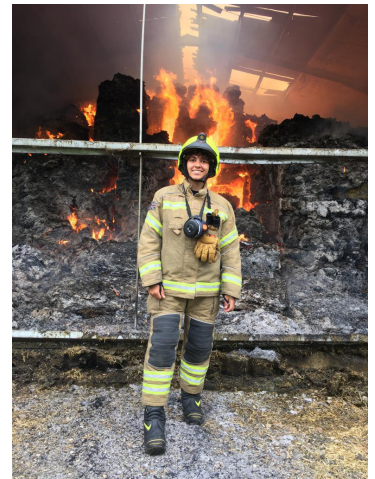


Becoming an on-call firefighter

Information guide



Essex County
Fire & Rescue Service

Search Join Essex Fire

Thank you for your interest in becoming an on-call firefighter with Essex County Fire and Rescue Service.

Our on-call firefighters are a vital part of our Service and play a huge role in helping to keep Essex safe. I recognise that being an on-call firefighter is a big commitment, and we're grateful for the support and encouragement friends, family and loved ones give so they can help keep our communities safe.

Throughout your career with us, you'll be making a positive difference to Essex.

It's not just a job you turn up to, get paid and go home. It's a real commitment and one that can vary day to day. You could attend an incident on what could be the hardest day of someone's life, or you may be giving safety advice to our communities or vulnerable people, that could prevent incidents happening in the first place.

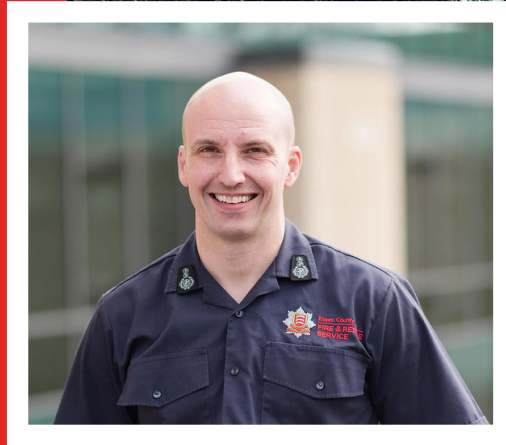
And while you do get paid for the role, we know many of our on-call firefighters aren't here for just the money. They're here because their values match ours – they want to look out for their family, friends, neighbours, and colleagues.

In return for this commitment, we promise to be here for you. To help you develop in your career and to welcome you into our Service.

I started my career as an on-call firefighter 28 years ago. I'm proud to now be the Chief Fire Officer for one of the most exciting Fire and Rescue Services in the UK. I was passionate about helping others back then, and I'm still dedicated to providing a service that our communities deserve.

I look forward to working with you soon.

Rick Hylton, Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive at Essex County Fire and Rescue Service



