



Careers in the ambulance service

Caring, compassionate, committed

Make a difference with a career in health

Welcome

A career for you

There are more than 350 roles in health, and many of them are part of a wider team which works alongside other health professionals for the benefit of patients and the public. As well as the NHS itself, many large and smaller organisations provide healthcare and work to prevent ill health in the UK. These include public and private sector organisations, community interest companies, social enterprises and charities, and you could work for the NHS or any one of these other organisations in a health role.

Some roles give you direct contact with patients, while in others you are part of a vast support network vital to delivering healthcare and preventing ill health, and good team-working is essential. Some jobs are in hospitals, others are based in the community: increasingly, health and social care services are integrated or co-ordinated in order to provide a seamless service for people with a range of needs.

We actively recruit people of all ages, backgrounds and levels of experience, including people who have worked in other sectors or who bring life experience from outside the world of work. This helps us to understand the different needs of patients, families and carers, and to provide the best possible service every day.

NHS values and the 6Cs of compassionate care

To apply for any job in the NHS or in an organisation that provides NHS services, or for a course with clinical placements in the NHS, you'll need to show how you think the values of the NHS Constitution would apply in your everyday work.

The NHS Constitution values are:

- > Working together for patients
- > Respect and dignity
- > Commitment to quality of care
- > Compassion
- > Improving lives
- > Everyone counts

These values may also be promoted as the 6Cs of compassionate care, which are:

- > Care
- > Compassion
- > Competence
- > Communication
- > Courage
- > Commitment

Find out more about the NHS Constitution and the 6Cs at

 www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/nhsconstitution

 www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/6Cs

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Your career in the ambulance service

In this booklet you'll learn about the exciting range of opportunities that today's NHS ambulance services have to offer. Healthcare is changing rapidly in response to modern needs, and urgent and emergency care is now one of the key developing areas. This is set to continue, bringing with it new roles.



The ambulance service is not just about responding to a 999 call with an emergency ambulance crew. A range of clinical roles and specialties are available that provide urgent and emergency care to patients over the phone as well as in community settings. There are teams of people who coordinate calls received and ensure the right response is provided. In addition, you could work in the non-emergency Patient Transport Service that is very much valued by communities, or the NHS 111 service for urgent medical concerns.

Whatever your academic background, preferences and interests, if you would like to help others in a role where the job satisfaction doesn't get much higher, the

ambulance service is right for you. It offers a flexible working environment, excellent benefits and a wealth of opportunities to develop your career.

For more information about working in the ambulance service, visit

 www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/ambulance

If you have any questions, you can call our helpline on

 **0345 60 60 655** or email  advice@healthcareers.nhs.uk



FAQs

Who works in the ambulance service team?

Ambulance service team roles include:

- ambulance care assistant/
Patient Transport Service (PTS) driver
- associate ambulance practitioner/emergency medical technician
- emergency care assistant
- emergency medical dispatcher/call handler
- PTS call handler
- paramedic, including roles for more experienced paramedics (see page 12)

How do I train to be a paramedic?

There are two ways to train as a paramedic – an approved full-time university course in paramedic science at degree or diploma of higher education level, or training that combines working as a student paramedic with an ambulance trust and study at university. Visit our paramedic web page or ask your local ambulance NHS trust for details. You can also search for approved university courses using our course finder at www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/courses.

Other routes to becoming a paramedic may be available, depending on local ambulance service recruitment policies, so it's important to check out what your local ambulance service requirements are. Visit the NHS Choices website to get their contact details.

Is there financial help to support me while I'm training to be a paramedic?

You will not usually receive financial support from the NHS but you should check with the university you're applying to. Those training through the student paramedic route will usually be salaried while studying on a part-time basis. Use our course finder to search for courses in paramedic science: www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/courses.

Where can I train as an emergency care assistant or for a role in the Patient Transport Service?

You will usually be trained while you are working in the ambulance service – you would not normally do a course before applying for a job, but you should always check the person specification for the vacancy you're applying for. You can search for vacancies on the NHS Jobs website.

I want a role maintaining ambulance vehicles. Which one is this?

The NHS employs motor vehicle mechanics and technicians to check and maintain the ambulance vehicle itself. Staff are also employed to check that vehicles are stocked with necessary equipment and medical supplies. You can search for vacancies on the NHS Jobs website. Occasionally, there are apprenticeships in motor vehicle maintenance with ambulance service trusts. Visit the NHS Jobs website and the National Apprenticeships website for vacancies.

Do all ambulance service staff deal with emergencies?

No, ambulance service staff may work for the emergency 999 service, the non-emergency patient transport service (PTS) or the NHS 111 urgent healthcare (but not emergency) service.

