



The job-related fitness tests

The purpose of candidates undertaking a fitness test is to ensure they are physically fit for the role to which they will be appointed to.

Staff fitness testing helps to meet our duty of care under health and safety legislation, ensuring that staff are fit for their job for their own safety and that of their colleagues and people in our care.

Staff will need to undertake a fitness test every year, as part of their contractual agreement prior to the 12-month expiry date of their previously passed fitness test

Fitness test

The fitness test is made up of 4 elements which have been devised to measure the fitness standards that underlie the physical tasks that prison officers perform. Performance on the tests will provide a good indicator of a candidate's capability to perform various officer tasks safely and without the risk of injury

Grip test

Prison officer's duties such as lifting objects and performing control and restraint (C&R) techniques require what is called "static strength". This is the force that a muscle or a group of muscles can exert over a brief period of time. The grip test is the most easily administered test to demonstrate static strength and has been shown to provide an accurate representation of your overall bodily strength and will reflect your ability to perform those tasks that require strength.

Your grip strength will be assessed by the use of a grip strength dynameter. This simply involves gripping the dynameter and squeezing as hard as possible. you will be allowed 3 attempts on each hand to reach the 25kg pass standard, if unsuccessful a further 3 attempts can be facilitated during the other elements of the fitness test.

Shield hold

As part of Prison officer duties sometimes there is the need to use protective equipment, including shields to deal with incidents relating to violent or non-compliant prisoners. During an incident the shield may need to be held up to protect yourself and colleagues for a period of time.

The test will involve holding a 6kg shield in front of the body in a functional position for 1 minute.

Multistage fitness test (bleep test)

Prison officers are sometimes required to perform physical activities such as alarm bell response and to control incidents with the application of C&R basic techniques. The ability to perform activities such as these will largely be based upon your level of endurance fitness which is the capacity to continue prolonged physical activity. As such endurance fitness is a reflection of how efficient your heart and lungs are, and it is required in any activity that causes you to get out of breath for a prolonged period of time

This particular test of endurance fitness involves running to between lines on a 15-meter course, you must keep in time with a series of bleeps, the test is progressive, so at the start you have 7 seconds for each shuttle on level 1, at each new level the time between each bleep gets quicker you will need to get to level 5.4 to pass the test, total running time 3 minutes 35 seconds.

Speed and agility

The speed and agility test measures both your ability to run, as well as to negotiate obstacles and change direction. Running at pace, often around objects and corners is needed when responding quickly to alarm bells. The test involves running around a series of cones in straight lines and in a slalom fashion through gates and is designed to assess your ability to change direction at speed, to pass the test you will have a maximum time of 34 seconds to complete the test.