Paramedic

Introduction

As an Ambulance Paramedic, you will respond to 999 and 111 calls and treat patients who may be suffering from anything from a cardiac arrest, heart attack, stroke, spinal injury and major trauma, to minor illnesses and injuries. You will provide a dynamic mobile healthcare service by arriving first at the scene and diagnosing and providing treatment, often in the patient's own home.

Also known as

- Paramedic, Ambulance

Work Activities

As a Paramedic, you will be the most highly trained members of the ambulance team. You'll be able to use sophisticated life-support equipment and to treat patients with drugs.

You will be the first healthcare professional at the scene of an accident or medical emergency.

You might work on an ambulance, alongside an Ambulance Care Assistant (ACA) and an Emergency Care Assistant (ECA).

Or you could be working as as a single responder from a car, motorbike or bicycle, or provide advice over the telephone from a control room or clinical 'hub'. You may even work in an air ambulance.

Once at the scene, you may have to use sophisticated emergency equipment and techniques, such as heart defibrillators and intravenous drips. You will be able to give oxygen and life-saving drugs, and can also use rescue gear.

You will check patients' conditions by using devices such as cardiac (heart) and blood pressure monitors.

Importantly, you will need to calm and reassure patients and their relatives or carers. Having given treatment, you'll make sure the patient gets to hospital quickly and safely, if required.

Apart from emergency work, Paramedics and ECAs must check that the ambulance's first aid and emergency equipment is in working order, and maintain the stock of drugs.

Being able to read, write and speak Welsh may be an advantage when you're looking for work in Wales.

Personal Qualities and Skills

To be a Paramedic, you'll need:

- To be highly practical.
- To enjoy working with people.
- Strong communication skills.
- The ability to act calmly and take the lead in an emergency.
- A strong sense of responsibility for others.
- Sympathy and tact to deal with patients and relatives in distress.
- The ability to make quick, calm decisions.
- Emotional strength to cope with distressing situations; you can't be squeamish.
- Common sense and initiative.
You must have a full manual driving licence. If you passed your driving test after 1996, you might need to take an extra driving qualification.

To train as a Paramedic, you must be able to cope with academic study, for example, of anatomy, physiology and drugs.

**Pay and Opportunities**

**Pay**

NHS employees are paid on a rising scale within defined pay bands, according to their skills and responsibilities. The pay rates given below are approximate.

Paramedics are paid on NHS band 5:

NHS Band 5: £21,909 - £28,462

However, with experience, Paramedics can earn up to £40,000 a year.

**Hours of work**

Paramedics usually work 37.5 hours a week, which may include shifts, early starts, late finishes, weekend work and working on public holidays.

**Where could I work?**

Most employment is with the NHS, working for one of the ambulance services. Other opportunities are in private ambulance services.

Opportunities for Paramedics occur in towns and cities throughout the UK.

**Where are vacancies advertised?**

Vacancies are advertised in local/national newspapers, on recruitment and employers' websites, and on Universal Jobmatch (www.gov.uk/jobsearch).

Social media websites, such as LinkedIn, Twitter or Facebook, are a great way to network, find vacancies and get in contact with possible employers. Make sure that your profile presents you in a professional manner that will appeal to potential employers.

Take a look at our General Information Article 'Finding Work Online'.

**Entry Routes and Training**

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In order to become a working Paramedic, you must first be registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). To register with the HCPC, you first need to successfully complete an approved qualification in paramedic science which could be a diploma, a foundation degree or a degree.

The ambulance service will expect you to have a full, manual driving licence when you apply for a Paramedic position.

Basically, there are two routes to studying and qualifying as a Paramedic. You can either:

- take a university qualification in paramedic science and apply to an ambulance service as a qualified paramedic
- or become a student Paramedic with an ambulance service and study while you work.

**University route**

Courses will usually take between two and four years full time. They include a mixture of theory and practical work including placements with an ambulance service - great work experience!
Each university sets its own entry requirements, so it’s important to check college/university websites carefully.

It will also help to have some relevant experience in healthcare or first aid, either voluntary or paid e.g. St John’s Ambulance or the British Red Cross. This helps you to stand out from the crowd when you apply for Paramedic positions.

A great way to get into this career is through an internship. Take a look at our information article ‘Internships’, for more details.

**Student paramedic route**

Ambulance services set their own entry requirements for student Paramedics. They usually ask for:

- at least five GCSEs, grade C/4 or above, including English, maths and science
- or equivalent academic qualification with a high level of health or science content.

However, entry to student paramedic schemes is very competitive. Many applicants have higher qualifications.

Employers also look for:

- a good level of physical fitness
- two years’ driving experience.

Most student paramedic schemes only recruit from time to time (once a year or every two years). The recruitment process often involves several stages. You may be asked to attend an assessment centre, which might include:

- interviews
- English and maths tests
- problem solving tasks
- a fitness assessment
- a practical driving task.

As with the university route, employers may also expect you to have some relevant medical/first-aid experience, either voluntary or paid. For example, working as an Emergency Care Assistant or volunteering with St John Ambulance or the British Red Cross.

**Applying to an Ambulance Trust**

Whether you apply to an ambulance service trust as a student Paramedic or are fully qualified, the trust will expect you to have a full, manual driving licence when you apply. If you passed your test after 1996, you may need an extra driving qualification to drive larger vehicles and carry passengers. Ambulance service trusts use vehicles of different sizes, so check carefully which classifications you need on your licence.