Which role is right for you?

NHS ambulance services play a crucial frontline role in delivering urgent and emergency healthcare. The priority is no longer getting patients to hospital as fast as possible; ambulance clinicians deliver mobile treatment services to provide care in home or community settings, or give advice over the phone. They work alongside other professionals to provide integrated health and social care.



When a 999 call is received, trained call handlers use triage software to decide rapidly what the problem seems to be and emergency medical dispatchers decide the right response. Not all patients need an ambulance with blue lights and sirens, in fact only a small proportion of calls need the fastest response.

Other callers may need advice over the phone from a specialist clinician in a clinical assessment 'hub', or they might need a paramedic or double-crewed ambulance for assessment and treatment before the patient is taken to hospital or an urgent care centre. Many patients can be assessed and treated in their own home by advanced paramedics.

If the situation is critical, one of the call handlers might have to talk a distressed caller through a life-saving procedure or collect more essential information as an ambulance or rapid response vehicle travels to the scene.

Non-emergency ambulance transport is absolutely vital to patients too. Day after day, patient transport services, as they are known, carry disabled, elderly and vulnerable people to and from outpatient appointments, hospital admissions, day centres and clinics. Without them, many people would be unable to carry on leading independent lives in the community.

Is the ambulance service right for you?

Later on in this booklet you can read about the entry routes available for a career in the NHS ambulance service, whether you are starting out fresh from school, as a graduate or perhaps looking to move to the NHS from another career.

As well as any formal requirements, there are some other qualities you may need to be a successful member of the ambulance team. Some you will learn as your career develops; others are personal qualities. These include:

- willingness to work as part of a team
- good communication skills
- good level of fitness and manual-handling skills for some roles
- excellent driving skills for some roles
- using your initiative, where appropriate
- ability to make decisions under pressure
- remaining calm when faced with aggressive or frightened people

In the next section, you can learn more about the key roles in the ambulance service and where you might fit in.

For more information about the roles and qualifications needed to work in the ambulance service, visit:
www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/ambulance



Ambulance service roles at a glance

You can find more detailed information about all the ambulance roles listed below on the Health Careers website at www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/ambulance

There are also short videos about some of the ambulance service roles on our YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/Healthcareers



See **real-life stories** of people working in some of the ambulance service roles at the end of this section.



Ambulance care assistant/Patient Transport Service (PTS) driver

In this role you will drive disabled, elderly, sick or vulnerable people to and from outpatient clinics, day care centres and routine hospital admissions. You'll be responsible for looking after them on the journey and while they are transferred to and from the vehicle. Because many of the passengers will be in poor health, ambulance care assistants also need life-saving skills in case there is a medical emergency.

You will often see the same people on a regular basis, getting to know them. Some of your passengers will be anxious about their hospital visit and others will lead isolated lives. They will value your reassuring manner and the chance to chat.

Based at an ambulance station or sometimes a hospital, you'll cover a particular local area and might work shifts.

You might be part of a two-person team using a specially designed ambulance with a tail-lift for wheelchairs, carrying several people on each journey. Alternatively, you might work on your own, driving a standard car to transport one or two able-bodied people at a time.

You will make sure that patients are safe and comfortable during the journey and that they arrive on time for their appointment. You will also be trained in resuscitation in case a patient is taken ill while in your care.

Associate ambulance practitioner

This role is also sometimes known as emergency medical technician. You'll operate as a single responder or support a paramedic on a double-crewed ambulance. You'll have many of the same skills as paramedics, such as being able to assess, triage and provide life-saving treatment.



Call handler/control assistant

Call handlers, like emergency medical dispatchers, have a vital role on the front line of the emergency ambulance service. Based in a control room as part of a team with a supervisor, you will answer the 999 telephone calls to the ambulance service from the public and GPs.

Working quickly and calmly, you'll take the essential details about the patient's condition and location, logging them on to the computer system. This information is then passed on to an emergency medical dispatcher to make important decisions about how best to handle the situation.

Thinking fast, multi-tasking and using your initiative, you will often work under great pressure.

You might be dealing with a life-or-death emergency, such as a major incident, a heart attack or a drug overdose. You might be faced with a non-life-threatening situation that nevertheless needs a response, such as a child with a suspected broken leg. In extreme cases, you might have to talk a member of the public through an emergency procedure, such as clearing an obstruction from someone's airway.

Equally, you might need to persuade someone that they should visit their GP or emergency department rather than calling out an ambulance.

Some ambulance services combine the roles of call handler and emergency medical dispatcher. There are also opportunities to work as a call handler with the NHS 111 service.

