

Practical Placement Portfolio

Introduction

This portfolio is about my first year in the Fire and Rescue Service training programme and the different experiences that have helped me grow both personally and professionally. Over the year I have taken part in different training exercises, classroom lessons, incidents, assessments, and feedback sessions which have all helped improve my confidence, teamwork, communication, leadership skills, and overall understanding of the fire service.

The main aim of this portfolio is to reflect on the progress I have made during my first year and look at both my strengths and the areas I still need to improve on. It also talks about some of the incidents and experiences I have been involved in, the feedback I got from instructors and crew members, and what I want to focus on improving during second year. Reflection is really important in the fire service because it helps you learn from experiences, improve your performance, and build confidence for future incidents and situations.

In this portfolio I will talk about my experiences throughout the training programme, including what went well, the challenges I faced, and the goals I have set for myself moving forward. It will also explain how the training programme has helped prepare me for second year and my future career within the Fire and Rescue Service.

Reflection on My First-Year Fire Service Training Programme

The first year of the Fire and Rescue Service training programme has been both hard and rewarding and has helped me grow personally, academically, and professionally. Throughout the course I have done loads of practical training and classroom learning which has helped improve my confidence, teamwork, communication, and overall understanding of the fire service. The training included initial assessments, Earlswood training, practical drills, classroom lessons, outdoor activities, and extra fire service courses. All these experiences have helped prepare me for the pressure and responsibility that comes with being in the fire service.

One of the biggest things for me during the training programme was improving my practical firefighting skills and confidence. At the start of the course I honestly was not sure if I would be able to deal with the physical and mental side of the job. But after doing repeated drills and training exercises I slowly became more confident in myself and understood operational procedures a lot better. Things like hose drills, ladder drills, BA training, and emergency care scenarios helped improve my practical skills and showed me how important discipline and attention to detail really is in the fire service.

The Earlswood training was one of the most valuable parts of the year because it put us in more realistic firefighting situations and pushed me out of my comfort zone. Working in smoke-filled environments while wearing BA really tested both my fitness and my mindset. At first I found BA training hard because of the lack of visibility, heavy kit, and trying to communicate properly under pressure. Sometimes I felt stressed and overwhelmed during the exercises, but over time I adapted and got more comfortable in those situations. Completing the BA course gave me a big confidence boost and made me realise I could deal with more pressure than I first thought.

Another big part of the programme was teamwork and communication. The fire service depends a lot on trust and teamwork and throughout the year I realised how important it is to work together properly. During drills and group exercises I improved my communication skills and learned how to support other people under pressure. I realised that in the fire service your team mates rely on you to do your job properly and safely. If one person makes mistakes or does not communicate clearly it can affect the whole crew and even put people at risk. This made me understand how important trust and teamwork really is during incidents.

I also learned a lot about leadership during the programme. Before starting the course I thought leadership was mainly about giving orders, but over the year I realised it is more about supporting your team, staying calm under pressure, and setting a good example.

During some exercises people struggled or made mistakes and I noticed that good leaders helped the team stay focused instead of shouting or blaming people. That helped me understand the importance of staying positive and helping others improve instead of putting them down.

One thing I learned a lot during the year was how important it is to learn from mistakes. During practical exercises there were times where I forgot procedures or made mistakes because of nerves and pressure. At first it knocked my confidence a bit, but over time I realised mistakes are part of learning and improving. The important thing is reflecting on what went wrong and trying to improve next time. Feedback from instructors and crew members helped me identify areas I needed to work on and this slowly improved my confidence and resilience. I think learning from mistakes is really important in the fire service because every incident is different and there is always something new to learn.

Classroom learning also played a big part in my development throughout the year. Lessons about fire behaviour, health and safety, risk assessments, and operational procedures improved my understanding of the fire service a lot more. Court visits and classroom discussions also helped me understand the importance of professionalism and accountability. Linking classroom learning with practical drills helped me understand why procedures are so important and how they help keep both firefighters and the public safe. Risk assessments help keep firefighters and the public safe (Health and Safety Executive, 2024).

Even though there were a lot of successful parts of the course, there were also areas I struggled with and still need to improve on. One of my biggest challenges was dealing with pressure and confidence during assessments. Sometimes I doubted myself too much and overthought situations, especially during practical assessments or stressful scenarios. This sometimes caused me to hesitate instead of trusting my training. Over time this improved through doing more drills and getting more experience, but it is still something I want to work on in second year.

