My name is Balvinder and I’m a Senior Fire Safety Inspector with West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service (WYFRS). I’m also a member of the Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) and my colleagues and I are putting on a Development Day at our headquarters in Birkenshaw. There will be some 200 people attending this event in July and we’re going to be discussing issues that affect the Fire Service and their local communities.

I joined the Fire Service because I knew it would be a great organisation to work for and I really enjoy my job because I get to keep people safe in their homes and businesses. But I’ve never been a Firefighter and I don’t need to be either, in fact there’s a host of jobs in the Fire Service that people simply don’t know about. A good fire service also needs administrators, vehicle technicians, business managers, inspectors, investigators, IT technicians, solicitors and accountants.

More importantly our emergency services also need to reflect the communities they serve, after all Firefighters are people generally from the local area. The reason why it’s so important is because we need to understand our communities and understand their lifestyles, home environments and the way they travel back and forth from work. By doing that we can be better at keeping them safe. Nationally Fire Services are working hard to attract people from all backgrounds but more needs to be done.

In my example, I get to educate the Fire Service on the realities of fire safety in our Gurdwaras, Temples and Mosques and vice versa. As a Fire Safety Inspector I often use Punjabi and Urdu to communicate the risks to those running our places of worship and I’d really like to see more people do what I do. It would be great to see more diversity in the Fire Service and more females apply for the various jobs we have to offer.

So this AFSA event isn’t just about what Fire Services are saying but more importantly on how they should listen.

AFSA needs your help to make this a successful event therefore we are providing a day’s work experience for 6 students in project planning in the Fire Service. This experience will give students a chance to:

* Meet and mingle with professional managers and senior officers. Create the right impression and if your smartly dressed and organised, people will remember you and you’ll be recognised for it!
* You’ll get see and take part in running a large scale professional event
* You’ll be making sure guests are heading into the right workshops
* We need to make sure we have no IT issues, so you’ll be making sure presentations and rooms are setup appropriately

You’ll also be fed and watered but more importantly this project will give you the chance to acquire life skills, experience and knowledge that will help you in future job hunting. Students won’t be thrown in at the deep end and they’ll receive the appropriate supervision and guidance and a pre-brief session at Fire Service HQ.

Towards the end of the day students will be presented with a certificate as recognition of their commitment and this can go straight into your record of achievement.

Many thanks and I look forward to hearing from you.

Balvinder