

# BECOMING EXTRAORDINARY

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

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PREVENTING PROTECT

Information for Firefighter Applicants  
version 4

**ROYAL BERKSHIRE  
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

**MAKING BERKSHIRE SAFER**

## Contents

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Introduction	2
Your career in the Fire Service	3
Firefighter Job Profile	4
Person Specification	5
Application Process	6
Improving your fitness	8
Fire and Rescue Service details	10

## Retained Firefighters

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The information in this booklet is intended as a guide for applicants who wish to become regular Firefighters.

However in many areas, especially small towns and villages, there are opportunities for Retained Firefighters – trained to deal with a wide range of situations and incidents, Retained Firefighters are on standby, waiting to answer the call. That means that they must live or work within a few minutes of the fire station.

As a Retained Firefighter you would be paid an annual payment plus a fee for each call-out or training session. If your employer agrees, you could be on standby while you work, or you can be on standby when not at work.

The entry requirements for Retained Firefighters are the same as for regular Firefighters, but the entry and initial training processes are usually different. Please contact your local Fire Service for details.

## Equality of opportunity

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We welcome applications from all parts of the community and value the strengths that a diverse workforce can bring. If you have a disability, please contact us to discuss any adjustments that we could make that would remove any unnecessary barriers to you becoming a Firefighter.

# Introduction

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The Fire Service can offer you a satisfying, exciting and varied career, and the aim of this booklet is to give you a better insight into what the work involves.

Fighting fires is in fact just a small part of everyday work. Fire protection and community education are a major and increasing part of a Firefighter's role. When called to a "shout" they could be dealing with any type of major or minor disaster; road, rail or air crashes; floods; chemical spills or rescuing people trapped in lifts or other confined spaces. This requires a range of personal skills such as understanding, reliability, flexibility and the ability to work in a team.

While you might start as a Firefighter, there are plenty of opportunities for career development if you want it, and how quickly you progress will depend on you.

## The work of the Fire Service

### Dealing with emergencies

Technology obviously plays a major role in helping Firefighters to tackle emergencies as efficiently and effectively as possible. For example, computers in control rooms store street plans, details of high risk buildings and the latest information on hazardous materials. This ensures that as soon as an emergency call is received - whether a fire, chemical spillage or road traffic collision - controllers can immediately assess what appliances are required to attend. On attending a fire, the Firefighters have to make a very quick assessment of the situation - as materials used in homes and factories change, so does the way a fire is tackled. A house fire may require two appliances whereas a commercial or factory fire may involve several more appliances as well as requiring thousands of litres of water and foam, plus the use of specialist equipment.

There is also the hazard of toxic fumes and heavy smoke which can be generated from modern materials - for example foam-filled furniture.

This makes tackling a fire much more difficult and Firefighters always go fully protected with equipment such as breathing apparatus as well as personal radio sets to keep them in contact with colleagues at the scene, or back at HQ. Firefighters will also have a range of other equipment at their disposal depending on the incident to which they have been called; cutting and lifting gear to deal with traffic accidents; protective suits for use at chemical spills and thermal imaging cameras to help locate victims in smoke filled rooms.

### Fire safety - a key area of work

Specialist training for officers involved in fire safety is provided at the National Fire Service College in Gloucestershire and within individual Services. Based on the study of Fire Engineering, there is also the opportunity to study other relevant academic qualifications, such as the membership of the Institution of Fire Engineers. Training in fire safety is critical to much of the day to day work of a Firefighter. Factories, offices, shops, hotels, boarding houses and railway premises are all required to comply with certain fire precaution measures, which include providing adequate means of escape. It is the job of the Fire Service to ensure that these requirements are being followed and effectively maintained. We also provide specialist fire protection advice to local authorities responsible for licensing buildings such as theatres, cinemas, clubs and sports grounds. Hospitals, schools, nursing homes and many other institutions also need professional advice regarding fire safety

Another important area of work is promoting fire safety through education and publicity to the general public. Close links between individual stations and their communities are vital in this, and building these gives Firefighters the opportunity to take part in all sorts of events and activities that you might not have imagined could count as "work"!

# Your Career in the Fire Service

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## The first phase of your career

For regular Firefighters, initial training takes place at a training centre within the region, and provides all the basic theoretical and practical training required to start operational duties. This may take up to 15 weeks, during which no holidays may be taken. In some Services the course is residential.

