



Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub  
Fire and Rescue Service

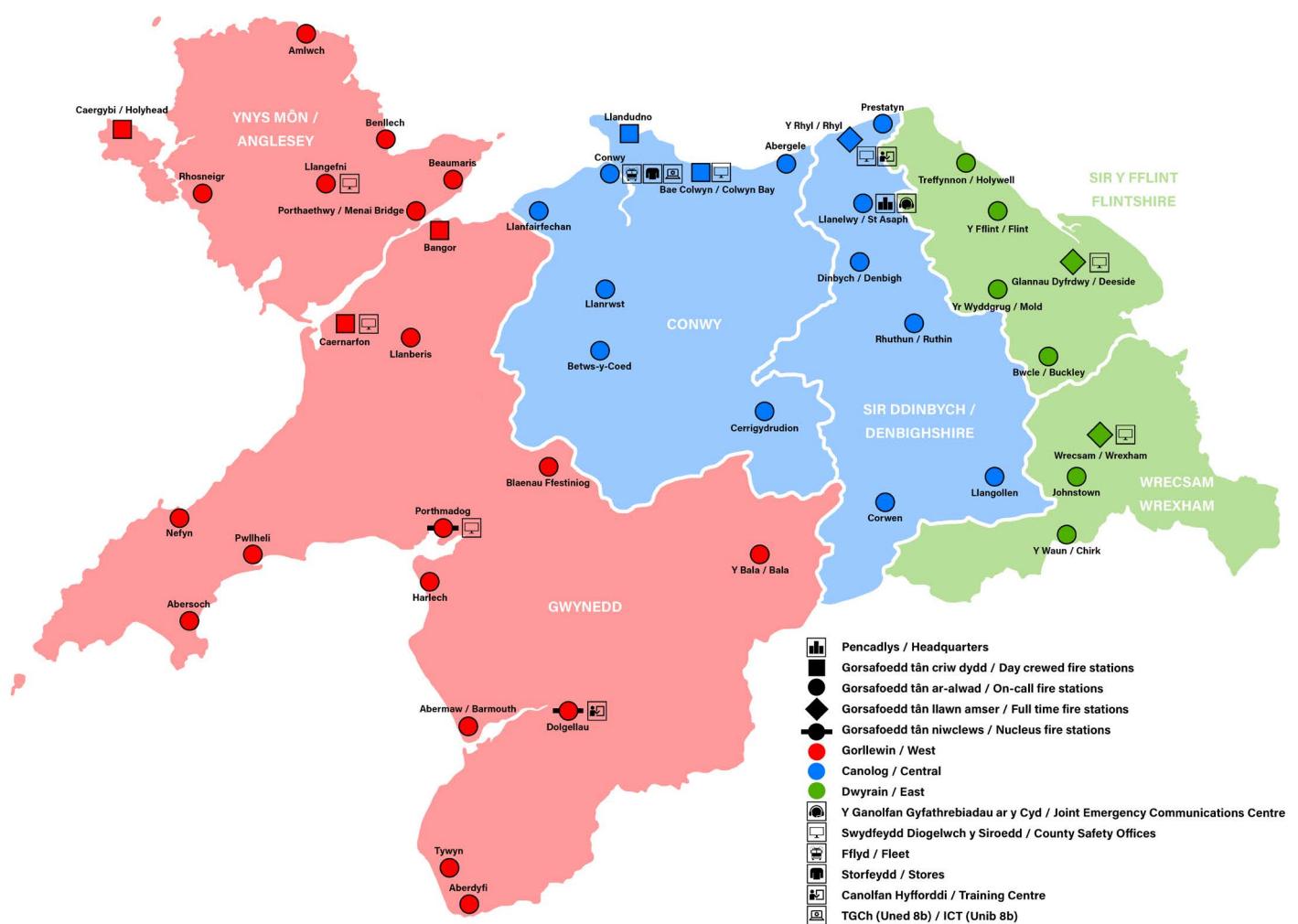
# On-Call Firefighter Applicant Information

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# On-Call Firefighter



On-Call Firefighters are a vital part of many Fire and Rescue Services, providing an effective and efficient service. Many of the fire stations in North Wales operate on an On-Call basis, often referred to as the Retained Duty System (RDS).

