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Advice for applicants:

- visit fire stations
- ask questions
- get training for the fitness tests

I always wanted to do a job where I could help people. I wanted a job that would be rewarding and purposeful. I was on the Great Britain rowing squad and am really into fitness so also wanted a job that would allow me use my strength for the greater good.

The recruitment process was very competitive. There were thousands of applicants. But I got in on my first application. I was determined and believed in my own abilities.

My parents initially had reservations about me joining the service, but they were really proud when I got in. My friends think I'm brave and slightly bonkers for loving my job as much as I do. They think it's heroic, but I don't see it that way. I feel compelled to help people.

Some of my friends think I must be tough to be in such a male-dominated environment and hold my own, but to me we're all firefighters. I'm not a firewoman and they're not firemen. We're like a family.

The best thing about my job is knowing I have made a difference to people's lives. I have rescued people and animals from house fires, road traffic collisions and lots of other situations. I love working in the community and talking to people, sharing fire safety advice and making people safer in their homes. I currently work in the training department, teaching firefighters. I enjoy interacting with people and sharing the skills and experience I have developed in my 11 years in the service. I'm currently studying for a degree in fire engineering and leadership and hope to go into fire investigation. I will continue studying and learning throughout my career.

Becoming a firefighter is a lifestyle choice. It's not a career that should be considered lightly. But we're a great bunch so don't be nervous about not being accepted or feeling different. There's a place for everyone in the fire sector.