



Derbyshire
Fire & Rescue Service
Making Derbyshire Safer

On-Call Firefighter

Interview Practice Booklet



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Section One: Introduction

About this booklet

This booklet has been developed to help you prepare for the On-Call Firefighter Interview. This booklet is divided into the following sections:

- **Introduction** – 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.
- **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.

Section Two: The interview

The interview will be conducted with two people; one will ask you questions about your experience, the other will make notes to ensure that a record is kept of all the examples you give. The interviewers may take it in turns to ask questions and take notes.

Your interview will last for up to 1 hour. Initially your interviewers will introduce themselves to you and talk you through the procedure of the interview. From then on, the main aim of the interview is to gather examples of when and how you have used skills that are important for potential firefighters. The areas that will be assessed are as follows:

- 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 Development/Excellence – This is about being committed to, and being able to develop yourself and others. Adopting a conscientious and proactive approach to work to achieve and maintain excellent standards.
- Confidence and Resilience – This is about maintaining a confidence and resilient attitude in highly challenging situations
- Commitment to Diversity and Integrity – This is about understanding and respecting other people's differences and treating people fairly and ethically.
- Problem Solving & Situational Awareness – This is about understanding, recalling, applying and adapting relevant information in an organised, safe and systematic way and maintaining an active awareness of the environment to promote safe and effective working
- 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. As you go through the interview, your interviewer will tell you which area their questions are focused on. Having an understanding of the area will help you target your examples to give your best response possible.

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.

Section Three: Preparing for the interview

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

- Read through your application form, CV and any further information that has been provided to help you prepare.
- Think about what questions an interviewer might ask and what examples you would give.
- Practice talking through the examples you could use, also write down your examples and read them through to familiarise yourself with them.
- Listen carefully to the question that the interviewer is asking.
- Don't be afraid to ask the interviewer to repeat the question being asked.
- Take a moment to plan your answer in your mind before you start speaking.
- Speak slowly and if you make a mistake, pause to recompose yourself before continuing.
- Talk about yourself and what **you** did- even if the question is about teamwork, use “**I**”
- Try to relax, although the interview is formal, the panel are there to try to get as much information as they can from you.

Practical Tips

- Ensure that you know the date, time, location and route, a telephone number for where you are going. Take this information with you to the interview.
- If you cannot attend the interview, always call and let the HR Services team know as soon as possible.
- Leave plenty of time to get there, always plan to be 10 -20 minutes early. If you think that you are going to be late, call and let them know as soon as possible.
- Take an umbrella with you. You will not be comfortable sitting in wet clothes for an hour if you get caught in the rain.

What to Wear

- Aim for smart and tidy. Wear a suit if possible.

Section Four: 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 that are being assessed. Specifically, your interviewer will be looking for examples of what you have actually said, done or decided. Your interviewer 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 interviewer 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 <input type="checkbox"/>	Do say <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
'We said...'	'I said...' or 'he said...'
'It was decided...'	'I decided...' or 'she decided'
'Usually we spoke to...'	'I spoke to...'
'I would write...'	'I wrote...'
'We solved the problem by...'	'My contribution was to...'

Section Five: Structuring Your Answer

When structuring your answer try to make sure that you:

- set the scene by describing the **context** of your example;
- clearly describe **what** you did and said;
- state **why** you chose that course of action; and
- say what the **outcome** of your actions were.

After you have given your example, your interviewer will ask follow up questions to clarify his or her understanding of how you have used the particular personal quality and attribute being investigated. This is to ensure that your interviewer has a full picture of how you have used a particular attribute or personal quality and what the result was.

Choosing an Example

Your interviewer is 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, enough that you will be able to confidently talk your interviewer through what you did and why.

Section Five: Practice questions

In this section you will find descriptions of the areas that will be assessed during your interview. For each of these, you will also find examples of the type of interview questions you may be asked. Your interviewer will spend up to 10 minutes investigating each area and will ask for one example in all the PQA areas. The question for the PQA's of Problem Solving & Situational Awareness will be a scenario based question. You will be given a scenario and you will be asked to describe how you would best solve the problem and what considerations you would give to the environment described in the scenario.

To get used to talking about your experience, you should practice answering these questions aloud, keeping in mind the STAR model 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 will be asked for examples 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 area you should think of as many examples of your experience that demonstrate what has been described.

Practice questions

Working with Others	This is about working effectively with a variety of people whether they are in your team or in the community.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Give me an example of a time when you have built new relationships with team members.• Tell me about a time when you have worked to resolve an issue that was negatively impacting your team.• Tell me about a time when you have acted with sensitivity to someone's feelings or well being.	

Commitment to Development / Excellence	This is being about committed to, and being able to develop yourself and others.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tell me about the last time you learned something.• Give me an example of when you have encouraged someone to improve.• Give me an example of when your colleagues or team mates have learnt from you.• Give me an example of when you have completed a task or project to a high standard.• Tell me about a time when you have been unhappy with the standard of work being produced.• Give me an example of how you have worked proactively to meet objectives.	

<p>Confidence and Resilience</p>	<p>This is about maintaining a confidence and resilient attitude in highly challenging situations</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me about a time when you have had to work under pressure • Give me an example of when you have had to control your emotions in a stressful situation • Give me an example of when you have challenged your colleagues or team mates to achieve a more effective outcome 	

<p>Commitment to Diversity and Integrity</p>	<p>This is about understanding and respecting other people's differences and treating people fairly and ethically.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me about a time when you have acted with consideration of someone's needs that were different to your own, e.g. working with a different age group, ethnicity, religion etc. • 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. • Give me an example of how you have taken responsibility for your own actions. • Tell me about a time when you have been trusted with a task or information that was sensitive. • Give me an example of how you have promoted the values of a group or organisation that you belonged to. 	



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