Clinical assessment service roles

Ambulance services provide clinical advice over the phone. Clinical assessment teams can include a range of professions:

- paramedics
- nurses
- mental health nurses
- pharmacists
- palliative care nurses
- GPs
- dentists and others

You'll be specially trained to assess, diagnose, advise over the phone and refer to other clinicians when necessary. You'll also provide specialist advice to ambulance clinicians treating patients out in the community. In addition to the 999 service, there are clinical assessment opportunities in the NHS 111 service.



Emergency care assistant

As an emergency care assistant, you are a member of the emergency ambulance crew attending 999 calls. You will work alongside a paramedic, helping them to provide patients with potentially life-saving care and, where needed, getting patients to hospital.

You'll attend every kind of accident and emergency, sometimes covering considerable distances, using your expert emergency driving skills to get to the scene with the greatest speed possible.

Under the direct supervision of the paramedic, you'll carry out essential emergency care, such as controlling severe bleeding, treating wounds and fractures and looking after patients with possible spinal injuries. You will use a defibrillator to resuscitate patients with heart failure and will be trained to give a range of different drugs.

As well as your contact with patients, you will also have to deal with relatives and members of the public. In larger or more serious incidents, you will work alongside the police and fire service.

Emergency medical dispatcher

As an emergency medical dispatcher, you will receive details of 999 calls via the exchange operator for someone requesting an ambulance. Using your training, you will ask a series of questions to ensure the most appropriate help is dispatched and use a triage system to assess the type of emergency and determine the response needed. Resources are dispatched automatically or manually, and additional resources such as a rapid-response car, motorcycle or air ambulance may be sent to the location as appropriate.

Your speed and accuracy could make the difference between life and death. While the clinicians are on their way, you will probably still be passing them further essential details so they can go straight into action when they reach the scene.

Some situations are complicated and the information you receive might be unclear and need careful checking. The pace can be furious: you could be dispatching 15 vehicles an hour as well as dealing with queries from the crews. You will work shifts, including some evenings and weekends.

Some ambulance services combine the emergency medical dispatcher role with that of call handler.



Paramedic

Paramedics have a highly responsible role, often being the senior ambulance service healthcare professional in a range of emergency and non-emergency situations. You will be one of the first healthcare professionals to arrive at the scene. You will probably be the senior member of a two-person ambulance crew, with an emergency care assistant or technician to support you. However, you might work on your own, using a motorbike, emergency-response car or even a bicycle to reach your patients.

You will assess the patient's condition and make potentially life-saving decisions about whether the patient can be treated at the scene or transferred to hospital. In non-life-threatening situations, you'll also have to use your professional judgement to make key clinical decisions. Most patients treated by paramedics do not have life-threatening injuries.

In an emergency, you will use high-tech equipment, such as defibrillators (which restore the heart's rhythm), spinal and traction splints and intravenous drips, as well as administering oxygen and drugs.

You will be trained to drive what is in effect a mobile emergency clinic and to resuscitate and/or stabilise patients using sophisticated techniques, equipment and drugs. You might be called out to someone who has fallen from scaffolding, for example, or an elderly person with a suspected stroke.

Based at a local ambulance station, you will work shifts, including evenings and weekends, going out in all weathers at all hours of the night or day. You will work closely with other healthcare teams in the community, such as GPs, occupational therapists, mental health teams or diabetes specialists, and doctors and nurses in hospital emergency departments. You will brief them as you hand your patient over to their care.

As well as contact with your patients, you will also deal with patients' relatives and members of the public, some of whom might be highly distressed or aggressive. You will also often work alongside the police and fire and rescue services.

With further training and experience, you could work in an increasingly wide range of roles. See page 12 for information about roles for experienced paramedics.

To work as a paramedic in the NHS, you need to be registered with the Health and Care Professions Council.



Patient Transport Service (PTS) controller

As a Patient Transport Service (PTS) controller, also known as a non-emergency call handler, you will have a key role in ensuring that patients who are frail or vulnerable or have no other means of transport get to their health appointments safely and on time. Based in a central office, you will book the vehicles that take patients to and from local clinics, daycare centres and non-emergency hospital admissions.

Handling requests for transport from patients and their relatives and also from healthcare professionals such as nurses, you will have to record patients' details accurately, usually using a computer.

You will then have to decide which type of vehicle is appropriate for each patient, depending on their mobility and state of health, and plan the trips to make the most efficient use of the vehicles and the drivers.

You will work under pressure a lot of the time, thinking fast and multi-tasking, and keeping a running check on the service and location of all vehicles in your charge.

You may work shifts involving some early mornings and evenings.

