

# On-call firefighter selection

Interview guidance for candidates



## Introduction

This booklet has been developed to help you prepare for the on-call firefighter selection interview. This booklet is divided into the following sections:

- **The interview** – this section will give you a brief description of what the interview is and what will happen.
- **Preparing for your interview** – this section provides you with some general advice on what to do and think about before your interview.
- **Talking about your experience** – this section provides some advice on how to phrase your answers.
- **Structuring your answer** – this section gives advice on choosing appropriate examples and which areas you need to cover in your answers.
- **Practice questions** – this section contains some practice questions

We strongly recommend you set aside some time to read through this booklet and consider the best examples you can use to demonstrate your experience.

## The presentation

You will be required to give a ten-minute presentation on a subject area of your choice. This does not have to be work related and can be

## The interview

The interview will be conducted with two people; who will ask you questions about your experience and take full notes to ensure that a record is kept of all the examples you give.

Your interview will last approximately 45 minutes. Initially your interviewers will introduce themselves to you and talk you through the procedure of the interview. The main aim of the interview is to gather examples of when and how you have used skills that are important for potential fire-fighters which we refer to as personal qualities and attributes (PQAs) . The areas that may be assessed are:

- **Working with others** – This is about working effectively with a variety of people whether they are in your team or in the community.
- **Commitment to excellence** – This is about adopting a conscientious and proactive approach to work, and achieving and maintaining excellent standards.
- **Commitment to development** – This is about being committed to, and being able to develop yourself and others.
- **Commitment to diversity and integrity** – This is about understanding and respecting other people's differences and treating people fairly and ethically.
- **Open to change** – This is about being open to change and how you support and promote it.
- **Problem solving** – This is about being able to recall and adapt relevant information and generating solutions to problems.
- **Situational awareness** – This is about your ability to judge the situation and react accordingly.

- **Confidence and resilience** – This is about remaining confident and in control in highly challenging situations.
- **Communicating effectively** – This is about how effectively you verbally deliver information, make yourself understood and how you understand information.

You will not be asked questions to assess 'Communicating effectively' - this will be examined through the way in which you communicate throughout the interview. Having an understanding of the area will help you target your examples to give your best response possible. For further information, please see the Firefighter's personal qualities and attributes available on our website, [www.ddfire.gov.uk](http://www.ddfire.gov.uk) .

This booklet is aimed at familiarising you with the areas being focused upon, the type of questions you may be asked and the way in which you should structure/phrase your examples. Later, some example questions are provided for your practice.

## **Preparing for the interview**

Here are some suggestions of what you can do to prepare for your interview:

- Think about what questions an interviewer might ask and what examples you would give.

### **Practical tips**

- Confirm the date, time, location and route, the name and telephone number of the person you are meeting and what they expect you to bring. Carry this information with you to the interview.
- If you are unable to attend the interview, inform someone as soon as possible.
- Leave plenty of time to get there, always plan to be 10 minutes early. If you think that you are going to be late, telephone and let them know as soon as possible.

### **What to wear**

- Aim for clean and smart.

## **Talking about your experience**

As in your application form, the main body of your interview will investigate your experience and how you have actually used the relevant personal qualities and attributes or behaviours that are being assessed. Specifically, your interviewers will be looking for examples of what you have actually said, done or decided. You interviewers will not be able to give you credit for hypothetical examples of what you would or might do in a particular situation.

In the same way, your interviewers cannot give you credit for what other people may have done. It is acceptable to describe the context of an example within a team effort, but you must also specifically refer to what you did within that team. For example, if you are talking about a team effort and referring to, 'what we decided', it is important to clarify what specific contribution you made to that team's decision.

### **Don't say**

'We said...'

'It was decided...'

'Usually we spoke to...'

'I would write...'

'We solved the problem by...'

### **Do say**

'I said...' or 'he said...'

'I decided...' or 'she decided'

'I spoke to...'

'I wrote...'

'My contribution was to...'

## Structuring your answer

When structuring your answer try to use the following **STARE** approach:

<b>Situation</b>	When, where, with whom? Set the context of your example.
<b>Task</b>	Describe the situation, task or problem you were faced with.
<b>Action</b>	What action did <b>you</b> take? It is important you give examples of your individual actions – you will get no credit for a group decision.
<b>Result</b>	What results did you achieve? What conclusions did you reach?
<b>Evaluate</b>	What did you learn from the experience?

After you have given your example, your interviewers may ask follow up questions to clarify their understanding of how you have used the particular PQA being investigated. This is to ensure that your interviewers have a full picture of how you have used a particular PQA and what the result was.

### Choosing an example

Your interviewers are primarily interested in your personal experiences. Where you have gained that experience is less important than the actual demonstration of your personal qualities and attributes. When you are choosing an example, you are encouraged to think about situations at work, college, in your home life, in your hobbies, or in any other clubs or organisations you may be a member of. It is important that you choose an example that is clear in your memory, so that you will be able to confidently talk your interviewers through what you did and why.

### Practice questions

In this section you will find descriptions of some of the areas that may be assessed during your interview and examples of the type of interview questions you may be asked. To get used to talking about your experience, you should practice answering these questions aloud, keeping in mind the STARE approach and the need to give specific examples about what you have actually done.

You will not be asked these actual questions during your interview, but you may be asked for examples for some of the areas described below. During your interview, you will not be able to use the same example more than once. While you are practicing, you are encouraged to do the same.

After you have gone through the practice questions, for each of the areas you should think of as many examples from your experience as you can that demonstrate what has been described.

**Working with others - This is about working effectively with a variety of people whether they are in your team or in the community**

1. Give me an example of a time when you have built new relationships with team members.
2. Tell me about a time when you have worked to resolve an issue that was negatively impacting your team.
3. Tell me about a time when you have acted with sensitivity to someone's feelings or wellbeing.

**Commitment to Excellence - This is about adopting a conscientious and proactive approach to work, and achieving and maintaining excellent standards.**

1. Give me an example of when you have completed a task or project to a high standard.
2. Tell me about a time when you have been unhappy with the standard of work being produced.
3. Give me an example of how you have worked proactively to meet objectives

**Commitment to Development - This is being about committed to, and being able to develop yourself and others.**

1. Tell me about the last time you learned something.
2. Give me an example of when you have encouraged someone to improve.
3. Give me an example of when your colleagues or team mates have learnt from you.

**Commitment to diversity and integrity - This is about understanding and respecting other people's differences and treating people fairly and ethically.**

1. Give me an example of when you have investigated the needs of someone that was different to you in cultural background, age, gender, religion, disability etc.
2. Give me an example of how you have taken responsibility for your own actions.
3. Tell me about a time when you have been trusted with a task or information that was sensitive.