Once you’ve successfully completed a programme approved by the HCPC, you are then eligible to apply for registration with the HCPC. Once registered as a practitioner, you’ll be required to retain your name on the register by keeping your knowledge and skills up to date and paying an annual retention fee.

**Progression**

With further training and qualifications, experienced Paramedics could move into a role such as senior Paramedic. This involves working in a setting such as a GP’s surgery, hospital accident and emergency department, minor injuries unit or a patient’s own home.

**Work Experience**

Previous experience includes working with older people and disabled people, working with the public and first aid
experience. Experience within the ambulance service, for example, as a care assistant or emergency care assistant, is useful for this career.

Rehabilitation of Offenders Act

This career is an exception to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. This means that you must supply information to an employer about any spent or unspent convictions, cautions, reprimands or warnings, if they ask you to.

This is different from other careers, where you only have to reveal information on unspent convictions if you are asked to.

Qualifications

Entry requirements for approved higher education courses vary depending on the university and level of the course. For entry to a foundation degree, you're likely to need 5 GCSEs (A*-C or 9-4), including English, Maths and Science. However, some course providers ask for at least 1 A level, preferably in a science subject. Some ask for 2 or 3 A levels, to include a science subject.

Alternatives to separate science GCSEs (Biology, Chemistry and Physics) are:

- Science and Additional Science, or
- Science and Additional Applied Science.

Alternatives to A levels include:

- BTEC level 3 qualifications
- the International Baccalaureate Diploma.

However, course requirements vary, so please check college/university websites carefully.

To start an approved BSc degree course, you'll usually need:

- 2/3 A levels, including a science subject (Biology might be essential)
- 5 GCSEs at grades C/4 and above, including English, Maths and Science.

Some universities accept the Welsh Baccalaureate as equivalent to 1 A-level.

Adult Opportunities

Age limits

It is illegal for any organisation to set age limits for entry to employment, education or training, unless they can show there is a real need to have these limits.

Skills/experience

 Relevant experience includes working with older people and disabled people, other work with the public and first aid experience. Experience within the ambulance service, for example, as a care assistant or emergency care assistant, is useful but not essential.

Courses

If you don't have the qualifications you need to enter an approved degree, foundation degree or diploma of higher education (DipHE) course, you might be able to start one after completing a college or university Access course, such
as Access to Science. You don't usually need any qualifications to start an Access course, although you should check this with the course provider.

**Funding**

Students on full-time courses in paramedic science don't receive financial support through the NHS Bursary Scheme. However, in some cases there might be local funding arrangements between the NHS and some universities, so you should contact universities directly to find out more.

**Further Information**

**Contacts**

- **Health Careers**  

- **NHS Wales Careers**  
  Publisher: National Leadership and Innovation Agency for Healthcare  
  Email: abm.wedsteam@wales.nhs.uk  
  Website: [www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/829/page/36090](http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/829/page/36090)

- **Northern Ireland Ambulance Service HSC Trust**  
  Northern Ireland Enquiries  
  Address: Site 30, Knockbracken Healthcare Park, Saintfield Road, Belfast BT8 8SG  
  Tel: 028 9040 0999  
  Email: reception@nias.hscni.net  
  Website: [www.niamb.co.uk](http://www.niamb.co.uk)

- **NHS Jobs**  
  Website: [www.jobs.nhs.uk](http://www.jobs.nhs.uk)

- **Scottish Ambulance Service**  
  Scottish enquiries  
  Address: Gyle Square, 1 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9EB  
  Tel: 0131 3140000  
  Website: [www.scottishambulance.com](http://www.scottishambulance.com)

- **Step into the NHS**  
  NHS careers  
  Tel: 0345 6060655  
  Website: [www.stepintothensh.uk](http://www.stepintothensh.uk)

- **Skills for Health**  
  Skills for the health sector  
  Address: Goldsmiths House, Broad Plain, Bristol BS2 0JP  
  Tel: 0117 9221155  
  Email: office@skillsforhealth.org.uk  
  Website: [www.skillsforhealth.org.uk](http://www.skillsforhealth.org.uk)

- **Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC)**  
  Address: Park House, 184 Kennington Park Road, London SE11 4BU  
  Tel: 0845 3006184  
  Email: education@hcpc-uk.org  
  Website: [www.hcpc-uk.org](http://www.hcpc-uk.org)

- **The Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust**  
  Website: [www.ambulance.wales.nhs.uk](http://www.ambulance.wales.nhs.uk)

- **St John Ambulance Cadets**  
  Address: St John Ambulance, 27 St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BU  
  Website: [www.sja.org.uk/sja/young-people/cadets.aspx](http://www.sja.org.uk/sja/young-people/cadets.aspx)
People Exchange Cymru (PEC)
Public sector recruitment portal for Wales
Email: peopleexchange@gov.wales
Website: www.peopleexchange.org.uk/home

Related Careers

- Emergency Care Assistant
- Healthcare Assistant
- Health Visitor
- Hospital Porter
- Nurse - Adult/General
- Nurse - Learning Disabilities
- Nurse - Mental Health
- Nurse - Children
- Midwife
- Ambulance Care Assistant
- District Nurse
- School Nurse
- Occupational Health Nurse
- Nurse
- Nursing Associate
- Phlebotomist
- Surgical Care Practitioner