Roles for experienced paramedics

Once you are an experienced paramedic there are many opportunities to develop into further roles, such as a Hazardous Area Response Team (HART) paramedic, a specialist paramedic, advanced paramedic or consultant paramedic.

You will be a paramedic with additional skills and qualifications that allow you to carry out more treatments and take on more responsibility.

You'll do shift work, including evenings and weekends, and also on-call work. As part of a team, working with other healthcare professionals, you'll have your own area of responsibility and be able to provide care independently.

Working from a response car, GP surgery or urgent care centre, you will assess patients with symptoms and conditions such as suspected fractures or chest pain. You might also see patients in nursing or residential homes, schools or prisons. You will take a patient's medical history, examine them and order tests and scans where necessary.

There are also opportunities for experienced paramedics with extended qualifications to move into executive director posts, research and teaching roles.

Other roles in the ambulance service

To support front-line ambulance service staff, there are numerous other opportunities in human resources, finance, administration, health informatics, estates and motor vehicle maintenance. Visit our main website for details of these and other careers: www.healthcareers.nhs.uk

For more information about roles in the ambulance service, visit www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/ambulance

For information about management roles in the health sector, see our *Careers in management* booklet or visit www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles

To search for current jobs, visit www.jobs.nhs.uk





Real-life stories



Patient Transport Service

Name

Tyiba Pervaz

Job title

Patient Transport Service (PTS) driver,
West Midlands Ambulance Service NHS
Foundation Trust

Entry route

Access to higher education course



**"I love the daily interaction
with patients."**

How I got into the role

I have a certificate in health from Manchester Metropolitan University, and during my career have cared for patients of all ages in various health settings, such as hospitals, nursing homes, voluntary organisations, domiciliary care and ambulance service. My experience includes looking after people who have challenging behaviour or learning disabilities and I was a volunteer for St John Ambulance for a while too. I have looked after patients of all ages from birth to death.

What I do

In 2011, I joined West Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust as a Patient Transport Service controller. I enjoyed that role but working in an office is not really my thing, so when an ambulance driver vacancy came up, I jumped at the chance to apply.

My job involves taking patients to and from routine hospital appointments, transferring them from one hospital to another and taking them home when they're discharged or to an intermediate care facility.

While working for the ambulance service, I have completed an advanced diploma in support services and high dependency training to enable me to transfer patients requiring cardiac monitoring.

The best bits

I love the daily interaction with the patients as well as the actual driving part of the job. The day goes very quickly because I'm always travelling all over the West Midlands, and beyond sometimes too.



Control manager

Name

Graham Robinson

Job title

Control manager, North East
Ambulance Service NHS Trust

Entry route

Ambulance care assistant*



"The opportunities are vast."

How I got into the role

I started as an ambulance care assistant on non-emergency ambulances. I enjoyed it but I really wanted the 'blue light' work so, after three years, I moved to accident and emergency as an ambulance technician. I was just about to start training as a paramedic when I was offered a job as control room superintendent/duty officer.

I was one of a rotating team of six, running the control operation, dealing with all kinds of emergency calls and supervising radio dispatch for vehicles. I loved it. Then, three years later, we needed funding for an air ambulance and I was offered the post of general manager in charge of generating income.

What I do

Ten years ago I got my present job of control manager. I head up a control room of more than 100 staff. The responsibilities include making sure we have all the resources we need to do the job and that we hit our targets for responding to calls on time.

The best bits

During my 25 years in the service, I've done a range of different jobs but I've always had the back-up and training I've needed. I've been on courses on all aspects of management and on dealing with the media, as well as specialist subjects such as decontamination and protective equipment and safety at sports and entertainment venues.

In the NHS we try to develop people as much as we can and the opportunities are vast.

**Some trusts are now replacing the ambulance technician role with associate ambulance practitioner posts (job titles vary between trusts).*



Emergency medical dispatcher



Name

Claudette McNaughton

Job title

Emergency medical dispatcher,
London Ambulance Service NHS Trust

Entry route

Call handling training course

**"It is a big responsibility
but I enjoy the challenge."**

How I got into the role

When you join the service as an emergency medical dispatcher, you complete a call handling training course. Once you finish your training and after approximately six months of call handling, you go back to the training centre to learn how to dispatch ambulances.

At the end of your first year in the service as an emergency medical dispatcher, you are able to answer emergency calls and also dispatch ambulances to incidents.

What I do

I joined the London Ambulance Service as a call handler in 1991 after working in the control room for the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA). I work 12-hour shifts as an emergency medical dispatcher.

I mainly work in the call handling section of the control room answering emergency calls from people including members of public, the police, London Underground staff, GPs and the London Fire Brigade.

When you answer a call you never know what type of incident you are going to be dealing with.

