



# CHLOE NELSON

ON-CALL FIREFIGHTER, NORFOLK FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

## Advice for applicants:

- go for it
- stick at it
- learn as much as you can

I'd wanted to be a firefighter from a very early age. My father was a firefighter for a while and he was a big part of my inspiration to join. I remember watching the fire engine leave the station on call outs as I grew up, and each time I saw it go I thought: that will be me one day.

I worked hard at college doing a public services course with the hope it would help me achieve my goal. I started going to drill nights to watch the crews train. I was welcomed straight away.

The recruitment process took a little while for me. The crew at my station were very helpful and ran taster sessions. My main problem was the equipment carry. I found it exhausting. Luckily the crew helped me improve my strength and physical fitness. I didn't pass the first time I took the tests, but the watch manager helped create a fitness plan.

This included gym work, swimming and some workouts I could do at the station - I would use the hoses as weights for arm strengthening, drag the dummy round the yard for cardio and use a ladder to do weighted squats. They were very creative in finding practical ways to help improve my fitness and prepare me for my next attempt. When I reapplied, I passed with flying colours!

I was really nervous about the written exams which are part of the recruitment process, but I did some revision using GCSE revision sites to prepare myself and passed.

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I love everything about my job as an on-call firefighter. It's always varied! No two call outs are the same, you get hands on with specialist equipment, you are always learning and the job gives you so many opportunities to learn new things. Sometimes there are unfortunate circumstances which occur, but you are part of a crew who feel like a second family and we always help each other out.



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This job has given me some amazing opportunities. I've been in posters, I have a blog on social media, I was asked to give a National Women's Day tweet and I now help Norfolk fire and rescue service with their campaign to recruit more female staff.

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My friends and family are unbelievably proud of me. They are always thrilled to hear about the things I have learned, events I have participated in to help my local community and, above all, they are proud of me when I come home and say: 'Today, I helped someone'. Smaller jobs or big jobs - it doesn't matter the scale of them - each job you go to is to keep the community safe and to help them. There is no better feeling than knowing you have achieved that.

I'm one of the lucky people who can say 'I have my dream job'. It's my proudest achievement in life and I wouldn't give it up for the world. Not everyone is perfect when they first apply - I wasn't. But I listened to what I needed to do, used the support that was available and stuck to my plan. Here I am - Firefighter Nelson!