

Firefighter Recruitment Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

GENERAL

How do I apply?

Once you have checked you are eligible to apply, please keep an eye on our website for details of how to apply.

If we are not currently recruiting, you can still register your interest using the online Registration of Interest form. We will then contact you when the next recruitment process begins.

What qualifications do I need to become a firefighter?

No formal qualifications are required to become a firefighter. However, you will need to pass a series of psychometric tests as part of the application process.

What are the entry tests to join the fire service?

Details of the recruitment process, including what each stage entails, is available in the relevant Candidate Information Pack available on our website.

How long does the recruitment process take?

Each recruitment process can differ but it takes approximately 16 weeks from receiving applications to the start of a training course. The timeline for each recruitment process will be published in the Candidate Information Packs as soon as dates have been set.

What are the upper and lower age limits for joining as a firefighter?

The minimum age before you can join the fire service is 18 years old. Applicants can apply at 17 years old provided they will be 18 at the start of their training course.

Do Fire and Rescue Services accept applications from females?

South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue is an equal opportunities employer and is determined to ensure that our workforce reflects the diverse society which we serve. We actively encourage applications from groups underrepresented within SYFR including females.

Would somebody's physical size have any bearing on their application?

A candidate's physical size does not have any bearing on their application. This is a popular misconception due to the fact that there used to be restrictions on height, weight and chest expansion. Candidates are expected to pass strength and fitness tests as part of the process. These are at a level that is achievable by men and women of all different sizes and builds.

How fit do I have to be?

All candidates will be required to pass the physical and medical elements of the process. Clarification of the elements continued within the physical tests is available and we do offer individual advice and guidance in relation to improving your physical fitness and stamina.



I have a beard for religious reasons; will I have to shave this off in order to be a Firefighter?

Unfortunately, yes. The fire service respects your religious needs however there are health and safety reasons why facial hair below the top lip cannot be accepted. As a Firefighter you will be required to wear a facemask when you are wearing breathing apparatus. To ensure that the facemask forms a seal around the face, it is necessary to keep the face shaven to prevent any dangerous airborne chemicals entering the facemask. The fire service is working closely with the manufacturers of the equipment to look for new ways of overcoming the issues with facial hair, however an acceptable alternative that would meet health and safety requirements, has not yet been found.

I have a disability, can I still apply?

The Equality Act 2010 describes a disability as:

'a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on a persons ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'

You will be asked if you have a disability as part of the recruitment process and asked to give details of the type of adjustments you may require in order to take part in the selection process and to fulfil the role of a Firefighter, should you be successful. Each case will be considered on an individual basis and if reasonable adjustments can be made to enable you to take part in the selection process and to fulfil the role of a Firefighter then your application will proceed.

I am dyslexic, will I be able to cope with the psychometric tests?

Dyslexia is considered to be a disability (see above) and you will be asked if you have a disability as part of the recruitment process. You should answer yes so that we can make reasonable adjustments for you. We will ask for a report to confirm the type and extent of your dyslexia and then use this information to determine the reasonable adjustments that can be made. For example, this may mean that you are given additional time for timed written tests.

I have a criminal record. Can I still apply and join as a firefighter?

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 during the application process. 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 you will be required to complete a basic disclosure online. A basic disclosure certificate will inform us of any unspent convictions. Please note, it is your responsibility to be sure of the status of any prior conviction(s). If your disclosure certificate highlights any conviction(s) that you have not declared to us your application will be withdrawn.

What can I do to better my chances of getting in the Fire and Rescue Service?

To improve your chances of becoming a firefighter, you need to stay fit and should gain as much information as you can about the role of today's firefighters within South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue.



This can be achieved by visiting our website and signing up to our newsletter to keep up to date with service news and priorities.

Will it be quicker and easier to join because I've been in the forces?

Everyone has an equal chance of applying to the fire and rescue service, and there are no quick ways in, even if you're leaving the forces. The fact you have been in the forces will help, regarding discipline and the physical side of the job. However being in the fire service is different than being in the forces in more ways than one.

Members of the forces will have to start by filling out an application form and completing the tests with everyone else. There is no process for ex forces to transfer straight across, just as there is no process for firefighters to transfer to the forces without going through recruitment.

