



AGATA WIECZOREK

FIREFIGHTER, CAMBRIDGESHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Advice for applicants:

- you have to want it
- don't listen to people who say you can't do it
- be prepared

The fire service was always spoken about in my family home. My father and uncles were part of the volunteer fire service in Poland. I never thought that I could join though as it was a very male-dominated job. Joining the service came out of the blue really.

One day I was talking to my family back in Poland. One of my brothers mentioned the fire service in my home town was recruiting and both my brothers wanted to apply. I said I would get in before them! Only at this point did I start to believe that I could apply to join the fire service. I started researching the role, reading guides and gearing up to know the UK fire service. I applied to become an on-call firefighter and, after a few years, successfully applied for a wholetime position. I got in on my second attempt.

I always give my very best and think if you fail to prepare, you are preparing to fail. So I read as much as I could and prepared physically. My biggest worry was the written tests as English is not my first language. This really worried me. For the on-call process I passed written, maths and problem-solving tests, but I initially failed the reading with understanding test. I felt I didn't have enough time to read it all. However, I took the test a second time and passed.

On equipment carry assessment day, I passed everything but one of the instructors said I should work on my upper-body strength as I might struggle during the initial course. That advice was really helpful.

During wholetime recruitment I had already passed some of the tests so did not have to redo them. My application was unsuccessful on first attempt but I was lucky to get very good constructive feedback after the process. The following year I was prepared and got in!

No two days are the same in this job. There are quiet days and really busy ones. I know I am making a difference to people in the community. I love waving to kids, helping when no one else can and, most importantly, proudly wearing my uniform! I can't think of another job that would give me the healthy adrenaline kick when we are going to a call.



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I love driving. I never thought that I would even be driving a lorry, but now I drive a fire engine! I am really proud of that.

My husband couldn't be more supportive of my career – he helped me at every stage. I don't think my family in Poland took me seriously when I said I would do it. But now they are very proud and think I'm brave for what I'm doing. My dad was super proud! Unfortunately, he passed away when I was on my way to Poland after passing my wholetime initial course. He never saw me in my undress uniform. But I know he is looking after me from above and is really proud.