

# Frequently Asked Questions

## GENERAL

### How do I apply?

You will need to register your interest by emailing [recruitment@syfire.gov.uk](mailto:recruitment@syfire.gov.uk) with the following details:

- 1) Title
- 2) Forename
- 3) Surname
- 4) Email address
- 5) Telephone number
- 6) Address

You will be emailed a username and password which will enable you to log on to our online recruitment system. The online application process will open at midday on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> July 2015 and will close at midday on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> July 2015.

### 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 on our website.

### How long does the recruitment process take?

The timeline for the recruitment process is available on our website.

### 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 on 15 October 2015.

### 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 online 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 then make reasonable adjustments for you at the relevant stages of the selection process. We normally ask for a report to confirm the type and extent of your dyslexia and then use this information to determine the reasonable adjustment that can be made. For example, this may mean that you are given additional time in the online 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 update 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.

## **MEDICAL**

### **I have a medical history of Asthma, can I still apply?**

SYFR will consider applications from applicants with a history of asthma, past or current, however each application will require individual an assessment. This will include;

- Careful history that focuses on current symptoms and treatment requirements,
- Potential triggers including exercise and irritant exposures
- The frequency and history of exacerbations

Applicants whose asthma causes symptoms with exercise or exposure to common irritants such as cold air, smoke or fumes (i.e. triggers that are likely to be encountered at work) irrespective of any treatment they are using, and those with frequent exacerbations provoked by infection or seasonal allergy are not likely to be considered fit for fire fighting.

In some cases specialist testing in the form of a histamine challenge test will be arranged

### **I am a diabetic. Can I still apply?**

SYFR will consider your application, however we will need a report from your Specialist Consultant requesting the following information and an individual risk assessment will 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/or sports clubs) 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?**

The current guidance for eyesight standards are as below, however assessments will be made on an individual basis.

- Use of aids to vision is allowed
- Modern soft contact lenses are now considered safe to use on the fire ground.
- 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 any ocular disease likely to progress and result in future failure of the visual standards for Firefighters.
- Individuals with protanopia, deuteranopia, monochromatism and tritanopia/tritanomaly are generally unfit for service as a Firefighter. Individuals with protanomaly rarely meet the required standards while deuteranomalous individuals should be safe for Firefighting. Where required an occupational functional test will be carried out.
- Individuals who have undergone laser surgery can be considered, provided 12 months have elapsed and the individual can satisfy the above criteria.