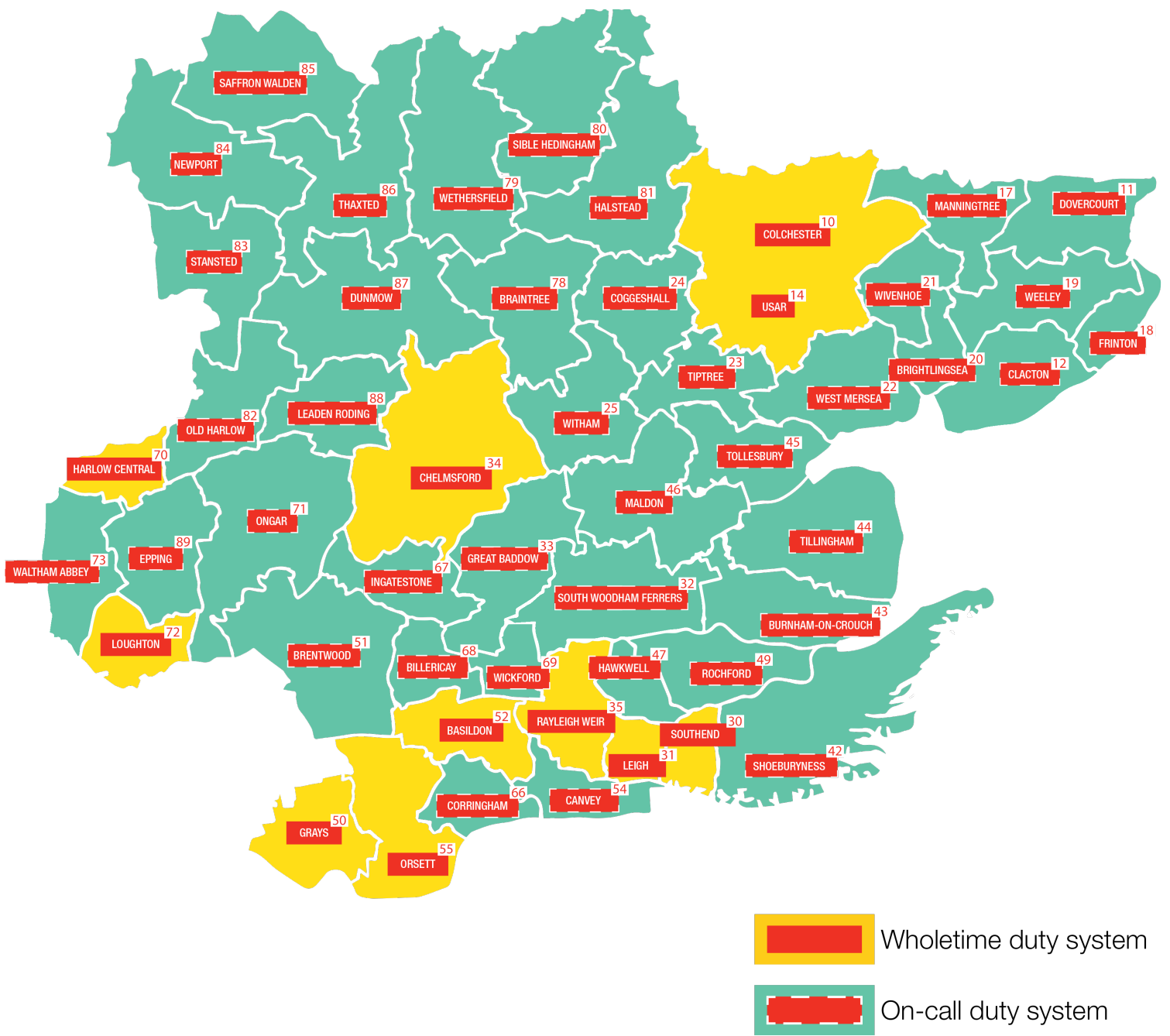




Contents

Introduction.....	4
Map of fire stations.....	4
A career with ECFRS.....	5
Information about on-call firefighters	6
Who can be an on-call firefighter?	6
When will i be needed?	7
What do I get out of it?.....	7
Pay, holiday, pension and benefits	7,8
How being an on-call firefighter can fit in with your life	9
Information for your family	9
Training and development	10
Initial training.	10
Breathing Apparatus initial course	10
Fire behaviour training	10
Promotion and longer term career prospects	10
General information	11
Information for your employer	11
Being an on-call firefighter when you're self employed	11
EC drivers Hours and Tachograph Rules for Goods Vehicles (Regulation 561/2006)	11
Qualifications.....	11
Personal appearance	12
Vision.....	12
The application process	13,14
Case studies	15
Watch Manager Darren Hockley	15
Crew Manager Sharon Blute	15
Crew Manager Graham Child.....	15
Firefighter Jennifer Adelle.....	15

Introduction

Essex County Fire and Rescue Service has a total of 51 fire stations across the county. Almost 80% of these are on-call fire stations or are partly crewed by on-call firefighters forming an intergral part of our response.



 Wholetime duty system
 On-call duty system



A career with Essex County Fire and Rescue Service

An on-call firefighter is a person who is 'on-call' to respond to a range of emergencies and engages with their community. They have everyday lives and jobs, until the pager sounds - then they become professional and paid firefighters. They all live or work within 5 minutes of an on-call fire station.

On-call firefighters come from all walks of life. For example, they could be working full time or part time, studying at college or university, providing fire cover while their children are in school or retired. One thing they all have in common is they're all working to keep their local and the wider community safe. They're working to keep their family, friends, neighbours and colleagues safe as well as being available to help across Essex when needed.

They need to be able to stop what they're doing when the pager sounds and get to the fire station within 5 minutes. They never know what they could be heading to but they receive training to deal with a variety of incidents including fires, chemical spills, animal rescues and water rescues.