I am also responsible for making sure that ambulance crews have as much information as possible before they arrive at a scene, so the crew can give the patient the best treatment.

The best bits

Call handling can be stressful and it is a busy job, but it is also very rewarding. Often I am the first person someone talks to when they are in an emergency situation and need help. It is a big responsibility but I enjoy the challenge.

As an emergency medical dispatcher you get a lot of job satisfaction – knowing that you have helped to save a person's life or helped deliver a baby over the phone is a great feeling.



Paramedic

Name

Elisha Miller

Job title

Paramedic,
West Midlands Ambulance Service NHS
Foundation Trust

Entry route

Urgent call taker



How I got into the role

My first job after school was urgent call taker in the control centre at Yorkshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust. I handled calls from district nurses, hospital staff, residential and nursing homes, and GPs, and decided on the best type of response for their patients.

That experience started me thinking about a career as a paramedic and, when I finished my sports studies degree, I got a place on the two-year foundation degree paramedic science programme. During the course, I worked as a first aider at the students union during evening events, which gave me fantastic experience of assessing people's injuries and deciding on the most appropriate ongoing care for them.

I graduated as a paramedic in summer 2013 and started work at West Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust.

What I do

As an autonomous practitioner at the scene of an emergency, I undertake a detailed assessment of the patient and carrying out life-saving treatment where necessary.

We have a wide range of drugs and equipment to ensure patients receive high-quality care at the scene, and refer them for the most appropriate ongoing care, whether that's to hospital, their GP or social services, or a question of showing the patient how to manage their own care after the incident.

The best bits

There's lots of room for career progression in this role, for example to specialist paramedic in urgent and emergency care or advanced paramedic. Most of all, I love the feeling that I've helped others in their moment of need, whether it's a patient having a heart attack or an elderly patient who's fallen over and just needs a helping hand to stand up.



Critical care paramedic



Name

Emma Relf

Job title

Critical care paramedic,
South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS
Foundation Trust

Entry route

Trainee ambulance technician

**"I love the fact that every
day is different."**

How I got into the role

I started my career in the NHS as a call operator in the control room at my local ambulance service headquarters, but as soon as I was 21 and eligible, I started to pursue my career on the frontline.

For the last ten years I've worked in a range of roles. I trained as an ambulance technician before becoming a qualified paramedic. I've also worked as a clinical team leader, providing support to other clinical staff and managing a team. I was keen to widen my skills and wanted further responsibilities and my trust had just developed a new critical care paramedic role, which specialises in managing acutely ill and critically injured patients affected by a wide range of conditions, such as trauma. I successfully applied for the post, and after seven months of training, I gained my postgraduate qualification. I am now studying for my Master's degree in Paramedic Science.

What I do

As well as carrying out the full range of usual ambulance duties and responsibilities, I also respond to life-threatening calls. My specialist role allows me to assess and diagnose injuries, and use more powerful drugs and equipment on the scene that, until recently were only used in hospital.

I also work closely with our air ambulance service, medical director and local hospital departments, such as theatres, A&E and intensive care units, to maintain my skills when I'm not working in the normal ambulance environment.

The best bits

I have always enjoyed the buzz of being a paramedic but I wanted to develop my skills, so I jumped at the chance to train as a critical care paramedic. I work 12-hour shifts which are long and tough but I love the fact that every day is different. Knowing I have made a positive difference to a person's life also makes the job worthwhile. I work within a supportive team with a great sense of humour which sees me through the difficult days.

Getting started in the ambulance service

Whatever your age, education and qualifications, you can join the ambulance service at a level that's right for you. You'll be given every support to develop your career if this is what you want. Below are some of the options and entry routes available to enter the ambulance service team.



As well as meeting minimum academic standards, ambulance trusts are keen to view evidence of a range of skills – see the list on page 6.

Ambulance services sometimes vary in the way they provide training and the job titles they use, so it's important to find out what your local service offers.

Work placements and volunteering

Doing volunteer work or arranging a work placement is the best way to find out if a health profession is right for you. It will give you experience of the working environment, show you the kind of work you would be doing and the people you would be helping, and let you talk with people who are already doing the job.

The number and type of work placements or volunteering opportunities available vary, depending on where you are in the country. Experience doesn't always need to be gained in the NHS either, so think about the independent health sector, charities and other organisations where you could provide care for people as a way of gaining experience.

