



# East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service

Retained Firefighter  
Information Pack







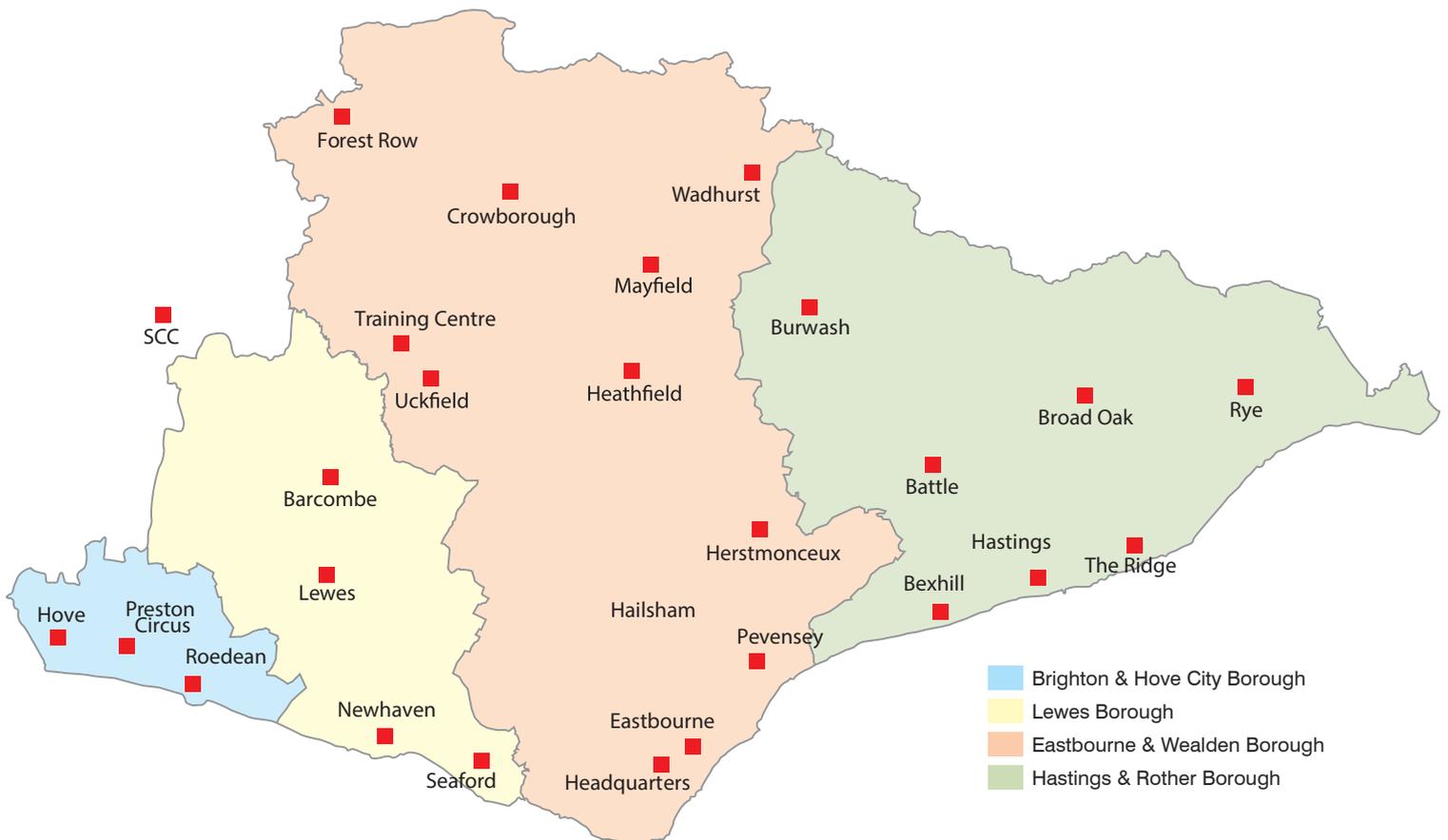
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# INTRODUCTION

East Sussex is served by 24 fire stations.

- 6 are Wholetime-only stations
- 6 are Wholetime and Retained stations
- 12 are Retained-only stations



Over the last few years the role of the Fire Service has changed considerably. Today, Firefighters are not solely focused on attending emergency incidents, but are also able to switch to a more preventative role, which involves educating communities about the hazards presented by fire.

