



JOANNA LOCKWOOD

NORFOLK FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Advice for applicants:

- visit a fire station and practice some of the tests
- learn about all the roles available
- do it now

I joined Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service as a PA. A couple of months in I got to spend a day out where I watched a large animal rescue demo and attended emergency fire calls.

When I returned to the office the next day I said to the Chief, 'If I had done that 20 years ago I would definitely have applied to be a firefighter.'

'Well, do it now!' he said.

That's how my journey to becoming a firefighter began.

The recruitment process took approximately 6 months from the initial assessment day to the start of my training. Before my assessment day I went along to a fire station and had a go at carrying the equipment and also wearing breathing apparatus in a rat run to see if I'd be ok in confined spaces. This was invaluable, especially the confined space drill. The crew were really supportive – encouraging me and giving tips. After I had passed the assessment day I then sat the written exams and had my medical examination – then it was on to the 2-week on-call recruits course.

It was a hard fortnight – both physically and mentally challenging. But passing the assessments and being handed my alerter was, without a doubt, on of the proudest moments of my life.

The best thing about being a firefighter is the variety. You never know what the next call is going to be and you have a real sense of achievement when you're able to help someone in their time of need. I also love the crew – it really feels like you're part of a big family and the support and encouragement I have received has been amazing.

I've recently left my PA role and have just completed my training to become an emergency call handler. It's been really interesting to see this side of the service and I am enjoying the new challenge! I am also a pilot for Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service's new drone.

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I would encourage anyone to look at a career in the fire service. There are so many fantastic opportunities you can explore. It's definitely the best career decision I have made.