competent	£38,881	£3,240	£17.75

Pension Benefits (Summary)

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

Highlights of the pension includes:

- 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.
- Employee contributions vary from 11.09% to 17.09%* of your pay depending on your rate of pay.

*Contribution rates are subject to change.

Annual leave

You will start on 29 days paid leave (pro rata). Leave is allocated in advance, the leave year runs from 1 January to 31 December. Leave entitlement increases with length of service.

Please note, that we cannot approve annual leave in your first 15 weeks of employment.

Hours of Work

Firefighting offers a work–life balance that's hard to find in many careers. As a wholetime firefighter, you'll benefit from a shift pattern designed to support both your wellbeing and your life outside of work.

Firefighters operate under a range of shift patterns designed to ensure the continuous delivery of an effective emergency response service. These include traditional wholetime rota systems, extended-day shifts, and day-crewing arrangements.

Extended-day patterns typically involve longer working periods to support operational readiness and training needs, while day-crewing models combine daytime station-based working with on-call availability outside of core hours. These flexible staffing approaches allow the service to maintain resilience, meet community risk demands, and support a balanced working environment for personnel.

The most common type of shift pattern is the wholetime rota (2-2-4) where firefighters work two-day shifts (9am - 6pm), two-night shifts (6pm-9pm) followed by four days off. Firefighters are required to work anti-social hours, weekends and public holidays.

Secondary employment

Becoming a wholetime firefighter doesn't just offer a rewarding primary career, it can also create opportunities outside the service. Once deployed to station, you will be eligible to apply to undertake secondary employment opportunities, giving you the freedom to explore additional skills, interests or income streams alongside your firefighting role.

Career progression and specialism development

A wholetime firefighting role is just the beginning of a long and rewarding career. TWFRS offer clear pathways for progression, whether you're aiming to develop specialist skills, take on leadership responsibilities or move into areas such as learning and development, fire safety or community engagement. With continuous learning, nationally recognised qualifications and structured development programmes, you'll be supported to grow at every stage. As your experience builds, so do your opportunities, giving you the chance to shape a career that reflects your strengths, ambitions and passion for serving your community.

The journey to becoming a firefighter

All new trainees will join TWFRS as firefighter apprentices*

As a firefighter apprentice you will:

- Be employed as a firefighter from your first day
- Undertake an initial 15-week trainee firefighter course
- Complete a nationally recognised Level 3 Operational Firefighter Apprenticeship of approximately 24-30 months duration, combining training, mentoring, on-the-job learning and assessments.
- Upon successful completion of the above, become a fully qualified, competent firefighter.

*Dependent upon prior learning.

Trainee Firefighter Course

If you are successful at the selection stage, you will be required to undertake an intensive 15-week Trainee Firefighter Course designed to prepare you for the physical, mental, and technical demands of operational firefighting. This programme is deliberately challenging and aims to develop your resilience, confidence, and professional competence from the outset.

Throughout the course, you will engage in a structured blend of theoretical learning and practical instruction, providing a strong foundation in the essential areas of Fire and Rescue Service operations. Training will include core operational drills such as ladder and pump procedures, Breathing Apparatus (BA) training, and Fire Behaviour Development.

In addition, you will take part in a variety of rescue-focused activities designed to equip you with the skills necessary to respond effectively to a wide range of emergency situations. Throughout the duration of the firefighter trainee course, all trainees will be subject to continuous monitoring of fitness standards. This ongoing assessment ensures that each recruit maintains the physical capabilities required to perform essential operational duties safely and effectively. Trainees are expected to meet and sustain the established fitness benchmarks.

This training programme is both demanding and highly rewarding. It is designed not only to build your technical capability but also to instil the discipline, teamwork, and safety-focused mindset required to begin your career as a professional firefighter.

By the end of the course, you will be fully prepared to progress into station-based development and contribute to the safety and wellbeing of the communities we serve.