Another weakness for me was time management and balancing academic work with fire service training. The course takes a lot of commitment both physically and academically and at times I struggled staying organised with coursework, revision, and deadlines while also attending drills and training sessions. During the year I got better at planning things and prioritising tasks, but I still think this is an area I need to improve more moving forward.

Fitness was another area where I realised I could improve. Some drills were physically demanding, especially BA exercises and carrying equipment during incidents and training. These experiences showed me how important fitness is in the fire service.

Since noticing this weakness I have become more focused on improving my endurance, strength, and overall fitness levels.

In terms of personal development, the programme has helped me become more resilient and adaptable. Before starting the course I was less confident in stressful situations, but throughout the year I learned how to stay calmer under pressure and deal with challenges better. I also became more aware of the importance of professionalism, responsibility, and accountability in the fire service. The training showed me that firefighters need to be mentally strong as well as physically fit.

Looking ahead to second year there are a few areas I really want to improve on. One of my main goals is improving my confidence and decision-making during incidents and training exercises. I want to trust my training more instead of overthinking situations. To improve this I plan to keep taking part in drills, listen to feedback, and continue learning from experienced firefighters around me.

I also want to improve my leadership and communication skills more. During first year I realised how important strong leadership is in the fire service, especially during stressful situations. In second year I would like to take on more responsibility during exercises and become more confident communicating with other people and supporting my team mates. I also want to continue improving my teamwork skills because I now understand how much firefighters rely on each other during incidents.

Academically, I want to improve my time management and reflective writing skills. I know academic work is just as important alongside practical training, so I plan to become more organised with assignments, revision, and deadlines.

Finally, I want to continue improving my fitness and wellbeing because firefighters work in physically demanding environments and need to stay fit for both safety and performance.

Overall, the first year of the training programme has been a really valuable experience and has helped me grow a lot both personally and professionally. Even though there were challenges and areas I still need to improve on, the course helped me build important operational skills, confidence, teamwork, and leadership. I have also learned the importance of learning from mistakes, supporting others, and working together as a team. I believe the experiences and lessons from first year have helped prepare me well for second year and my future career in the Fire and Rescue Service.

Reflection on Incidents Responded To

Throughout my first year in the Fire and Rescue Service training programme I had the chance to attend and observe different incidents which helped me understand what the fire service is really like. These incidents helped improve my confidence, communication skills, teamwork, and overall awareness on the incident ground. Even though training exercises are important, going to real incidents showed me how unpredictable situations can be and how important it is to stay calm, focused, and professional under pressure. Every incident taught me something different and helped me grow both personally and professionally. (London Fire Brigade, 2026)

One incident that really stood out to me was attending a road traffic collision (RTC). When we arrived there was already a lot going on and it was clear straight away how important teamwork and communication are. Everyone on scene had their own role and responsibilities and it showed me how much firefighters rely on each other during difficult situations. Even though I was nervous at first, I focused on listening carefully to instructions and watching how experienced firefighters handled the situation calmly and professionally.

One of the biggest things I noticed during this incident was how important communication is. There was constant communication between firefighters, other emergency services, and the casualty to make sure everyone knew what was happening and what needed to happen next. It made me realise that clear communication helps prevent mistakes and keeps both the crew and the public safe. It also showed me how quickly situations can change and how important it is to stay alert and adapt when needed.

Another thing I learned from the incident was the emotional side of the job. Seeing injured people and upset members of the public made me realise that firefighters do not just deal with physical challenges but emotional pressure as well. I learned how important it is to stay calm and professional during stressful situations because people look towards emergency services for reassurance and support. Even though it was difficult to witness at times, it helped me understand the responsibility firefighters have when attending emergencies.

I also attended smaller incidents such as alarms, and smaller fire-related incidents. Even though some of these incidents were not major emergencies, they still needed professionalism, communication, and teamwork. One thing I learned is that every call is important because you never fully know what situation you are arriving at until you get there. This taught me not to become complacent and to treat every incident seriously no matter how small it might seem at first.

During incidents I also became more aware of the importance of risk assessments and safety procedures. Firefighters work in dangerous environments a lot of the time and following procedures properly is important to reduce risks. Watching experienced firefighters carry out dynamic risk assessments showed me how important training and preparation are during operational situations. It also made me realise that confidence comes from repetition, training, and experience over time.