Before completing your application, please carefully read all of the following information to fully understand the work of the Fire Service, and the role of the Retained Firefighter.

# THE WORK OF THE FIRE SERVICE

## Key Objectives

The objectives of a modern Fire and Rescue Service are to build a safer society by working in partnership with others, and to reduce death, injury, damage to property and the environment from fire and other emergencies.

## Prevention and Protection

We aim to prevent loss of life and injuries in our communities through the delivery of prevention and education programmes, and to protect our communities and the environment from fire and other risks. We work with local partners to run safety events and prevention campaigns, and actively involve local communities wherever possible.

## Response

We respond, along with our emergency service partners, to help people at a range of emergencies to save life, property and protect the environment.

These include:

- Fires in properties, cars, open spaces and at sea
- Road traffic collisions
- Other types of transport incidents
- Floods and other natural disasters
- Chemical spillages
- Building and trench collapses
- Lift and machinery entrapment
- Rescues at heights and from enclosed spaces

We also provide 'humanitarian services' including rescuing animals and protecting the environment.

## Dealing with Emergencies

On arrival at the scene, Firefighters have to make a quick assessment of the situation. A house fire may require two appliances, whereas a commercial or factory fire may involve several more appliances, as well as requiring thousands of litres of water and foam, plus the use of specialist equipment, such as cutting and lifting gear, protective suits for use at chemical spills and thermal imaging cameras to help locate victims in smoke filled rooms. There is also the hazard of toxic fumes and heavy smoke. With this in mind, Firefighters always go fully protected, with Breathing Apparatus and personal radio sets to maintain contact with colleagues.

Technology also plays a major role in helping Firefighters to tackle emergencies. For example, our control room computers store street plans, details of high-risk buildings and the latest information on hazardous materials. This ensures that as soon as an emergency call is received, controllers can immediately assess which appliances are required to attend.

## Fire Safety

Training in fire safety is a critical aspect of a Firefighter's remit. Private properties and business premises are required to comply with strict fire precaution measures and it's up to the Fire Service to ensure that these requirements are effectively maintained, as well as to provide specialist fire protection advice. Another important aspect of our work is promoting fire safety through education and publicity. It is therefore vital that stations forge close links with their local communities and Firefighters take part in a wide range of events and activities designed to raise awareness of fire safety.

# THE RETAINED DUTY SYSTEM (RDS)

## The Role of Retained Firefighters (also known as On-call Firefighters)

The Retained Duty System is one of three Duty Systems (alongside Shift and Day Crewed) that combine to provide operational fire cover across the County of East Sussex. All Firefighters in East Sussex are trained to respond to the same incidents and Retained Firefighters are not a secondary or backup service. They are an integral part of the County's fire cover and enable us to crew more fire appliances in some of the more rural and remote areas of the County, in the most cost effective way.

Over 90% of Retained Firefighters in East Sussex do their firefighting work alongside their day job. For example, we have those at home during school hours, office workers and self-employed people. Retained Firefighters come from all walks of life. They are people who are able to give their time to assist the Fire Service in return for payment. Retained Firefighters are not based at a fire station, but are on-call and need to be able to stop whatever they are doing when their alerter goes off and go straight to station. In order to do this Retained Firefighters need to live or work within five minutes of their local community fire station.

Retained Firefighters provide cover during the day, night and at weekends and are required to commit to specified hours of availability, providing a minimum of 40 hours a week. Pay varies according to the number of hours of cover provided. Retained Firefighters are paid an annual Retaining Fee of up to £2,964<sup>+</sup>, plus an hourly rate of up to £13.53<sup>+</sup> for any work undertaken for the Service, including responding to incidents and training. Your annual earnings will depend largely on how much cover you can offer and how often you get called out. The average earned by Retained Firefighters in East Sussex is between £5,000 and £7,000\*.

<sup>+</sup> correct at 1 July 2016    \* gross average, ESFRS, 2016.

