

Wholetime Firefighter Recruitment

Candidate Information Pack

2025



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INTRODUCTION

The role of a Firefighter

Our firefighters are the beating heart of our service – providing fire cover to Northumberland from 15 fire stations across Wholetime, Day Staffing and On Call duty systems.

All of our operational staff are trained to the highest possible standard, ensuring they are ready and able to respond to emergencies across the county. However, the role is no longer just about responding to incidents. We now expect our firefighters to understand the importance of working alongside partners to prevent incidents occurring. To achieve this, we must be an integral part of our local communities.

Whilst the image of a firefighter may still be that of someone running into burning buildings to rescue people, the role of a firefighter has changed considerably in recent years. The primary change, which is integral to the firefighters' role is an increased focus on prevention work. This includes community engagement activities, school visits and visiting peoples' home to provide potentially lifesaving advice and fitting smoke alarms where necessary.

In addition, the types of emergency incidents we attend have become more varied. These include; road traffic collisions, rescuing people who are trapped in a range of scenarios, floods and the consequences of storms, chemical spillages and the growing threat of terrorism.

The role will continue to evolve in response to changing needs and emerging risks in our communities. This requires staff who are open to change and who can demonstrate adaptability.

This is why it's vital we recruit a wide, diverse range of people for our operational roles – so we can continue to provide a first-class service to the people of Northumberland.

All our staff, operational or otherwise, are bound by our four core values of:

People First



We provide services to our people (residents, colleagues, members, partners, visitors and businesses) through lasting, genuine, relationships that make a positive difference to their lives and their communities. We listen and understand our people's needs and put them at the heart of our decision making.

Respect



We are committed to building a trusting, caring and supportive environment for all our colleagues and communities. That means we are there for each other, act with empathy, value differences and encourage others to express themselves in order to collectively achieve our common goals. We treat others as they would wish to be treated.

Excellence



We strive for the highest quality delivery of our services. This means being accountable for our actions and delivering on our commitments. We share and celebrate what works, are open and learn from what doesn't and take pride in continually improving.

Resilience



We have robust controls, practices, and support in place to protect our residents, our colleagues, and our communities and empower them to thrive and live well. We are committed to acting sustainably in order to drive the right impact, over the long term, whilst ensuring best value for money.

What will be expected from me as a Firefighter?

- To demonstrate appropriate values and behaviours at all times.
- To maintain an appropriate level of physical fitness.
- To maintain the skills you need to do the job by attending training sessions.
- To undertake a development programme to develop competence in your role as a Firefighter.
- The inter-personal skills required to engage with diverse communities.

What are the duties and responsibilities of a Firefighter?

- Educate your community in how to stay safe.
- Save and preserve lives in danger.
- Take responsibility for effective performance.
- Resolve emergency incidents as effectively as possible.
- Protect the environment from the effects of hazardous materials.
- 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 and equipment.

Hours of Work

- You will be required to work day shifts, night shifts, evenings, weekends and public holidays. NFRS operate the following wholetime duty systems to meet the needs of our communities.
- 2-2-4 – Employees working this system will work two day shifts (08:00-18:00) followed by two night shifts (18:00-08:00) followed by four days off (known as rota days).
- Day Staffing (DS) – employees working this system typically work four day shifts (08:00-18:00) for four consecutive days, during the evenings you will be 'on call'. After your four shifts you will then have four days off (known as rota days).
- You will be informed of your shift pattern upon appointment and will also be advised which station you will be initially based at following your training course. Please note that you may be required to work any of the above duty systems during your career with Northumberland Fire and Rescue.

Could I be a Firefighter?

We are committed to cultivating a diverse and inclusive workplace where every individual feels valued, respected, and empowered to contribute their unique perspectives and talents. We warmly welcome applications from individuals who identify with underrepresented groups within our workforce, including individuals from Minority Ethnic backgrounds, women, those who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer / Questioning, Intersex Asexual + (LGBTQIA+), and individuals with some disabilities. We believe that a diverse workforce leads to innovation, creativity, and better decision-making, and we are dedicated to creating an environment where everyone can thrive.

To be considered for the role of a Wholetime Firefighter in NFRS, you must:

- Be able to demonstrate values and behaviours that are consistent with the those of the organisation.
- Be eligible to work in the United Kingdom.
- Be 18 years of age by the time your training course starts.
- Be physically fit to meet the requirements of the role and medical examination.

- Be comfortable working at height, in confined spaces and around water.
- Be able to demonstrate reading, writing and numerical skills to meet the requirements of the role.
- You must also be committed to maintaining and developing new skills and studying on top of your normal working days.
- Be able to demonstrate the inter-personal skills required to engage with diverse communities.

What can you expect from us?

