

Title: **Case Study  
Public Services  
in Wiltshire & Swindon**

**Chris Petty**, aged 22, is a trainee firefighter based at Trowbridge in Wiltshire. Becoming a firefighter has been his dream. "It's something I've wanted to do all along – ever since I got my first Fireman Sam outfit at the age of three," he says.

But getting there was not easy. Fire services don't recruit very often and when they do, competition for places is intense. When he applied to join Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service he was one of hundreds of hopefuls trying for a handful of places.

After filling out an application form detailing the qualities he had for the job he took a written test, a fitness test, an interview and a medical examination before going on to complete his initial six weeks of rigorous training.

He will now continue his training and development while working at the fire station for up to two to three years, until he is assessed as a fully competent firefighter.

It is worth every moment, he says. "I love coming to work – it's just fantastic. I love the team spirit and the fact that everyone is treated as an equal.

"I also love the adrenaline rush when there's a shout (a 'shout' is when fire crews are called out to an emergency) and getting there and doing the job."

Chris went to school and college in Warrington, Cheshire. He admits he didn't do as well as he would have liked in his exams, leaving sixth form college with one 'A' Level.

Back then he thought he had little chance of fulfilling his dream of becoming a firefighter

– at the time fire services had cut back on recruitment.

He began to look at an alternative career with the police or military, serving as a special constable for two years to gain experience.

But then the situation changed as fire services began recruiting again. Chris applied to four or five services and finally chose Wiltshire. "To be honest I was so keen to get into the fire service I would have moved to Australia," he says.

His 'A' Level results weren't a barrier. Throughout his teens Chris had spent his weekends with the Air Training Corps which gave him valuable skills and experience, including team working, people management and the ability to think quickly in difficult situations.

"Having gained good GCSE results, I was a bit worried about my 'A' Levels," he says. "My results did show that I had gone through college and hadn't really tried. "But the fire service isn't looking for fantastically academic people and evidence to show it – it's really looking for the quality of the person."

"Being in the Air Training Corps and the Special Constabulary did show that I have the ability to learn when I'm doing something I want to do.

"If you have something about you like that, if you have taken on some responsibility, then the fire service is going to look at that positively. Because with this job you have to do that in everyday life."