



WHOLETIME FIREFIGHTER

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PROCESS GUIDANCE NOTE

We recognise that the role of a Wholetime Firefighter is a highly sought after, extremely rewarding career and generates significant interest when the role is advertised.

Following the completion of the 2019 Wholetime Firefighter Campaign, this guidance document has been prepared to inform and offer general advice to those who are interested in pursuing a career as a Wholetime Firefighter when the opportunity is next promoted and advertised.

Our recruitment process is designed to ensure that all candidates have equal access to opportunities in the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) and that the most suitable candidate pool is shortlisted based on consistent and objective criteria, which is required for the role.

The Equality Act 2010 was applied throughout the Wholetime Campaign, in all recruitment and selection activity, ensuring no one was treated less favorably when applying for the role or throughout the process.

The Recruitment and Selection process consists of a number of assessment exercises designed to appropriately assess and evaluate candidate attributes against the criteria for the role and can be segmented into seven main stages;



A summary of each of these stages is further explained in each of the sections below. It is hoped that the information provided is helpful to assist you in ensuring that your application and performance is the best it can be.

ADVERT and APPLICATION

The advert encouraged interest from internal SFRS staff and external applicants from all across the UK to apply to join the SFRS as a Wholetime Firefighter.

6082 applications were received, anonymised and individually reviewed against appropriate and objective evaluation criteria.

HOW TO COMPLETE THE APPLICATION FORM

- Completing the application form is an important part of the recruitment process. Think of the application as your first test in following instructions – a requirement of the role. Ensure that you read the questions and the supporting information provided thoroughly (SFRS Recruitment Information Pack and SFRS Values Booklet) so that you fully understand what you have been asked to do.
- Draft your responses in a structured, detailed format. The STAR method is a good way to answer competency questions (*an internet search will provide more detailed information on this approach*);

S	SITUATION	describe a situation;
T	TASK	outline what your task or role was;
A	ACTION	what action did YOU take;
R	RESULT	what was the outcome.
- In your example, focus on what **YOUR** role was, what **YOU** did, to evidence skills such as teamwork, organising, managing, problem solving, communicating, taking initiative etc. (*consider the personal qualities and attributes detailed for the role in the Job Description within the Recruitment Information Pack*).
- Ensure you stick to the word count – you will not be scored for questions if you have exceeded the specified word count.
- The application is a reflection of you. Before you submit your application, sit back and take a moment to thoroughly proof read the document, checking for errors - especially typing mistakes and misspellings.
- Review your responses to ensure that you have provided sufficient detail to describe the Situation and Task, and specific Actions you took as well as the Results. Consider whether your response fully answers the question and how well your actions demonstrate the Firefighter Personal Qualities and Attributes detailed within the Job Description for the role.

FIRST PSYCHOMETRIC ASSESSMENT

– CALCULATION TEST

This test consists of numerical problems for which quick and accurate calculations are required. The test is timed and you are permitted to use a calculator.

We use this test to assess a candidate's ability to understand and work with numerical information of a type that a Firefighter is likely to experience within their daily routine.

1688 applicants progressed to psychometric testing stage and required to pass the assessment to be eligible to progress to the next stage in the process.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE CALCULATION TEST

→ Prior to taking the test, take some online practice tests (*an internet search will provide links to a number of different online tests that will help to familiarise you with the type of questions you are likely to encounter and give you a 'feel' for how to solve them*). Practice tests will help you familiarise yourself with the format and how questions are presented so that you know what to expect when you access your actual test for the first time. This can help you feel comfortable and confident, and is a great way of reducing any anxiety you might feel about the tests.

NB: *Practice tests do not provide an exact like-for-like experience and may not exactly reflect the level of difficulty of the test you will be asked to complete. They provide a similar testing experience, in terms of timed testing and offer some insights into the different question types and format.*

→ Ensure that you carefully read the comprehensive instructions provided, before starting the test.

→ Take the test in a suitable quiet environment and ensure that you will not be disturbed.

→ Make sure that you have enough time to finish the test as you must take the test in one sitting i.e. you cannot stop and restart the test.

→ **DO NOT** take this test on a mobile device (iPad, tablet or smart phone).

→ Manage your time. The time limit is challenging and you need to work quickly and accurately. If you can't answer a question you should look to move on.

→ Check your answers – spend a couple of seconds to check that you have indeed calculated what was asked.

❖ *Candidates who could demonstrate that they hold a minimum of National 4 Mathematics (or equivalent), were not required to undertake the Calculation Test and were required to evidence the qualification by providing a copy of the qualification certificate.*

SECOND PSYCHOMETRIC ASSESSMENT

– SITUATIONAL JUDGEMENT TEST

The Situational Judgement Test (SJT) is designed to measure judgements Firefighters may have to make. Questions are based on realistic events that you may be involved in should you be offered an appointment as a Wholetime Firefighter.