Being a Firefighter is an interesting, varied, and fulfilling career. In addition to safety critical training, we can offer a wide range of specialist and general training opportunities to contribute to your personal development and career aspirations.

Pay (as of July 2025)

Development £30,384 per annum,
Competent £38,881 per annum.

You will be paid at development rate when attending the trainee course. Once you have completed the required training you will continue to be paid at the development rate. When you've completed your development programme (when you have been deemed competent in role) you will be paid at the competent rate of pay. This may take up to 3 years.

Uniform

All new firefighters are issued with their uniform and kit before the initial training course starts. Kit includes a corporate uniform which is everyday dress and 'personal protective equipment' which is the full firefighting kit.

Leave

Annual leave comprises of 31 days (rising to 34 days after 5 years) per annum including public holidays and will be taken in accordance with whichever Duty System you are appointed to. Ordinarily, the allocation of annual leave periods will be determined by the Service.

Career Progression

We are committed to the continued development of all staff. How you progress in your career is dependent on you demonstrating your competence in the role as part of our development programme. As well as the development opportunities we offer, prior learning and previous qualifications and experience are also taken into account as part of your future career development.

Pension

On appointment to the Fire Service, you will be automatically enrolled into the Firefighters Pension Scheme 2015. However, you may choose to opt out at a later date.

Making Northumberland Safer

Our mission has been created to help every member of staff, regardless of rank or role, to understand the challenges we face, their place in addressing them and their contribution towards making us a leading fire and rescue service.

RECRUITMENT STAGES

To become a Firefighter, you will have to undertake a series of tests designed to assess your suitability for the role.

When the recruitment process is open, a link to apply on our online recruitment system will be made available on our website and via other channels. You will then be invited to progress through the selection tests, which will assess your suitability for the Firefighter role.

WHOLETIME FIREFIGHTER RECRUITMENT PROCESS		
Application	Stage 1	Application form and eligibility screening
	Stage 2	Phase 1 - Situational Judgement Test
		Phase 2 – Ability Tests: Verbal, Numerical & Mechanical Reasoning
Physical Tests	Stage 3	Fitness Test (Bleep Test)
		Practical Testing
Interview	Stage 4	Interview and repeat of Situational Judgement and Ability Tests.
Final Selection	Stage 5	Course Experience Day including Verification Fitness Test
Medical & Pre-employment Checks	Stage 6	Medical, Employment Checks, Enhanced Disclosure and References.
		Kitting Out
Employment Commences	Stage 7	Induction
		Initial Trainee Course

The first two stages are designed to make an initial assessment of your potential to work as a Firefighter using a range of specifically designed questions, which examine the qualities and basic knowledge you need for the role. Firefighter recruitment is always a competitive process, with an extremely high number of applicants competing for a small number of roles, so we can only take the highest performing individuals on to the next stage.

Stage 1 – Application form and eligibility screening (online)

Being a firefighter is challenging and can involve a number of situations not commonly found in other jobs. These questions will help you decide whether you are likely to enjoy working as a firefighter.

The Eligibility Questions allow us to establish whether you are eligible to apply to become a firefighter with Northumberland Fire and Rescue. If you leave the eligibility screens without submitting your details this information will not be saved.

As part of this stage, you will be asked to declare any unspent criminal convictions. Under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 you are obliged to declare any unspent convictions or criminal proceedings pending as these may bar you from working as a Firefighter. This will be checked before an offer of employment is made. Failure to declare any unspent conviction(s) will result in your application being withdrawn.

Reasonable adjustments

We understand that in some cases additional support may be needed to enable a candidate to participate fully in the Selection Process (e.g. Dyslexia). You will be asked during this initial stage what, if any, reasonable adjustments you require. We will then contact you to ensure that the necessary arrangements are made on your behalf. In the case of dyslexia, we will need a copy of your dyslexia assessment report or Exam Access Arrangements.

The first timed tests are the Ability Tests so, for any reasonable adjustment related to additional time, this is the first opportunity to have this applied.

This detail is kept confidential and has no bearing on a selection decision.

Stage 2 – Psychometric Tests (online)

The purpose of this stage is to examine key qualities you need to work in the role of a firefighter. These assessments are designed to give all candidates a fair chance to show that they have the skills, abilities and personal qualities important for success as a firefighter.

The psychometric tests include multiple choice ability tests. These tests relate to the role of a Firefighter and assess your ability to work with numbers, solve problems as well as verbal reasoning questions.

Please be aware that the below details are an indication of the type of psychometric tests undertaken but may be subject to change in future recruitment processes.