One thing I struggled with during incidents was confidence and self-belief. Sometimes I doubted myself and worried about making mistakes, especially around experienced firefighters. But over time I realised it is normal to feel nervous and that confidence comes with experience and learning. I also realised that asking questions and learning from others is really important if you want to improve. The support and feedback from crew members helped me feel more comfortable and confident in operational environments.

The incidents I attended also improved my understanding of teamwork and leadership. I learned that everyone in the crew has an important role and if one person does not complete their task properly it can affect the whole operation. This showed me how much trust firefighters place in each other during incidents. I also noticed how good leaders stayed calm, organised, and communicated clearly even under pressure. Watching this helped me understand the type of firefighter I would like to become in the future.

Another important thing I learned from incidents was the importance of learning from mistakes. After incidents there were usually discussions about what went well and what could be improved. I realised that reflecting on incidents is important because it helps firefighters improve and avoid making the same mistakes again. Instead of seeing mistakes as a bad thing, I learned they can actually help you improve and develop your skills.

Overall, attending incidents during my first year has been one of the most valuable parts of the training programme. The experiences improved my confidence, communication, teamwork, and operational awareness. They also helped me understand the reality and responsibility that comes with working in the fire service. Even though there are still areas I want to improve on, the incidents I attended have helped prepare me for future operational situations and motivated me to keep improving my skills and confidence moving forward.

Reflection on Personal Assessments and Feedback Sessions

Throughout the training programme I got regular feedback from instructors, crew members, and through different assessments. These feedback sessions were important because they helped me understand my strengths, weaknesses, and the areas I still needed to improve on. At first I found feedback sessions quite stressful because I worried about getting criticised or disappointing the instructors, but over time I realised feedback is there to help you improve and develop within the fire service. (Accessed: 15 May 2026).

One of the positive things mentioned during assessments was my attitude and willingness to learn. Instructors said I stayed motivated during training exercises and was willing to listen to advice and improve myself. Hearing this helped build my confidence because it showed me that effort and commitment are noticed within the fire service. Positive feedback also pushed me to keep working hard and improving my operational skills.

Another strength picked up during assessments was my teamwork and communication. During practical exercises I worked well within the crew and communicated properly with other people. I learned pretty quickly that teamwork is one of the biggest parts of the fire service because firefighters rely on each other during difficult and dangerous situations. Getting positive feedback in this area made me realise my communication skills had improved a lot compared to when I first started the course.

Even though there were positives, the feedback sessions also showed me areas where I still needed to improve. One thing mentioned a few times was confidence during practical assessments. Sometimes I hesitated or overthought situations because I was worried about making mistakes or getting things wrong. This sometimes slowed me down during tasks and affected my performance. At first I found this hard to hear because I wanted to do well all the time, but after thinking about the feedback I realised confidence only really improves through repetition, experience, and learning from mistakes.

Another area I needed to improve was time management and organisation. Trying to balance coursework, revision, drills, and station commitments was difficult at times and there were periods where I felt stressed and overwhelmed. Feedback from tutors helped me realise how important it is to stay organised and plan ahead. Since then I have tried to improve by starting assignments earlier and managing my time better instead of leaving things too late.

Fitness was another thing discussed during assessments. Even though I met the standards needed, I realised there is always room for improvement in the fire service. Some exercises showed me that improving my endurance and strength would help me perform better during physically demanding incidents and training drills. Feedback about my fitness motivated me to become more consistent with training and improving my overall fitness levels.

One big thing I learned from feedback sessions was the importance of accepting criticism and being honest about weaknesses. In the fire service safety depends on teamwork and competence, so it is important to recognise areas you need to improve on instead of ignoring them. Over time I became more open to feedback and started seeing it as a way to improve rather than something negative.

The feedback process also helped improve my mindset and resilience. At the start of the course I would sometimes get frustrated with myself after making mistakes or not performing as well as I wanted. But through feedback sessions I learned that development takes time and nobody becomes perfect straight away. Learning from mistakes and continuing to improve is all part of becoming a firefighter.

Looking ahead there are still areas I want to keep improving based on the feedback I have received. One of my main focuses is building more confidence during incidents and assessments. I want to trust my training more and stop overthinking situations as much. I also want to improve my leadership skills and become more confident communicating within the team environment. Academically, I want to improve my time management, organisation, and reflective writing skills because I know they are important for balancing both practical and academic work properly.