On-Call Firefighters come from all areas of the community, and often have other employment. When a call is received they will respond to the fire station from their home or workplace, depending on the availability offered. It is difficult to predict when they will be called out and so On-Call Firefighters need the ability to be flexible in their work or home-based activities.

Trained to the same high standards as Wholetime Firefighters, they carry out similar duties and attend the same broad range of incidents, including fires, road traffic collisions, chemical spillages and many other emergencies that arise.

The role is also actively involved in the prevention of fire in the home and community. One of the key duties is to undertake safe and well checks, offering advice to residents on how to eliminate or reduce the risk of fire and raise awareness of keeping safe at home. Being able to communicate effectively is important, as is treating people with dignity and respect, regardless of their background or culture.



# What does the role involve?

On-Call Firefighters help protect the communities in which they live and work.

They:

- Typically live and/or work within a set response time, usually five minutes, of a fire station;
- Provide 'On-Call' cover for a pre-agreed number of hours each week (referred to as 'availability');
- Carry an alerter at all times whilst on duty, so they can respond to their fire station when required;
- Attend a weekly three-hour drill night at the fire station on one set evening a week so as to maintain and enhance skills and development;
- Need support – those responding from work must have their employer's consent and those responding from home need to be aware that it may impact on home or family life.

The role is demanding, unpredictable, exciting and rewarding, coupled with the satisfaction and respect that comes with providing a crucial service to your local community. Anyone who can give their time to the Service and wants to protect their local community is welcome to apply, providing they meet the eligibility criteria.

# Job description

**Principal aim:** To protect and save people and property from fire and other hazards in the most competent and effective manner to the highest possible standard of care and quality.

**On-Call Firefighters:** To provide 'On-Call' cover to help protect the communities in which they live or work. Also to be actively involved in the prevention of fire, particularly in the home. A key part of the role is to undertake safe and well checks in the home, offering free advice to residents on how to eliminate or reduce risks in the home.

## Duties and Responsibilities

- Attend emergencies and use operational equipment;
- Deal with people;
- Provide fire safety advice;
- Develop a good understanding of health and safety;
- Maintain personal fitness and wellbeing;
- Improve knowledge of local geography;
- Maintain skills through regular training.



# Physical fitness

Firefighting can be a physically demanding and hazardous activity. To ensure effective and safe operational performance, an appropriate level of physical fitness, including both cardiovascular and muscular strength, is essential.

All On-Call firefighters undergo a fitness assessment as part of the recruitment process and continue to attend fitness assessments throughout their firefighting career. The fitness assessment predicts aerobic capacity and also allows the ability to perform exercise for longer periods of time to be tested, which is important for safe firefighting.

As part of the physical ability assessments, tests are undertaken to assess the level of fitness, strength, endurance and manual dexterity as well as the level of confidence in simulated exercises, such as working at height and confined spaces. These tests are designed to reflect operational practice.

Further information about the fitness standards required as well information on how to prepare for the physical tests is available in the firefighter fitness information section on the [North Wales Fire and Rescue Service website](#).

## Equal opportunities

Fire and Rescue Services are fully committed to meeting their duties in relation to equality and diversity, as set out in current legislation, but cannot make any adjustments to the person specification requirements or to nationally set fitness standards. These requirements and standards have been set to ensure that individuals are safe at work, for their own protection and that of others.

If you have a disability and feel that you are able to meet the essential requirements as detailed in the job description and person specification but the assessment process prevents you from fully demonstrating your abilities, reasonable adjustments to the process will be considered. Please bring this to our attention upon application.

As an inclusive employer, we strive to ensure our workforce represents the community in which we work, by ensuring that our recruitment is targeted to encourage applications from across our diverse community. A workforce that is diverse ensures we demonstrate our approachability and commitment to those in our community.