We have more than 500 on-call firefighters in Essex. They're all paid to protect their communities and some have served with us for more than 40 years. They cover more than three quarters of fire stations in Essex and our on-call firefighter model is similar to one used all over the world.

On average, our on-call firefighters give around 90 hours a week during the day, evenings and weekends. Giving fire cover means you're within 5 minutes of the fire station and can drop what you're doing to attend an incident. This could be while you're working your day job, in your free time and even while you sleep.

Any questions? Email:
Mailbox.oclo@essex-fire.gov.uk

Who can be an on-call firefighter?

Our on-call firefighters are all unique, coming from a range of backgrounds, careers and different stages in their life.

Our only requirements for our on-call firefighters are:

- You're over 18-years-old
- You live or work within 5 minutes of an on-call fire station
- You have a good all round level of fitness
- Your eyesight meets our requirements

That's it! There are a lot of myths about who can and who can't be a firefighter and we can tell you that they're just myths.

There are no height requirements to join, we've got firefighters who are under 5 ft and some towering over others at almost 7ft. There's also no upper age limit, some of our firefighters are in their 60s and have dedicated more than 40 years to their communities.

What we do ask for is flexibility. We can't predict what will happen on any given day and we rely on our on-call firefighters to be flexible with their time to help us maximise cover across Essex. We'll give you training to deal with a variety of incidents and with your flexibility, we can make sure we're there when people need us the most.

We know that it's not just you we're asking to be flexible. It's your family and friends too, there will be times where you have to stop whatever you're doing and head to the fire station.

Your employers and colleagues will also need to be flexible. Some on-call firefighters work for an understanding employer who is prepared to release them from their workplace from time to time when the pager goes off, others work for themselves and can arrange their days around their on-call firefighter role.

Our on-call firefighters need to have good communication skills together with personal skills like courage, understanding, reliability, flexibility, determination, self-motivation, common sense, commitment, enthusiasm and the ability to work within a team. You'll also need to be able to reflect our values at all times.

Above all, being an on-call firefighter requires a real desire to serve the local community.



When would I be needed?

On average, our on-call firefighters give around 90 hours a week during the day, evenings and weekends. Giving fire cover means you're within 5 minutes of the fire station and can drop what you're doing to attend an incident. This could be while you're working your day job, in your free time and even while you sleep.

Part of those hours will be a paid weekly drill night at your fire station which lasts around two hours. You'll be offered training courses throughout your career which you'll be able to book on to and be paid during.

Once you've passed your assessment process and been offered employment with us you'll be ready to start training to become an on-call firefighter. This will begin with a two-week training course, which runs Monday – Friday. You'll be paid during the course which is based in Essex, primarily at one fire station with occasional travel to our bigger training sites in Wethersfield and Witham.

After this you'll attend evening training sessions which usually last for two hours one evening a week for 10 weeks.

As well as responding to incidents, on-call firefighters also carry out home fire safety visits, attend community events and visit community hubs like schools and care homes to give safety advice.

Each fire station has its own way of maximising cover. There will be times where there are more firefighters available than needed for incidents meaning you wouldn't always be called to every incident.

What do I get out of it?

Firefighting is not like any other job. It can be unpredictable, exciting and highly rewarding. You're helping to protect your local community - your family, friends, neighbours and colleagues.

You'll learn new skills as you train to deal with fires, road traffic collisions and rescuing people and animals from water, height and depth. You'll also have opportunities to learn other skills like Large Goods Vehicle (LGV) Driver Training, First Aid and Trauma Care Training as well as Health and Safety Training.

It is a paid role. As an on-call firefighter you will receive a monthly retainer based on your hours of availability (below), plus an hourly rate between £12 and £20.50 when you attend incidents, training, community safety activities or carry out equipment maintenance, as well as paid holiday.

Pay

You'll be paid a standard rate for the hours you are available as well as additional payments when you are called to incidents, training or community events.

Contract type	Hours per week	Minimum pay per month
Whole rate	120+ hours	Trainee £225+ Development £235+ Competent £300+ Crew Manager £334+ Watch Manager £374+
Reduced rate	90+ hours	Trainee £169+ Development £176+ Competent £225+ Crew Manager £251+ Watch Manager £280+



Contracts

We offer flexible contract options to suit the hours you can provide fire cover. Whether you can give 120 hours a week, 90 hours a week, night and weekend cover or daytime cover, we'd love to hear from you to see how you can support your local on-call fire station.