For more information about opportunities in your area, talk to your local trust or healthcare provider and voluntary organisations. You can also find more information on gaining experience at www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/experience



Remember that if you're applying for a role either directly in the NHS or in an organisation that provides NHS services, you may be asked to show how you think the values of the NHS Constitution apply in your everyday work. Find out more at www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/nhsconstitution and www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/6Cs

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are often available in ambulance services which can provide invaluable experience of the workplace. Some apprenticeship roles may work directly with patients and service users, such as Patient Transport Service driver or care assistant. The associate ambulance practitioner role being offered by some ambulance service trusts can be entered through a 12 month apprenticeship. Other apprenticeships may be based in administration or involved in maintaining the fleet of ambulance vehicles.

Don't just think about the ambulance service for apprenticeships. Other organisations that provide healthcare have apprenticeship opportunities that could provide great

experience of working directly with patients or the wider public. Similarly, roles elsewhere in administration, business, reception and vehicle maintenance could all be really useful if you're considering a non-patient facing role in the ambulance service.

Experience gained through an apprenticeship can boost your confidence and help you to secure a role in the ambulance service or other healthcare setting.

Apprenticeship vacancies in health can be found on the NHS Jobs website at: www.jobs.nhs.uk and the Government Apprenticeships website at: www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship

Entry level/assistant roles

The ambulance service has an excellent record in staff development. Many people in senior roles – whether in clinical or management jobs – came in at junior levels with fewer qualifications. Local ambulance trusts differ in their entry requirements. However, some ask for GCSEs or equivalent vocational qualifications, while others will also recruit people with a good general education and/or work experience.

Some ambulance service trusts recruit apprentices into support roles, such as associate ambulance practitioner, within patient transport services (see the Apprenticeships information on page 21).

When you join, you will be given full training. Much of your learning will be practical and on the job, but some will take place in a classroom. Once you have had your initial training, you will spend time working under supervision.

If you come in as an emergency care assistant, after experience and further training, you will have the chance to apply for any available student paramedic positions. You will have to pass entrance exams and fulfil additional selection criteria, competing against other (including some external) applicants, before being accepted into a student paramedic position. Alternatively, you could leave your employing organisation and apply for a full-time university course in paramedic science.

To drive an ambulance, whether emergency or non-emergency, you will need a full, (usually) clean, manual driving licence with the appropriate classifications as set out by individual ambulance service trusts.

Graduate opportunities/approved courses

To practise as a paramedic, you must be registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). To register, you must successfully complete a course approved by the HCPC. Courses are currently offered at diploma of higher education and degree level but moving to degree-only level in the future.

Some courses are open on a full-time basis to direct entrants applying through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS), and part-time to those already working in appropriate ambulance service roles. Some ambulance trusts offer student paramedic posts, where you will be recruited specifically to train as a paramedic while working. Courses last from two to five years, depending on whether you study full-time or part-time. It's important to check entrance requirements with the university concerned and with the partner ambulance trust/s in the areas where you want to work.

As a qualified paramedic, you will be eligible for one of the growing numbers of part-time and full-time degree and postgraduate courses in the developing area of emergency care. They are run by a number of higher education institutions, equipping students with the specialist knowledge and skills to contribute to the development and effective delivery of care in an emergency setting. These qualifications can lead to a post as a specialist paramedic.

Funding

Funding arrangements vary from trust to trust. For on-the-job training, you will be paid a salary while you learn. Some employers, but not all, will support you if you need the extra driving qualification.

Read more about studying to be a paramedic at www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/studyingtobeaparamedic

Speak to your careers adviser, call us on 0345 60 60 655 or email advice@healthcareers.nhs.uk to find out more about approved courses in paramedic science.



Next steps and progressing your career

If you want to work in health, it's important to find out as much information as you can about the qualifications you need and the opportunities that are available.



If you have decided that you want to join the ambulance service, your next step depends on your starting point. Health Careers can provide further information on routes in and general entry requirements. You can also consult your local careers adviser.

If you need a degree, you usually need to apply through UCAS which provides details of the universities offering courses. You can also use the course finder on the Health Careers website to get an approved list:

www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/courses.

Each university will be able to tell you what they look for in applicants.

If you are already working but are thinking about a change of career, consider volunteering in your spare time. This is a great way to find out if you like the work, and can sometimes lead to a more permanent position.

Here is a checklist of things you should be doing, whether you're still at school, studying for your degree or looking for a change of career:

- Have you explored routes into your chosen career? Will you need a degree or other qualification before you join, or will an employer train you on the job (there may also be the opportunity to start as an administrator)?
- Are there any particular skills or experience that will improve your chances of getting into your chosen career?
- Have you enquired about opportunities to volunteer or do relevant work experience?
- Have you investigated further qualifications you might need for your chosen role?
- Have you searched the NHS Jobs website or spoken to your local trust to get an idea of the type of vacancies available?

Whatever position you're in now, the Health Careers service can help.