Phase 1	Situational Judgement Test	In this test you will be presented with the type of situations you could face in the role of a Firefighter and will be asked how you think you should react to each situation. This is not a timed test.
Phase 2	Verbal Reasoning	This test is designed to measure your ability to interpret and make sense of written information. This is a timed test and you will have 15 minutes to complete the questions.
	Numerical Reasoning	Firefighters need to be able to make basic mathematical calculations. You will be presented with a number of scenarios that will show numerical information in a variety of formats from tables to graphs. This is a timed test and you will have 18 minutes to complete the questions.
	Mechanical Reasoning	Questions will comprise images and contain very little text. Candidates will be required to apply cognitive reasoning to mechanical, physical and practical concepts in order to solve related problems. This is a timed test and you will have 17 minutes to complete the questions.

Stage 3 – Fitness Test and Practical Testing

Pre-fitness test Questionnaire

If you are invited to undertake the fitness test stage with us, you will be required to complete a Pre-fitness Test Questionnaire. This will be kept confidential and, if necessary, reviewed by our Occupational Health Department who will contact you, if required, to discuss any issues or concerns ahead of the Fitness Test and Practical Testing.

Bleep test

You must complete a bleep test and achieve a minimum level of 8.8 to demonstrate your physical fitness.

The bleep test involves continuously running between two lines 20m apart to a series of bleeps. The speed starts at 8kph and progressively increases at each level. The test finishes if you fail to reach 3 consecutive lines in time for the bleep or when level 8.8 is achieved.

Further information on these tests can be found in the Firefighter Recruitment Exercise, Fitness and Nutrition guidance available on our Northumberland Fire and Rescue website.

Practical Testing

These job-related assessments consist of a number of different tests, which will assess your practical ability to handle fire service equipment. The tests are designed to simulate the tasks carried out in the training course and then in the role of Firefighter.

Equipment Carry Test *	This is a test of aerobic fitness, stamina, upper and lower body strength (including grip strength) and co-ordination. It includes an equipment and hose carry. Full details will be provided on the day, and verbal instruction will be provided throughout the test from the safety officer. The test will be timed.
Ladder Extension	This is a 2-part test of upper body and grip strength, carried out on a ladder simulator. The 1 st test is to simulate extending a 13.5m ladder to the first floor of a drill tower weighing approx. 25kg. The 2 nd test is to simulate lowering a 13.5m ladder from full extension to ground level weighing approx. 32kg. Each test must be carried out in one continuous movement. You will be assisted, if necessary, by the safety officer.
Ladder Climb	This is a physical test of confidence and the ability to follow instructions. You will ascend a 13.5 metre (45 foot) fire service ladder to a point two thirds of the full working height, take a leg lock and remove your hands from the ladder and look down to the assessor to identify a symbol placed flat on the ground at the foot of the ladder. You will be assisted, if necessary, by the safety officer.
Ladder Lift	This is a test of upper and lower body strength and co-ordination. You will raise the bar of a ladder and lift to full arm extension. The starting weight will be a 5kg practice lift above the head. You will then repeat the test with a 15kg weight. Both lifts must be achieved to pass this test. You will be assisted, if necessary, by the safety officer.
Enclosed Space *	This is a test of confidence, agility and identification of claustrophobic tendencies. Wearing a breathing apparatus facemask, you will negotiate a crawl and walkway with clear vision. You will then retrace your steps wearing a mask that obscures your vision. This is a timed exercise. You will be assisted, if necessary, by the safety officer.
Equipment Assembly *	This is a test of manual dexterity. You must assemble and then disassemble a piece of equipment following a demonstration by the safety officer.
Ladder Carry	This test simulates carrying the heel bar / jack beam of the 13.5 metre across a designated course 1 handed carrying a 25kg. You will be assisted, if necessary, by the safety officer.
Casualty Drag *	This is a test of evacuating a 55kg casualty over a 30-metre course. You will be assisted, if necessary, by the safety officer.

Please note any test marked with a * indicates a timed test which will be communicated on the day.

Full instruction is given on the day and you will be provided with protective clothing to wear.

Further information regarding general exercise, aerobic training and strength training is available on our website.

Stage 4 – Interview

As with any interview, you should expect to be asked about your knowledge of both the role and the organisation. This will be your opportunity to show the interview panel how your skills and attributes contribute to your suitability for the role of a Firefighter.

You will be asked questions relating to the NFCC Leadership Framework, there will be at least one scenario-based question.

Following your interview, you will be required to undertake verification tests under exam conditions to corroborate your online ability tests.

Stage 5 – Course Experience Day and Fitness Test

The purpose of the Course Experience Day is to see how you perform in a simulated recruit course environment at our Headquarters. The day itself will include:

- Physical exercises e.g. hose running, ladder lifts, ladder carry, sewer crawl
- Practical exercises e.g. team building tasks using Fire Service equipment.
- Observation of behaviours, including the ability to follow instructions.