Holiday

Like most full time jobs, you'll be entitled to four weeks paid leave a year. After five years' service, this entitlement increases to five weeks. A week's leave means a period of seven consecutive days free from duty but can also be taken as individual days.

Pension

From the start of your employment you will be able to contribute to a firefighter's pension scheme, which we will also contribute to.

Benefits

At Essex County Fire and Rescue Service your payslip is only part of the package.

As well as the more obvious benefits, like working for one of the largest fire and rescue services in the county and keeping your community safe, our competitive pension scheme and rates of pay, there are additional perks that make us an employer of choice.

From career development to our in-house Occupational Health services, access to affordable private health care and a Blue Light Card that gives discounts at 1000s of retailers. There's lots of benefits in becoming an on-call firefighter.

Find out more about the benefits at essex-fire.gov.uk/recruitment/benefits

Joining the Fire and Rescue Service is a great way of meeting new people – both the people you work with and those in the community who you help.

be able to contribute to a firefighter's pension scheme, which we will also contribute to.

Joining the Fire and Rescue Service is a great way of meeting new people – both the people you work with and those in the community who you help. There's a special kind of bond among firefighters that comes from working together as a team in conditions that are sometimes potentially dangerous or emotive. This helps bind you together as few jobs could.

Any questions? Email:
Mailbox.oclo@essex-fire.gov.uk

How being an on-call firefighter can fit in with your life

On average, our on-call firefighters give around 90 hours a week during the day, evenings and weekends. This might sound like a lot but it can all be done around your life outside of the fire service. The vast majority of fire cover given by our on-call firefighters is during the evenings and nights while they sleep. So, provided you're ready to hop of out bed and make it to the fire station when called, you could be paid while you snooze. If you work in your town too, it could be that you give cover during your working day as well as a few evenings a week or the weekend.

Giving fire cover just means you're within 5 minutes of the fire station and can drop what you're doing to attend an incident.

Once a week for around two hours, you'll need to attend a drill night at your fire station. You'll be paid for this as well as any additional training you need to do.

The number of incidents that an on-call firefighter attends varies between fire stations - on average, our on-call firefighters are called out two or three times a week for a couple of hours at a time.

We recognise that there will be times that unexpected family or work demands prevent you from being available and on those occasions you will be allowed to 'book off-call'. Like most other jobs, you will also be entitled to paid annual leave.

Because you'll have to drop what you're doing at a moment's notice, we recommend you plan any caring commitments like childcare or caring for a relative for when you're not on-call.

Before you're thinking of applying, make sure to have a chat with your employer about how they could support you in the role.

Lots of employers would let you give fire cover during your working hours or be flexible with your hours if you've had a call in the night. We've made an Employer Information Guide you can give to your employer for more information.

Information for your family

Without the support and encouragement of their partners and families, on-call firefighters would struggle to carry out their role.

This support does mean that occasionally the lives of partners and families can be affected. The main disadvantages to being on-call are:

- It can be difficult to plan spur of the moment activities
- You can be called out in the middle of the night
- You won't be able to be the sole carer for children or dependants as you'll need to respond quickly in an emergency

We think the positives outweigh the benefits, being an on-call firefighter means:

- You're protecting the community you live in
- You'll be a positive role model within the community
- You'll learn new skills and your confidence will increase
- You'll be an expert in all things fire, road and water safety which could help you make your home and workplace safer

What if I move house?

There are 40 on-call fire stations in Essex, so the chances are you might end up moving close to another one. You'll be able to transfer to another fire station when you move.

Training throughout your career

Once you've passed your assessment process and been offered employment with us you'll be ready to start training to become an on-call firefighter.

This will begin with a two-week basic training course, which runs Monday – Friday. You'll be paid during the course which is based in Essex, primarily at one fire station with occasional travel to our bigger training sites in Wethersfield and Witham. Here you'll learn the basics around pitching ladders, pumping water and general fire craft.

After this you'll attend evening and weekend training sessions which usually last for two hours one evening or Sunday a week for 10 weeks.