Eligibility to apply

To be eligible to apply for the process you must:

- Be aged 18 years or over by 31st December 2026.
- Have the right to work in the UK.
- Possess a full UK driving licence or in the process of obtaining one at the time of applying.
- Be able to confidently swim at least 25 meters (desirable).

As part of our commitment to safe, fair, and transparent recruitment practices, the Service requires all applicants to declare any unspent or pending criminal convictions at the point of application. This requirement reflects the legal obligations set out in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, which states that unspent convictions must be disclosed.

An unspent conviction is one for which the rehabilitation period has not yet ended. These convictions will appear on a Standard Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, which forms a standard part of our vetting process. Failure to disclose an unspent conviction that is later identified through the DBS process will result in the withdrawal of your application.

Fitness Standards

Candidates must meet essential physical fitness standards to ensure they can safely perform the demanding operational duties of the role. Firefighting involves strenuous activity in high-pressure environments, including climbing, lifting, carrying equipment, working in heat, and performing rescues. For this reason, all applicants are required to demonstrate a good level of overall physical fitness throughout the selection process. During the recruitment process, candidates will complete a series of fitness and practical assessments designed to measure their aerobic capacity, strength, and functional ability.

Candidates are required to undertake a job-related fitness test where they will begin by completing a physical activity readiness questionnaire, following this they will complete an aerobic fitness test. (20m Multi-Stage Fitness Test - AKA Bleep Test). This fitness assessment will demonstrate levels relating to cardiorespiratory fitness for UK firefighting. As a guide, you are likely to have the minimum aerobic capacity 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.

Firefighter functional strength and muscular endurance is extremely important and will be assessed during the recruitment process. You are likely to have the minimum physical strength if you can:

- Shoulder press 30kg in a overhead, upright position.
- Repeatedly carry a weight bar of 22.5kg & carry 2x 15kg (dumbbells / kettlebells) one in each hand (farmers walk) over various short distances.

We have published a copy of a number of useful fitness programmes and guides to help you train and build up your fitness levels. The fitness programmes and guides are available to download via the links below.

Please note that you must be free from injury to participate in any physical activity, if you have any doubts about your health or physical ability to exercise, you should consult a medical professional prior.

[Improve your VO2.ppt](#)

[Improving Multi Stage 20m Fitness Test \(bleep test\).docx](#)

[Pre Course Physical Training Support Booklet.pdf](#)

Selection Process

Selection Process Timeline

*Dates shown may be subject to change

Stage 1 Applications Open	9th February 2026 at 12 noon
Stage 1 Applications Closed	7th April 2026 at midnight
Stage 2 Online Testing Stage	20th - 27th April
Stage 3 Bleep Testing Stage	W/C 18th & 25th May
Stage 4 Role Related Testing Stage	W/C 15th, 22nd & 29th June
Stage 5 Interview Stage	W/C 13th, 20th, 27th July & W/C 3rd August
Stage 6 Online Test Validation	W/C 24th August
Stage 7 Medical Stage	7th, 14th, 21st & 28th September
Stage 8 Final Assessment Stage	23th & 24th October
Stage 9 Offer Stage	By 30th October
Stage 10 Pre-employment check Stage	From 30th October to 14th December
Appointment Paperwork & notice periods/ Onboarding Stage	14th December onwards
Trainee Course Commences	18th January 2027

- Please make a note of the deadlines, we do not offer extensions.
- You need to pass each stage to move onto the next stage.
- We do not accept CVs.

TWFRS Values and Behaviours

Our values shape who we are, how we work, and the impact we create. They guide our decisions, influence our relationships, and define the standards we hold ourselves to every day. We demonstrate these values not only through what we achieve, but through how we achieve it such as behaving with integrity, respect, and accountability in every interaction. TWFRS Values and Behaviours Framework builds on our values and sets out clear examples of what they look like in action, every day, in every role.

Our Values

Simply put, our value statements answer the question, “Regardless of what we’re working on, how will we work?” It is the responsibility of every individual within the Service to ensure these values are implemented and upheld.