Retained Firefighters are required to attend an evening training session each week for approximately two and a half hours, known as a Drill Night. Drill nights for Eastbourne and Wealden Borough are on a Monday, on a Tuesday for Hastings and Rother Borough and for Lewes Borough they fall on a Wednesday – please see the list of stations' drill nights below:

### **Monday**

Crowborough  
Forest Row  
Hailsham  
Heathfield  
Herstmonex  
Mayfield  
Pevensey  
Uckfield  
Wadhurst

### **Tuesday**

Battle  
Bexhill  
Broad Oak  
Burwash  
Rye

### **Wednesday**

Barcombe  
Lewes  
Newhaven  
Seaford



## WHO CAN BE A RETAINED FIREFIGHTER?

Retained Firefighters have to be at least 18 years of age at the start of their training. Training comprises two induction/training weekends, followed by a two week training course (Monday to Friday) at our Training Centre in Maresfield, or residential at a West Sussex Fire & Sussex Service training location; usually Horley or Worthing. Previous experience or formal qualifications are not required and there is no upper age limit. A good all-round level of fitness is essential.

Retained Firefighters are a vital part of East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service and need to have an enthusiasm and commitment to serving the local community. They also need to be flexible, reliable, and self-motivated. It is a huge commitment, but the job is rewarding and in addition to learning firefighting techniques, Retained Firefighters learn other skills such as first aid, trauma care and road traffic collision procedures.

# WHERE ARE WE RECRUITING?

The following East Sussex Fire Stations have RDS crews:

Barcombe	Forest Row	Newhaven
Battle	Hailsham	Pevensy
Bexhill	Heathfield	Rye
Broad Oak	Herstmonceux	Seaford
Burwash	Lewes	Uckfield
Crowborough	Mayfield	Wadhurst

To see a list of stations currently recruiting, please visit [www.esfrs.org/retained-recruitment](http://www.esfrs.org/retained-recruitment)

Please note there are no RDS vacancies available in Brighton, Hove, Hastings or Eastbourne as we do not have RDS crews at these locations.

Due to the nature of the role, it is absolutely essential that you are able to travel at normal road speeds and arrive at your Fire Station from your place of work/home within 5 minutes of your Fire Service Alerter sounding.



# THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

We strongly encourage prospective applicants to contact the RDS Fire Station and arrange to visit the Watch they are proposing to join. This provides applicants with a bespoke understanding of the nature of the role, and what Retained Firefighters do in their local community.

**Application Form** – applicants are required to complete a short, straightforward application form which gives us information on your contact details, the cover you are able to provide and the distance you are from your local Fire Station. Initially, candidates are considered on the cover they offer and distance elements alone.

**Written Tests** – candidates will be required to pass all of the following tests. **Please note** that applicants who do not pass all three tests after three attempts will be required to take a six month break before re-entering the recruitment process:

- Working With Numbers
- Situational Awareness and Problem Solving
- Understanding Information

## **National Firefighter Questionnaire**

Candidates with conditions such as dyslexia will be given the opportunity to make themselves known to the assessment team. You will be asked what reasonable adjustments, if any, you require to undertake the tests and we will endeavour to implement these where possible.

Elements of both the Written Tests and the Interview are designed to assess your attitudes and motivations against set Personal Qualities and Attributes (PQAs):

- **A Commitment to Diversity & Integrity.**  
To be someone who understands and respects diversity and adopts a fair and ethical approach to everyone.
- **Change.**  
To be someone who is open to change and actively seeks to support it.
- **Confidence and Resilience.**  
To be confident and resilient - even in highly challenging situations.
- **Working with Others.**  
To be someone who can work easily with others - both within the Fire & Rescue Service and in the community.
- **Communicate.**  
To communicate effectively - both verbally and in writing.
- **Personal Development.**  
Be someone who is committed to personal development - for yourself and others.
- **Practical Abilities.**  
Be practical and able to solve problems in a logical, safe and systematic way.
- **Awareness.**  
You should have a good level of awareness to be able to respond to a rapidly changing environment. Safety is always of paramount importance.
- **Excellence.**  
Candidates should be capable of achieving and maintaining standards of excellence.

**Interview** – You will be required to attend an interview. This will last for approximately 45 minutes and will consist of questions designed to demonstrate ways in which you meet the relevant Fire Service Personal Qualities and Attributes. **Please note** that applicants who do not pass the interview after two attempts must take a six month break before re-entering the recruitment process.

**Physical Tests** – These tests are related to the actual tasks a Firefighter will face and are designed to test fitness and the ability to understand and apply information.

The tests are timed and consist of the following:

### **Ladder climb**

Whilst attached to a safety line, you'll climb a 12 metre ladder and carry out a selected task within a time limit. This test will assess your confidence and co-ordination whilst working at heights.

### **Casualty evacuation**

A simulated rescue of a casualty from an open space. This test involves upper and lower body strength and stamina.