Call us on **0345 60 60 655**, email advice@healthcareers.nhs.uk

or visit our website at

www.healthcareers.nhs.uk

To search for jobs, go to

www.jobs.nhs.uk

For job vacancies with other health organisations, visit

www.gov.uk/jobsearch

For job vacancies in local government, visit www.lgjobs.com

Here are some other things you can be doing, depending on where you are right now:

Where are you now?	What should you do now?	Who can help?
<p>Studying for your GCSEs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Visit www.stepintothens.nhs.uk ➤ Check what your likely exam grades/results will be. ➤ Explore routes into your chosen career – will you need a degree or other qualification before you join, or will the NHS train you on the job? ➤ Can you start as an assistant? ➤ Are there any particular skills or experience that will improve your chances of getting into your chosen career? ➤ Enquire about volunteering or work experience. ➤ Find out if you need any specific A-levels, or equivalent qualifications. 	<p>Subject teachers Your careers adviser National Careers Service Professional bodies Health Careers</p>
<p>Studying for A-levels or another course at your school or a local college</p>	<p>As GCSEs, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ If you need to study a particular higher education course, investigate which universities offer it. ➤ Investigate any further qualifications you might need for your chosen role. ➤ Search the NHS Jobs website at www.jobs.nhs.uk and speak to your local ambulance trust to get an idea of current vacancies. ➤ Consider the option of an apprenticeship. 	<p>Subject teachers Your careers adviser National Careers Service UCAS Health Careers Professional bodies NHS Jobs Local ambulance trust</p>
<p>At university</p>	<p>As A-levels</p>	<p>University careers service Health Careers Professional bodies NHS Jobs Local ambulance trust</p>
<p>Looking for a new career</p>	<p>As A-levels, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Find out if you will need to retrain before you apply for new roles or if the NHS will train you while you are working. ➤ If you left school some time ago, visit the Access to Higher Education website at www.accesstohe.ac.uk or contact the National Careers Service for course details. 	<p>National Careers Service Access to Higher Education Health Careers Jobcentre Plus Professional bodies NHS Jobs UCAS Local ambulance trust</p>



Fulfil your potential

The NHS is committed to offering development and learning opportunities for all full-time and part-time staff. If you work for the NHS, no matter where you start, you'll have access to extra training and be given every chance to progress within the organisation. You'll receive an annual personal review and development plan to support your career progression.

You will also be encouraged to extend your range of skills and knowledge and take on new responsibilities through the Knowledge and Skills Framework (KSF). The KSF is available on the NHS Employers website:

www.nhsemployers.org/SimplifiedKSF

The example career routes on p.30-31 make it easy to see at a glance how you can progress within your chosen career.

Other organisations that provide healthcare and work to prevent ill health will offer similar development opportunities and the chance to review your work. It's a good idea to discuss career development with any employer you are considering.



Benefits of working in the NHS

As a member of the ambulance service team in the NHS, you will enjoy one of the most competitive and flexible benefits packages offered by any employer in the UK and a wealth of opportunities to develop your career. You will join one of the country's most respected organisations and one which has the values of compassionate care and staff wellbeing at its very heart.

If you work in the private or voluntary sectors or another public sector organisation, your pay and benefits will vary depending on your employer.



Your pay in the NHS ambulance service

Most jobs are covered by Agenda for Change (AfC) pay scales, except doctors, dentists and very senior managers. The NHS job evaluation system determines a points score, which is used to match jobs to pay bands and determine levels of basic salary. Each pay band has a number of pay points. Staff will normally progress to the next pay point annually until they reach the top of the pay band.

Your career in the NHS ambulance service could start as an ambulance call handler or control assistant at AfC band 2, or in a patient transport service role at bands 2, 3 and 4. Paramedics start at band 5 as part of their learning programme and progress to band 6 after two years. Specialist paramedics

are employed at band 6. Your earnings in frontline operational roles are often enhanced with unsocial hours payments of up to 25 per cent of basic salary, which reflects the 24-hour nature of the service. There are promotion opportunities, for example to service area managers at band 7, with further managerial roles attracting higher bandings.

For more information on pay bands and the most up-to-date salary information in your chosen career, visit www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/pay





One of the UK's best pension schemes

The NHS Pension Scheme is one of the most generous in the UK. Every new employee automatically becomes a member, unless you choose to opt out.

