PQA INTERVIEW GUIDANCE

GET PREPARED FOR YOUR INTERVIEW WITH

ASPIRATIONAL TO INSPIRATIONAL

LEICESTERSHIRE FIRE and RESCUE SERVICE
It is an essential requirement for a firefighter to have the ability to converse at ease with members of the public and provide advice in accurate spoken English. This is a requirement as part of the Code of Practice on English Language Requirements for Public Sector Workers.

If you ask, we can provide the information in this document in another format, such as large print, braille, an alternative language or audio version.
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This guidance is intended to help you prepare for your interview. The interview questions will be competency based, which means that we want you to answer the questions in the context of actual events. You will be asked questions relating to your behaviour in specific circumstances which you will need to evidence with specific examples.

These guidance notes are divided into the following sections:

- Interview – this section will give you a brief description of what the interview is and what will happen.

- Preparing for the Interview – this section provides you with some general advice on what to do and think about before your interview.

- Talking About Your Experience – how to approach questions in your interview.

We strongly recommend you take time to read through this guidance to help you to prepare. Preparation will be the key to your success.
The interview panel will consist of two people; one will ask you questions, the other will make notes to ensure your answers are recorded for review during the marking process.

Your interview will last for up to one hour. Your interviewer will introduce him/herself to you and tell you about the interview process. From then on, the aim is to gather information about when and how you have demonstrated skills, knowledge and experience essential for the role of a firefighter and to determine your understanding of the role. Your interview will focus on five Personal Qualities and Attributes (PQA) and these are listed on the following pages. As you go through the interview, your interviewer will tell you which PQA each question relates to. It’s important that you read through each of the PQA’s in this guidance because this will enable you to structure your answers accordingly.

CONFIDENCE AND RESILIENCE.
This is about maintaining a confident and resilient attitude in highly challenging situations.

- Remains in control of own emotions during emergency situations (e.g. does not panic and considers risk)
- Concentrates on the task despite pressure (e.g. pressure of time, noise, conflicting information and tasks, and concern for casualties)
- Challenges or questions others constructively to achieve more effective outcomes
- Retains confidence in own ability or convictions despite setbacks (e.g. after a community fire safety talk is received poorly)
COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE
This is about adopting a conscientious and proactive approach to work, and achieving and maintaining excellent standards.

- Continually looks to improve standards of working and offers suggestions as necessary (e.g. provides feedback concerning new or existing work practices to influence change or improve service delivery)
- Approaches work proactively and efficiently both with routine tasks and during incidents
- Adopts a conscientious approach to work (e.g. checks work to ensure all tasks completed correctly and with due attention to detail; maintains appropriate levels of personal fitness)
- Completes work using appropriate procedures (e.g. refrains from taking unsafe short-cuts)
- Completes work as instructed without being reminded constantly
- Is clear about the role of the firefighter and operates within agreed levels of authority and accountability (e.g. does not take action outside own level of control without seeking confirmation)
- Demonstrates a commitment to the work of the Fire and Rescue Service, viewing its role as socially important

SITUATIONAL AWARENESS
This is about maintaining an active awareness of the environment to promote safe and effective working.

- Constantly checks the environment and takes action to ensure safe working (e.g. looks for and assesses risks to safety of self and others)
- Has awareness of a range of safety related information without becoming unduly focused on any one piece of information (e.g. considers full range of factors at an incident such as location of team members at an incident)
- Provides timely and accurate information to confirm progress and outcomes against objectives (e.g. keeps team informed at incidents of changing circumstances)
- Able to judge space and distance within three dimensions and time to perform tasks safely and effectively (e.g. able to judge space and distance to work with ladders)
COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY AND INTEGRITY

This is about understanding and respecting other people’s differences and treating people fairly and ethically.

• Is concerned to treat people fairly and ethically (e.g. completes work according to same high standards regardless of individual differences)
• Recognises the importance of an awareness of the community and understands its needs (e.g. is aware and respectful of differing cultures and backgrounds)
• Recognises and has respect for others’ backgrounds, views, values and beliefs (including religious beliefs)
• Maintains an open approach with others, taking account of, and accepting, individual differences such as age, ethnicity, gender, religious beliefs, social background, disability, sexual orientation and physical appearance
• Is committed to the Fire and Rescue Service values and actively promotes them (e.g. challenges inappropriate behaviour)
• Is honest when working with others and accepts accountability for own actions (e.g. quickly takes responsibility for own mistakes; respects the need for confidentiality; is trusted to enter others’ homes)

COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY

This is about how effectively you verbally deliver information, make yourself understood and how you understand information.

• Communicates verbal messages clearly, concisely and at a level appropriate to the audience so that message is understood regardless of individual differences
• Is sensitive to the needs of the audience and tailors communication in response to feedback (e.g. able to convey the importance of fire safety without distressing members of the public unnecessarily)
• Constantly alert for new information and listens actively to ensure accurate understanding (e.g. using appropriate body language, or by asking questions)
• Asks appropriate questions and checks understanding to ensure all messages received and sent are clearly understood (e.g. asks colleague to repeat message)

• Communicates effectively with both small and large groups

• Presents messages (e.g. fire safety information) in a way that promotes understanding (e.g. uses slides, videos and other visual aids appropriately during presentations and fire safety visits; engages with the audience)

• Writes clear, basic and appropriate information or messages that are understood by the recipient (e.g. completes standard Fire and Rescue Service forms and uses the breathing apparatus operations entry control board correctly)

You will not be asked questions regarding the PQA ‘Communicating Effectively’, because your verbal communication will be assessed throughout the interview.
PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

We recommend you undertake some in depth preparation before the interview:

- Read through your application form
- Identify at least a couple of examples per PQA that you can talk about during your interview
- Practice talking about everything in your application
- Consider the role of a firefighter
- Think about what questions an interviewer might ask and what examples you would give
To help you structure your answers effectively, we advise that you use the **STAR** acronym. **STAR** stands for: **Situation**, **Task**, **Action** and **Result**.

**SITUATION**
Set the situation and context for your answer for example if you are asked a question about time management, your reply would include the details of the work you were doing such as a project, who you were working with, what happened and where you were.

**TASK**
Explain how you handled the situation and place emphasis on your role.

**ACTION**
Explain the specific part that you played and use the word ‘I’ in your answer. Make sure you include a lot of detail about how you assessed and decided on the appropriate response to the situation.

**RESULT**
Explain the outcome and if possible quantify it for example: an increase of productivity which saved the team five hours per week. Make sure you explain what you learnt from the situation and if there was anything you would do differently next time.

We advise you use this technique to enable you to provide the best possible answers to the questions you will be asked.