For more information on equality and diversity, please visit the [North Wales Fire and Rescue Service website](#).

## Standards of appearance

It is necessary for our staff to maintain a clean and tidy appearance that reflects well on the Service. All our staff wear the uniform with pride.

On-Call Firefighters wear a facemask when wearing breathing apparatus. In order to ensure the facemask fits correctly and forms an effective seal around the face, it is necessary to keep the face free of hair or stubble whilst on-call.

Hair styles and length must not compromise the fit of the helmet or equipment and should not adversely affect the work being undertaken. Long hair should be kept up off the collar and kept beneath the fire helmet when participating in training or on operational duty.

Tattoos and body art are acceptable providing they are not offensive or of an inappropriate nature and uphold the Service requirement for employees to portray a smart and professional image, in line with our core values. For safety and to prevent injury, all jewellery and exposed piercings should be removed before the commencement of duty or training.

## Pay and benefits

On-Call Firefighters receive a retaining fee based on the level of availability they provide.

- 100% are those who offer 120 hours or more of availability each week
- 80% are those who offer between 91 and 119 hours per week
- 60% are those who offer between 61 and 90 hours per week
- 40% are those who offer between 31 and 60 hours per week
- 20% are those who offer 30 hours or less per week

They also receive hourly rate payments for turnouts/call-outs, attendance, disturbance and attending drill night one evening per week.

All On-Call Firefighters start as a trainee and will progress to development status on successful completion of the on-call initial training course. Pay will remain at development rate until deemed competent in the role. The average time for a firefighter in development to achieve competence is between 18 and 24 months.

For further information on the current On-Call pay rates, please visit the [North Wales Fire and Rescue Service website](#).

## Benefits

As an employee of North Wales Fire and Rescue Service, you will also be able to access the following:

- Generous annual leave entitlement;
- Employer contributory pension scheme;
- Health and wellbeing support, including occupational health, colleague support and mental health champions;
- Employee assistance programme;
- Retail and leisure discounts scheme;
- Critical incident debriefs;
- Training and development.

# The recruitment process

## Stage 1 – Online registration

To apply, please register your details using the link found within the vacancies section on the [North Wales Fire and Rescue Service website](#).

In order to register, you will need an active email account which will also be used to provide updates on your application.

During the online registration, you will be asked to provide your personal details to ensure that you are eligible to apply, as well as answer the realistic job preview questions, which allow you to self-assess your suitability for the role (the results of the realistic job preview questions are private and for your consideration only).

## Stage 2 – Eligibility review

Following your registration, we will review your eligibility based on the following factors:

1. Whether you are over the age of 18;
2. Whether you have the right to work in the UK (you will be asked to provide documentation to confirm this during the process);
3. Whether you have any unspent convictions that may act as a bar from working as a firefighter. (You are not required to declare ‘spent’ convictions, but all ‘unspent’ and pending convictions must be declared; failure to do so will result in your application being withdrawn. The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 will be strictly adhered to);
4. Whether you are able to respond from home or work to a fire station within a satisfactory response time;
5. Whether the fire station you are applying to is actively recruiting.

Following review, we will advise if you are eligible to continue and what will happen next. If you are not eligible due to any of the factors above, you will be informed and your application will not be progressed further.

## Stage 3 – Availability grids

Once your eligibility has been confirmed, you will be invited to complete an availability grid to indicate when you are available and not available to provide on-call cover.

If you are eligible to respond from your place of work, please ensure that you seek the appropriate permission from your primary employer to confirm this is acceptable to them.

The cover you are able to provide, as detailed on your availability grid will be reviewed against the needs of the fire station you are applying for and if approved, you will progress to the next stage.

# Stage 4 – Online assessment

You will be invited to complete two online assessments once your eligibility has been confirmed. You will receive two emails with a link to the following questionnaires:

- Behavioural Styles Questionnaire – this explores your preferred behaviours within a working environment;
- Situational Judgement Test – this measures your judgement and decision making skills in situations that are typical for the firefighter role.