Overall, feedback sessions and assessments have been a really important part of my development throughout the training programme. They helped me understand both my strengths and weaknesses and gave me clear areas to focus on improving. Even though feedback can sometimes be difficult to hear, I now understand how important it is for both personal and professional growth within the fire service.

Development Plan for Training and Academic Learning

Throughout my first year in the Fire and Rescue Service training programme I have noticed a lot of strengths and weaknesses that I want to keep improving on going into second year. The fire service is the type of job where you are always learning new things and improving yourself because you need to keep high standards both practically and academically. My development plan mainly focuses on improving my confidence on jobs and training exercises, teamwork, leadership, fitness, time management, and my academic work.

One of my biggest goals for second year is improving my confidence during operational training and incidents. In first year there was a lot of times where I doubted myself or overthought situations, mainly during practical assessments or high pressure scenarios. Even though my confidence has improved over the year, I still want to trust myself and my training more. To help improve this I want to get more involved during drills and training exercises and keep learning from more experienced firefighters. I also want to ask for more feedback from instructors and crew members so I can keep improving the areas I struggle with instead of avoiding them.

Another important area I want to improve is leadership and communication. During first year I realised how important leadership actually is in the fire service and how much firefighters rely on each other during incidents. Before the course I thought leadership was mainly about telling people what to do, but now I understand it is more about helping your team, staying calm under pressure, and setting a good example. In second year I want to become more confident speaking up during drills and helping support other people in the crew. I also want to get better at staying calm under pressure because I know if one person panics it can affect the whole team. I think improving my communication and leadership skills will help me become a better firefighter and team member overall.

Physical fitness is another thing I really want to improve. Firefighters work in difficult environments and need good strength, fitness, and endurance. During first year there was some drills and BA exercises that I found physically hard, especially carrying equipment for long periods of time or working in hot conditions. It made me realise how important fitness is in this job and how it can affect performance on incidents. To improve this I want to stick to regular gym training, cardio, and endurance work so I can improve both physically and mentally. I also think improving my fitness will help my confidence because I will feel more capable during difficult exercises and incidents.

Academically, one of the main things I need to improve is my time management and organisation. During first year I sometimes struggled balancing coursework, revision, station time, and practical training all at once. Sometimes I left assignments too late which caused extra stress and pressure for myself. Moving into second year I want to get more organised by planning work earlier, making revision schedules, and managing my time better overall. I also want to improve my writing skills and referencing because I know academic work is still an important part of the course.

Another area I want to improve academically is reflective writing. At the start of the course I did not really understand why reflection was important, but now I realise it helps you look back at situations, learn from mistakes, and improve for next time. I want to become more confident writing reflections and explaining what I learned from different experiences instead of just describing what happened. I think this will help me

both academically and operationally because reflection is a big part of learning in the fire service.

I also want to keep improving my teamwork skills because throughout first year I learned how important trust and communication are within the fire service. Firefighters rely on each other all the time and your team mates need to know they can trust you to do your role properly and safely. If one person makes mistakes or stops communicating properly it can affect the whole crew. During training I learned a lot about helping other people, listening properly, and working together under pressure. Going into second year I want to continue building these skills and become someone that others can rely on during incidents and exercises.

Another thing I want to improve is my ability to deal with pressure and stressful situations. During first year there was times where nerves got the better of me, especially during assessments or incidents where there was a lot going on. Sometimes I would overthink things instead of trusting my training. Over time this did improve, but I still know it is something I need to work on more. I want to become better at staying calm, focused, and thinking clearly under pressure because that is really important in the fire service. I think this will come with more experience, training, and confidence over time.

I also want to keep learning from mistakes instead of getting frustrated by them. During first year there was times where I made mistakes during drills or forgot parts of procedures because of nerves or pressure. At first this knocked my confidence a bit, but over time I realised mistakes are part of learning and improving. The important thing is learning from them and making sure you do better next time. Feedback from instructors and crew members helped me understand this more and made me realise nobody gets everything perfect straight away.

Overall, my development plan is about improving both my operational and academic skills so I can keep progressing in the Fire and Rescue Service. Even though I have improved a lot during first year, I know there is still loads more for me to learn and improve on. I think through more training, hard work, feedback, and experience I will keep building my confidence and become a more capable firefighter in the future.

References

Health and Safety Executive (2024) *Managing risks and risk assessment at work*. Available at: [Health and Safety Executive](#) (Accessed: 15 May 2026).

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