Safety

- Be diligent and observant
- Be caring and compassionate
- Be accountable



Integrity

- Be trustworthy
- Be authentic
- Be open and honest



Inclusivity

- Encourage engagement
- Promote equality
- Be collaborative



Learning

- Be curious
- Seek and encourage development
- Continuously improve

Why is it important for candidates to share TWFRS values and demonstrate high standards of behaviours?

Firefighters play a critical role in safeguarding the public, responding to emergencies, and representing the Service in the community. For this reason, it is essential that candidates who apply to join the Service demonstrate behaviours and attitudes that align with our values and behaviours framework and Service standards.

TWFRS operates within a values-driven culture where principles such as integrity, dignity and respect, leadership, teamwork, equality, diversity and inclusion, and putting communities first guide every decision and action. These values are embedded nationally through the UK Fire & Rescue Core Code of Ethics, which sets out the standards expected of all personnel.

By demonstrating alignment with our values from the start, candidates show that they are committed to representing TWFRS with professionalism, compassion, and respect; qualities that are fundamental to maintaining public trust and delivering the high-quality service our communities expect.

Selection process important information

Throughout all stages of the selection process, candidates' overall behaviour, conduct, and professionalism will be assessed. This includes all interactions with recruitment staff, assessors, panel members, and other candidates, whether in person, online, or in written communication.

This ensures that all candidates demonstrate the standards of behaviour, integrity, respect, and professionalism expected within TWFRS. Behaviour forms a key part of our assessment of suitability for the role and will be considered alongside performance in interviews, tests, and practical assessments.

At each stage of the firefighter recruitment process, only the top-performing candidates will be selected to progress to the next stage. This approach ensures that progression is based strictly on merit, performance, and alignment with the required standards for the role. Candidates should therefore be aware that meeting the minimum criteria does not guarantee advancement, as competition is high and selection is determined by comparative performance against all applicants.

The Service reserves the right to withdraw a candidate from the recruitment process at any stage should their conduct or behaviour fall below the standards expected of those seeking to join the Service. This includes behaviour demonstrated during assessments, communication with staff, interactions with other candidates, or any activity connected to the selection process.

Stage 1 - Application Process

How to apply

Applicants interested in applying are required to submit an online application through the 'Current Vacancies' section of the TWFRS website. You can access the application link directly here: [Current Vacancies – Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service](#)

The application form is not optimised for use on a tablet or mobile device. Applicants are strongly advised to complete the form using a PC or laptop to ensure full functionality. Please ensure that all responses and contact details are accurate before submission, as amendments cannot be made once the form has been submitted.

All correspondence regarding your application and throughout all subsequent stages of the process will be sent to the email address you provide at the point of application. We recommend regularly checking your spam / junk folder and you may also wish to setup an email alert for HR.HelpDesk@twfire.gov.uk to avoid missing important updates.

Please note that we are unable to accept late applications or CVs.

Stage 2 - Online Tests

For this stage you are required to complete a selection of cognitive ability and behavioural tests. There are five tests in total including:

- Verbal Reasoning (Cognitive ability test)
- Numerical Reasoning (Cognitive ability test)
- Mechanical Reasoning (Cognitive ability test)
- Situational Judgement (Behavioural test)
- Behavioural Judgement (Behavioural test).

Cognitive ability tests

Cognitive ability tests, also known as aptitude tests or reasoning tests, are standardised assessments used to measure certain cognitive abilities. For example, verbal reasoning tests are designed to measure a candidate's ability to work with written and spoken information, whereas numerical reasoning tests are designed to measure a candidate's ability to work with quantitative and mathematical information.

Cognitive ability is important because it underpins a firefighter's capacity to learn, quickly solve problems, and make effective decisions. When several ability tests are used together, they collectively provide a good measure of overall general cognitive ability. The tests are designed to be fair to all applicants, regardless of ethnicity, gender or age, they are set at the academic level of ability relevant to the role and are in the context of a firefighter. This makes them fair, valid to the role and relevant.