Please note; no prior knowledge or experience as a firefighter is required to complete these assessments and no advance revision is needed.

## Professional discussion

Following approval of your availability grids, you will be invited to attend a Professional Discussion at the fire station with the Watch Manager and Station Support Officer/Locality Manager. You will be asked a series of questions which are designed to assess your understanding of the role and you will also have the opportunity to discuss in more detail the commitment and expectation that the role demands.

The professional discussion can be undertaken in Welsh or English, as preferred.

## Welsh assessment

How well you speak and understand spoken Welsh will be assessed either during the professional discussion (if you have opted to have this through the medium of Welsh) or by completing a short Welsh language assessment.

Ideally you will be able to demonstrate at least Level 2 Welsh on application, but you will not be disadvantaged if you do not already speak or understand Welsh so long as you achieve Level 2 Welsh before the end of your probation period. Level 2 Welsh is about showing basic linguistic courtesy and being sensitive to the language and culture of Welsh speakers.

Being able to pronounce, understand and record names and place names correctly, give simple greetings and say some simple words and phrases in Welsh is not only about responding courteously to someone who speaks Welsh – it is also about providing a safe and effective service.

The results of Welsh language assessments are used by the Training and Development Department to ensure that successful candidates are given the appropriate support and guidance to achieve Level 2 Welsh within their probation period.



# Stage 5 – Practical assessment day for National Fire Selection Tests

Following successful completion of stages 1 – 4, you will be invited to attend the practical assessment day to undertake written ability and physical tests at a fire service premises, typically held in a central location.

## Written ability assessments

The written ability assessment is designed to assess your ability to understand and work with both numerical information and written information. The numerical part includes addition, subtraction, multiplication, division and making estimates on numerical data. You will also be given different formats of written information and asked to demonstrate your understanding of this information through the questions.

Information and materials to help you prepare for the written ability assessment is available on our website.

## Physical ability assessments

The physical ability assessments are designed to assess your level of physical fitness and capabilities in line with the requirements of the role. The following are the physical assessments which will be undertaken:

- Enclosed space test;
- Equipment assembly test;
- Ladder climb;
- Equipment carry;
- Casualty evacuation test;
- Ladder lift simulator test.

Each assessment has a permitted time for completion. Failure to complete the assessments as instructed and within the time will result in the physical assessment being unsuccessful.



## Stage 6 – Medical

On-Call Firefighters may be exposed to extreme physical and psychological demands in sometimes hostile and dangerous environments. It will be necessary for you to pass a full medical assessment plus drug and alcohol screening, undertaken by our occupational health physicians.

The nature and effect of medical conditions on suitability for the role may vary and under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, Fire and Rescue Services must reduce risk so far as is reasonably practicable. This means a medical condition giving rise to reasonably foreseeable occupational risk would not be acceptable. It is not possible to confirm medical conditions that would be unacceptable prior to an individual medical assessment.

It is important that you disclose any medical condition or history of a medical condition which may affect your ability to undertake the role of an On-Call Firefighter. These should be declared upon application and will be discussed during your medical assessment. If you do not do so, and the facts later emerge, your continued employment may be at risk.

The individual medical assessment will involve due consideration of any opinions or medical reports you may wish to submit to the occupational health physician. However, the decision on the significance of any risks identified will rest with the Fire and Rescue Service.

## Stage 7 – Pre-employment checks

You will be asked to complete a Standard Disclosure and Barring Service criminal record check. If the results are unsatisfactory you may be withdrawn from the recruitment process.

Any unspent convictions must be declared at registration so information can be considered in relation to your application. The recruitment team should be updated of any changes to your conviction status during the recruitment process.

In line with the Service's Core Values and in compliance with the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, the Service does not require you to disclose details of any 'spent' convictions for this recruitment, however spent convictions will be visible on a Standard Disclosure and will be subject to a Risk Assessment by the Service. To confirm if a conviction is 'spent' or 'unspent' please visit the [Disclosure Calculator](#).