### **Ladder lift**

You'll be asked to lift the weight of a ladder to a defined height within a time limit to simulate housing a ladder back on an appliance. This will test upper and lower body strength.

### **Enclosed space**

You'll negotiate your way through a measured crawlway wearing a Breathing Apparatus facemask within a set time. Your vision will be obscured and you will be asked to identify a number of objects during this test.

### **Equipment assembly**

This aims to test your ability to comprehend and follow instructions. You'll be asked to assemble and disassemble a piece of equipment following a series of diagrams within a set time frame.

### **Equipment carry**

A variety of equipment will need to be carried to a set point within a defined timeframe, between shuttle runs. This will test your aerobic fitness, muscular strength and stamina.

### **Medical**

A full medical examination by the Service's Occupational Health Adviser is required. The purpose of the medical is to assess your general level of health and to ensure you are fit to take on the role of a Firefighter. A medical report from your GP may be requested, for which your consent will be required. Any conditions you may have are assessed on an individual basis. There are no "blanket bans" on conditions such as asthma and diabetes and we do not ask for 20:20 vision\*. All conditions are assessed in line with the requirements of the job.

\* Firefighter Eyesight Requirements

Applicants must meet the required standard of vision when applying to join East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service as Firefighters.

The eyesight standards are as follows:-

- Uncorrected distance vision no worse than 6/18 in the better eye, and 6/24 in the worse eye
- Corrected distance acuity should be at least 6/9 with both eyes open and reach 6/12 in the weaker eye.
- Near vision – should be able to read N12 at 30 cm with both eyes open unaided.
- Have normal binocular field of vision.
- Have an appropriate level of colour perception. Individuals with either normal colour vision or slightly abnormal green colour vision are suitable for appointment to the Fire Service. The recommended test procedure uses the Ishihara test with additional tests (including the Farnsworth D15 test and the Nagel Anomaloscope) if the applicant does not pass the initial screening, to determine the severity and type of colour vision deficiency.

### **Service Fitness Test**

As part of the recruitment process you will also need to undergo and successfully complete a Service fitness test, which measures aerobic fitness. The role of Retained Firefighter can be physically demanding in arduous conditions, therefore it is vital from a health and safety and well-being perspective that applicants meet minimum fitness levels.

If you are successful through the recruitment process you will be asked to visit an optician for an assessment, as part of the medical process.

### **The Decision**

Following the medical process, candidates will be advised whether they are likely to be offered a position within the East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service. References will be taken and you will be required to undertake a basic criminal records disclosure check.

### **Career Opportunities**

While there are occasionally opportunities for Retained Firefighters in East Sussex to apply internally for Wholetime Firefighter roles, this remains a highly competitive process. Entry to the Service as a Retained Firefighter should never be seen as an “easy route” to becoming a Wholetime Firefighter.

# EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES, INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

The South East Fire Services are community services that are committed to ensuring equality and fairness in employment and to giving a high level of service to all people of, and visitors to, the area.

Our aim and commitment is to ensure no person whether an applicant for employment, employee or member of the community receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of sex, race, colour, age, nationality, ethnic or national origin, marital status, dependents, sexual orientation, political or religious belief, trade union activity, disability or any other factors.

All employees have the right to be treated with dignity and consideration at work. This extends to the right to work in a safe and healthy environment free from harassment, bullying, discrimination or intimidation either directly or indirectly by other employees.

The Services are committed to the implementation of their Inclusion Policies and will actively pursue practices designed to promote Equality and Fairness at Work and to eliminate discrimination, bullying and harassment.

The overall responsibility for the Policy lies with the Service's Chief Fire Officer, however, all staff are expected to comply with the policy and to act in accordance with its objectives so as to remove any barriers to equality and fairness. Any act of discrimination by employees or any failure to comply with the terms of the Policy will result in disciplinary action.