To become a fully trained firefighter, you will need to go through development training, some of this will take place during drill nights and some will need to be completed in your own time. This normally takes up to 24 months to complete and includes:

Breathing Apparatus initial course:

11 days, Monday – Saturday on Week 1 and Monday - Friday on Week 2.

This gives you the basic BA qualification. You will receive further training throughout your career to enhance your career.

Fire behaviour training:

One week, Monday – Friday

Five day fire behaviour training course combining elements taught on the breathing apparatus initial course with the realistic conditions encountered at operational incidents. It is held at Wethersfield Training Centre.

Development and maintenance of skills

After successfully completing your development training, you'll have the opportunity to complete training courses to broaden your knowledge. You'll receive further training throughout your career to make sure that you're kept up to date with the latest technology and equipment.

Promotion and longer term career prospects

Once you've completed your firefighter development, you'll have the opportunity to complete training in leadership and management to progress to the roles of Crew Manager or Watch Manager.

Any questions? Email:
Mailbox.oclo@essex-fire.gov.uk

General Information

Information for your employer

On-call firefighters who are planning on responding to incidents while at their place of work must have permission from their employer.

It is important that employers understand what this involves so please make sure they receive the Employer Information Guide.

Employers may need to sign a form confirming that an on-call firefighter can be released from work, which is included within the application pack.

Becoming an on-call firefighter when you're self employed

In Essex a large percentage of our on-call firefighters are self-employed, including mechanics, accountants, bricklayers, plumbers, project managers and shop owners.

Many of these people have found that being an on-call firefighter has a positive impact on their business. This is because they have better links with local businesses and their communities and they are well known and trusted by the people in their area.

What if I'm an HGV driver?

The EC Drivers' Hours and Tachograph Rules for Goods Vehicles (Regulation 561/2006) limit driving time and make sure that proper rest periods are taken to prevent road traffic collisions.

The rules apply to anyone who drives an 'in-scope' vehicle. 'In-scope' describes a goods vehicle over 3.5 tonnes, or a passenger vehicle with nine or more passenger seats.

You'll be asked in your application form if your primary employment involves driving 'in-scope' vehicles. This is so the Station Manager can

make sure you're getting proper rest periods and imposed limits are observed.

Do I need any qualifications?

No, but you will need to pass the online English and Maths assessments as part of your application. You will not need to do these online assessments if you hold a Level 2 pass in Maths and English. This means you will need to have a GCSE pass at grade C or 4 (or above), or have completed a functional skills (level 2) in Maths and English. You will be required to provide evidence of these qualifications.



Any questions? Email:
Mailbox.oclo@essex-fire.gov.uk



Personal appearance

While we encourage your individuality with different hair styles, hair colours and tattoos, we do expect our employees to present themselves and dress in a professional manner while at work.

A uniform that reflects the professional image of the Service is provided and allows on-call firefighters to be appropriately dressed for the range of activities in which they are involved.

For safety reasons, jewellery including rings, earrings and facial piercings may not be worn while on duty. Hair (including facial hair) must not impair the seal of the breathing apparatus face mask nor must it impair vision or hearing.

Some facial hair is allowed like a goatee beard or moustache. As a firefighter you will be required to wear a facemask when you are wearing breathing apparatus.

Semi-permanent or false eyelashes may not be worn while on duty.

While on duty, the use of makeup or hair preparations, such as hair spray, is allowed.

Vision

Your eyesight doesn't have to be perfect to be a firefighter, but you will have to take an eye test as part of the recruit medical.

You must meet the required vision standards to pass the recruit medical which is at the end of the application process – if you are unsure of how well you can see then go to an optician, take the below information with you and get an eye test **before** you apply to make sure you have the required standard.

Firefighters require a certain level of eyesight to enable them to carry out their role safely and must meet a nationally required standard of both distance and near vision when applying to join the fire service.

Safety glasses are provided by the service, including inserts for Breathing Apparatus (BA); all contact lenses are discouraged on operational duty though, as they may compound eye contamination with chemicals or particulate. Hard lenses cannot be worn with breathing apparatus masks.

Any questions? Email:
Mailbox.oclo@essex-fire.gov.uk



The application process

Once you've checked you meet the basic requirements, eyesight requirements and you're fit and ready, you're ready to apply...you won't regret it!