Tips and advice for the cognitive ability tests

Here are a few tips to help maximise the probability of showing your true potential during the ability test stage of the recruitment process.

- 1 Familiarise yourself with the format:** Fear of the unknown is a major cause of test anxiety, particularly if candidates have no idea what to expect. On this page, we provide some example tests which outline the exact layout and format of the live assessments, putting your mind at ease and giving you the opportunity to practice beforehand.
- 2 Make sure your tech is up to date:** We strongly advise making sure that your chosen device has a stable internet connection, an up to date internet browser, and that your operating system has been updated. This will minimise the probability of unexpected errors with your device, giving you a smoother and more reliable testing experience.
- 3 Don't try to cheat:** Naturally, in the long-run you will only be cheating yourself by attempting to cheat on the FRS ability tests. The Service uses "verification tests", as part of the later stages of the selection process which will require candidates to complete short versions of the ability tests in-person, verifying the original score and catching out any potential cheaters.

- 4 Complete the tests somewhere quiet:** The tests can be completed anywhere with a stable internet connection, but to avoid distractions and interruptions we recommend completing the tests somewhere private. After finding somewhere quiet and distraction free, we also recommend turning off your phone, further reducing the probability of interruptions.
- 5 Use a calculator and rough paper:** The FRS numerical reasoning test permits the use of a calculator and rough paper, and we strongly advise having these to hand before starting the assessment. Although ultimately you may not even need to use them, having easy access to them can help put your mind at ease, and will give you more options for calculations.
- 6 Complete the assessments well before the deadline:** Although it may be tempting to wait until the last minute, this is a risky strategy. If you do encounter technical problems, little can be done to remedy the situation if you start your assessment an hour before the deadline. Instead, complete the tests well ahead of time and avoid the stress.

Tips and advice for the behavioural tests

The behavioural tests are designed to measure certain behavioural characteristics, such as personality traits, values, strengths, or behavioural styles.

TWFRS want to ensure person-job fit by identifying candidates who are most likely to thrive as a firefighter. Here are a few tips to help you complete your behavioural tests:

- 1 It's not about ability, it's about fit:** Behavioural assessments help identify person-job fit, so it's in your best interest to be honest.
- 2 Take your time:** Unlike ability tests, behavioural assessments are untimed, so there is no rush to complete your assessments. Therefore, it makes sense to complete the assessment at your own pace, as there is no benefit to completing the assessments quickly and no penalty for completing them slowly.
- 3 Thoroughly read instructions:** Behavioural assessments tend to be simple and straightforward, but misread instructions could seriously harm your chances. Take time to carefully read instructions and preparation materials beforehand. It's always worth the extra effort.
- 4 Treat questions independently:** Some candidates may overthink their responses to behavioural assessments. For example, they may worry about saying "Strongly Agree" too often, or not often enough. The tests aren't tracking your response patterns across questions, so just answer each question one at a time.
- 5 Feel free to take short breaks:** Behavioural tests don't have time limits, so if you find yourself needing a short break then feel free. Naturally, over time many find themselves going into autopilot during behavioural assessments, and taking a quick break can help refocus your attention, ensuring that everyone gets the most from the assessment.

Important information:

- You can complete the tests in any order.
- The tests are available to complete 24 hours a day.
- You must complete all 5 tests, failure to complete all of the tests by the deadline will result in your application being withdrawn.
- The tests are facilitated by an external provider who will be able to provide advice should you have any technical issues.
- We are unable to offer extensions.
- You will need to use a laptop or PC to access the tests as they are not optimised to work on a tablet or mobile.

Stage 3 - Bleep Test

All firefighters must be physically fit to do the role; we look for candidates who have a good all-round level of fitness. Candidates are required to successfully pass the 20m bleep test to demonstrate adequate fitness levels in line with cardiorespiratory fitness requirements for UK firefighting.