Currently there are three nationally recognised representative Fire and Rescue Service networks and East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service is proud to be corporate members of them all. These are as follows:

## **Women In The Fire Service**

WFS is a voluntary, not for profit organisation, established in 1993. Comprising of members from all roles within the Fire and Rescue Service, its aim is to make all Fire and Rescue Services a place where men and women can work, and compete, together professionally and harmoniously. The network supports and encourages the recruitment, retention, development and progression of women within the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS). For further information, go to [www.nwfs.net](http://www.nwfs.net)

## **Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA)**

Formed in 2003, this independent inclusive employer led support group aims to raise the profile of Asian staff to enhance equality and diversity and its associated values. AFSA works with Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) to mainstream subjects around equality and diversity in two priority areas; Service provision and delivery and Employment policy and practice. For further information, go to [www.afsa.co.uk](http://www.afsa.co.uk)

## **UK FRS Quiltbag Network**

Formed in 2015, The QUILTBAG network works alongside the FRS and other Blue Light Responders with the aim of supporting Fire and Rescue Services to improve their approaches to employees and the public who self-identify across the spectrum of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identities. For further information go to: [www.quiltbagfire.co.uk](http://www.quiltbagfire.co.uk)

## **Links**

Please note that East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service cannot be held responsible for the content of any of the external websites mentioned in this leaflet.

## **Any Questions?**

If you have any questions that are not answered within this booklet, you can call and leave your details on our Recruitment line on 01323 462349. Or go along to your local fire station's drill night and speak to a member of the crew.

**Do something extraordinary! Apply to be a Retained Firefighter today.**

# CASE STUDY: CALLUM HILLS – RETAINED FIREFIGHTER AT BEXHILL

## **What attracted you to the role of RDS firefighter?**

To be able to learn skills to use in situations to help people in need, whether on a call or in my day-to-day life.

## **How did you find the recruitment process?**

My personal recruitment process took just over a year. I was always given plenty of notice for my next steps in training and was sent information through the post to prepare me for almost every part of my recruitment so I was ready and knew what to expect. My final two week intensive course was one of the best experiences within my career to date. I bonded with every member of my course and made some life-long friends. The instructors are extremely knowledgeable, professional and were always committed to getting their candidates through the course.



## **How much training do you do and what skills have you learned?**

On station, we train every Tuesday evening. This can include all kinds of exercises from Road Traffic Collision drills, to search and rescue Breathing Apparatus drills. We also get opportunities to train with other stations at public or residential locations to simulate a real incident. Since being an RDS Firefighter, I have picked up numerous new skills such as first-aid and branch techniques to extinguish fires.

## **How long did it take before you became fully trained?**

Overall, my recruitment process took roughly 14 months.

## **What is your greatest achievement as an RDS Firefighter?**

Passing my Breathing Apparatus course as it's such a technical, physiological and physical feat.

## **What do you most enjoy about the role?**

Being a part of a team that the community can rely on for help.

## **How does your RDS commitment impact on your life - both positively and in more challenging ways?**

Working at Hastings Direct while being an RDS Firefighter can occasionally interrupt my calls or training when my pager alerts, so this can cause a bit of disruption on my work path. However, since joining the Fire Service, I have noticed that I'm using skills and thought-patterns that I've learnt from my RDS training, in my day-to-day life.