You will also be asked to provide the name and address of two referees, one of which should be your current or most recent employer. If the references received are unsatisfactory, further enquiries may be made before your application can be progressed.

## Stage 8 – Appointment

If you are successful at all the stages of the selection process, an offer of employment will be made subject to organisational need and requirement. You will be offered a place to attend an On-Call Initial course and your employment will commence at the start of the training.

You will be issued with full Fire and Rescue Service uniform and personal protective equipment to undertake the role.

## Right to Work

When you are invited to written and physical tests, known as Selection Day, you will also be required to bring evidence of your right to work in the UK. Failure to provide evidence on or before this day will prevent your application from being progressed further until suitable evidence is provided.

## References

You will be asked to complete a form providing the name and contact details of two referees.

## Stage 9 – On-Call initial course

On-Call Firefighters must be well-trained, skilled and knowledgeable if they are to work safely and effectively in the wide range of operational incidents they are called upon to attend.

Initial training gives trainee firefighters the necessary basic core competencies to enable them to safely attend incidents. For their own safety and that of others, each must be deemed competent in the use of pumps, ladders and firefighting equipment and be able to wear breathing apparatus safely and effectively.

All Firefighters must continuously maintain and develop their skills and so the training is on-going throughout their employment. On-Call crews attend the fire station on one evening per week, for a period of three hours, to undertake training and development, embedding and strengthening skills and competence.

All On-Call Firefighters must attend the following courses as part of their training during their first year of employment:

Course	Duration	Information
RDS Initial Firefighter module	6 days	The course is designed to provide trainees with the information and skills required to allow them to work safely and efficiently as a member of an operational firefighting crew, with particular emphasis on Safety, Dynamic Risk Assessments and Environmental Awareness.
Breathing Apparatus Module	10 days (over 2 consecutive weeks)	The course provides trainees with the opportunity to gain the necessary skills to carry out search and rescue firefighting techniques in a controlled environment, whilst experiencing working in heat and smoke under real fire conditions.  Following a safe and effective completion, this course will enable firefighters to attend emergency incidents as qualified Breathing Apparatus wearers.
Road Traffic Collision Module	3 days	This course provides trainees with the information and skills to enable them to deal safely and competently with Road Traffic Collisions, and apply the recognised Safe Systems of Work at such incidents.  Theory input and practical sessions to develop, test and confirm competence in all aspects of extrication and casualty care.

Some of the training undertaken as an On-Call Firefighter will require attendance at residential training courses; this will be confirmed and discussed when courses are being offered.

# Do you want to be an On-Call Firefighter?

The following list of questions has been designed to help you decide whether being an On-Call Firefighter is really for you. Simply tick YES or NO to each of the following questions to help you decide.

	Yes	No
Are you 18 years old or over?		
Do you live or work within 5 minutes of a fire station?		
Do you have a good standard of all-round fitness?		
Are you looking for an exciting opportunity in your spare time?		
Are you interested in protecting your community?		
Do you have an interest in helping people		
Can you get on with people from different backgrounds and cultures?		
Do you speak and understand Welsh or could you commit to developing your basic welsh language skills (with support)?		
Do you want to work as part of a close knit team?		
Can you work under pressure?		
Can you think on your feet and solve problems when you know a lot depends on the suggestion 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 Service when you are at work and when you are not?		
Are you prepared to study to develop, maintain and expand your skills?		
Can you take orders and instruction from other people?		
Can you accept the need to keep to rules that tell you what you can and cannot wear?		
Are you committed to maintaining your health and physical fitness?		
Are you a practical person who likes to work with your hands/equipment?		
Do you enjoy making things or finding out how things work?		
Are you someone who can always be relied on to be somewhere on time?		
Are you someone that others see as dependable?		
Are you prepared to work outside in all types of weather, when it is wet and cold?		

If you answered Yes to all of the above questions and think you have what it takes to serve and protect the community where you live or work, please submit an application via the Online Registration portal on the [North Wales Fire and Rescue Service website](#).

**We would like to take this opportunity to wish you every success in the process.**