

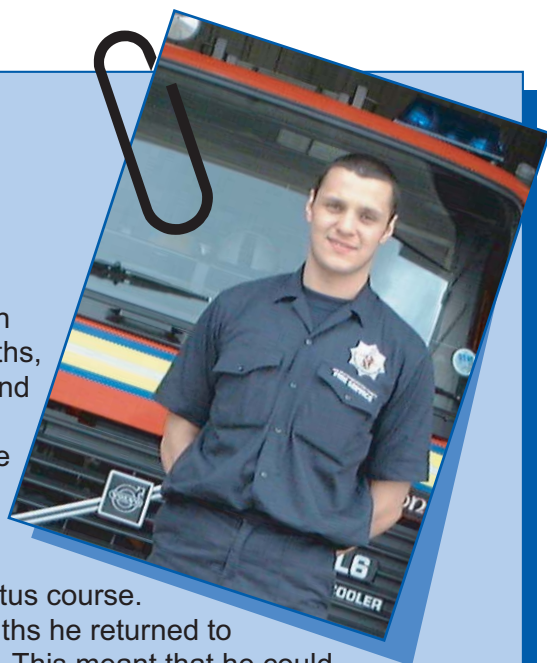
Name: Kevin Williams

Age: 26

Background:

Kevin was born and lives in Manchester. He went to Lostock High School and then South Trafford College, and took GCSE's in Maths, Science, Drama, English Language, English Literature, French and Geography. At college he also gained a NVQ Uniform Services Course qualification, which prepares people for working in the fire service, police and armed forces.

Kevin's fire-fighter training started with a twelve-week residential basic training course, followed by a three week breathing apparatus course. After that he joined a watch at Trafford Fire Station. After six months he returned to training school and passed his Breathing Apparatus Assessment. This meant that he could now enter buildings wearing breathing apparatus. New fire fighters who have not yet passed their assessment wear a red spot on their helmets to identify them at a fire scene.



What sort of work do you do?

Obviously no day is the same, because you cannot predict what sort of call-outs we are going to get. Each watch does two 9 hour days and two 15 hour nights, and then has three days rest. On nights you sleep in the station house dormitory from midnight to 7am, but usually we will be called out 2-3 times during the night.

During the day we have roll call at 9am then inspect the fire engine, checking breathing apparatus, hoses and ladders. After that we get an update on any road closures in our area, information on special events like carnivals and details of special cargoes or hazardous

substances that are being transported through the area, so we can be prepared in case of any emergency with them.

We do physical training for fitness in the gym, have a lecture to update our training and then practice a drill (for example, entering the smoke house) before lunch. In the afternoon we carry out inspections of premises such as schools, hospitals and businesses to check fire safety. □ Of course if we get called out, we have to leave immediately. When we get back from a call out any equipment we've used is checked and cleaned ready for the next job.

What's the worst bit?

I have attended some very nasty accidents and fires, and no-one wants to see people hurt, but it's our job to help people. You know what to expect when you join up, and we're well trained for situations like that. Some people joining the service have to take a pay cut to do it, so that could be improved. The basic salary is £18,000, which goes up after the end of your probationary period. You can take further examinations for promotions and there is long-service pay as well.

What do you like about your work?

There's nothing really that I don't like, it's a fantastic job. Helping people is why we join up in the first place, and the teamwork is excellent. Each watch is a really close team - we depend on each other so much when we're working.

What do you want to do in the future?

I'm still fairly new to the job, and I'm open-minded about the different opportunities. I want to get more experience and to take examinations that will allow me to be promoted before deciding how I want to specialise.