### **What do your friends and family think of you being in the fire service?**

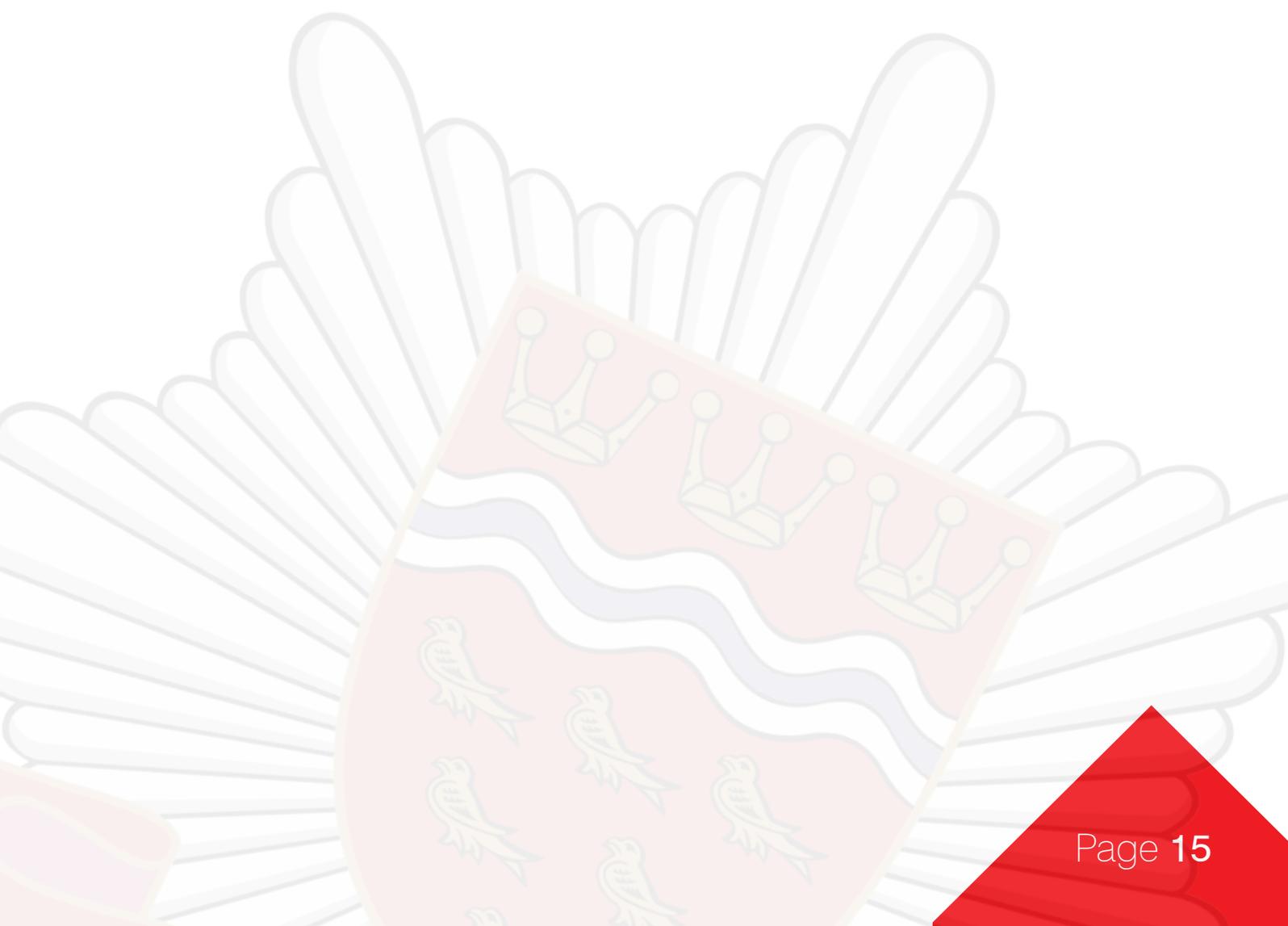
My family have never been more proud of me and my friends are constantly interested in what my job involves and asking questions.

### **How does being an RDS Firefighter compare with other jobs you've done?**

The RDS role is so different to any other job I've had, as I'm always interacting with the community. When we are called out, we never know what to expect and every call is different.

### **What advice would you give to anyone wanting to become a Retained Firefighter?**

I would recommend that anyone that has the opportunity to apply for an RDS role should definitely go for it. It offers the most rewarding situations and you become a member of a tight family unit at your station. The training can get tough and mentally straining but if you are a determined and committed individual who really wants to be a part of an elite service to help your community, then you will be a great addition to the crew.



# CASE STUDY: KARL HARRISON – RETAINED FIREFIGHTER AT UCKFIELD

## **What attracted you to the role of RDS firefighter?**

I was really after a new challenge. I have been doing my work now for about 15 years and I just fancied doing something different. It represented a new challenge for me, so I wanted to give it a go.

## **How did you find the recruitment process?**

The recruit process was quite tough and it was very thorough. It tests you both physically and mentally, but once I got through it all I found it actually to be quite a rewarding process, and you are really pleased to get through and get on to station.



## **How much training do you do and what skills have you learned?**

We do quite a bit of training. We learnt lots of different skills. Initially, when you join you do a two week core skills course which enables you to go to your station to ride the pump. We also do a weekly training night on a Monday night, and then it's an ongoing process really. You get to do lots of courses, such as water safety and Breathing Apparatus training, as well as all sorts of other courses. It's just an ongoing process.

## **How long did it take before you became fully trained?**

I guess it's about 2 years when you're fully trained, but there are always new skills to learn so it's difficult to say you are fully trained. To be deemed a competent Firefighter probably took me about 2 years.

## **What is your greatest achievement as an RDS Firefighter?**

That's a difficult one. I guess on a personal level it is going through all the courses and becoming competent, but then on the job you get lots of different rewarding things; just helping people doing their home safety visits, doing school visits. Then obviously at incidents when you do get to rescue people from a building, or a car accident.

