Ambulance Paramedic

Introduction

Ambulance paramedics, usually working with emergency care assistants (ECAs), are the first healthcare professionals at the scene of an accident or medical emergency. They work with sophisticated life-support equipment. Having treated the patient at the scene, they take them quickly and safely to hospital. Paramedics have more advanced training than ECAs, and lead the team.

Also known as

• Paramedic, Ambulance

Work Activities

Ambulance paramedics are the most highly trained members of the ambulance team. They are able to use sophisticated life-support equipment and to treat patients with drugs.

Usually alongside emergency care assistants (ECAs), they are the first healthcare professionals at the scene of an accident or medical emergency.

Ambulance teams are usually made up of paramedics and ECAs who drive to the scenes of accidents or emergencies, treat patients and take them to hospital.

Paramedics might also work alone, travelling to emergencies in an emergency response vehicle.

Apart from ambulances, paramedics can also reach their patients by using cars, motorcycles and air ambulances. They are trained in emergency driving, as well as in giving treatment.

Once at the scene, paramedics use sophisticated emergency equipment and techniques, such as heart defibrillators and intravenous drips. They are able to give oxygen and life-saving drugs, and can also use rescue gear.

They check patients’ conditions by using devices such as cardiac (heart) and blood pressure monitors.

They have to calm and reassure patients and their relatives or carers. Having given treatment, they will get the patient to hospital quickly and safely.

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.

They must check the ambulance regularly to make sure that oil and water levels and tyre pressures are correct. Other duties include administrative tasks such as completing log sheets. Paramedics spend a lot of time in the ambulance or other vehicle, keeping radio contact with the control room.

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 an ambulance 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.

Ambulance paramedics earn in the range of £21,176 - £27,625 a year. With experience, they can apply for posts with salaries rising to £40,157 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.

**What's happening in this work area?**

Student paramedic vacancies, involving training with an ambulance trust, are rare. The more common entry route is now through an approved higher education course. Please see 'Entry Routes and Training'.

**Where are vacancies advertised?**

Vacancies are advertised on the NHS Jobs website, on job boards, at Jobcentre Plus, on the Universal Jobmatch website, and in local newspapers.

**Entry Routes and Training**

**Entry routes and training**

To become a paramedic, you must have a full manual driving licence. If you passed your test after 1996, you may need to take an extra driving qualification. Some ambulance services support this extra driving training - please check with your local ambulance service trust.

All paramedics must be registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). To register, you need to gain an HCPC-approved qualification, either training via a student paramedic position with a local ambulance service or going on an approved, full-time higher education course. Student paramedic positions are rare, so the higher education route is the more likely way to get in.

Entry requirements for student positions vary; please check with your local ambulance service trust. You will need 'a good standard of education', such as a minimum of five GCSEs (A*-C) including English, Maths and Science. However, training is often towards an approved foundation degree, so you might need at least one science A level, preferably in a science subject. Some ambulance trusts will accept people without qualifications, for example, if they have evidence of recent study or have completed a relevant Access course. To enter a student position, you might need to pass a number of assessments, for example, in number and written skills.
Apart from an approved foundation degree, student paramedic training could be towards another HCPC-approved course, such as the Institute of Health Care Development (IHCD) Paramedic Award. The IHCD is part of Edexcel. A student paramedic post will combine lessons with practical placements and workshops.

The HCPC approves a number of full-time higher education courses for registration, including DipHEs, foundation degrees and BSc (Hons) degree courses. You would need to successfully complete the course and then find a job vacancy. You must check that any course you are interested in is approved; for a full list of courses, please see the HCPC website.

You'll need to apply to UCAS for full-time courses. If you're applying for a student paramedic post that includes studying an approved course part-time, you should speak to the ambulance service trust about how to apply for courses.

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.

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 student positions vary; please check with your local ambulance service trust. You are likely to need a minimum of 5 GCSEs (A*-C), including English, Maths and a science subject. However, training could be towards a higher education course such as a foundation degree, in which case you might need at least 1 A level, preferably in a science subject, to enter. Some ambulance trusts will accept people without qualifications, for example, if they have evidence of recent study or have completed a relevant Access course.

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), 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:

- Edexcel (BTEC) level 3 Nationals
- the International Baccalaureate Diploma.

However, course requirements vary, so please check prospectuses 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 and above, including English, Maths and Science.
Again, equivalent qualifications might be accepted. Please check prospectuses carefully.

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**
  Website: [www.nhscareers.nhs.uk](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk)

- **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
• **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)

**Related Careers**

• Emergency Care Assistant (Ambulance)  
• 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