The Course Experience Day is the final stage of the competitive selection process. It also provides you with the opportunity to experience life as a Trainee Firefighter and for you to see if it is the right fit for yourself.

Verification Fitness Test

You will be required to undertake the Chester Treadmill Walk Fitness Test to demonstrate you have maintained the required fitness levels. This test involves walking on a treadmill at 3.9 miles per hour, for 12 minutes, with 3% gradient increases applied every 2 minutes from 0% to 15%.

This is the final stage of the competitive selection process.

Candidates will be selected for employment subject to satisfactory completion of the following:

- Medical,
- Employment checks,
- Enhanced DBS Check (Adult Workforce),
- References,
- Verification fitness test.

GP medical questionnaires will be requested at this point, as will kit measurements and details of your current and previous employer(s) for references.

Stage 6 – Medical, Employment Checks, Disclosure & Barring Service Check and References

Medical

The medical appointment at our headquarters will incorporate:

- A review of your medical questionnaire (signed by your GP and if relevant other organisations e.g. the Armed Forces)
- A series of screening tests with our occupational health nurse including:
 - Hearing test
 - Lung function
 - Blood pressure
 - Vision
 - Weight and height
 - Substance misuse and alcohol testing (may be on a separate day)
- An examination with our medical officer who will assess your fitness for the role. This will include further medical testing should any medical problems be detected.

Further information on the medical specifics can be found in our Frequently Asked Questions document on our website.

Employment Checks

Eligibility to work in UK – in line with section 8 of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 all employers in the UK have to make basic checks on everyone they employ. Therefore, you will be required to bring to your pre-employment check the relevant documents, to confirm your eligibility to work in the UK, such as a passport.

DBS Check

As a condition of the employment contract, you are required to complete an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Check (including spent and unspent convictions and cautions, relevant police intelligence and adult barred list information).

A DBS result which identifies a criminal conviction will be assessed on a case-by-case basis but could lead to your offer of employment being withdrawn.

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 on your application, your offer of employment may be withdrawn.

References

Candidates will be required to provide the contact details of two referees, who will be contacted prior to a formal offer of employment. One of the referees should be your most recent employer or education provider.

Subject to selected candidates satisfactorily completing all of the above, formal offers of employment may be made, subject to satisfactory references.

Kitting out

Following the formal offer of employment, an appointment will be made for you to collect your uniform and Fire Kit.

Stage 7 - Initial Training Course

Once we have received written acceptance of a formal offer of employment, you will be invited to attend an Induction immediately followed by the Initial Training Course (ITC). The start date is programmed for 12th January 2026.

The ITC is physically demanding and requires good levels of stamina and upper body strength. You must ensure you maintain the required fitness levels to safely participate in the ITC.

The ITC will be held at our Service Headquarters (SHQ) at West Hartford Community Fire Station and will cover the safety critical training needed to enable you to be safe to ride a fire appliance.

You will be required to pass all elements of the training before joining your designated team on a fire station and working further to demonstrate your competence, eventually becoming a fully competent Firefighter.

DATES FOR WHOLETIME FIREFIGHTER RECRUITMENT STAGES

Initial advert	07/07/2025 – 03/08/2025
Application phase	04/08/2025 – 31/08/2025
Candidate notification	01/09/2025 – 12/09/2025
Online testing	15/09/2025 – 21/09/2025
Candidate notification	22/09/2025 – 26/09/2025
Physical testing	29/09/2025 – 08/10/2025
Candidate notification	09/10/2025 – 10/10/2025
Competency based interviews	15/10/2025 – 24/10/2025
Candidate notification (Conditional offer of Employment)	27/10/2025 – 28/10/2025
Occupational health / medicals & DBS	29/10/2025 – 11/12/2025
Orientation and introduction day	06/11/2025
Candidate notification and job offers (Employment Contract)	12/12/2025
Trainee course begins	12/01/2026 – 03/04/2026

Please note these dates may be subject to change at short notice.

The dates for the current wholetime firefighter recruitment process will be stated on the NFRS recruitment webpage as soon as we open for applications. Please ensure you look at this and keep a copy for your reference throughout the process.

Please note: You MUST be available for all of the recruitment stages in order to be considered for this role.

Unfortunately, if you are unavailable, it may not be possible to progress your application. If you know in advance that you are unavailable on a particular date, please notify us by email as soon as possible to fire.recruitment@northumberland.gov.uk and we will try to accommodate your needs where possible.

Furthermore, if you are scheduled to attend/undertake any of the above stages and are unable to do so due to unforeseen circumstances (e.g. illness), we cannot guarantee that we will be able to offer you another opportunity to undertake the assessment/stage. If this is the case your application will unfortunately have to be withdrawn from the process.

MAP OF NORTHUMBERLAND