

Frequently Asked Questions

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue
Service

Summer Internship Scheme





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Frequently Asked Questions

Background

What is the Summer Internship Scheme?

To support our strategic drive towards becoming a more diverse and inclusive organisation, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) is launching a paid internship scheme, called the 'Summer Internship Scheme'. The opportunity is aimed at young people living in Berkshire, aged 17 or 18 and from ethnic groups/backgrounds that are currently underrepresented in our Service.

How was the internship developed?

From the outset, the intention was to place the experience and views of young people at the heart of the project.

In early 2022, RBFRS conducted a number of focus group engagement sessions with young people from schools and community groups in Berkshire, alongside running a survey to ensure we heard from as many diverse voices as possible. Based on this feedback, we developed a programme of activities that is tailored to the motivations, career goals and interests of young people in Berkshire. This programme formed the 'Chairman's Internship Scheme' in the summer of 2022 which has since been rebranded as the Summer Internship Scheme for 2023.



What is the eligibility criteria for the Internship?

Candidates will be considered for the 2024 intake if:

They are aged 17 or 18 years old.

This means that to apply for the 2024 scheme, at a minimum candidates must be aged 17 before the general programme start date of 29 July 2023. At a maximum, candidates must not turn 19 before 1 September 2024.

They live in Berkshire.

They are from an ethnic group that is currently under-represented in RBFRS:

- White: Irish
- White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller
- White: Roma
- White: Other White*
- Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups: White and Black Caribbean
- Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups: White and Black African
- Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups: White and Asian
- Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups: Any other Mixed or multiple ethnic background
- Asian *Please note: Other refers to any other White ethnicity outside of the category of White: English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British (monitored as 'White British' in RBFRS equality monitoring) as this is not an under-represented group in Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service/Asian*
- British: Indian
- Asian/Asian British: Pakistani
- Asian/Asian British: Bangladeshi
- Asian/Asian British: Chinese
- Asian/Asian British: Any other Asian background
- Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: African
- Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: Caribbean
- Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: Any other Black, Black British, or Caribbean background
- Other Ethnic Group: Arab Other Ethnic Group: Any other under-represented or minority ethnic group

e. Further data regarding this can be found in the quarterly performance reports on the RBFRS website.



Why isn't the Summer Internship Scheme open to everyone?

As an organisation, we are committed to playing an active role in addressing inequalities that exist in our workplace and society, and therefore our systems. We recognise that due to systemic inequalities, many different identities and groups are disproportionately impacted in our community, and we are taking action to address these disproportionate impacts in a number of different ways:

- We have equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) objectives, which are reviewed every four years and published on our website.
- We have a corresponding EDI Action Plan to track progress against these objectives.

These guide our work to ensure that our Service is a fair and inclusive place for everyone, whether part of our staff or members of our community.

The Summer Internship Scheme is just one of the many initiatives through which we are working to address inequalities and promote an equitable drive for inclusion for all. Our data has shown us that there is a significant under-representation across all areas of our workforce in terms of ethnicity – of the overall workforce, less than 7% have backgrounds that are not White British (as of March 2023.)

We have therefore designed the programme as a positive action strategy to address this specific issue, aiming to expand pathways into our organisation for individuals from ethnic groups that are currently under-represented in our Service. This will enable us to be more representative of, and therefore better serve, the people of Royal Berkshire, as well as helping us to build stronger links with more of our local community.

Information about our other initiatives, including Open Days, Have a Go events and the Fire Cadets scheme, can be found on the RBFRS website.



Why get involved?

The scheme is a fantastic opportunity for young people to gain workplace skills and discover the opportunities available in a modern fire and rescue service. RBFRS employs over 600 members of staff in a wide range of roles, including:

- Operational firefighters
- Support staff – in departments such as finance, communications and engagement, human resources
- Control staff, who work to answer 999 calls and mobilise our response in emergencies.

Successful applicants will spend two weeks with a host department before spending a week visiting stations and prevention and protection teams. They will then spend their final two weeks with a different host department. During their time with us, interns will complete work tasks relating to the allocated department/role to find out more about the work of our Service. They will have the opportunity to see first-hand the variety of roles and opportunities available for people with all different kinds of skills and interests.

Recognising the importance of the contribution that interns will make, this is a paid internship opportunity, meaning all interns will receive a salary. Further detail can be found in the question on pay rates.

In addition, interns will spend time each week focusing on learning, including career development workshops and skills sessions. Through participation in fun and engaging activities, interns will be brought together as a group to develop skills in a range of areas to support them in their future education and career paths. This may include sessions on:

- Time Management
- Mental Health Awareness
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Presentation Skills
- Preparing your CV/Supporting Statement and Interview Skills

Furthermore, as part of the internship, interns will have opportunities to share their reflections and views about RBFRS and the services we deliver, helping to play a key role in shaping the future of our work for the people of Royal Berkshire.



The Internship

How long will the internship last?

The internship will be held during the summer holidays for five weeks, from Monday 29 July to Friday, 30 August 2024. Successful candidates are required to be available for the duration of the scheme. A standard timetable for all interns is available on the Service's website to provide an overview of each working week.

Line managers will support individuals who are selected for the scheme to make these arrangements, and applicants can also ask questions relating to this during the application process if they wish to.

Where will the internship positions be located?

RBFRS Headquarters is located in Calcot, Reading.