Other employment benefits for NHS staff

Everyone employed under the NHS Agenda for Change pay system is entitled to:

- a standard working week of 37.5 hours
- holiday entitlements of 27 days per year, plus eight general and public holidays, rising to 33 days after ten years' service
- pay enhancements to reward out-of-hours, shift and overtime working
- career and pay progression based on the application of knowledge and skills
- annual personal development review to support career aspirations
- occupational health services
- study leave for sponsored courses

Many of these benefits apply across the whole of the NHS, although local organisations may offer additional benefits such as cycle to work schemes and nurseries. Many local shops, restaurants and services offer discounts to health staff too, including most gyms and leisure centres. Health Service Discounts is an employee benefit provider for many NHS organisations and offers discounts and deals for NHS staff on shopping, holidays and financial services from well-known brands: www.healthservicediscounts.com

Health and wellbeing at work and your work-life balance

The NHS is committed to helping staff to stay well, including serving healthier food, promoting physical activity, reducing stress, and providing health checks covering mental health and musculoskeletal problems.

The NHS will help you combine your work with commitments in your everyday life and at different stages of your career – whether you're studying for a new qualification, raising a family or have other responsibilities.

The size and diversity of the NHS means we can offer you a range of flexible working and retirement opportunities. Part-time roles and job-share opportunities are often available, as well as term-time only, evening and weekend positions. Many people take an extended break to look after young children or other dependants who need special care, or to study full-time.

As well as advice and support for people looking after sick or elderly relatives, the NHS provides a range of childcare services for employees, including:

- nursery care
- after-school and breakfast clubs
- holiday play schemes
- emergency care

You can find more information on health and well-being at work at www.nhsemployers.org/healthyworkplaces

Get more information about the benefits and opportunities offered by the NHS at www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/payandbenefits

Example career routes

The diagram on pages 30 and 31 has been designed to provide examples of how staff can progress throughout their career in health.

It gives an illustration of a range of health careers and how someone could progress through different levels. It is not exhaustive; details on other careers can be found in the relevant Health Careers booklets and on the Health Careers website.

The real-life story on page 16 describes how Graham Robinson has progressed within the ambulance service. You can follow his career path in the white boxes on the diagram, alongside other potential paths in the different areas of health.



	Initial entry level jobs	Support workers	Senior healthcare assistants/technicians	Assistant practitioners/ Associate practitioners
Allied health professions		Therapy clinical support worker	Occupational therapy rehabilitation assistant	Assistant practitioner in occupational therapy
Ambulance service team		Patient Transport Service driver	Ambulance care assistant	Ambulance technician
Dental care team		Dental nurse	Student dental technician	Assistant dental technician
Health informatics	Health records assistant	Support desk assistant	Medical records clerk	Helpdesk adviser
Healthcare science		Phlebotomist	Newborn hearing screener	Critical care technologist
Management				General office manager
Midwifery		Healthcare assistant (maternity)	Maternity support worker	
Nursing	Nurse cadet	Healthcare assistant (nursing)	Senior healthcare assistant	Community care assistant
Pharmacy	Pharmacy porter	Medicines counter assistant	Senior pharmacy assistant	Pharmacy technician
Psychological therapies		Healthcare assistant (mental health)	Care support worker (mental health) Mental health support worker	Assistant clinical psychologist Trainee psychological wellbeing practitioner
Public health	Young Health champion	Health champion	Health trainer	Stop smoking adviser Health trainer team leader
Wider healthcare team	Porter	Maintenance assistant	Security officer	Medical secretary

Practitioners	Senior practitioners/ specialist practitioners	Advanced practitioners	Consultant practitioners	More senior staff
Occupational therapist	Senior occupational therapist	Advanced occupational therapist (team leader)	Consultant occupational therapist	
Control room superintendent	Specialist paramedic	Advanced paramedic	Consultant paramedic	Clinical director of service
Dental technician	Senior dental technologist			
Web developer	Special projects manager	Head of communications	Access, booking and choice manager	Director of information management and technology
Cardiac physiologist	Senior biomedical scientist	Specialist respiratory physiologist	Consultant clinical scientist (medical physics)	Director of regional genetics services
Payroll manager	General manager community services	Control manager	Maxillofacial laboratory manager	Director of human resources
Midwife	Community midwife	Head of midwifery	Consultant midwife	Director of maternity services
Staff nurse	Senior staff nurse	Clinical charge nurse	Nurse consultant in stroke	Director of nursing
Pre-registration pharmacist	Pharmacist		Lead pharmacist for admissions	Director of clinical support services
Psychological wellbeing practitioner Trainee clinical psychologist	High intensity therapist Psychotherapist		Consultant clinical psychologist	Assistant director - clinical professional practice
Health improvement practitioner	Senior health improvement practitioner	Specialty registrar in public health Advanced health improvement practitioner	Public health consultant	Director of public health
Catering manager	Chaplain	Head of estates		

**For further copies of this
booklet please contact:**

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www.healthcareers.nhs.uk

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