

Kickstart your passion and unlock your potential **with an apprenticeship**

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Jordan in training

Jordan Coughlan had a moment of nostalgia a few weeks ago. “We were at a ‘have a go’ session at the fire station recently,” he says, “and I thought to myself, ‘I was standing in that group three years ago and now I’m here as part of the operational crew’.”

Dreaming big

Jordan has wanted to become a firefighter all his life. A member of the London Fire Brigade Cadets, he did a BTEC in fire and rescue services, followed by public services, before applying for the London Fire Brigade. “I look young now and I looked even younger then,” he laughs. His application wasn’t successful, so he started an apprenticeship in fire alarm engineering and electricians – where he was using the systems firefighters use day to day. He was eventually successful in getting into the Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service, where he remains now.

An immersive experience

Jordan began his training during the covid pandemic, so he says, “We weren’t even sure if it was going ahead. We started in April 2020, and after three weeks in-house, we spent eight weeks at Moreton Fire Service College followed by a two-week conversion course at the end.”

For Jordan, the idea of a 12 week course was daunting. “You’re given so much information and you’re thinking, ‘I’m not going to be able to retain this’ and then all of a sudden, it’s scenario week and you’re able to remember it all – and I still can. That really surprised me.”

The immersive aspect of the apprenticeship also really appealed. “As soon as you get on the trucks you’re seen as a firefighter – you’re not eased into it slowly,” Jordan says, “you’re a crew member and you’ll have an impact.”

The experience at Moreton was, says Jordan, “absolutely fantastic”. “Some brigades might only have the one smokehouse and you learn the layout fairly quickly, but Moreton has so many different places you can light up, – different floors and different rooms – so it was excellent because it was always completely different.” It was the same with the road traffic collision training. “The experience was second-to-none,” he says.

Out of the heat

However, he says, training school was only a whistle-stop tour compared with the on-the-job training: “You could be told one thing and then suddenly plans change and you have to do something different and drastically change your thought process.”

Jordan is now at Aylesbury, a specialist station with urban search and rescue, soon to be followed by a two-week course in Merseyside, where he’ll specialise in confined spaces and ‘breaching and breaking’ in collapsed buildings. “I’ve still got my eyes on doing my Institution of Fire Engineers (IFE) qualifications too,” he says, “I still find I’m revising and looking things up, so I’d like to do my exams now rather than just go up the ranks.”

Firefighting isn’t easy, says Jordan, “It’s not just a physically demanding job, it’s mentally challenging too. You’ve got the heat against you. You’ve got limited air supply and you can’t see. All your senses are gone but you still must remember what setting your hose reel is on and how to open doors properly and how to firefight.”

Take the plunge

Jordan is passionate about encouraging potential firefighters into the profession. “Local fire stations and firefighters are very happy to share their knowledge with you, so if you’re wanting to apply, go to your neighbouring station and ask. We’ll always need firefighters.”

Interested?

To learn more about the different types of apprenticeships in the fire services, contact apprenticeships@capita.com



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