What the firefighter bleep test involves

- It's a 20-metre shuttle run, where you run back and forth between two lines in time with a series of beeps.
- As the test progresses, the beeps get faster, meaning the pace increases.
- Candidates must reach the minimum standard of level 8 Shuttle 8 to pass the test successfully, which demonstrates the minimum aerobic capacity needed for operational duties. If you can run 1.5 miles in 12 minutes, then you are likely to meet this standard.

Candidates should practice the bleep test before the tests where possible, there are free apps available to download from the app store, please ensure you set the distance on the app to 20 metres and mark a 20 metre course in an area that is level, smooth and free of holes / obstacles.

Level 8.8 is the minimum standard required, candidates should aim to progress beyond this level. Candidates who fail to achieve level 8.8 will not progress to the next stage.

Stage 4 - Role Related Tests

The Role-Related Tests are practical assessments designed to measure whether candidates can safely and effectively perform key physical tasks required in operational firefighting. These tests simulate real-world duties and evaluate strength, fitness, coordination, manual dexterity, confidence, the ability to follow instructions and to work in challenging environments.

Further information about each of the tests can be found below, all tests are conducted wearing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), some of the tests are timed as shown below:

1 - Ladder Climb (timed)

Purpose: Confidence working at height.

Overview: Candidates climb a 13.5-metre ladder, perform a leg-lock at height, lean back with arms outstretched, and identify a symbol on the ground.

2 - Casualty Evacuation (timed)

Purpose: Upper and lower body strength, stamina, and coordination.

Overview: Candidates drag a 55kg dummy backwards around a set course (30 metres).

3 - Ladder Lift / Ladder Lift-Lower Simulation

Purpose: Strength and safe handling of equipment.

Overview: Using a simulator, candidates lift a weighted bar to a required height and return it safely.

4 - Enclosed Space Test (timed)

Purpose: Confidence, stamina, and ability to operate in confined, low-visibility environments.

Overview: Wearing a breathing apparatus mask, candidates crawl through an enclosed space. Part of the route is completed with vision obscured.

5 - Equipment Assembly (timed)

Purpose: Manual dexterity and ability to follow instructions.

Overview: Candidates assemble and disassemble firefighting equipment following diagrams and demonstrations.

6 - Equipment Carry Test (timed)

Purpose: Strength, endurance, stamina, and safe handling techniques.

Overview: Candidates carry multiple items of firefighting equipment over set distances.

7 - 13.5m Ladder Extension

Purpose: The purpose of the test is to ensure candidates can extend, secure, and lower one of the main operational ladders used at incidents using correct technique while maintaining full control and working within safe systems of work.

Overview: The ladder extensions tests strength, coordination, safety awareness, and the ability to follow standard operational procedures. The focus is on safe, methodical handling, not speed.

The Role Related Tests take approximately 3 hours to complete. Candidates who fail to achieve the standard required will not progress to the next stage.

Stage 5 - Competency Based Interviews

Format of the interview

Interviews are conducted by a panel of two trained interviewers, who will work together to assess your suitability for the role. Panel members will ask specific questions, and each interviewer will take their own notes throughout.

You will be asked to provide real examples from your past experiences that demonstrate the key behaviours and competencies required of a firefighter in line with TWFRS' Values and Behaviours Framework.

During the interview, each question will be asked in a structured manner, and you may be asked follow-up questions to explore your example in more depth. All candidates are asked the same core questions to ensure fairness and consistency. The interviewers will assess your responses against the evidence you provide, looking for clear, specific examples that show how your actions reflect the values and behaviours of the Service

In addition to assessing competencies, behaviours and operational suitability, the interviewers will be evaluating who you are as a person, what motivates you, and whether you will be a good fit for the service.

How to structure your answers

Interviewers want specific examples of what you did, not what you would do hypothetically. You should describe your actions, decisions, behaviour and any outcomes arising as a result.

It is beneficial to format your answers using the STARE method:

- 1 - Situation** – provide the context and set the scene
- 2 - Task** – describe your role
- 3 - Action** – outline what you did / actions you took
- 4 - Result** – what happened because of your actions
- 5 - Evaluation** – evaluate what you learned from the experience.

