



SARAH HOLDEN

ON-CALL FIREFIGHTER, LANCASHIRE FIRE
AND RESCUE SERVICE

Advice for applicants:

- it's not just fires
- do your research
- you're not too old

I worked as a graphic designer from the age of 18 until I 'gave it all up' to move to the country with my family. After that I set up my own niche farm business and ran that for 12 years. But by then I was approaching 40, my children had grown up and I found myself with a little more time on my hands. I wanted to give something back. Becoming an on-call firefighter seemed perfect for me.

I was apprehensive about the recruitment process. I'd heard stories about how tough it is. I was the oldest female on the course and the second oldest recruit overall. Yes, it was tough. I'm quite fit from running and the farming job had given me a lot of upper body strength so the fitness wasn't an issue. But I did doubt myself throughout the process. Luckily I was in regular contact with the watch manager who gave me the encouragement I needed.

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Our station is the hub of village. We host cadets, a dementia cafe, running club, couch to 5k and lots of fundraising events. I love the community side of my role. Being in a small village means the call outs we get are usually to people we know. It's all very personal. The feeling when you leave an incident knowing you have made a positive impact is incredible. I feel unbelievably proud to wear my duty rig and fire kit protecting the community I live in.

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I applied to be a wholetime firefighter 6 months after I became an on-call firefighter because I love the work so much. For my interview I had to give a 10-minute speech on the role of a modern-day firefighter and the challenges we face. Doing this truly opened my eyes. It made me appreciate everything the fire service does and, more importantly, made me realise this is the perfect job for me.

I just want one thing - to be an exceptional modern-day firefighter having spent years perfecting my skills.