If you have any further queries, please contact recruitment@syfire.gov.uk

MEDICAL

I have been told by my doctor that I have Asthma. Will this stop me being a Firefighter?

Some of the substances you may be exposed to as a firefighter, could trigger an Asthma attack to those already sensitised. GP's may diagnose Asthma based on the individual clinical presentation only (what the patient says and appears to have) without specific testing. This diagnosis can stay with a person throughout their life, yet, they may not be truly asthmatic, simply very chesty and short of breath when they saw the doctor.

If this is you, then it is important you declare this to us at an early stage in the process. Before our Occupational Health Physician (OHP) makes a decision, we will ask your GP about the diagnosis given and to provide us with a specific report based on the most recent NICE Guidelines for Asthma Diagnosis. We requires specific testing results to confirm or exclude the condition.

Each case is assessed individually and further testing (additional to any by your GP) in the form of a treadmill test, with multiple lung function assessments, may be required before seeing our OHP. This testing will carried out our CHQ by our Occupational Health team.

The decision of our OHP is final.

I am a diabetic. Can I still apply?

SYFR will consider your application, however we will need a report from your Specialist Consultant providing the following information allowing an individual risk assessment to be undertaken:-

- Category of Diabetes (Type 1 or 2)
- Evidence of stability of control
- Evidence of blood sugar levels (HbA1c) over a recent 12 month period

I have a medical condition – can I still be a Firefighter?

Probably yes – you need to declare your condition – giving as much information as possible on your declaration of health form. We will get information from your GP (and where



relevant Armed Forces) and will get further information via Consultants, testing etc. as appropriate.

Each case is taken on its own consideration. In the event that you are not considered fit, this will be because your condition is likely to worsen or be a safety issue to you and others. Where possible you will be given the opportunity to train with reasonable adjustments, if necessary.

Where musculoskeletal surgery has taken place, generally we would assess at two years' post-surgery.

Where there has been a history of a psychological condition generally we would wish the individual to have been symptom free for at least two years.

What are the eyesight requirements to join the fire service?

Some eye conditions are not accepted within the operational side of our service (firefighting) but allowable in non-operational roles. The current guidance for fire fighter eyesight standards are as below:

- 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.
- Normal binocular field of vision.
- Near vision: N12 at 30cm unaided with both eyes open (applicants \geq 25 years)
- Near vision: N6 at 30cm unaided with both eyes open (applicants $<$ 25 years)
- No history of night blindness or ocular disease likely to progress and result in future failure of the visual standards for Firefighters.
- Individuals with some colour deficiency in their eyesight may be unfit for service as a Firefighter. Specific professional testing might be needed, and, where required, an occupational functional test carried out.
- Individuals who have undergone laser surgery can be considered, provided 12 months have elapsed and the individual can satisfy the above criteria.
- Use of aids to vision is allowed.
- Modern soft contact lenses are now considered safe to use on the fire ground.

All recruits eye assessments will be made on an individual basis. Our Occupational Health Physician decision is final.

What are the hearing requirements?

I know I have a problem with my hearing, can I still be a Firefighter.

Not everyone has perfect hearing. With age, and noise exposure, hearing does get worse. Knowing that, South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue take account of age and previous employment when assessing hearing to become a fire fighter. A simple hearing test, in a sound reducing booth allows us to record the quietest sound you can hear over low, mid-range and high frequencies. The result is your 'hearing threshold'.

Our hearing standards are such that those with some reduction in hearing do pass this assessment without any problems. Where a concern is raised about hearing ability, we ask the individual to take part in a functional hearing test. This involves having the ability to



hear certain commands, and responding to them appropriately while being exposed to increased background noise; as you would when exposed to fire fighting.

The results of all tests are seen by our Occupational Health Physician (OHP) and his decision is final.

I wear a hearing aid, does this stop me from applying?

We cannot prevent you from applying for a position with South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue, even as a fire fighter. Your hearing ability will be assessed against our standards and may include a functional hearing test for recruit fire fighter positions.

If you have any other medical queries or wish to discuss any of these issues further, please email recruitment@syfire.gov.uk and we will put you in touch with our Occupational Health Unit.

