

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Wholetime Firefighter  
Recruitment





## Frequently asked questions - information prior to applying

### **How old do I need to be to join the fire service?**

You may apply at the age of 17 years old and 6 months but you have to be at least 18 years of age to be appointed. There is no rigid upper age limit.

### **How long does the recruitment process take?**

The process will take approximately 6 months from the date of application to the date of commencing the training course. We will endeavour to keep candidates informed and updated at each stage of the selection process.

### **How do I apply?**

Details of how to apply will be made [available on our website](#) prior to the commencement of any wholetime firefighter recruitment process.

### **I have a conviction may I still apply?**

The Service undertakes to operate effective and appropriate systems to comply with, and fulfil the principles of, the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. Applicants for employment with criminal convictions will be assessed on their relevant skills, qualifications and experience. Applicants would only become ineligible to proceed if past offences are directly relevant to the job concerned and where it is judged that the applicant, if appointed, would pose a significant risk to the Service, the public, property or public funds

### **I'm not a particularly strong swimmer and I understand some Fire Services require their applicants to be able to swim to a certain level - does RBFRS have these requirements?**

While there is no formal requirement to swim in the role map of a firefighter, firefighters will be expected to be able to self-rescue in situations where there may be difficulties in water – e.g. during flooding periods etc. Hence the need for individuals to be confident in water. We have one Station which crews the rescue boat, as such there is a requirement for individuals posted to this station to be a skilled and confident swimmer.

### **How long is the training?**

Details of the training will be provided during the recruitment process. The most recent training course was run both in-house at the Training Centre Whitley Wood, Reading RG2 8FS which was (non-residential), and externally at the Fire Service College, London Rd, Moreton-in-Marsh GL56 0RH which was residential. The course ran over a period of approximately 12 weeks.

### **What are working hours / shifts?**

The current shift pattern is 2 day shifts, followed by 2 night shifts then 4 days off duty. This cycle is then repeated. The day shifts are 0900 hours to 1800 hours and the night shifts are 1800 hours to 0900 hours.



**Would I have to work weekend and public holidays?**

Firefighters whose shift/work pattern falls on a weekend or public holiday will be required to work. There is the option to take leave subject to a maximum number of people being on leave at any one time. This is to make sure our fire engines have enough people on duty to crew them.

**How much will I get paid?**

Information on our pay scales can be found on our website

<https://www.rbfrs.co.uk/careers/wholetime-firefighter/wholetime-pay-scales/>.

**Can I choose which fire station I am posted to?**

You will be asked for your preference of which station you would like to be posted to, but, whilst every effort is made to place trainees at their preferred station, the final decision will be based on the operational needs of the Service.

**Why have you restricted applications to individuals who live within a 30 mile radius from the centre of Reading?**

This requirement is in place to assist us in managing the high volume of applications we receive and to ensure applicants are invested in and committed to serving the communities of Royal Berkshire.

**If I'm unsuccessful at any stage will I be able to obtain feedback?**

Unfortunately, due to the volume of candidates that apply it is not possible to provide feedback on individual applications.

**Is further interview guidance available?**

An interview guidance booklet will be automatically sent to all those who are invited to interview later within the recruitment process. This will provide details on what to expect from the interview, how to prepare and some general tips/advice.

**How can I improve on my interview?**

Higher scoring candidates in the interview process tend to be able to draw on a range of experiences across a number of aspects of their life. These candidates explained the situation, the task and actions taken together with the outcomes for each example they were asked to provide.

**Why don't you give application packs to the individuals who attend 'Have a Go' events to take away/ make them available at fire stations?**

Not all 'Have A Go' attendees choose to pursue a career in the fire service and, in addition, fire stations do not have personnel available to deal with large numbers of ad hoc visitors. Our applications process is managed online.



**Can I have a second job?**

Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service has a policy that secondary employment has to be authorised by the Service. Your secondary employment must not affect your ability to complete your initial firefighter training programme or compromise your ability to attend work on your allocated rota pattern.

**If my faith requires me to fast, can I still be a Firefighter?**

Yes, you can still fast, but it is important that all members of the Service are able to perform their core role whilst on duty. It is important to recognise that dehydration can affect a person very quickly. An individual may feel well but very quickly succumb to the adverse effects of dehydration. We encourage staff who choose to fast to discuss it with their line manager. Employees have a responsibility for being fit for duty and, where fasting has affected a member of staff adversely, they must tell their manager immediately.

**As a practising Sikh, can I still be a Firefighter and wear a turban?**

A new clause of the Deregulation Bill 2015 extends the existing exemption for Sikhs to have to wear a safety helmet under the Employment Act in all workplaces. However there are exclusions for emergency response services and the military, which apply only in hazardous operational situations when the wearing of a safety helmet is considered necessary. These include for example, entering a burning building where protective clothing needs to be worn to enclose the whole body, situations such as bomb disposal, or when dealing with hazardous materials like chemical leaks, bio-hazards or radiation.

**I have a beard for religious reasons, will I have to shave it off in order to be a firefighter?**

As a firefighter, you will be required to wear a facial mask when you are wearing breathing apparatus. To ensure that the mask forms an air-tight seal around the face, it is necessary to keep the face shaven to prevent any dangerous contaminant from entering the facial mask.

**My faith requires me to allocate certain times of the day for prayer. Will this be accommodated?**

Due to the nature of the role, there may be times when this is not possible. However, we actively support employees who wish to pray at work to balance their individual beliefs with operational needs.

**Do you have quotas for women and ethnic minority recruits?**

No, we don't have such quotas, but we encourage and welcome applications from these groups because they're under-represented within our workforce. However, all applicants are assessed purely on merit and to the same standard.

**I have a disability. Can I still apply?**

Yes, you will be asked if you have a disability as part of the recruitment process and 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 fulfil the role of a Firefighter, then your application will be progressed.

**I am dyslexic. Will I be able to cope with the online ability tests?**

Dyslexia is considered to be a disability and you will be asked if you have a disability as part of the recruitment process. Should you answer 'yes' we can make reasonable adjustments for you at the relevant stages of the selection process. We ask for a report/evidence to confirm the type and extent of your dyslexia. We will then use this information to decide if a reasonable adjustment can be made – for example, you may be given extra time to complete an online test. We will need the report/evidence to be submitted prior to undertaking the tests so the appropriate adjustments can be considered and any adjustments made.

**I wear glasses and have had corrective eye surgery. Can I apply?**

Recruits will need to provide an optician's report at medical stage. You will need to meet the following standards:

- The minimum uncorrected vision should be 6/18 in the better eye and 6/24 in the worse eye
- Will not have undergone refractive surgery in the past 12 months and provided the limit of surgical correction does not exceed 8D. Before being accepted into a role, recruits will be required to undertake a Log MAR test carried out by our Occupational Health team
- Normal binocular visual field in each eye
- Have no history of night blindness or ocular disease that is likely to progress and result in the failure of visual standards for operational Firefighters
- Have the appropriate level of colour perception

**I am colour blind. Can I apply?**

When you go for your eye test, the optician will test you for colour vision. Individuals with either normal colour vision or slightly abnormal green colour vision are suitable for appointment to the Fire Service.

**Do you have to have good hearing?**

Yes, there is a requirement to have good hearing in line with functional standards (with artificial aids, where applicable).

**Would somebody's size affect their application?**

No – this is a popular misconception, because there used to be restrictions on height, weight and chest expansion. Candidates are expected to pass fitness tests as part of the recruitment process. The tests are at a level that's achievable by people of all different sizes and builds.