If you have any questions before applying, please email mailbox.oclo@essex-fire.gov.uk

Apply online at essex-fire.gov.uk/apply

After we receive your application form we'll contact you to go through the next steps. If you meet the requirements and your local station is recruiting you will go through the following stages:

1 Stage One – Informal meeting at your local fire station with the Station Manager and Watch Manager

This is your chance to meet your managers and it's your opportunity to ask any questions you have with the team you'll be working with.

2 Stage Two – Online English and Maths assessments

You will need to pass the online English and Maths assessments as part of your application. You will not need to do these online assessments if you hold a Level 2

pass in Maths and English. This means you will need to have a GCSE pass at grade C or 4 (or above), or have completed a functional skills (level 2) in Maths and English. You will be required to provide evidence of these qualifications.

3 Stage Three – Pre-fit with the fitness team

This one isn't mandatory but if you wanted to give the fitness test a go ahead of the assessment day, you can book in with our fitness team to have a go at some of the elements of the assessment day. The fitness team has given lots of advice on how to train for the assessment day on our website.

Any questions? Email:
Mailbox.oclo@essex-fire.gov.uk

4 Stage Two – Physical assessment day

All applicants will have to pass our assessment day in order to progress through their application to become an on-call or wholetime firefighter.

You'll have to pass the National Fire Selection Test, more details about the assessment day can be found here.

1. Bleep Test or Chester Treadmill Test
2. Ladder climb
3. Casualty evacuation
4. Ladder lift
5. Confined spaces
6. Equipment assembly - manual dexterity
7. Equipment carry

5 Stage Five - Formal interview

Next, you'll have a formal interview with your Station Manager. It will be a values-based interview where we will find out more about you and assess your values and behaviours.

This is your time to shine, we want to hear all about how you've demonstrated behaviours like problem solving, working with others and your commitment to diversity and integrity.

It's also another chance to ask any questions you have about the role.

6 Stage Four – Occupational health assessment

Here you'll attend a medical appointment to make sure you're fit and healthy to carry out your role safely.

7 Stage Seven – Background checks

We'll need references from you to cover a minimum of three years of your employment or educational history before we can give you an offer of employment.

All members of staff will be required to complete a Disclosure and Barring (DBS) check.

8 Stage Eight - Four week on-boarding

While we wait to get you booked onto a training course, we'll ask you to start attending weekly drill nights at the fire station. You'll be paid for the time you attend the fire station.

9 Stage Nine – Two week basic training course followed by additional evenings and Sundays

Finally, once you've passed your assessment process and been offered employment with us you'll be ready to start training to become an on-call firefighter.

This will begin with a two-week training course, which runs Monday – Friday. You'll be paid during the course which is based in Essex, primarily at one fire station with occasional travel to our bigger training sites in Wethersfield and Witham.

After this you'll attend evening training sessions which usually last for two hours one evening a week for 10 weeks.

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CASE STUDY

**Watch Manager
Darren Hockley - Wethersfield**

By day, Darren is a Service Manager at a local garage and credits the support his boss has given him for his 30-year long career with us.

“It is only with the the full support and understanding of Chris that I am able to provide cover for the station.”

CASE STUDY

**Crew Manager
Sharon Blute - Braintree**

Sharon has balanced her 20-year role as an on-call firefighter with her career as a wholetime firefighter and her busy family life with three young daughters.

“My girls are quite young and it’s been really flexible in my on-call role. We’re very family friendly at Braintree Fire Station and my girls are always popping in to say hi while I’m giving fire cover or to events we hold at the stations. We’re all like a big family here.”



**Crew Manager
Graham Child - Stansted**

CASE STUDY

Graham always wanted to be a firefighter and has been an on-call firefighter for more than 15 years.

“The training received and life skills learnt will arm you to be able to help others. Some of the most challenging situations I have found myself in have been while off-duty but because of my knowledge/ skills been able to make differences to difficult situations.”



CASE STUDY

**Firefighter
Jennifer Adelle - Epping**

Jennifer became an on-call firefighter with us in 2022 and joined to help people in their worst day of their lives.

“This job will help you to know yourself, to know what are you capable of, how far you can go. You don’t just help people, you help yourself to grow, to be responsible and to be able to be strong enough to help people who have a bad day.”



**Any questions? Email:
Mailbox.oclo@essex-fire.gov.uk**



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