



SAMANTHA SAMUELS

STATION COMMANDER, FALLINGS PARK FIRE STATION,
WEST MIDLANDS FIRE SERVICE

Advice for applicants:

- be yourself
- you have to want it
- work at it

I've been part of the fire service since 1990. I applied when I saw an advert in a local newspaper picturing a female firefighter holding a child that had been rescued from a fire. I'd never considered being a firefighter as a career before that.

It turned out when I joined there was only one operational female firefighter. And the woman I'd seen in the advert had been an actress!

It's not been an easy journey. Black female firefighters are few and far between. But being part of a junior firefighter scheme really helped – I was able to join at 16 and train for two years before applying to the wholetime service.

West Midlands fire service has made me the person I am today. The people I have met and the support I've had along the way (particularly from other ethnic minority women) has kept me alive. I'm very active in my brigade.

I stand tall in my community as a black woman. People look up to me, and that's set high expectations. This can sometimes be challenging, but I think that's necessary.

I have made my mother proud. I have been a role model for my brother who is also a firefighter now. I've been able to continue to achieve and develop, recently getting a degree in leadership and management supported by my brigade.

I stand tall in my community as a black woman. People look up to me, and that's set high expectations. This can sometimes be challenging, but I think that's necessary.

At 44, I'm now a station commander with 27 years of service. I'm not afraid to be myself – I love my life and my work.