The test is untimed but should take you approximately 30 minutes to complete.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE SITUATIONAL JUDGEMENT TEST

→ The test does not require or assume any operational experience or knowledge. To answer, you should draw on your general knowledge and life experience.

Practice tests are available online and it is worth taking advantage of these.

NB: Please note that practice tests do not provide an exact like-for-like experience and may not exactly reflect the test you will be asked to complete. They provide a similar testing experience, in terms of timed testing and offer some insights into different question types and format.

→ Ensure that you carefully read the comprehensive instructions provided, before starting the test.

→ Read each scenario and consider each response carefully before making your selection.

→ Only use the information provided in the question, do not make assumptions.

→ Take the test in a suitable quiet environment and ensure that you will not be disturbed.

→ Make sure that you have enough time to finish the test. You must take the test in one sitting i.e. you cannot stop and restart the test.

→ **DO NOT** take this test on a mobile device (iPad, tablet or smart phone).

597 candidates received an invite to attend an Assessment Day. The Fitness Assessment, Practical Selection Tests and Interview formed part of this day and candidates required to successfully complete each of these stages to progress to the next stage of the day.

FITNESS ASSESSMENT

Firefighting is a physically demanding occupation and it is essential that our operational staff have sufficient levels of fitness to enable them to carry out their roles as safely and effectively as possible.

The recruitment standard for firefighting roles is $42.3\text{mlO}_2\cdot\text{kg}^{-1}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$. This equates to level 8 shuttle 8 on the Multi-Stage Shuttle Run Test and is equivalent to being able to run one kilometre in 4 minutes or 5 kilometres in 23 minutes, if these were maximal efforts.

A Multi-Stage Shuttle Run Test (commonly known as a bleep test) is used to assess aerobic fitness. Aerobic fitness is a measure of the body's ability to take in and use oxygen to fuel exercise and can also be referred to as stamina or endurance.

In some instances, we may undertake a further fitness assessment and may use the Chester Treadmill Walk Test (CTWT). Candidates performing the Chester Treadmill Walk Test are required to walk briskly on a treadmill at a constant speed of 6.2 km/hr for 12 minutes, the initial two minute stage on the treadmill is performed without any incline on the treadmill platform, the incline will be increased by three degrees at each of the following five (two minutes) stages until the final two minutes (10-12 minutes) is at a 15 degree incline.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE FITNESS ASSESSMENT

- Applicants should have a good-all-round physical fitness level at the point of application.
- We recommend that you establish a regular fitness routine and stick to this to maintain and improve cardiovascular fitness. Ideally your training should include running.
- In preparation for the test, ensure that you are properly hydrated, that you have eaten a light meal approx. 1-2 hours before the test and that you have had enough sleep.
- During the test;
 - pace yourself – focus on you and not the other participants and do not try to run any faster than you need to in order to reach the mark when the bleep sounds.
 - turn efficiently, you may wish to alternate your turning leg to distribute the stress across both legs.
 - try to accelerate and decelerate smoothly.

PRACTICAL SELECTION TESTING

The Practical Selection Tests closely reflect the wide range of physical tasks carried out by firefighters and are designed to assess whether candidates have the ability to carry out the physical aspects required of the role of a firefighter.

These tests not only assess aerobic fitness, stamina, upper and lower body strength and manual dexterity but also level of confidence in simulated exercises (working at height and enclosed spaces) and ability to understand, absorb and carry out instructions. In addition, candidates are asked to complete a Breathing Apparatus entry level calculation test. This test is used to validate and verify the results of the online calculation test and your ability to work out numerical calculations accurately.

Further details on these tests are provided on our website. Full instructions are provided, and candidates are required to complete each test within a specified timeframe.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE PRACTICAL SELECTION TESTS

These tests are specific to the Fire Service and as such cannot be practiced.

- Applicants should have a good-all-round physical fitness level at the point of application.
- We recommend that you establish a regular fitness routine and stick to this to maintain and improve cardiovascular fitness.
- In preparation for the test, ensure that you are properly hydrated, that you have eaten a light meal approx. 1-2 hours before the test and that you have had enough sleep.

INTERVIEW

The interview process seeks to match the candidate's potential skills, abilities and knowledge with those stated in the Firefighter role map and the personal qualities and attributes, which are detailed within the Job Description contained within the Recruitment Information Pack.

Good preparation is essential to a successful job interview. Some helpful hints and tips on interview technique is detailed within the Recruitment Information Pack. Alternatively, you may wish to conduct an internet search e.g. "preparing for a competency based interview".

HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE INTERVIEW

- In preparation for the interview, reflect on your experiences from work, education, your home life, hobbies or clubs/organisations you may be a member of.
- It is important that you choose an example that is clear in your memory, so that you will be able to talk confidently, open and honestly to your interviewers detailing what you did and why.
- Ensure that your responses are well structured, clear and concise. The STAR method is a good way to answer competency questions *(an internet search will provide more detailed information on this approach)*;

S	SITUATION	describe a situation;
T	TASK	outline what your task or role was;
A	ACTION	what action did YOU take;
R	RESULT	what was the outcome.

- The Interview panel will review YOUR contribution in situations, in terms of actions taken and behaviours demonstrated. Your example should focus on what **YOUR** role was, what **YOU** did, to evidence skills such as teamwork, organising, managing, problem solving, communicating, taking initiative etc. *(consider the personal qualities and attributes detailed for the role in the Job Description within the Recruitment Information Pack)*.

N.B. You will not be given credit for hypothetical examples of what you would or might do in a particular situation.

CONDITIONAL OFFER

At this stage of the process we conduct a number of pre-employment checks, including medical assessment and final stage fitness assessment if required.

82 successful applicants started with the Service in September and are attending a 14 week training course, where we nurture and support them, expecting that they will become committed to their chosen career and embrace the opportunity to learn an extraordinary amount of skills to help keep Scotland safe.

222 candidates remain within the Holding Pool for consideration for future opportunities.

MEDICAL STANDARDS

- We need to make sure that our Firefighters are both medically and physically fit, therefore, as part of the selection process, you will be asked to complete medical questionnaires, undergo and pass a medical examination.
- The medical element of the assessment will examine your general health and fitness against the required standard and will include a discussion on your completed medical questionnaire.
- Your health information is confidential to our Health and Wellbeing Practitioners and Doctors. They will identify and discuss with you any medical conditions that may affect your ability to undertake the role of a firefighter. In some cases, we may need to seek further information from your GP.
- Should you have a disability that may require a reasonable adjustment under the Equality Act 2010 for you to safely undertake the role, this will be discussed with you.

EYESIGHT STANDARD

Prior to your attendance at medical, candidates require to attend an Optician and provide an eyesight examination report to determine that your eyesight meets the requirements.

- The eyesight requirements for the role of a firefighter are:
 - Uncorrected vision of 6/18, 6/24 or better;
 - Corrected acuity should be a minimum of 6/7.5 in the best eye with worst eye at least 6/12;
 - The ability to read N6 at 30cm (under 25 years of age) or N12 at 30 cm (25 years and over) unaided binocularly;
 - No history of night blindness;
 - Normal vision fields to confrontation in both eyes;
 - Acceptable colour vision defined as no more than 2 errors on Ishihara plate test. (minor colour vision defects may be acceptable subject to the results of specialist testing);
 - Candidates who have had laser surgery cannot be progressed until a period of 12 months has passed and will require a full specialist report to confirm that there is no evidence of complications that would impair safe or effective working;
 - Other eye disorders will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

OFFER AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT CHECKS

An offer of appointment will be conditional and subject to the following pre-employment checks:-

Confirmation of Right to Work in the UK

In line with the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006, all candidates applying for SFRS roles must be eligible to live and work in the UK. Documented evidence of eligibility will be requested from candidates as part of the selection process and this will require to be checked and verified.

Receipt of satisfactory references

When completing the application form you will be asked to include details of two referees. We recommend that you obtain the approval of any individual whose details you input into this section. If we do not receive references timeously this may affect your start date and appointment with the SFRS.

The referees should be two individuals who have known you for at least 12 months and who know you in a work capacity or can comment on your ability to carry out the role applied for. At least one of these should be from your current employer, where possible, providing you have been employed with them for a period of at least 12 months prior to submitting your application. The referees should not be related to you in any way. Candidates should indicate on their application form if they do not wish referees to be approached without prior consent.

Criminal Record Check

In accordance with the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exclusions and Exceptions) (Scotland) Order 2013 (as amended) if an applicant has a conviction or spent convictions and if the nature of the offence is relevant to the job that he/she has applied for, we will seek to review the individual circumstances of the case and may decide to withdraw candidates from the process on this basis.

Applicants must disclose ALL previous convictions, whether they are spent or unspent.

Successful candidates' details are checked through Disclosure Scotland. The SFRS will pay the required fees associated with this criminal record check.

Should any of the above stages not be fully satisfied, the conditional offer of employment may be withdrawn or deferred for review of individual circumstances.

We hope that this information is useful and wish you well with your future endeavours.