Stage 6 - Online Test Validation

If you pass your interview, you will be required to undertake an online test validation assessment at Service Headquarters.

Candidates are required to undertake a shortened version of the tests to validate their initial testing results.

Candidates are required to pass the validation stage to progress to the fitness and medical stage.

Stage 7 - Fitness and Medical including substance abuse test

The fitness and medical assessments will take place on the same day; you can expect to be with us for approximately 2.5 hours.

Fitness Test

You will undertake a Chester Walk Test (more formally known as the Chester Treadmill Walk Test). The Chester Walk Test is an aerobic fitness assessment designed to measure cardiovascular fitness and estimate VO^2 max.

Candidates must achieve a VO^2 max of 42 ml/kg/min to pass the test as this is the national operational standard.

Medical Assessment

As part of our commitment to ensuring the highest standards of safety, professionalism, and operational readiness, all candidates progressing through to the later stages of the recruitment process will be required to undergo a comprehensive medical assessment. This assessment ensures that individuals are medically fit to perform the physically and psychologically demanding duties of a firefighter. It includes a review of your medical history, physical examination, and a range of functional tests carried out by qualified occupational health professionals.

A refusal to participate in any required substance abuse test, or a confirmed positive result, may lead to withdrawal from the recruitment process. All results and medical information will be handled confidentially by the Occupational Health team, in line with professional standards and legal requirements.

By continuing with your application, you acknowledge and agree to comply with the medical and substance testing procedures required as part of our recruitment and pre-employment checks.

You will be asked to complete a medical history questionnaire prior to attending the medical appointment.

The following assessments will be undertaken as part of the medical:

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

You are required to obtain an up-to-date record of your vaccinations from your General Practitioner prior to attending your appointment.

Please be advised that we may invite a greater number of candidates to the fitness and medical assessment stage than the number of positions available. This approach is necessary because, in some cases, we are required to request additional medical information from a candidate's General Practitioner or Specialist before confirming their suitability for the role. Such enquiries can cause unavoidable delays, and it is possible that medical clearance may not be received within the required timeframe to progress to appointment.

We also maintain a small reserve list of candidates to ensure continuity in the event that an individual who has been offered a position is subsequently withdrawn from the recruitment process.

Candidates should not assume that an invitation to attend the fitness and medical stage constitutes a guarantee of employment.

Stage 8 - Final Assessment

The Final Assessment Stage evaluates a candidate's overall suitability for the role of Firefighter. The overall aim is to confirm that candidates not only meet the required physical and practical standards but also display the right mindset, behaviours, and values to carry out the role of Firefighter effectively.

This stage brings together performance from all earlier assessments and provides a final opportunity for candidates to show they can conduct themselves safely, responsibly, and in line with Service expectations. More detailed information will be provided to candidates who progress to this stage.

Stage 9 - Conditional offers of employment

Conditional offers of employment will be issued to candidates who successfully pass all stages of the selection process. Selection decisions will be made strictly on merit, based on each candidate's performance throughout every stage of the recruitment and selection process.

All offers of employment are conditional and subject to satisfactory pre-employment checks.

Stage 10 - Pre-employment checks

As part of our commitment to ensuring a safe, professional, and legally compliant workforce, all offers of employment issued by the Service are conditional and subject to the successful completion of a series of pre-employment checks. These checks are designed to confirm your suitability for the role and to ensure that all candidates meet the national standards required for operational roles within the Service.

The following pre-employment checks will be undertaken:

1 - Identity Verification and Right to Work Checks

All candidates must provide documented proof of their identity and eligibility to work in the United Kingdom. This is a statutory requirement under UK immigration law. Evidence such as a passport, birth certificate, or relevant immigration documentation will be required and verified.

2 - Employment History and References

You will be required to supply details of your employment, education, or training history for the previous five years. Any gaps in employment must be explained and evidence provided where possible. Where possible, referee contact details should be provided for the Human Resources department of your employer. If an employment reference cannot be obtained for example if you are a student, an academic reference from a College or University may be accepted as an alternative.