## Training throughout your career

After your initial training you will join a “watch” at a station, where your skills and experience will be developed through a National Vocational Qualification programme. On successful completion of the programme you will progress to Competent Firefighter status.

You will receive further training throughout your career - in-service training programmes ensure your potential is maximised and that you are kept up to date with the latest firefighting and specialist techniques.

## Is it for you?

The following list of questions is designed to help you to decide whether being a Firefighter is really for you.

- Are you genuinely interested in people? Can you get on with people from a variety of backgrounds and cultures?
- Have you worked as part of a close knit team? Can you work under pressure without letting the rest of your team down?
- Can you think quickly and solve problems when you know that a lot depends on the suggestions you come up with?
- 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 Fire Service when you are at work and when you aren't?
- Are you committed to always developing your skills? Are you prepared to study on top of your normal working day?
- Are you prepared for the demands of a disciplined uniformed service in which you will have to take orders from other people?
- Could you accept the need to keep to rules that tell you what you can and cannot wear and the standard of appearance that you must maintain?
- Are you committed to maintaining your physical fitness? Is regular exercise a part of your everyday life?
- Are you prepared to work day and night shifts, evenings, weekends and public holidays?
- Are you a practical person who likes to work with their hands and with equipment? For example, do you enjoy making things or finding out how things work?
- Are you someone who can be relied upon to be somewhere on time? Do others see you as dependable?
- Are you prepared to work outside in all kinds of weather – when it's wet and cold and you don't know when a job will finish?
- Can you cope with routine, knowing that you may have to do certain tasks every shift, but with the possibility of sudden interruptions?

If you think that you can honestly answer “yes” to all these questions, then a career as a Firefighter could be just what you are looking for.

You will be a responsible member of a close-knit and well organised team - your safety and the safety of others depends on it. It is not a job which can be undertaken lightly, but can provide a sense of real achievement and value.

# Firefighter Job Profile

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## Purpose

To provide operational firefighting, rescue and humanitarian services for the benefit of the general public in and around the area.

## Duties and responsibilities:

### Incidents

- Attend and deal with incidents involving fire and other incidents such as road traffic collisions, extricate victims or casualties, and render the scene safe from risk of fire.
- Minimise distress and suffering, including giving first aid.
- Instigate protective measures to safeguard members of the public from hazards, including those resulting from dangerous buildings or structures.
- Mitigate the effects of damage to property as a result of freak or exceptional climatic conditions.
- Prevent suffering to and effect the rescue of animals trapped by fire or other causes.
- Provide physical assistance and rescue skills to aid other Emergency Services at major incidents.
- Assist authorities at incidents involving hazardous substances, and protect the public and the environment from the effects of those substances.

### Fire protection

- Help to educate members of the community about fire safety by giving general fire safety advice and guidance to individuals or groups.
- Carry out fire safety inspections of premises.

## Routine duties

- Check, test, clean and maintain all firefighting equipment.
- Inspect and test fire hydrants in accordance with Service policy.
- Maintain paper and electronic records and undertake administrative tasks.
- Host and guide members of the public visiting Fire Service premises.

## Personal

- Maintain standards of dress and personal appearance as required by Service policy, reflecting a proper image of a uniformed service.
- Maintain the level of fitness necessary to carry out all the duties of a Firefighter.
- Know the local geography and be aware of the risks, possible hazards and water supplies within the area.
- Have an understanding of and commitment to equal opportunities, and treat all colleagues and members of the public with dignity and respect.
- Ensure personal safety and that of others, co-operating fully with health and safety initiatives, guidance and instructions.
- Participate in a continuous training programme by attending courses, lectures, exercises, practice drills and other forms of training to maintain competence.
- Undertake any special role or assignment as required as a member of a specialist or project team.