The interns will be based at the Service's Headquarters and will be asked to arrange their own transport to and from the site. During week three, interns will be required to work from a different site (one of our Fire Stations).

Location information will be provided in advance as part of the internship timetable to support individuals in planning their journeys. However, the Service is committed to supporting all successful applicants as far as reasonably possible to participate fully in the scheme, and we will therefore seek to work with interns to identify alternative arrangements where transport requirements are a barrier to participation.

What support will interns be given during the internship?

Interns will be assigned a mentor for the duration of their internship to support and guide the intern during their time with us.

The mentor will have knowledge of the scheme, where interns will be working each week and which teams they will be meeting throughout the programme. The allocated mentor will be a 'go to' person for any questions or concerns that interns may have during their time with us, and they will also meet with their mentee at least once a week to learn about their progress and provide broader support and guidance.

Interns will be introduced to their mentor on their very first day with us, if not before, so they will know who their key contacts are from the start of the programme.



What hours will interns be expected to work?

The contractual hours for the internship will be 30 hours per week, 9.30am to 4pm, Monday to Friday.

We acknowledge that this will be different to hours that young people may be used to from education or part-time employment, and we are committed to ensuring that the internship is a manageable and enjoyable experience for all. The Service, along with their mentors, will support interns to adapt to these working patterns, and interns will be able to raise any concerns or ask for further support at any point throughout the process.

In line with our existing policies, line managers will also ensure that interns are informed and fully supported regarding arrangements for absences, including time off for medical appointments, sickness, disability-related or other absence. Further information about this will be provided to all interns as part of their induction process, and interns can raise concerns or questions at any time with their line manager or other key contacts.

What happens when the internship ends?

At the end of their time with us, interns will take part in a final day of evaluation and activities to reflect on their experience. They will also receive a certificate as part of the final day to celebrate their achievements over the course of the programme. In addition, they will have earned a salary from their work, and have gained valuable experience and skills from both their day-to-day activities and the specific workshops they undertake, which will support their CV and future applications to employment or education.

How much will interns be paid?

It is anticipated that interns will be paid at a standard rate of £9.99/hour, in line with existing comparable positions in the organisation. Based on a 30-hour week, this equates to a weekly wage of approximately £299.70. Final details will be shared as part of the advertising of these roles in due course.

Interns will receive their wages through the standard RBFRS payroll process.

Information about RBFRS pay scales can be found on our website.

What health and safety measures will be in place?

As part of the development of the scheme, all necessary health and safety matters have been considered, including through the creation of regularly reviewed risk assessments.



Next Steps and Application Process

What will the application process be like?

Details of the application process will be available to potential applicants in the recruitment documentation that is shared when applications open. The process will consist of an online application, requiring candidates to answer preliminary questions, followed by a selection process that may include a group activity and individual interview.

The process is intended to be an informal, supportive and enjoyable experience for all applicants, which will also support them in gaining experience of applying for further education or employment opportunities.

We are committed to ensuring that our recruitment process is accessible and inclusive for all. As a Disability Confident Leader organisation, RBF is also committed to supporting all eligible individuals to participate fully in the recruitment process. We welcome applicants with disabilities or long-term conditions – if successful at the initial application stage, we will work with applicants to identify reasonable adjustments and support them to participate in the following stage of the recruitment and selection process.

We will continue to work with individuals who are selected to participate in the scheme in order to develop this and provide further support before and during their time with us as part of the internship programme.

We are committed to creating a culture where everyone feels included and respected, and where no one is unfairly discriminated against. In line with the eligibility criteria, all applications will be considered on merit alone.

Do applicants need permission from parents, carers or guardians to apply?

No – but we recommend that parents, carers or guardian are kept informed throughout the process, particularly for those applicants who are successfully appointed to participate in this programme. Interns may also find it useful to keep a trusted teacher, community group leader or careers advisor informed about this so they can provide additional support during the process.

Parents, carers, guardians or other supports may also be invited to events prior to the commencement of the internship programme and to events arranged to mark the end of the internship, although it will not be mandatory to attend. Further details about this will be shared in due course with successful applicants.



What happens next for successful applicants?

RBFRS will maintain ongoing contact with successful applicants to provide all the necessary information and support prior to the start of the scheme. This will include a tailored handbook of information about the Service, details of the schedule for the programme, key contacts and answers to other questions that interns may have.

As well as completing any necessary pre-employment checks, consent forms and arrangements for kit and equipment provision, we are also in the process of arranging pre internship contact such as open evening or question and answer sessions, which interns will be able to take part in to find out more before they begin their internships with us. Further details about this will be available in due course.

What happens next for unsuccessful applicants?

Those who remain eligible for the Summer Internship Scheme the following year will be welcome to apply again. Moreover, we will also be able to share information to support unsuccessful applicants to engage with other opportunities that the Service offers. We are currently also planning further specific post-application contact and engagement opportunities for all those who apply to be part of the scheme, ensuring that any interested individual is able to learn more about the work we undertake even if they are not successful in their application on this occasion.

We are committed to ensuring that all applicants gain something from their engagement with us through the process of applying to the programme, and that all involved have a positive experience.

Further Information and Contact Details

If you have any additional questions or would like further detail on any of the information contained in this document, please contact Claudia Trott, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Coordinator (trottc@rbfrs.co.uk)

We will also share further information about the scheme in due course on the RBFRS website.