## **What do you most enjoy about the role?**

I think just the variety to be honest. It's such a varied role. You get to work as part of a team so it's always good fun, but then when you're going out to jobs you have got to be serious. You can rely on your mates there. I guess every time you go out of the door, whether it's a home safety visit, or a school visit, or to an incident, you are helping people and that's really rewarding.

### **How does your RDS commitment impact on your life - both positively and in more challenging ways?**

I love doing the job, so it's had a really positive impact on me and my life generally. The sort of things we do, meeting people, and being part of a team. I suppose the negative parts are you are on call, so when your friends are going down the pub, or something like that, you can't always go, or you can't drink. You are pinned to being close to the station, so you can respond when you are booked on your hours. There is some flexibility though; you can change your hours. So, yes, it does affect your life both positively and negatively.

### **What do your friends and family think of you being in the Fire Service?**

I think they're quite proud to be honest, I've only had good comments, so yes, it is a good thing.

### **How does being an RDS Firefighter compare with other jobs you've done?**

It's just completely different really. The sorts of things I've done before were the sort of standard jobs, I suppose. This is very varied; the people you meet, things you do, the different training received. It isn't a normal 9-5.

### **What advice would you give to anyone wanting to become a Retained Firefighter?**

I guess I'd look into it, see if the sorts of things we do is what you are interested in. I would recommend it. I found it a really good challenge, so all the things we do is very rewarding and if you think you want to do the job then go for it.

# CASE STUDY: ANNE GOLDSTONE – RETAINED FIREFIGHTER AT BURWASH

## **What attracted you to the role of RDS firefighter?**

I have always liked doing active, physical work. I like a challenge. I like working as part of a team. I like working in my community and being part of the community, so I felt like it was the right time in my life to give it a go and try it. I thought I'd see what happened.

## **How did you find the recruitment process?**

The recruitment process can be quite lengthy. You basically have to do a written test to start off with, and then you have an interview, and then if you pass both of those, then you have a physical test, and then you have a medical after that. You can, if you fall at one of the hurdles, get support and help through the process, which I did. I had a little bit of trouble on my physical, with strength, so I needed to build up my upper body strength. Once I had done that, and I got some help on station with that, I went on and passed it, so it took quite a while for me to get into the Service. Other people get in quicker if they get through all the hurdles straightaway.

## **How much training do you do and what skills have you learned?**

Training is on-going. When you first start you do a two week core skills basic training course, and then you do on-going training throughout your time with your station. We train every Tuesday night at Drill Night, and we do extra training all the time. There is on-going training at our Training Centre in Maresfield, where you do water skills, Road Traffic Collision training and first aid, plus lots of additional training.

## **How long did it take before you became fully trained?**

You become competent after about 2 years, and throughout that time you are doing constant training until you're fully competent.

## **What is your greatest achievement as an RDS firefighter?**

I think just becoming competent is an achievement in itself. As part of our training we have to do Breathing Apparatus training, which is its quite arduous training. You have to be quite physically fit to do it, and I think that was a big achievement passing that. But also you know we go out on lots of different shouts, quite often helping members of the public and that's often quite rewarding.



### **What do you most enjoy about the role?**

I enjoy being part of a team. You know, we have a good laugh. I enjoy helping the public, and I like being active, being physical. I like giving back to my community. You get to know, and get to see, the same faces and meet lots of different people in your community, and it is really rewarding.

### **How does your RDS commitment impact on your life - both positively and in more challenging ways?**

It does have an impact on your life. We're on-call Firefighters, so we have an alerter which goes off when we are at home. When you're at home you have to be available to get called to a shout, so you could be in the middle of dinner, or in the middle of cooking dinner, or in the shower and you could get a shout. You have to be ready to go as soon as your alerter goes off. So it does have an effect on your family, but my children are slightly older now and my husband is used to it now. You just have to be very organised really. You can't be spontaneous. You can't just suddenly say "Oh, I'm going to go out" because you're on call. You have to book yourself off if you're going to do that. So it does have an effect, but if you are organised, and once everybody gets used to it, you know they are all used to hearing my alerter go off and me rushing out in the middle of dinner. So, yes, it is all good.

### **What do your friends and family think of you being in the fire service?**

I think my husband and my two boys are quite proud of me really. My mum worries a bit, but then all mums worry!