## Person Specification

	Essential	Desirable
<b>Skills and aptitudes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good verbal communication skills.</li> <li>• Able to communicate effectively in writing.</li> <li>• Able to work effectively with others.</li> <li>• Understands and respects diversity and adopts a fair and ethical approach to others.</li> <li>• High degree of practical / manual ability.</li> <li>• Committed and able to to develop self and others.</li> <li>• Able to be confident and resilient in highly challenging situations.</li> <li>• Able to understand, recall, apply and adapt relevant information.</li> <li>• Able to be aware of danger and react appropriately.</li> <li>• A conscientious and proactive approach to work.</li> <li>• Open to, and supportive of, change.</li> </ul>	
<b>Knowledge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aware of the main elements of the job.</li> <li>• Aware of the role of the Fire Service in the community.</li> </ul>	
<b>Experience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successful contribution to teamwork.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience of practical work.</li> <li>• Work related to community service.</li> <li>• Teamwork in a disciplined environment.</li> </ul>
<b>Qualifications</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current EU driving licence.</li> <li>• LGV driving licence.</li> <li>• First Aid qualification.</li> </ul>
<b>Other requirements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to satisfy the medical and fitness requirements to the role, including minimum standards of eyesight, colour vision and hearing.</li> <li>• Able to work at height and in confined spaces.</li> <li>• Committed to providing a service to the community.</li> </ul>	

## Application Process

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The first step is to obtain an application form - precise details of when and how these will be made available will depend on which Service you are applying to. Please contact them or see their website (details on page 10).

Applications will be screened and shortlisted applicants will be invited to take 3 written tests and a questionnaire.

If you are successful at the written stage you will be invited to take the physical and practical tests.

Successful applicants will then be invited to an interview.

### Qualifying criteria

You must not have undertaken the National Firefighter Selection process within the previous 3 months, and you must not have an application pending with another Service.

Before being offered employment, you will be required to produce documentary evidence of your entitlement to work in the UK, in accordance with the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996.

A full driving licence is not required before employment, but without one a Firefighter cannot progress to Competent status and pay.

No formal educational qualifications are required.

### Declaration of offences

If you have a previous criminal record, this will not necessarily disqualify you from employment. All applications are considered on merit and in particular, whether the offence has a bearing on your suitability for employment as a Firefighter. However Firefighters do need to have a high level of self-discipline, and be people in whom the public can have complete confidence.

You will therefore be required to declare any conviction that is not yet 'spent' within the meaning of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, and any charges that are pending. A Criminal Records Bureau check will be made.

If you are in any doubt about your declaration, you should seek independent legal advice.

### Written tests

There are three ability tests and a questionnaire, which will take around 3 hours to complete. These tests are conducted under strict conditions to ensure that the process is fair to everybody. Before the tests you will have the opportunity to work through some examples and ask any questions that you have about them.

If you have been assessed and certified as dyslexic, you can be given additional time to complete the tests. You will need to produce your certificate when you take the test if you want to take advantage of this.

The four written elements are:

- The **Situational Awareness and Problem Solving Test** – assesses ability to ensure the safety of themselves and others, and to use information to solve problems.
- The **Understanding Information Test** – assesses ability to read and understand written information of the type that a Firefighter is likely to experience.
- The **Working with Numbers Test** – assesses applicant's ability to understand and work with numerical information of the type that a Firefighter is likely to experience.
- **National Firefighter Questionnaire (NFQ)** – assesses candidates' attitudes and motivation in relation to seven scales each based on one of the Fire and Rescue Services Personal Qualities and Attributes (PQAs)

Practice booklet for these tests will be made available in advance.

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## Physical Tests

Candidates who are successful in the written tests will be invited to take a series of six physical and practical tests related to work within the Fire Service, designed to assess physical skills, fitness and manual dexterity. You will be given information about each test before you are assessed. Before the practical tests, you will be given a demonstration.

Each test will involve physical effort. In some cases, this will be a high level over a short period, so you are advised not to eat or drink immediately before your test.

The Service considers personal safety very seriously and the equipment you will use during the tests, will have been examined, tested and maintained.

You will require a pair of training shoes or suitable footwear for running, T-shirt and tracksuit bottoms, or similar. You will be provided with other protective clothing.

You will be asked to complete a Statement of Health Form and you will not be allowed to take the tests if you have not completed this form.

- **Ladder Climb** – Candidates wear a safety harness and ascend two thirds of the way up a 13.5 metre ladder and take a leg-lock. They are then asked to lean backwards and outstretch their arms to the sides, and then whilst looking over their shoulder they are to say out loud what symbol is being shown by the assessor at ground level.
- **Casualty Evacuation** – Candidates drag a 55kg dummy backwards around a 30m course, by a carrying handle fixed to the dummy.
- **Ladder Lift** – Candidates 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** – Candidates put on a facemask and with un-obscured vision make their way through a crawl and walkway. Once inside the crawl/walkway they have their vision obscured and return to the start.
- **Equipment Assembly** – Candidates 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** – Candidates carry items of equipment up and down a course between two cones placed 25m apart.