3 - Criminal Record Check

A standard DBS check will be undertaken.

Applicants must not be barred from regulated work and must declare all unspent convictions at the point of application.

All disclosed convictions, as well as those identified through the appropriate criminal record checking processes, will be formally reviewed by the Head of People and Culture and a decision will be made as to candidates' suitability for the role as a result.

Applicant Guidance Document appendices

Further information regarding the selection process can be found in the applicant guidance document appendices.

Good luck with your application and thank you for considering a career with Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Firefighter Role Map

The Firefighter Role Map is used by all fire and rescue services.

The Firefighter Role Map sets out the nationally agreed functions that every firefighter must be competent in. These functions form the basis for training, assessment, performance management, and professional development throughout a firefighter's career.

Firefighter Role Map

Inform and educate your community to improve awareness of safety matters.

Take responsibility for effective performance.

Save and preserve endangered life.

Resolve operational incidents.

Protect the environment from the effects of hazardous materials.

Support the effectiveness of operational response.

Support the development of colleagues in the workplace.

Contribute to safety solutions to minimise risks to your community.

Drive, manoeuvre and redeploy fire service vehicles.

Appendix 2

Are you ready to be a Firefighter checklist

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.

Appendix 3

Medical Standards - 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.

Appendix 4

Frequently asked questions

1 What qualifications do I need to apply?

Candidates do not require any specific qualifications to apply; we instead look for candidates with the appropriate behaviors and fitness standards required to perform the role effectively.

2 Is there an age limit for applying?

- Minimum age: 18 by December 2026
- Maximum age: No upper age limit

3 I do not live in Tyne and Wear, can I still apply?

Yes. Candidates should, however, consider their commute to Station should they receive a formal offer of employment.

4 I have made a mistake on my application form, can I make changes?

You are unable to make changes once you have submitted the application form. Unfortunately, we are unable to make any changes on your behalf either.

5 There is a problem with the system, who do I contact?

You can contact us by emailing HR.HelpDesk@twfire.gov.uk. Please note that we will respond to you as quickly as we can during our normal office hours: 09:00 – 17:00 Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays).

6 I have missed the deadline can I have an extension?

Unfortunately, no. This campaign is strictly timetabled, which is why we pre-publish the dates of each stage.

7 Will there be a talent pool created for candidates who are successful in the process but who are not provided with an offer of employment?

It is our intention to create a talent pool, the talent pool will remain active throughout 2027.

8 Can I choose which station I work at?

No, firefighters are deployed onto Station according to Service needs and may move between stations for operational or development reasons as required.

9 How long does the selection process take?

The selection process can take up to 12 months from application to job offer.

10 I am unable to attend one of the selection stages due to an existing commitment, can I request an alternative date?

Unfortunately, we are unable to accommodate requests for alternative assessment dates for any stage of the process. Candidates should ensure they are able to attend all dates listed on the selection timeline in the Candidate Guidance Document.

11 How long is the initial training course?

Training typically lasts 15 weeks and is conducted at Service Headquarters, leave is not permitted throughout the 15-week initial training course.

12 Will I be paid during my training?

Yes, trainee firefighters receive a salary during training.

13 Can I apply if I have tattoos, piercings, or facial hair?

- Tattoos are usually acceptable unless offensive.
- Jewellery must not be worn operationally.
- Facial hair must not interfere with the breathing apparatus seal, candidates should be clean shaven.

14 I have driving offences, do I need to declare these?

You must tell us if your licence is endorsed. You will be asked to provide 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. A Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check will be carried out at 'standard level' for those who are offered employment.

15 Will a pre-existing medical condition automatically prevent me from becoming a firefighter?

No, a pre-existing condition does not automatically prevent you from applying.

Pre-existing medical conditions are reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the Services Medical Advisor and Occupational Health Department during the fitness and medical stage.

Please be advised, we are unable to provide advice regarding pre-existing medical conditions to candidates prior to this stage.