## Interview

If you pass the physical tests you will be invited back for an interview.

You will be asked questions designed to find out how you have used personal qualities and attributes that are important for Firefighters:

- Working with Others.
- Commitment to Diversity & Integrity.
- Commitment to Self Development.
- Commitment to Excellence.
- Communicating Effectively.

Your interviewer will ask you to give examples of experiences where you could have used these qualities and attributes. Evidence of appropriate communication skills will also be sought. The interview is also an opportunity for you to ask questions about the job.

## Medical

If you are successful at interview you will be required to undertake a full medical examination by the Fire Service Medical Officer, and a full eye test by an ophthalmic specialist.

A decision on whether an individual is fit to undertake fire fighting duties will take into account the advice from the Occupational Health Physician together with any

## Improving your fitness

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reasonable adjustments that may be made in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

Your medical records from your General Practitioner will be required, for which you will be asked to give consent at the appropriate time.

Eyesight, both aided and unaided, will be tested to ensure that you would be able to perform the range of tasks required, in the type of light conditions that you would encounter. Minimum standards of colour perception must be met.

Hearing and lung function will also be tested.

If you have any of the following conditions you should seek advice from your own GP before applying about whether the nature of the work, the environments in which it may be carried out, or the attendance pattern, (which includes the possibility of lengthy hours at major incidents), would be detrimental to your health:

- Significant joint injury or disease, especially if it affects the back or knees.
- Chronic respiratory problem, eg asthma.
- A history of hypertension, diabetes, epilepsy, cardiac or circulatory disease.
- Contact dermatitis, psoriasis or eczema.
- Vertigo, claustrophobia or acrophobia (fear of heights).

### Appointment

Following medical clearance, and subject to satisfactory references, you will be issued with an Appointment Letter.

**You must not give notice to a current employer until you have received confirmation of medical clearance and an appointment letter has been issued.**

You do not need to be a bodybuilder in order to pass the physical tests or to be a Firefighter, but you will need a higher than average level of fitness. It is suggested that you undertake a suitable programme of physical training in advance of the selection tests. Participation in any physical training programme is undertaken on a voluntary basis and the fire authority accepts no responsibility for any injury caused as a result. If you are unsure about what physical training you should undertake, you should consult an appropriately qualified fitness advisor or seek medical advice.



## Fire and Rescue Service Details

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### **Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service**

Cambridge Street  
Aylesbury HP20 1BD

01296 424 666  
[www.bucksfire.gov.uk](http://www.bucksfire.gov.uk)

### **East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service**

20 Upperton Road  
Eastbourne  
BN21 1EU

0845 130 8855  
[www.esfb.org](http://www.esfb.org)

### **Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service**

Leigh Road  
Eastleigh SO50 9SJ

023 8064 4000  
[human.resources@hantsfire.gov.uk](mailto:human.resources@hantsfire.gov.uk)  
[www.hantsfire.gov.uk](http://www.hantsfire.gov.uk)

### **Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service**

58 St Johns Road  
Newport  
Isle of Wight PO30 1LT

01983 823 194  
[fire.service@iow.gov.uk](mailto:fire.service@iow.gov.uk)  
[www.iwfire.org.uk](http://www.iwfire.org.uk)

### **Kent Fire and Rescue Service**

The Godlands  
Straw Mill Hill  
Tovil  
Maidstone ME15 6XB

01622 692 121  
email via website  
[www.kent.fire-uk.org](http://www.kent.fire-uk.org)

### **Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service**

Sterling Road  
Kidlington OX5 2DU

0800 5870 870  
[fire.personnel@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:fire.personnel@oxfordshire.gov.uk)  
[www.oxfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk)

### **Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service**

103 Dee Road  
Reading RG30 4FS

0118 932 2260  
[recruitment@rbfrs.co.uk](mailto:recruitment@rbfrs.co.uk)  
[www.rbfrs.co.uk](http://www.rbfrs.co.uk)

### **Surrey Fire and Rescue Service**

St David's, 70 Wray Park Road  
Reigate RH2 0EJ.

0845 6009 009  
email via website  
[www.surreycc.gov.uk](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk)

### **West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service**

Northgate  
Chichester PO19 1BD

01243 786 211  
[psu.fire@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:psu.fire@westsussex.gov.uk)  
[www.westsussex.gov.uk](http://www.westsussex.gov.uk)

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